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Coordinator, Assistant Run New Youth Drop-In

Ellie Maier has been hired to serve as coordinator and Antonio "Tony" Travis as assistant coordinator for the new Wisconsin Youth & Family Center middle school and high school youth drop-in program.

The program began June 16 and is drawing about 30 youth each day it is open. The program operates Monday through Thursday, 6-8 p.m. and Saturdays 12-5 p.m. It is funded by a grant from the City of Madison Office of Community Services.

Both Maier and Travis enjoy the challenges of working with young people.

"They're like sponges at this age," said Maier. "They really like to learn."

Maier who is originally from Poynette, WI has been active in youth work for many years. She has worked for after school programs, been a lifeguard, help start and set up a youth drop in program, and was a licensed family child care provider for a time.

"This is a difficult age," said Maier. "Middle and high school age kids are going through so many life changes."

In addition to youth work Maier also served in the U.S. Navy. She has an associate's degree in recreational services from MATC.

Travis grew up in the projects in Chicago.

"I always felt that working with kids was my calling," said Travis. "That and music."

Travis is also known locally as a hip hop artist, something he is sharing with the youth who attend the drop-in program.

"Music saved my life," said Travis. "Being on stage is a powerful feeling."

Maier and Travis want the young people to be challenged and to learn new things.

"They're coming together and getting to know each other," said Maier. "We're working on social skills and ways to de-escalate conflict."

Travis said he believes it's a matter of finding out what the kids are interested in.

"All you got to do with these kids is motivate them," he said.

Besides hip hop classes youth participate in sports and organized games, cooking, Dance Dance Revolution and field trips.



Girls from the Teen Drop-In Program danced at the community gathering July 18.



Dane County Executive Kathleen Falk, left, Stephanie Rearick, Director of the Dane County Timebank and Lynn Green, Director of Dane County Human Services, held a press conference last month at Wisconsin Youth Company (WYC) to share information about the Timebank. The Timebank is an exchange system where people can obtain goods and services by helping each other instead of exchanging money. Triad, a neighborhood crime prevention and safety group for seniors which meets at WYC, sponsored the press conference.

Community Event Brings Neighbors Together

About 50 people—adults and youth residents of the Elver Park neighborhood, other community members and Wisconsin Youth Company (WYC) staff—attended a gathering at WYC's administrative offices on McKenna Blvd. on Saturday, July 18. The purpose of the gathering was for neighbors to get to know each other and begin a discussion about the kinds of public events and spaces they would like to see in their neighborhood.

Mark Lakeland from City Repair, Portland, OR gave a slide presentation about things that have been done in Portland neighborhoods to calm traffic, reduce crime and promote neighbors getting to know each other.

Novissi, a West African drum group, performed and girls from the teen drop-in program did a dance.

AFTER SCHOOL Summer Camp at WYFC

Wisconsin Youth Company's Camp Programs Division is operating a summer day camp program at Wisconsin Youth & Family Center this summer. The program is funded by a grant from the City of Madison Office of Community Services. The program is free to qualifying families. Twenty children from the Elver Park neighborhood attend.

"The staff works on being consistent with the children," said Peter Bittner, camp director.

"We review the rules often and focus on social skills."



Josh, left, and Willie built an elaborate castle from wooden blocks at the WYFC summer day camp.

The group goes swimming every Wednesday at either the Middleton Pool, Vilas Park Beach or Fireman's Beach in Verona. They also take part in arts and crafts and cooking projects.

The children are picked up each week day morning at neighborhood stops at either 7:45 a.m. or 8:45 a.m. and brought to WYFC. The program is held in the gym. Two shuttle runs at 4:10 p.m. or 5:25 p.m. return the children to their neighborhoods.

Two additional staff work with the children: assistant director Rissa Bradetich and camp counselor James Berry.

Way to Go!

Youth from the Middle and High School Summer Drop-In Program parked cars in the Wisconsin Youth Company lot for the Elver Park fireworks on July 4. They made \$335 which the group will use to help pay for a field trip to see the Madison Mallards play.

Leadership Group Learns Golf Skills and More

For the past four summers youth participating in the Wisconsin Youth & Family Center's Summer Youth Leadership and Technology Program have been learning how to play golf.

"I wanted them to learn a sport other than basketball," said Loyd Harris, WYFC Director.

"I wanted them to learn to use other skills."

Participants have instruction every Thursday at Pleasant View Golf Course.



Trey Gilbert, red shirt, is the instructor.

Harris says the youngsters love golfing.

"They get mad at me if it rains and we can't go," laughed Harris.

Harris likes the fact that the kids are not only learning a sports skill but are learning life skills as well.

"Golf takes patience," he said. "They have to learn to slow down and do things correctly."

Trey Gilbert, assistant pro, is the instructor. He's teaching the basics: putting, driving and chip shots as well as how to behave on the course.

"We're trying to teach the kids about etiquette and values," he said. "You know you have to count every stroke. You can't cheat."

He feels that kids have a better attitude towards golfing.

"They just want to have fun," he said. "Adults take it too seriously some times."

The kids enjoy it whether they're learning to make chip shots or getting something else out of the experience.

"Ever since the first time I hit the ball, I like it," said Derek, 13.

Shakira, 14, appreciates the opportunity to relax on the course.

"Golf is a stress reliever," she said. "I just get relaxed. You got a good view and the breeze is blowing."



From left, Jerel, Shakira and Derek wait their turn to practice chip shots.