

New Mural Reflects Strength of Women



The blank gym wall at the Wisconsin Youth & Family Center (WYFC) has become a colorful statement about the strength and power of women and the possibilities of change in the world.

"It's really the voice of a community," said lead artist Sheba McCants, "conveyed through a mural."

McCants designed and painted the mural with a lot of help from the girls who attend the WYFC teen drop-in program.

"We used brainstorming sessions to come up with the ideas for the design," said McCants. "But the idea for the quotes is mine."

Floating throughout the design are quotations from famous women including African American author Bell Hooks and Eleanor Roosevelt.

"I really enjoy good quotes and I like to combine them with visual art," said McCants.

The girls who helped paint the mural came up with the central design which depicts change coming out of a globe representing the world. On one side a large image of the

face of a woman with her long hair streaming across the mural dominates.

"I want people to look at her and ask themselves 'Who is she? What race is she? What does she mean?'" said McCants.

The mural is intended to be an inspiration to girls and women as well as something to get people thinking.

"For the girls who participated in the mural I hope they remember the project and continue to express themselves through art and through other ways of being creative."

The mural is funded by a Case Foundation grant which was obtained by Natalia Thompson and her organization Speak Out Sisters (SOS).

The mural was unveiled at a WYFC family night celebration on September 26. More than 100 people attended.



Top left, Sheba McCants was the lead artist for the WYFC mural. Bottom, image from the mural designed by youth.

Calendar

Nov. 21 -
Thanksgiving dinner

Dec. 12 - Winter
Holiday Party

Ellie Maier to Coordinate WYFC Programs

Former teen drop-in coordinator Ellie Maier has been named program coordinator of the Wisconsin Youth & Family Center (WYFC). She replaces Loyd Harris who left the organization in mid September. He directed the center for three years. Maier will coordinate all center programs including the teen drop-in program, activities offered through program partners such as Scouts and Girls, Inc. and activities sponsored by the center itself such as homework club.

Maier has been involved in youth work for many years. She helped start an after school program and was a family child care provider for a time. She will supervise Assistant Teen Coordinator Tony Travis, AmeriCorps staff Rose Johnson Brown and Denise Peltier, AFTER SCHOOL Site Supervisor and Evening Coordinator.

WYFC Special Youth Classes

- Tuesdays, Bucket Drumming
- Wednesdays, Dance Group, Comedy Sportz
- Tuesdays/Thursdays, Spanish
- Thursdays, cooking

WYFC Staff Heads Up AFTER SCHOOL

Denise Peltier is the new site supervisor for the WYFC AFTER SCHOOL program. She is well known to neighborhood children through her work as WYFC evening coordinator. Peltier, along with specialist Lynda Johnson, supervises about 20 children ages five to 10 on weekdays after school. The children are either picked up by a Wisconsin Youth

Company shuttle or dropped off by school bus. The children have a snack, play games, do arts and crafts and work on social skills. Peltier is a long-time WYC employee. Besides working at the youth and family center she has directed an AFTER SCHOOL summer day camp and coordinated Girl Scout programming at AFTER SCHOOL sites.

Hip Hop Class Is A Way to Inspire Youth

Assistant Teen Coordinator Tony Travis is using Hip Hop music as a way to reach youth and to inspire them. In his class they learn the history of Hip Hop, how to develop stage presence, how to mix and scratch, how to work a sound board and how to create rhymes.

"I got my inspiration from listening to Hip Hop," said Travis, a rapper who performs under the name T.O.N.E. "I'm a true fan and I love the music."

Travis hopes that young people will come to his class and become interested in Hip Hop and that interest will translate into a desire to stay in school and perhaps pursue a musical career.

"I hope that kids can learn values from Hip Hop," said Travis. "It's the truth. It's honesty."

Travis recognizes that much of Hip Hop music has a bad reputation for glorifying violence, putting down women and using bad language.

"We don't listen to anything that's considered 'hard core,'" said Travis. "I keep it all positive and try to capture their interest."

Currently the class has about 20 students. It meets Tuesdays and Thursdays from 6-7 p.m. Travis has arranged for several guest speakers to attend the class including a rapper from Beloit, Bodega, who has a contract with Def Jam Records.

"I want these kids to learn something and to be inspired to do something with their lives," he said.

Travis, who grew up in inner city Chicago, knows what it's like to struggle to get by. His mother and stepfather encouraged him to finish high school and go on to college.

"Some of the kids I see don't have anyone at home telling them they can make their life better," he said. "I'm trying to save a generation."

AmeriCorps Volunteer Knows Needs of Youth

WYFC AmeriCorps volunteer Rose Johnson Brown knows what young people need.

"They need someone they can reach out to and feel a sense of caring," she said. "and they need structure."

Brown provides both as she serves as afternoon staff during WYFC drop-in programming. She supervises Homework Club weekdays after school and works with the girl's club Nefertiti.

The Nefertiti Club is her brainchild begun this fall when she realized that girls coming to the center needed something to "channel their energy." So far they have tackled cooking and nutrition and a sewing project.

"I want to expose them to new things," she said.

Brown, a native of the South Bronx, has worked with youth in many capacities. She has been a family child care provider, an Outward Bound counselor, and worked for Madison School Community Recreation and the Lussier Community Education Center.



Rose Johnson Brown, center, helps some girls with their homework.