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CALENDAR

March 15

"Wonder of Physics," hands-on activities, 2 p.m.

March 26

Middle school dance, 6-8 p.m., free pizza and soda.

March 29 - April 5

Spring Break, open 12-6 p.m.

March 31

Overnight to Black Earth for Aldo Leopold Center service project.

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Youth Roots Combines Gardening, Cooking, Art

Youth Roots is a group of teens who meet every Wednesday from 3-6 p.m. at the Wisconsin Youth & Family Center to learn about growing, cooking and eating organic, local foods and to make art. The group is led by volunteers Serana Beik and Ben Konkel.

One week the group does cooking and the next week they do art activities. Konkel, a chef by trade, leads the cooking activities.

"The kids do all the cutting, chopping, mixing and stirring," said Konkel.

Konkel has an early childhood degree and enjoys working with young people.

"I've always liked kids and I like cooking so I thought 'Why not combine the two?'" he said.

Konkel uses the time to talk to youth about sustainability.

"If we're going to grow enough food for everyone and have a sustainable future we need to educate youth about our food system," he said.

The volunteers purchase local organic foods to cook with. One week they made roasted roots and bean soup with curry. In the fall they planted garlic in the raised beds behind the WYFC building. They also planted a cherry tree. They hope to grow more food this summer.

Beik has been involved with Wisconsin Youth & Family Center before. Her grassroots organization Junebug put on an arts and activism workshop for youth last summer.

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Volunteer Ben Konkel, right, and Charles make chili at a Youth Roots, a club for youth to learn about cooking and art.

Reminders for WYFC Participants

- Hours for middle school students are Monday through Friday, 3-6 p.m.
- Hours for high school students are Monday through Thursday, 6-8 p.m.
- On early release days or no school days, grades 6-12 may attend, 12-6p.m.
- If school is closed due to inclement weather, the teen drop-in program is closed.
- All youth wanting to participate in the teen-drop-in program must complete a registration form.

Hip-Hop Class Performs at Celebrating Youth!

From hair, makeup and clothes to deejaying, dancing and singing, members of the youth center Hip-Hop 360 class handled every aspect of their performance at *Celebrating Youth!*



Josh Cook, top, and Devonna Jackson, performed with Hip-Hop 360 at *Celebrating Youth!* Jan. 31.

"Some of these kids have been with me since I started the class two years ago," said Tony Travis, WYFC assistant coordinator.

Travis, a Hip-Hop performer, worked with about 30 teens, rehearsing daily.

"We have dance troop on Tuesdays and Thursdays, Hip-Hop on Mondays and Wednesdays and on Friday we all practice together," he said.

Travis said he worked with the youth to create a performance

that was family-oriented and kid friendly but "urban."

"We learned about old school Hip-Hop. It's music with meaning," said Travis. "I encouraged the kids to tell people about their struggles."

Taking a broad approach has meant that more youth can be involved.

"Some wanted to dance; some wanted to sing, some were involved in picking out clothes, doing hair and makeup," he said. "It's was all centered around the world of Hip-Hop."

Youth Learn About Fresh, Organic Foods

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"I wanted to create an organization that would combine art, agriculture and activism," she said.

Last August a permaculture class was held at the WYFC building and Beik participated. That led her to starting Youth Roots as an informal garden and art club to expose young people to growing and preparing whole and organic foods and making art.

"I don't think many of the kids have opportunities to get fresh food, prepare it and eat it," she said.

Beik said she and Konkel are most interested in building relationships with the youth who participate and letting them decide the direction of the group. Cooking and art help that to happen.

"We want to help the kids to have a healthy relationship with food because that can change their lives," she said.



Youth Roots prepared and served chili and nachos for all the kids at the center on February 17.

WYFC Group's Song Gets Radio Play

A song created by Tony Travis, assistant coordinator at the Wisconsin Youth & Family Center, and four of the youth in his Hip-Hop class was played on two local radio stations.

The song, "She Likes Me," is sung and rapped by Blair Cook, Josh Cook, Byron Davis, and Shondell James.

"It sounds like it's dedicated to a girl," explained Travis, "but it's really about Hip Hop."

Travis is proud of his protégés.

"These are all kids that could not rap a couple months ago," he said. "It's all about helping kids recognize their potential because they will say 'If I can do this then I can get a job or go to college.'"

Shondell, 13, said he has enjoyed being a part of Travis's class.

"I like rhyiming about stuff that true—about what I believe in," he said.

What's New!

About 40 middle and high school youth are attending the teen drop in program weekdays for homework help, gym time and other activities. WYFC is adding two staff and two volunteers to work with the increased numbers.