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CALENDAR

June 14-18

WYFC drop-in program closed

June 15

Hip-Hop 360/Sidewalk Academy performing at 2 p.m., Whitefish Bay Library in Milwaukee

June 19

Hip-Hop 360/Sidewalk Academy performing at Juneteenth Celebration

June 21

Summer Teen Drop In Begins

July 5

Closed

July 10

Hip-Hop 360/Sidewalk Academy performing at Beloit Riverfest

August 3

National Night Out Against Crime, 5-7 p.m., Elver park

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Empowerment Café Teaches Self Understanding

We spend years in school learning how to read, write and do math but most of us don't get training on how to identify our feelings and figure out why we do what we do.

Dolores Kokinos is out to change that. She is the founder of Empowerment Café and the empowerment principles. She's been working with middle school youth at the Wisconsin Youth & Family Center this spring.

"We don't take the time to let people express their feelings or to ask themselves 'Why am I doing this,'" she said. "Young people don't have a chance to ask themselves if their behavior is a good choice for what they are doing right now."

Kokinos has studied human behavior for more than 20 years and has developed a system based on five foundation blocks of happiness: acceptance, purpose, belonging, respect and security.

Working with actual blocks representing needs she teaches young people to understand that their behavior choices grow out of one of those needs or blocks not being met. That produces behaviors where they are trying to regain that block.

"When the five core blocks are in place and solid a person feels good about themselves—they have positive behaviors," she said.

Kokinos works with a boys group once a week and a girls group once a week.

"It takes practice for people to get this and learn how to bring it into their daily lives," she said.

The goal, said Kokinos, is for youth to have a healthy relationship with themselves which then allows them to have healthy relationships with others.

For more information visit www.theempowermentcafe.com.

Volunteer Teaches Cooking Class

Wisconsin Youth & Family Center high school youth are learning about cooking once a week from Kay Enslin, an administrative office assistant at the McKenna office of Wisconsin Youth Company.

"I work in the office until 6 p.m. on Wednesdays and then I go over to the center and we cook until 8 p.m.," she said.

So far the group, which usually numbers about 15 to 20, has made cookies, pastries and chicken pot pie.

"The rule is that if they want to eat they have to help in some way," said Enslin. "They can help with set-up, clean-up or they can help prepare food."

While the youth enjoy the food, the time is mostly a chance for them to hang out and be social. Enslin is used to being in a "hang out." She has three sons, ages 19, 18 and 13 and they bring their friends home. She also is the youngest of 10 children and

her home growing up was where the neighborhood kids came.

Besides raising her own children, Enslin's experience with youth comes from being a counselor at church camp and working for the Lutheran Church

mentoring youth directors and teaching teambuilding. Her goal for the youth is simple.

"I just want a place where they can come and be safe," she said.



Kay Enslin, Wisconsin Youth Company Office Assistant volunteers at WYFC teaching cooking once a week.

New Center Staff is a Sports Enthusiast

There's lots of sports activities going on at the Wisconsin Youth & Family Center and Ryan Hayes is right in the middle of it. Hayes, the newest WYFC employee, started working at the center in February. He has a strong interest in sports.

"Sports did so much for me when I was growing up," said Hayes. "I'd really like to see these kids have the chance to play."

Hayes was an all around athlete playing basketball, football, baseball and golf in high school until a knee injury sidelined him. He still plays but has to be careful as he's had two knee replacements.

Coaching has now become one of his interests. He coached eighth grade football for two years in his hometown of Monroe, WI and he gives basketball pointers to the center drop-in youth.

"Anything related to sports—that's what I help them with," he said.

Besides the fact that it's good exercise, Hayes believes that playing sports is also a good stress reliever.

"Kids can let off steam in a good high energy basketball game," he said.

Recently with the warm spring weather, Hayes has been taking some of the center youth fishing at Elver Park and they are actually catching some.

"There's tons of fish in that lake," he said.

He plans to offer a fishing class as part of the center's summer activities. He also wants to organize a boy's group to cover things like life skills—how to apply for and interview for a job and other career related topics.

"I'd like the kids to see what opportunities are available to them in terms of career or college," said Hayes. "If they aren't exposed to these opportunities, they won't know what they can achieve."



Ryan Hayes is helping center youth with their basketball skills and coaching them in other sports.

Staff Learn about "Teens and Technology"

"Teens and Technology" was the topic of a workshop attended by Wisconsin Youth & Family Center Coordinator Ellie Maier and AmeriCorps staff Annie Vulpas on May 6.

The workshop was sponsored by the Dane County Youth Resource Network and featured speakers from the Wisconsin Department of Justice and Planned Parenthood.

The focus of the workshop was on ways to help young people use the Internet

and cell phones safely and appropriately and to make good decisions about who they relate to and how much information they reveal about themselves when using the Internet and cell phones.

Having an Internet use contract with each child was suggested. It should include what they can use the computer for, what behaviors would cause a loss of computer use privilege, limits on the length of time youth can use the computer and clear expectations for computer use and consequences of breaking the rules.

Youth workers and parents alike should be aware of the websites and/or blogs that youth have created. They should talk to them about their virtual lives. Make sure the computer is located in a common area where you can monitor what sites youth are accessing. At home or at the youth center certain sites can be blocked to prevent youth from being exposed to sexual or violent content. They also suggested talking to youth about what is appropriate to post online. Remind them that once they post something it can be taken and distributed

or misused by others.

Resources are available to help parents and others make sure children and youth are safe on the Internet. They include: www.ikeepsafe.org which has tutorials for parents and kids on using the Internet and www.getnetwise.org, which discusses kid's safety, spam, security and privacy settings.

Anyone who is concerned that their children or the children they supervise are being approached by online predators can go to www.cybertipline.com and report it.



Assistant Coordinator Tony Travis was honored May 7 by the Dane County Youth Gang Prevention Task Force with a Youth Gang Prevention and Intervention Services Award for his work with young people at the center.

Summer Hours

Monday through Friday,
12 Noon - 6 p.m.
Free lunch is served to
registered participants,
12:30 - 1:30 p.m.