

Appendix G: Examples of Youth Programs at Neighborhood Networks Centers

The Grove Neighborhood Networks Center

Greeley, Colorado

In 2005, The Grove Neighborhood Networks Center launched its Kaleidoscope Youth Program with a modest amount of left-over grant money. The center hired a part-time volunteer coordinator to run the eight-week summer program that would provide enriching activities for center youth. The coordinator quickly—and wisely—enlisted the help of a team of volunteers, and three summers later, The Grove is proof that minimum resources can achieve maximum results. With each passing summer, the Kaleidoscope Youth Program has gotten bigger and better, gaining the support of residents, the community, and the center's board of directors.

Program's Progress

The first summer, the coordinator recruited volunteers to teach all sorts of classes. The residents liked it, and the program was a success. The board funded the program for a second year. Additional funding was secured with a grant from the Colorado Council on the Arts. This grant money enabled the center to launch the Visiting Artists Series, which invited five different folk artists to the center to present their crafts. Visiting artists included a painter, a Native American flutist, a cowboy poet, a Native American drummer, and a Native American dance troop leader. Recognizing the value of the series, the city of Greeley asked the center if they could bring the kids from their summer programs to the Visiting Artists Series.

For the third summer of the program, The Grove's board of directors once again funded the Kaleidoscope Youth Program. Offered Monday through Thursday from 1 p.m. to 4 p.m., the program offered weeklong, theme-based activities. Weekly themes

included Father's Day, games, Under the Big Top, and Mysteries of Ancient Egypt, which included a local ceramic sculptor who came to the center and applied temporary fine art tattoos to about 70 kids. An average of 25 youth attended the program each day.

To support the weekly themes and add a technology component to the program, the center created a new Web site for this year's program. The youth would log onto a new Web page each day to find activities related to the weekly theme. Activities included arts and crafts, puzzles, mazes, and links to relevant computer games, Web sites, and music.

The Secret of Their Success

The center attributes much of the success of the Kaleidoscope Youth Program to the commitment and dedication of its volunteers, and to the coordinator's interaction and communication with the all-volunteer team. Each summer, 20 to 30 volunteers help run the Kaleidoscope Youth Program.

The coordinator also enlists the help of the program's participants. Realizing that the young center users wanted a role in planning and running their program, the coordinator created the KaleidoKrew. In addition to helping sort papers and keep the center clean and presentable, the KaleidoKrew serves as a volunteer youth advisory board and provides guidance on what program participants want and need.

Spartanburg Terrace Resource Center Spartanburg, South Carolina

When discussing youth behavior, the term 'peer pressure' is often used to explain why negative actions have been taken, such as performing poorly in school or engaging in underage drinking or drug use. But for Dominique Jones, there was nothing negative about the peer pressure exerted by his friends.

In fact, it was their persuading that landed Jones on the platform at the New York Stock Exchange.

A Little Help from His Friends

For Jones, the journey to the New York Stock Exchange began when he saw how much fun his two friends were having in the Crescent Hill Apartments (formerly the Spartanburg Terrace Apartments) Tenant's Association Save the Children Program. Encouraged by his friends, Jones joined the program in 1999. From that moment, Jones became actively involved in the program, becoming a team leader, helping younger children with their homework, and serving as a mentor. Jones went on to become president of Save the Children's Youth Council.

An Example for All

After graduating from Spartanburg High School in 2005, Jones enrolled in Benedict College in Columbia, South Carolina, and hopes to launch a career in real estate upon graduation. Even though Jones is away at college, he still visits whenever he can and mentors the other children at the center. He has never forgotten how much the center and the Save the Children Program have affected his life. Save the Children works in disadvantaged, rural communities throughout the United States to provide early childhood development, literacy, physical activity, nutrition programming, as well as emergency relief.

When Save the Children announced their nationwide search for young program participants to ring The Closing BellSM at the New York Stock Exchange commemorating its 75 years of service to children and families in need, Jones' name was at the top of the center's nominee list.

As a nominee, Jones was interviewed and was required to write a biography. In the end, it was Jones' drive and ambition that set him apart from the other nominees, and led him to the New York Stock Exchange.

More Where That Came From

A cluster of three buildings, the Spartanburg Terrace Resource Center at Crescent Hill Apartments is comprised of two portable classroom buildings that were donated by local school districts and a 13-computer technology lab that used to be a maintenance shop for the housing complex. The center staff hope to one day house all of the programs and services in a single facility.

The Save the Children Program that Jones participated in is one of the many programs offered at the Spartanburg Terrace Resource Center. Center staff members have worked hard to ensure that they offer a range of programs in which all residents can participate.

In addition to a summer program, the center offers a literacy program that requires center youth to read books and then take a test in the computer lab to demonstrate their comprehension. The program offers incentives for the children, such as trips to local events.

The center also offers an afterschool program. Every school day from 2:30 p.m. to 6 p.m., the children report to the center. After a snack, they work on their homework, and then they have a literacy block, at which time they are required to read. This is followed by a physical activity block. The center relies on the help of about 18 volunteers to offer this program.

All of the programs offered at the center are operated by the residents association, an Internal Revenue Service 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. Through the residents association, the center has won about \$1.5 million in grants that is being used to offer programs that make a difference in the lives of youth and other residents.

Jane Addams Hull House Association's LeClaire Neighborhood Networks (LNN)

Chicago, Illinois

Chicago is home to some of the finest art museums and prestigious art schools in the world. These institutions are supported by a thriving art community that embraces fresh ideas and welcomes new artists. On September 26, 2007, eight rising digital artists from the Jane Addams Hull House Association's LeClaire Neighborhood Networks (LNN), introduced their work at a premiere held at the LeClaire Hearst Community Center. The event marked the artists' entrance into the lively Chicago art scene, and a grand entrance it was.

Now Playing

About 75 family members, friends, neighbors, Hull House and LNN staff members, center funders, and partners attended the event that featured the first public showing of the artists' digital autobiographies. What made the premiere different from the countless others held throughout Chicago was the fresh perspective of the artists, but that is to be expected when the artists are 10- to 12-year-olds.

The young artists were participants in LNN's digital storytelling program that was made possible with a grant from the Chicago Department of Children and Youth Services. Each Tuesday and Thursday from 3:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. during the summer, the students worked on digital stories that provided a glimpse of their life and times, their vision of the world around them, and their hopes for the future. The premiere was the culmination of the eight-week summer program that taught the youth how to combine photographs, words, sounds, video clips, and music to create a digital story.

Each artist was given 10 invitations to invite family and friends to the premiere. During the premiere, the center showed all of the digital stories on a large screen and hosted a question-and-answer period with the artists. The event concluded with a reception at

which each artist was presented with a congratulatory gift.

The Story Behind the Stories

Like traditional stories, the youth's digital stories began with an outline. Participants were provided the outline that included four components of the youth's lives: personal life, family life, education and career goals, and community.

Each student had to write a little bit about each area. For example, some of the children described their parents and siblings; others talked about their community and what they liked and what they would like to change in it. The outline helped the children plan what they wanted to say and structure their stories.

Once the students created the words for their story, the next step was to complement the words with images and sounds. To help them do this, the center provided each student with a disposable camera. When the students were finished capturing their images, the photos were developed and saved on a CD so they could be easily incorporated into the software used to create the final story.

The center's digital video camera was also used to record footage that the students could use in their stories. To obtain footage, the center staff walked with the children to their school, which is only two blocks away, and took some video footage. They also walked through the neighborhood to record images from their community, and conducted interviews with the students so they could provide their personal touch to their stories.

When the students had created and gathered all of the elements of their stories, the final step was to put them all together. To do this, the center staff taught the youth how to use Windows MovieMaker to create their digital stories. Because MovieMaker is a part of Windows XP, the center already had the software on its computers and did not have to purchase additional software. The center staff also shared tips they learned while attending a digital storytelling session

at the 2006 Neighborhood Networks Regional Technical Assistance Workshop (RTAW) in San Diego.

Bethel Villa Neighborhood Networks Center

Wilmington, Delaware

Art is more than just creating pretty pictures. Art education can have a major impact on a child's academic and social development. In fact, research conducted by Americans for the Arts showed that children who regularly participate in a comprehensive arts program are four times more likely to be elected to class office, four times more likely to take part in a math or science fair, and four times more likely to win an award for writing.

When staff at Bethel Villa Neighborhood Networks Center heard that funding for art programs was cut from their children's school district, they knew they needed to fill the gap. The team launched a project that not only provided center children with a creative outlet, but also contributed to their academic success and enhanced their social skills. And in the process, the center gained a one-of-a-kind masterpiece.

Mural, Mural on the Wall

The project implemented by the team was the creation of a billboard-size mural that covers an entire wall of the center. To create the mural, the center called on the talent of a graduate student from the nearby University of the Arts in Philadelphia. The student taught the children about murals and mural design, and then engaged them in a brainstorming session to develop a theme for the mural. The children chose to create a mural based on the theme, "Musical City." The next step was to create a blueprint of the project and apply that to the wall. The final step was turning the blueprint into a colorful, life-size mural. Once the mural was complete, the center held an opening that was attended by approximately 25 people.

The success of the mural project has encouraged the center to continue providing art education opportunities for its youth. The center also launched an anti-bullying program with its partner, the YMCA. The program, which uses the curriculum developed by the YMCA, addresses issues of violence among children and families and teaches the 25 children who participate in the program how to engage in nonviolent problem solving, as well as communication and leadership skills.

Summercrest Resource and Community Center

National City, California

The Summercrest Resource and Community Center decided to enlist the help of local professional athletes to deliver positive messages to youth and increase awareness of the organization. For that event, the staff invited former members of the San Diego Chargers professional football team to the center to conduct a 90-minute sports clinic and to share their success stories with the youth.

About 250 children participated in the event, which attracted the attention of the mayor of National City, a local radio station, and the local ABC News channel. At the end of the clinic, the players treated everyone to a barbecue at the center.

In addition to special events, the center offers young residents plenty of programs from which to choose. Programs include a childcare program that is offered every weekday from 2:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. For this program, a certified childcare worker and five volunteers plan activities for about 10 five- to seven-year-olds. The center also offers an afterschool program for eight- to 14-year-olds that is held every weekday from 2:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. About 40 children take part in this program that focuses on academic achievement, sports, dance, computer education, and science. This program is run by a primary director, supervisor, and staff members that are provided by the center's partner, Life Connects.

The center also offers two- to three-month workshops that address current risk issues that the teen residents may be facing. Past workshops have included pregnancy prevention and saying no to drugs and gangs.

Castle Square Technology Center

Boston, Massachusetts

When the Castle Square Technology Center was awarded a \$10,000 grant from the Boston Foundation, it used the money to help launch the Peace on the Move summer program. With the grant, the center was able to offer extended operating hours until 10 p.m. every night of the week.

Young participants in the center's digital music and film program were particularly appreciative of the extended operating hours as it provided them with more time to create and produce community public service announcements (PSAs). These PSAs not only provide a creative outlet for community youth, but they also provide valuable information on various topics to community members, as well as the youth who must research the topic and determine the best way to present the information.

The first PSA was a two-minute, anti-smoking PSA that used a rap music video to emphasize the dangers of smoking cigarettes. All of the talent and

production was done by center youth with the help of the center's music and film instructor. A local newspaper, *The South End News*, featured the PSA on their Web site.

There's Nothing Standardized About This Youth Program

In addition to developing young residents' creative abilities, the center provides programs to support academic achievement. As more and more students opt to attain a higher education, it is expected that the number of test takers will increase, as will the competition to get into college. To help college-bound residents earn the scores needed to be competitive among college applicants, the Castle Square Technology Center launched the Youth Education Initiative. A key component of this initiative, which was made possible with a \$25,000 Community Development Block Grant, is to teach college-bound residents how to take and receive higher scores on standardized college entrance exams.

The Youth Education Initiative is part of the Castle Square Technology Center's afterschool program. Each weekday, a program education coordinator, teen counselors, and students from nearby Benjamin Franklin Institute of Technology (BFIT) provide homework assistance and tutoring to the approximately 30 first through 12th graders who participate in the program.

