

Madison Civics Club Youth Grants Initiative 2008/09

The purpose of Madison Civics Club Youth Grants initiative is to invite youth groups involved in valuable community activities to our Saturday luncheon meetings, giving them an opportunity to hear national and international speakers in areas of their interest. Both the students and Civics Club members benefit from inter-generational discussions around the luncheon tables. Youth groups are also included in a reception prior to the luncheon to interact with guest speakers. In addition, we provide an honorarium to middle and high school groups to further their volunteer and civic activities.

In 2008/2009, Youth Grants sponsored 138 youth and staff. The following middle school and high school groups were honored at our luncheon meetings with a \$300.00 honorarium: Madison SOS (Speak Out Sister!), Youth Peer Court (YPC), Boys & Girls Keystone Clubs--South Madison & Allied Dr., and Circle of Voices, Sun Prairie. In addition, we sponsored AmeriCorps members at two meetings and U.W. students from the Middle East Studies program at one meeting.

At our **October 11, 2008** meeting featuring Jonah Edelman, Co-founder of Stand for Children, a groundbreaking child-advocacy group that harnesses citizen commitment to affect electoral and political decisions to benefit children, we honored AmeriCorps. Four AmeriCorps members and staff represented this project.

AmeriCorps: The Schools of Hope Project is a unique collaboration of the United Way of Dane County, RSVP of Dane County and the Madison Metropolitan School District. Its mission is to increase the academic performance of students of color and those from low-income families. Led by a team of AmeriCorps members based in elementary schools, volunteer tutors are matched with children in need of additional help with reading and math. The Project currently serves students in Madison, Sun Prairie and Verona, working closely with school staff to deliver high-quality academic support.

“One of the core principles of the AmeriCorps program is to help these members develop their sense of civic responsibility, including developing a commitment to lifelong service, exploring ways to improve conditions in their communities, and developing skills to participate actively in American democracy. Giving our members an opportunity to be present with the members of the Civics Club who are, themselves, actively engaged in their community and hearing presenters who live their lives demonstrating these attributes was a rare opportunity and one that our members truly benefited from...” ...wrote Karen Dischler, Co-Director, Schools of Hope Project

At our **November 8, 2008** meeting featuring Tammy Baldwin, Second-district Congresswoman, we honored Madison SOS (Speak Out Sister!), Youth Peer Court (YPC) and invited AmeriCorps members back. Forty youth and staff representing these projects attended.

Madison SOS (Speak Out Sister!): Madison SOS is a city-wide initiative to engage high school young women in community leadership and advocacy, founded in 2007 by Natalia Thompson, then a West High sophomore, as her Girl Scout Gold Award Project. Since then, Madison SOS has organized a fall 2007 program called the Young Women's Leadership Forum, a November 2007 community event highlighting Women's leadership called Voices of Courage, a May 2008 community roundtable on issues affecting high school teen girls, and two summer 2008 projects--a teen-created documentary on local issues and a teen-painted mural. Throughout these efforts, Madison SOS has aimed to promote girls' leadership by providing girls with hands-on experience taking action on issues that matter to them and by providing youth with mentorship from local women leaders.

“...attending the Civics Club luncheon with Representative Tammy Baldwin provided a phenomenal opportunity for several young women involved in Madison SOS to interact with and hear from Representative Baldwin, whose insights on women's leadership and the importance of youth civic engagement were both important and inspiring. Meanwhile we've been able to use the honorarium provided by the Youth Grants

towards the creation of our Platform for Action, a forthcoming report to local policy-makers and community stakeholders on six key issues facing Madison high school young women.” ... wrote Natalia Thompson, Founder and Program Director, Madison SOS (Speak Out, Sister!)

Youth Peer Court (YPC): a program of Youth Services of Southern Wisconsin, is an alternative to the traditional municipal court system, offering eligible youth an opportunity to receive a meaningful sanction from a jury of their peers. Students in 8th to 12th grade serve as volunteer jurors, and along with adult community members, sit on an advisory board for each court. These Youth/Peer Court volunteers are very interested in how their lives and the lives of their loved ones will be affected by future laws and regulations. Many of them are interested in pursuing careers in criminal justice or the legal field, and all of them are interested in helping to make their communities a better place. The Youth/Peer Court volunteers in the Allied Driver Community were looking forward to attending the statewide Youth Court Conference in December where they will present a workshop on circle sentencing, a restorative model for Youth Courts.

We received the following thank you from Peer Court: *“Thank you so much for the opportunity for our youth to participate in the reception and luncheon last Saturday. We all had a great time and the kids were very glad that they attended. Your members were so gracious and welcoming, and meeting Tammy Baldwin and Chief Justice Abramson was such a positive experience. We are looking forward to using the honorarium to take the teen volunteers to the conference in December.”* ... wrote Sheri Gatts, Victim Services & Youth/Peer Court Coordinator, Youth Services of Southern Wisconsin.

At our **February 21, 2009** luncheon we invited *62 students from the **U.W. Middle East Studies program** to hear Azadeh Moaveni, Tehran correspondent for *Time Magazine* and author of *Lipstick Jihad: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America and American in Iran*, speaking on "Global Culture and American Youth: What Does It Mean for Our Future?" (*Due to the snow storm, 43 students were able to attend.)

U.W. Middle East undergraduates take an elective course in international studies. Many of them are students pursuing a certificate in Middle East Studies for which this class is required. This semester's course focuses on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but involves understanding it from both regional and global perspectives. The International Learning Center honors students with special interests in international studies. These students are part of a program that encourages language & overseas study, multicultural events and activities, and biweekly dinners with different international themes and cuisines.

At our **March 21, 2009** luncheon featuring Prof. Dresang, U.W. Madison speaking on gangs, we honored 13 youth and staff from the **Boys & Girls Keystone Clubs--South Madison & Allied Dr.**, leadership groups that help provide services to the community.

The Keystone Club at the Boys & Girls Club is a leadership group that helps provide services to the community as well as develop ways to enhance the Club. Keystone is for Boys & Girls Club members aged 14-18 and meets weekly. Our Keystone guests are from the Boys & Girls Club of Dane County—Taft, and the Boys and Girls Club of Dane County--Allied Family Center.

Keystone members participate in community service, help with fundraising for the Club, and work on character and leadership development, unity, free enterprise as well as have opportunities for social recreation.

Some community service activities performed by Keystone Club—Allied Family Center members include: visiting a nursing home, cleaning apartments for families displaced by Hurricane Katrina, and organizing fundraisers including a community car wash.

Some community service activities performed by Keystone Club—Taft include: helping with wheelchair repair for the Martin Luther King Service Day, working with Boston Store on their Community Days Event that helps with fundraising for nonprofit organizations, and organizing an annual Haunted House at the Club for their

members and the community. For 2009 they are working on their National Project "Take a Stand" to help raise awareness and combat poverty, both locally and internationally. They are also researching way to improve the environment and increase community awareness. They hope to work with Adopt-A-Park or be part of the WAVES program with the DNR.

We received the following thank you from Justin Hustad, Teen Program Director Keystone--Taft *"I want to thank you again for having us at your luncheon. Our members learned that their work is appreciated and recognized. The luncheon hopefully will give them the motivation to keep doing positive work."* During the reception they had the opportunity to meet the speaker as well as George Chavez, Madison Police Department. *"Our members and myself had some great discussions with him (George Chavez) during the registration, and would like to work further with him."*

At our **April 18, 2009** meeting featuring Anastasia Goodstein, author of *Totally Wired: What Teens and Tweens are Really Doing Online*, we honored 19 youth and staff from **Circle of Voices, Sun Prairie**.

Circle of Voices is a youth study circle program modeled after the Madison Study Circles program and the original Building Bridges Program. The program has served over 17 schools in the Dane County area for more than 10 years. The program offers opportunity for respectful constructive dialogue for students in grades 4 through 12.

Our student guests included Circle of Voices students from two Sun Prairie Schools: Patrick Marsh Middle School and Sun Prairie High School. Each semester the students are recommended by their school for their leadership potential and their ability to use positive dialogue in identifying affecting their learning environment. This year, the Patrick Marsh Middle School have initiated a Pay It Forward Project involving voluntary student pledges to improve their environment through clean-up projects, anti-bullying behaviors, homework/class work assistance and respectful behavior. A video of verbal student pledges and the fulfillment of the pledges will be part of the project.

The Sun Prairie High School Circle of Voices students will participate in dialogue sessions with the Sun Prairie School Board and administrators concerning the increased fighting and violence at the high school. A multicultural picnic is planned for Circle of Voices students and their families.

"Many of the students expressed their amazement of being able to meet and converse with members of the Civics Club as well as the guest speakers. One of the students said, 'I loved the way people asked us questions and listened to what we had to say'. The recognition for their ability to have respectful, meaningful discussions and plan school projects based on those discussions has encouraged them to continue in the Circle of Voices program."...wrote Donna Mackey, Coordinator, Facilitator, Circle of Voices, PICADA

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Report prepared by Margie Zutter, Youth Grants Chair 2008/09