

Teach Empower Advocate Motivate

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Peer Ambassador Community Newsletter

Happy New Year!!!



Peer Ambassador Update by Amber Fraizer

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The Peer Ambassadors (PAs) are a group of African American teens trying to make a difference in the community. PAs work throughout the community trying to improve life for youth. The PAs host meetings, conferences, and events that are usually open to the public. Plus, we get involved with other youth-led groups to make a difference. The information collected and received from resources is transferred to a higher rank that can actually change things.

Using peer to peer counseling and advocacy, the PAs have a goal of decreasing drug use, preventing youth from going to jail, and eliminating violence. PAs are committed to teaching, empowering, advocating, and motivating their peers.

Though, the PAs are currently in Champaign County and they take action in other places through out the state.

Recently, the Peer Ambassador Program was invited to present at the Federation of Families for Children's Mental Health Annual Conference to do a presentation of the statistics from all the data taken about youth relations with the community.

In addition, the PA's a part of the youth voice for Project ACCESS and are working on Project Reality.

Amber Fraizer is a senior at Central High School

Upcoming Spring Events

- ◆ Monthly Book Club Meetings
- ◆ Youth and Police Basketball Game
- ◆ Youth Summit

Flyers with more information will be posted in the community and schools.

"We, The PAs" by Cherise Denton

We the PAs, standing strong and proud
We teach, advocate, uplift ourselves
and stand out in any crowd

We love our work and we are good at
what we do
We do fundraisers, community service
and have a book club too

Not only do we teach, but also we learn
If one of us is on flames, the whole
group feels the burn

Because we stand together always and
always have each other's backs
We help peers in need, if there is
something that they lack

And not only do we learn, but also we
lead

We put the fire in others that will
lead them to succeed

There is just something about us that
makes us unique
We go through a lot to get what we
seek and once we finally get it
We want everyone to know because
we've got to be hear in order to grow

So, we the PAs
Stand strong for what we believe
We believe in each other and our
peers and there is nothing we can't
achieve

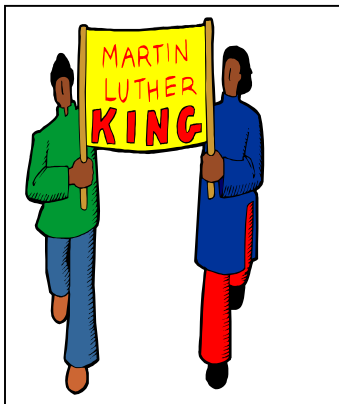
PA's and Project Reality Partner to Target Smoking

Globally, between 80,000 and 100,000 kids start smoking every day. This is a serious problem that needs to be stopped. The PA's have partnered with Project Reality to help educate middle and high school youth about the "reality" of the health risks of smoking.

Project Reality is funded through the Champaign-Urbana Public Health District. It is a youth advocacy and tobacco prevention program. The

project's mission is to teach kids to advocate for what is right. Plus, Project Reality understands that youth have power collectively to make change that is needed.

The PA's will assist Project Reality with planning plays, videos, and other marketing items to demonstrate the effects of smoking. These are great strategies to keep cigarettes out of the hands of youth.



"You are either part of the solution or part of the problem"

- Eldridge Knight Cleaver
Civil Rights
Leader/Activist

The Freedom March for Justice by Andrea McIntyre

"What do we want: FREEDOM and JUSTICE!
When do we want it? NOW!!"

These were the chants that could be heard at the Freedom March that was held in Washington, D.C. on November 16, 2007. Thousands of people gathered to march around the Justice Department to encourage them to become more involved in protecting youth.

The march was triggered by a number of things, but most notably the Jena 6 case and several other cases where African Americans have been disproportionately affected by the justice system. The March was organized by Al Sharpton (with National Action Network), Martin Luther King III and promoted by Black Radio. Tom Joyner, Steve Harvey, and a lot of other celebrities were there.

People from across the country attended the march coming from

California to Michigan to Georgia. According to the press some of the people who attended the march were quoted as saying, "We're not stopping until we get fair justice," and "This has been a successful unity event." I personally think that this shows how united African Americans can be when it comes to justice.

If you attended or know of someone who attended the March in Washington, D.C. or the Jena 6 March, please share your story with us at pa@mhcenter.org.

Andrea McIntyre is a senior at Central High School

Dear Billy Joe Bob - Teen Advice Column

Dear Billy Joe Bob,

I have a problem with a friend. He says racist comments to me, but he only says them when no one is around to hear. When I tell others, they think I am lying, because he acts nice around others. What should I do? Thanks, Innocent Victim

Dear Innocent Victim,

You can do two things. You could either tell an authority figure that could

counsel your friend. Another strategy is to create a situation so he is caught saying racist comments. You could ask someone to hide in the room when you are talking to your friend. The best way to handle this problem is to confront him directly. Ask him to stop and tell him how uncomfortable his comments make you feel. Peace, Billy Joe Bob

Please write Billy Joe Bob for teen advice at pa@mhcenter.org.

Peer Ambassador Revealed

Jasmine Gay was selected by the Peer Ambassadors for this feature PA profile. Jasmine is a member of the PAs' Leadership Team and Education Committee. She was interviewed by Cherise Denton who is junior at Central High School.

Cherise: What skills or qualities do you bring to the Peer Ambassador Program?

Jasmine: I think I bring leadership, dedication, humor, and beauty! 😊

Cherise: What made you join the PA Program?

Jasmine: My mom and my cousin, Korey, told me about it. When I got involved in the program, I wanted to stay.

Cherise: What do you like about being a PA?

Jasmine: I love the people and I like how it feels to come up with an idea, execute it, and looking at the effect after it's over.

Cherise: How do you think the PA program is going so far?

Jasmine: I think we are building each day, but we need to stay focused to reach our goals.

Cherise: What are your plans after high school?

Jasmine: I want to attend Lane College in Jackson, TN and major in Sociology.

Cherise: Besides the PAs, are you involved in other activities?

Jasmine: I play basketball. I'm in the African American club, Interact, and Students for Equity at Urbana High School.

Cherise: If there were 2 things that you could change about your community, what would you change?

Jasmine: Decrease the number of my peers who have to go to JDC and increase the number of my peers who want to go to college.

Cherise: Why?

Jasmine: I would like to change the number of my peers who get "caught up" with the juvenile justice system. Because when the PAs go to JDC to do focus groups, so many of the youth are intelligent, and they shouldn't have ended up there. I think some of them just need guidance.

I would also like to see more of my peers motivated to go to college. Sometimes when I ask some of the African American students at my school where they would like to go to college, they reply "no where" or "I don't have the money to go to college." This is sad, because all they need is guidance to find resources on how to attend college.

Cherise: What are 5 things you can't live without in your life?

Jasmine: My family (grandpa, mom, brother, and sister), money, guidance, education, and God.

Cherise: In conclusion, what else would you like for people to know about you?

Jasmine: Recently, I was selected as a debutante for the 2008 Gamma Upsilon Cotillion.



Jasmine Gay
Senior, Urbana High School



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We must all TEAM
together to
Teach, Empower,
Advocate, and
Motivate!

Watch out for the
next newsletter
in the February 2008

Top 10 Ways To Avoid A Fight or Conflict

1. BECOME A PEER AMBASSADOR
2. Do not hit back
3. Tell an adult
4. Be the bigger person yourself
5. Talk it out with the person
6. Mind your own business
7. Peer mediation
8. Do not talk stuff
9. Stay away from bad influences
10. Do productive activities instead

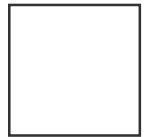
There are many ways to avoid conflicts that lead to fights. The PAs feel there is a need to inform our peers of ways to stay out of trouble and violence at schools and in the community. This list may not be an ideal "Top 10" and the suggestions are not the most fun options, but they can work.

PAs and MHC Welcome New Staff Member

Kevin Causely is joining the Community Connections Department at the Mental Health Center (MHC). He will coordinate transition services for youth ages 16-18 who are returning to the Champaign County community from juvenile corrections.

Kevin will be assisting the Peer Ambassadors with outreach and programs targeting youth who are involved with juvenile justice. He is a native of Urbana and former professional basketball player. Welcome home Kevin!

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