

Teach Empower Advocate Motivate

Spring 2008
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Upcoming Spring Events

- ◆ Youth Summit
Saturday, April 19
10:00am - 2 pm
202 W. Park St.
- ◆ Free Screening of
Canvas Film during
Ebertfest
Sunday, April
27th at 4:30pm
at Virginia
Theatre
- ◆ Operation Snowball
(Meets every Tuesday
from 7-9 pm)

Peer Ambassador Community Newsletter

"Say It Your Way: Youth Summit 2008"

By Andrea McIntyre and the PAs

The Peer Ambassadors will be hosting their 2nd annual youth summit on Saturday, April 19, 2008 from 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. The theme is "Say It Your Way: Youth Summit 2008" and the focus is speaking up to improve our schools, bodies, and communities. The purpose is to bring a diverse group of youth together from all over Champaign County and to let their voices be heard. Also, we want them to be familiar with and learn about various youth organizations, groups, and programs around this county.

The Youth Summit is designed to be a space for teens to feel safe about expressing their opinions concerning their bodies, schools, and community issues.

Throughout the day, the PAs will provide food, play games, and give away prizes. Registration forms will be posted at area schools, clubs, and agencies. The most important thing about this event is that youth will have their voices heard, know how to take action, and make a change in their community.

Lessons from Sonia Sanchez by Andrea McIntyre

On April 3, 2008, Sonia Sanchez, a famous poet and professor from New York City, was at the U of I to speak and read her poetry. I personally think she is an outstanding person. I would love to hear her speak and read more of her poetry. She speaks with wisdom and knowledge about life and young people. Some topics she spoke about were American justice, African American history, slavery, and AIDS in Africa. She also talked about how many of our soldiers are being deployed and killed in Iraq and she believes "mothers" need to

This year's event will feature a:

- **Resource Fair/Scavenger Hunt: 10-11am**
Project ACCESS will host an interactive resource fair/scavenger hunt for teens to learn about services, programs, and activities available in our community. Teens can also compete for prizes and listen to the live broadcast from Hot 105.5!
- **Youth Speak Out: 11am-12noon**
Teen groups are invited to make a brief creative and fun presentation about its programs and services. Prizes will be awarded for the most creative presentation.
- **Break-Out Sessions: 12:30-1:30pm**
Teens will break into small groups to begin developing action plans to improve their schools, their bodies, and their communities.
- **Wrap-up: 1:30-2pm**
The Summit will wrap-up with teens reporting back to the group on the changes they see necessary and the plans they have to facilitate change in the future.

do more to keep their children safe from war and violence. In fact, she was arrested last year for protesting the war. She feels that mothers should go to jail to keep their kids from going to war.

I personally hope she comes back again, because knows how to connect with the audience. Professor Sanchez asked two questions that really stuck out to me. "What does it mean to be human?" "What kind of human do you want to be?" These are questions we should all answer.

Project A.C.C.E.S.S.: Working To Serve the Community By Cherise Denton

The Peer Ambassadors are a part of the youth voice for Project ACCESS, and we decided to interview the administrator of Project ACCESS, Mr. Stuart Broz. Cherise Denton and Andrea McIntyre conducted the interview, and learned a lot about Project ACCESS and what it's doing to help our community. A summary of what we learned is listed below.

Here's what we learned:

Project ACCESS is a collection of agencies, organizations, parents, community groups, and youth who are trying to change the way that mental health and social services for children are delivered. They are especially interested in reducing the disproportionality of services provided for African American children in Champaign County.

Project ACCESS came together formally in 2005, but some people in the group have been meeting since 2003. Right now, the specific focus is how to reduce the numbers of youth who are detained or incarcerated. They especially want to make sure that youth get services before they get in trouble. In addition, help parents, mental health people, social service people, and the juvenile justice system people see that sometimes when kids get in trouble they really need help and don't always need to be "locked up." For example, Stuart told us that some studies have found that almost 70% of youth who are involved in the juvenile justice system have some sort of 'diagnosable' mental health issue. (This was surprising.)

So, Project ACCESS has been working hard to make sure enough services are available for

youth who need them and to ensure that youth and families who are using the services have a say in how they are run.

One of their biggest accomplishments so far is the "pilot program" that Ms. Jonte Rollins is over. In this program, people from Project ACCCES meet every week and coordinate services for youth who are in and leaving the Juvenile Detention Center (JDC). So far this seems to be working well. Stuart said, "It has been great and it has made a great difference having everyone at the table."

Stuart also said during the interview that the Peer Ambassadors played an important role with Project ACCESS. The PAs were helpful with an application for a big federal grant (called a SAMSHA grant), because the information we get from our focus groups and surveys at JDC is used in helping change the system. In the future, they are hoping to put together a Youth Advisory Council modeled after the Peer Ambassadors.

Presently, Project ACCESS meets at the Champaign-Urbana Public Health Building from 4:00-5:30 on the 3rd Wednesday of the month. Everyone is invited to the meetings as long as they believe in the goals of Project ACCESS.

Project ACCESS is a strong positive group of people and providers, and they are making a difference in our community. Right now, their sights are set on getting the SAMSHA grant and with this group of people working so hard....anything is possible.

Check out Project ACCESS at www.cuap.org!



"If you're walking down the right path and you're willing to keep walking, eventually you'll make progress."

Barack Obama

Dear Billy Joe Bob - Teen Advice Column by Melorene Grantham

Dear Billy Joe Bob,

There is a guy who I go to school with who really likes me, but I don't like him. I have told him this and that I have a boyfriend. He follows me around all the time, and I always tell him to stop. One day he trapped me in a classroom and told me that if I didn't go out with him, he would hurt me. He tried to grab me, but I got away. I don't know what to do or who to tell. I don't even want to go to school anymore. I'm afraid if I do tell he'll find out. What should I do?

Dear Friend,

First you need to know that this is a very serious matter and you have to tell someone. You can call an anonymous hotline, tell your parents, or talk to someone you trust at school. But you need to tell someone you trust at school. If you don't the situation could get worse. You need to get support and you need to be safe. One hotline that might be really helpful is the Rape Crisis Services hotline @ 355.5203.

Peace, Billy Joe Bob

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

Peer Ambassador Revealed

Jamel Freeman was selected by the Peer Ambassadors for this feature PA profile. Jamel is a junior at Central High School and a member of the PA Leadership Team and Education Committee. He has been a PA since January 2007. He 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?*

Jamel: ***I think I bring a strong sense of leadership. I also bring calmness that helps me mediate certain situations.***

Cherise: *What made you join the PA Program?*

Jamel: ***I joined the PAs because I really wanted to make a difference in my community and the program provides me with an excellent opportunity to do this.***

Cherise: *As a senior PA, what qualities do you think the group has? What do you think you need to improve on?*

Jamel: ***The best quality of the PAs is that it is a group of youth trying to do something positive. I think we need to work on improving our work ethic so that we can complete what we start.***

Cherise: *Name 3 goals you want to accomplish over the next 10 years?*

Jamel: ***I want to go to college, find a very successful job, and make a significant difference in the world.***

Cherise: *What are some of the activities that you participate in at school?*

Jamel: ***Jazz band, Spanish club, chess club, math club, and the afterschool program.***

Cherise: *What kinds of things do the PAs do for the community? What else do you think they could be working on?*

Jamel: ***We are the youth voice for Project ACCESS and we try to keep kids out of JDC and to promote health in our community. The PAs could work on doing more volunteer work and could work on becoming more involved in helping out wherever they can.***

Cherise: *How has the program benefited you?*

Jamel: ***The program demands me to be more responsible. It also pulls out hidden talents that I have and forces me to use them.***

Cherise: *Why do you think you were chosen as the PA of the month?*

Jamel: ***I think I was chosen as the PA of the month, because I display a strong work ethic and I also think that the PAs are hoping this interview will help me come out of my shell more.***

Cherise: *Since joining the PAs, what has been your favorite memory?*

Jamel: ***I think that moment has yet to come.***

Top 10 Reasons to Attend the Youth Summit



Peer Ambassadors @ CUPHD
201 Kenyon Road
Champaign, IL 61821

Phone:
(217) 531-4321

Karen C. Simms

MHC Community Connections
Supervisor
(217) 531-4322

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pa@mhcenter.org

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

10. Because the Pas worked so hard on this
9. You will be outside (some of the time) with 105.5
8. You will learn about great resources
7. You can be a part of change in the community
6. Free FOOD!
5. Be around people and friends
4. Great PRIZES!
3. A chance to meet the PAs and PA adult staff
2. You will be away from your family for the day
1. It will be a great place to “check out” guys and girls

Project Reality: Teen Smoking Facts! by Deanna King

Did you know?

- Teen smoking has increased over the past years
- 773,000 children are exposed to second hand smoke
- 21.7% of high school students smoke
- By smoking just 1 cigarette, teens are opening your life up to many cancerous disease

Upcoming Project Reality Events

- Elementary School Poster Contest
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More information about smoking and Project Reality will be in the summer newsletter. Also, contact Kari Schweighart with CUPHD at 531-2915 to get involved in Project Reality.

Peer Ambassador Program
201 Kenyon Road
Champaign, IL 61820

**Watch out for the
next newsletter
in Summer 2008**

**RECIPIENT NAME
STREET ADDRESS
ADDRESS 2
CITY, ST ZIP CODE**