

2019 Middle Earth Children's Hope Initiative Report

Lunch-Time Mentoring:

Served:

46 youth total for the academic year

Issues:

Youth are younger with much more serious mental health needs and system involvement. Because of this, we were not comfortable with having youth alone during the summer. We referred out to other services including our after-school program but not all were eligible. Consequently we developed a Lunch-Time Mentoring summer program that will help to maintain contact with the youth and bridge the gap of services over the summer until they return to school. The program includes groups at Spring Reigns for Life and swim lessons. In addition they will receive one-to-one time with a mentor to do fun activities. We are hoping that we can implement this portion of the program each year as we move forward.

Impact Story

SB is an 11 year old boy from Bound Brook who was referred to Lunch Time Mentoring in need of a positive role model. SB's mom had been hospitalized since the beginning of the school year for kidney failure forcing SB to live with his step father. SB's step father was verbally abusive to both SB and his 3 year old sister. There are accounts of drugs, inappropriate touching, and physical abuse that were reported to DCPP against SB and his sister. SB tried as hard as he could to protect his sister and even wrote a 10 page letter to the judge stating everything his stepfather has done. The court removed them from the house and they moved in with their godparents. During this time, SB's mother would often call SB to talk and check up. She would tell SB she was dying and he would never see her again. During one of their calls on Mothers Day- she told SB that he didn't love her and she wished he was never born. SB was devastated from this phone call. SB became very depressed and started having suicidal ideations and was sent to an inpatient program where he remained for one month.

We did not have a male mentor available at the time but recognized the seriousness of the case. We conferred with the guidance counselor and it was decided that we would assign him a female mentor in hopes that this could address some of his issues with regard to his mother. SB met with Amanda and an instant bond was formed. SB opened up to Amanda easily and told her that he needed more help than he realized. Amanda and SB worked on some methods to help him get through his periods of depression and anxiety. Drawing became SB's saving grace and helped him express how he was feeling. While checking in with the school they stated that since starting with Amanda and meeting once a week, SB's grades became better and he was able to explain his feelings to teachers and his counselor. Amanda had to end mentoring in June due to a job change and SB was very upset but was promised a spot in our new Lunch-Time Summer Program where he would be able to see a new mentor and go on some exciting trips. SB came to summer

program in July. SB said that he was still using some techniques that Amanda had taught him during the school year. We were able to see his growth when a situation happened at camp that would have normally sent him over the edge. SB used breathing techniques that Amanda had taught him and drew a picture to show how he was feeling. SB also met with a new summer mentor named Noah who SB became very close with. Noah and SB were able to have one on one time where SB was able to talk about what was happening at home and talked about his feelings about his worth and self esteem. SB and Noah worked on various ways to keep SBs spirits up. SB was also able to participate in swimming lessons and equine therapy. SB loved the horses and said that the horses helped "calm his soul." As summer ended, Noah promised to write SB letters and SB was excited. They are now pen pals. SB will most likely be receiving another mentor this year but Noah will continue to write to him and help him as needed as well. SB knows he has a support system at Middle Earth that goes beyond Lunch-Time Mentoring and is now currently enrolled in our after-school program so that he can get even more support.

Visions Plus:

Served:

11 youth

Issues:

Many of our Visions Plus youth express a desire to get involved in more creative fields. A computer that has programs that the students can use to help them with their creativity (i.e. photoshop, film editing app) would be helpful. We used a consultant to teach cooking to some of our youth in another program. Visions Plus youth could greatly benefit from this life skill. Funding for choosing healthy food options and cooking classes would help them to master this needed life skill. Driving lessons as most students do not have a driver's license because no one has taught them to drive.

Impact Story:

AH: This student started working with us while she was living at a local youth shelter. She was involved with DCPP as well, and was in need of assistance in transitioning out of state care. Today, she is living comfortably with a friend, is a full-time student at RVCC where she is now the president of the student resource committee, helping other students who are housing or food insecure. She recently acquired a full-time summer job as well, and has been participating in a film-related internship with the Visions Plus program.

Promise Plus

Served:

13 youth

Issues:

We are receiving many more referrals than we can serve. Additional funding to hire another staff person would help us to serve more youth.

Impact Story:

IB is an African American male from Raritan. He comes from a low income home with no father figure in the house. He originally wanted to attend a 4-year college after graduating High School but because of his home situation he had to work and help take care of his younger brother. He joined the PROMISE PLUS program to get help with enrolling in college and employment skills. Staff helped IB register for health insurance, enroll at RVCC and improve his employment skills. IB is studying Criminal Justice and wants to become a school resource officer. IB has excelled during his time at program showing that he is responsible and reliable. As a result, we offered him a position in our our Middle Earth Journey's program as a Youth Worker. We feel that his hard work and dedication to bettering himself will have a positive impact on other youth.

Fun Recreation Trips

Served:

90 youth for trips to Great Adventure, Dorney Park and Tree-Scape. We also will have another 40 youth served for our upcoming trip to Schaffer Farm at the end of October.

Issues:

Our only issue is that we would love to take even more youth on these trips!

Impact Story:

Youth benefit so greatly from their ability to go on these fun and recreational trips. One youth from Franklin was especially thankful because he missed his eighth grade class trip due to his family's inability to pay for the trip. He told staff that going to Great Adventure helped to make up for this loss and he was so grateful to be able to go on a fun trip and not worry about paying.