

Weed & Seed Report May 2008

The Weed and Seed Coordinator continues to facilitate the monthly Allied Stakeholders and South Neighborhood Resource team meetings. In addition to the monthly Stakeholders meetings, the Coordinator regularly attends Joining Forces for Families team and neighborhood association meetings in each of the neighborhoods, the monthly Allied Partners meetings, and several regular City staff meetings regarding Allied.

Leadership Training

According to the Burr Oaks Neighborhood Association bylaws, the election of officers - they serve one year terms - occurs at the June meeting. Two of the GLC training series participants have been nominated for leadership positions in the association. The coordinator also continues to support resident leaders that formed the Penn Park Partners – a joint initiative of BANA (Bram's Addition Neighborhood Association) and the neighborhood police officer. They have assembled a group of neighbors, providers, community groups and elected officials to bring more positive activities to Penn Park. The group has had its first facilitated visioning session that included ideas/activities for their short-, medium- and long-term goals for the Park.

Truancy Initiative

The truancy specialist from MY CRIB continues to work with about 11 youth – the majority of whom attend Toki. He has been working collaboratively with YWCA Girls, Inc. staff to address issues specific to girls that are having attendance issues. Both MY CRIB and Girls, Inc. staff have been dealing with and talking with students about increasing gang activity at Toki and in the South/Southwest neighborhoods. He has also been meeting weekly with some 6th grade students that are at risk for becoming truant.

Youth Court

Three cases were heard at the April court session. Eleven cases remain open – staff from Youth Services of Southern WI work with offenders to complete their sentences. Some of the sentences could include: writing essays about how the offender may have handled the situation differently, writing articles for the neighborhood or agency newsletter, community service hours, and jury duty. Judge Dan Koval continues to have municipal court in Allied for area youth and immediately refers appropriate cases to the Allied Community Youth Court. Three youth jurors, a neighborhood resident/Steering Committee member, Youth Services Staff and Judge Koval conducted a workshop about the circle sentencing process they use in the Youth Court at the statewide Restorative Justice Conference. In addition to the workshop, the staff and youth were able to enjoy an afternoon at the water park at the hotel. We continue to discuss how we might expand the Youth Court to serve youth in South West Madison.

VITA site

The VITA site had been much slower this year – likely due to the decrease in population in Allied, some technical difficulties at the sites, and the horrible weather. Staff estimate that they filed more than 150 returns, with many late nights during the last week of operation. They were pleased with a connection to the Hmong community – one woman that completed her tax return at the site in Darbo, ended up bringing about 12-15 more filers during the last few weeks. They hope to build on those relationships with the Hmong community next year.

South Side Initiatives

Penn Park Partners, which includes neighborhood residents, the neighborhood officer, the Boys & Girls Club, MSCR and others, continues to meet monthly. Penn Park Partners have been able to secure bathroom stall doors for the park shelter in time for the summer MSCR program for young children that will be held there. The coordinator is working with the staff from *Mentoring Positives* – a mentorship program that involves basketball – to secure funding for a summer program in the Park. They have applied to the *Hands Across South Madison* grant program – they will be notified on the 12th of May; they will also be applying for Emerging Funds through the Office of the Mayor.

The **Community Coordinated Response to Prostitution** (fka the prostitution workgroup) operates with two subcommittees – one to work on the deferred prosecution project -JOHN (**J**oining and **O**rganizing **H**ealthy **N**eighborhoods) school - and one to further develop services for women that are prostituting or at risk for prostituting (Badger Wellness Workshops). The JOHN school group has planned the first “school” for the 21st of May – they are anticipating 10-12 participants. The Badger Wellness Workshop subcommittee has planned an expansion of services using Emerging Neighborhood funds to extend the hours for the Saturday evening group, which will allow the staff more opportunity to do outreach in the neighborhood and more appropriately target the audience they’re hoping to serve. The expanded hours started at the end of last month. The Badger Road JFF office will be moving to the same building as the neighborhood probation and parole office. It does not have great space for the Badger Wellness Workshop activities, so Project Respect staff have been identifying other potential neighborhood space, though none has been secured.

South Madison Generations, an intergenerational Weed & Seed sponsored project, has held three events to date – a Valentine cookie decorating project, an Easter Egg Hunt and an arts and crafts day at Quaker Housing. With assistance from some UW service learning students, youth from the Boys & Girls Club and elders from Quaker Housing made earrings, necklaces and bracelets with beads and string. The neighborhood officer’s sister lead the group in a craft activity – they made fish out of 2 liter soda bottles, plastic eyes, glitter glue and fancy beads and buttons. The event ended with a group singing activity lead by a neighborhood elder. The next event – spring planting – will be held at the end of May.