



OUTREACH NEWSLETTER

FALL 2015

BRENEN'S STORY

Graduate of Outreach's College Prep Program Becomes First in His Family to Attend College

During my freshman year of high school, life suddenly changed. My dad lost his job and, before long, we had no option except to move out of our nice home into a smaller house, and then eventually into an even smaller apartment. I had a lot of anger, sadness and depression during this time. Life as I had known it was never going to be the same. By sophomore year, life at home had grown more difficult. Circumstances meant I now had to step up and get a job, even though it meant I would have to quit track. I felt so overwhelmed.

It was during my junior year that I made a pivotal decision: I would not let my present circumstances keep me down. Instead, I chose to lean into my faith, with the encouragement of staff at Outreach Community Center in Carol Stream (OCC). The Bible tells us that "God doesn't give us challenges that we can't handle." This verse helped me to mentally get through this tough time and become the man that my mom wanted me to be and, better yet, the man I wanted to be. My mom was so proud of me for how I handled myself, and how hard I worked to keep the home stable. This was one of the most challenging things in my life, and I can proudly say that I overcame it. Without God, I would not be here today. This is why I work hard and am very dedicated.

Even though I struggled with challenges at home there were also things that I struggled with at school. I have a learning disability and cannot understand certain things as fast as other students. At first, this made me upset because I felt like I was not smart. It made me believe that I may never be able to attend college. But with the help of Outreach, I came to understand that my learning disability was not going to stop me from pursuing my dreams. Instead, it motivated me to do well in school and focus on my strengths, including math and problem solving.

OCC's Student Achievement Leadership Team (SALT) helped me succeed in school and as a person. This after-school program for high school students taught me leadership skills and prepared me for college. Every year, SALT takes students on a college tour. I was chosen to be a leader on the college tour committee, helping pick out the colleges we would tour, encouraging students to go and helping choose community fundraisers for the tour. As the leader, I had to make sure everyone had a voice.

Being a leader helped me realize that I can have a positive effect on people's lives.

There were people who went on the tour because I encouraged them to go. The younger students wanted to be on the committee or in my hotel room on the tour. I would tell them things like, "You need to get your grades right and act right." They started looking up to me and calling me "Uncle Brenen." They would tell the teachers, "Don't tell Uncle Brenen because he'll be disappointed in me."

This year I was able to pass the leadership of the committee down to a junior who really looked up to me last year. I have been trying to help him take over the committee so that it continues to grow stronger when I am gone.

Right now, I have three goals in my life: to graduate from college, to get a business degree and to have a stable job when I finish college. College is not only a major milestone for me, but especially for my family. When I walk onto the Indiana State University campus this fall, I will be the first in my family to attend college.

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THE PATH TO SUCCESS

The pilot phase of the Employment Opportunity Center (EOC) is well underway with its second cohort of participants. This new venture has proved to be a learning process for both the young adults and Outreach.

According to Ruben Munoz, Job Coach/Teacher at the Employment Opportunity Center, helping vulnerable young adults find employment is often a multi-step process. As of September 1, 2015, 13 participants have entered the program: five were homeless and two had no high school diploma. "As a staff we help the participants any way we can to make sure they succeed," he says. "We try to find housing for them, child care if needed and set them up to take GED courses if they have not completed high school."

The program also helps participants find transportation, a crucial element of holding down a full-time job. "So far, two women have received donated cars—one from Jubilee Cars and one from Naperville Cares," says Ruben. "Both young women have since found permanent employment." One additional participant is currently looking for a full-time position in an office setting and is on the list to receive a car as well.

EOC staff are currently recruiting for their next cohort of students. "We are talking to high schools, apartment complex managers and other social service organizations that might be able to refer young adults that need this program," he says. As soon as they have enough students for the next cohort, they will begin their job class.

In the meantime, three new participants are learning new skills by working at Jubilee Furniture in various roles in the warehouse or in sales. And participant, Mari, has moved onto an internship with one of Outreach's corporate partners. "We helped her get childcare for her two girls and are in the process of finding her an apartment," says Ruben. "Mari has expressed her gratitude for Outreach and this program many times."



EMBEDDED IN WEST CHICAGO

This fall, students at West Chicago Community High School won't have to travel very far to their counseling appointments at Wheaton Youth Outreach; their counselor will be right down the hall.

Thanks to an expanded partnership, Wheaton Youth Outreach (WYO) counselors now have office space at West Chicago Community High School.

According to Kimmerly Buchholz, WYO Youth & Family Therapist, this is the definition of a win-win. "We are serving students the school may not be able to reach, we are embedded in the school, and we have access to our clients' school performance and behavior," she says. "This partnership is especially successful in the West Chicago community because many of our clients would be unable to make it to our offices in Wheaton due to transportation or a lack of parental involvement, usually because they are working many jobs."

How it works: WCCHS guidance counselors and school social workers initiate the process by referring students to WYO. Most students are considered at-risk of future difficulties, meaning they may be from homes of modest income, have incarcerated parents or domestic violence in the home, be truant, be experiencing depression and/or anxiety, or be on the brink of

the juvenile justice or child welfare system. Once they've received a referral, students then meet with WYO counselors in offices at the school.

"This definitely reduces the number of missed sessions due to a client forgetting or a lack of transportation," says Kimmerly. "We have parental permission to talk to the school, so we are often notified if our clients are suspended or failing classes. We are sometimes included in meetings, and if our clients are hospitalized, we're a part of the team to create a safety plan for their return to school. It has been very helpful to have relationships with the WCCHS staff because it makes it easier to advocate for our clients," she adds.

Kimmerly says students have reacted positively. "Because there are so many counselors in the building, the stigma of 'seeing a counselor' seems to go away. I've had many students wave to me in the hallway and say to their friends, 'Oh, that's my counselor,'" she says. "It also seems to be validating to our clients that they have a whole team working on their behalf: sometimes their

social worker, guidance counselor, school nurse and their WYO therapist. They have a built-in support system that helps them stay accountable, especially when they're struggling academically."

That support system can benefit the student's entire family. Sometimes counselors see students individually at school, and then have family sessions at WYO. As a result, clients are usually more invested because they have had more time to build a relationship with therapists before coming into a family session.

Kimmerly is excited to expand WYO's presence this year; three staff members and four interns will have access to the school. "What started as a referral source, like many neighboring high schools, now provides counselors with WCCHS staff ID badges, private conference rooms, access to our clients' class schedules and a system to send passes to our students' classes to remind them when and where to meet," she says. "This partnership has absolutely grown, and is a fantastic set-up."

OVERHEARD: INSIGHTS FROM THE CEO

"Did you know there are as many youth and families living in poverty in the collar counties as there are in the city of Chicago? There's a great need in DuPage County. Our mission is to partner with the church and the community to be restorers of hope and providers of opportunity to those who are vulnerable."

"You are crucial members of our team. Without you, we do not take the playing field. You, the team of Christ followers who are assigned to DuPage County, have a vital role in our ministry."

- Shared by Chris Ellerman, CEO, at the Golf, Food & Wine Experience on June 11, 2015, raising support for Transitional Housing and the College and Career Opportunity Programs



Chris Ellerman
CEO



SUMMER WRAP-UP

Summer was full of fun and education across the Outreach sites! Summer youth programs, which ran from June 15 through August 14, focused on helping students retain academic skills in reading and math and providing a variety of fun summer activities such as swimming and field trips. The program also plays a crucial role in the lives of families, as it provides child care in a safe, positive environment that allows parents to continue to work while kids are on summer break.

Outreach Community Center in Carol Stream

Elementary

This year's summer theme was "Speak Life," based on Deuteronomy 30:15. "Students practiced putting others first, trusting God and having a good attitude," says Mary Lundeen, Jubilee Neighborhood School Program Coordinator. Students also took specialized classes in cooking, building, drama, sewing, photography and healthy eating. Special thanks to the HYACK high school students from College Church in Wheaton, who led the OCC elementary students in fun games, crafts, skits and academics for a week in July.

Junior High

Chantel Gamboa, OCC Junior High Program Coordinator, intentionally included more STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) curriculum as part of the Learn 2 Earn summer program. The class built windmills and used recycled materials to construct art projects based on a book they were reading, "The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind." Chantel says, "By working on the windmill project, we took an interdisciplinary approach and connected language arts with the science class."

Thanks to the Girl Scouts of Greater Chicago and Northwest Indiana, girls from the class continued learning STEM, as well as job readiness, life skills and self-esteem, when they met as a troop one day a week for four weeks. Each week, Girl Scout leaders provided an activity such as team-building exercises, journaling, crafts and making tie-dye t-shirts. They also led a

catapult competition in which each team designed catapults, created with recycled materials, and tested it to see which team could shoot the farthest.

All middle schoolers from the Learn 2 Earn program also kept busy by hosting a pancake breakfast for approximately 40 older adult residents at Colony Park apartments in Carol Stream.

High School

Students engaged in two hours of academic class and two hours of job class each Monday. The rest of the week, they worked at different worksites. Jeremy McDowell, Youth Employment and Education Instructor, helped rising seniors work on their writing skills by completing personal statements that can be used for their college applications and scholarship applications. Students completed timelines from their lives and shared them with the class, which helped them think of stories for their personal statements.

The group invited guest speakers to the program, as well. Heather Hernandez, Outreach Human Resources Director, presented on "Confidence in the Workplace," and Connie Tintera, High School Education and Employment Instructor, gave a presentation titled "Getting to Know Your College Professor."

Outreach Community Center at Villagebrook

Thanks to a partnership with Wheaton Christian Reformed Church, Villagebrook kids and volunteers met weekly for a new summer evening event called Fun in the Park. Weekly activities included kickball, ultimate frisbee, filming short videos, a photo scavenger hunt, improv games and building model rockets. (See story on page 5.)

Villagebrook also held classroom and hands-on activities each weekday. The HYACK youth group from College Church in Wheaton volunteered at Villagebrook for one week, where they offered academic support, Bible lessons, games and



Wheaton CRC Partners with Villagebrook

When Pastor Kyle Haack of Wheaton Christian Reformed Church (WCRC) was asked to consider hosting a weekly program for Villagebrook kids during the summer, he didn't hesitate to say yes. "Three years ago, a small group of us from WCRC started tutoring Villagebrook students in 2nd through 4th grade, focusing mostly on literacy," he says. "I love the weekly connection with students and the relationship that develops over time. Extending that to the summer just made sense."

The weekly program, called Fun in the Park, met every Tuesday evening during the summer months. "This program was focused on fun and building relationships between the Villagebrook kids and adults in our congregation," says Pastor Kyle. "A few of us organize the program and a bunch of volunteers rotate in for a week or more." Activities included kickball, ultimate frisbee, filming short videos, a photo scavenger hunt, improv games and building model rockets.

Lathie Norton, OCC's Villagebrook Program Coordinator, is thrilled about WCRC's ongoing involvement with Villagebrook. "The WCRC volunteers have been a coordinator's dream—organized, detail-oriented, great at building relationships and respecting boundaries—but also a dream for the kids because of the awesome activities they've had a chance to participate in."

Pastor Kyle has been intentional about volunteering since starting as WCRC's pastor four years ago. "I volunteer because it is a direct way to make a difference in the lives of people who are under-resourced. The scope of need, even in DuPage County, can be overwhelming, but we can't use that as an excuse to do nothing. Tutoring and connecting with a child for an hour and a half once a week is a small way to try to work towards furthering God's kingdom."

According to Pastor Kyle, Outreach provides the perfect opportunity for his congregation. "Our church is involved at Villagebrook because the residents are our neighbors. We can put our arms around one apartment complex and try to help it rather than become overwhelmed by all that needs to be done."

activities. "They also did a service project in which they deep cleaned the classroom and kitchen!" says Lathie Norton, OCC Villagebrook Program Coordinator.

Puente del Pueblo

At Puente del Pueblo, the theme was "World Tour 2015," based on Psalm 24:1, "The earth is the Lord's and everything in it." Students in the summer program, which met at Wheaton Bible Church, "toured" eight regions of the world via curriculum and hands-on experiences. Classroom activities included language arts/reading, math, life skills and Christian education. Special thanks to District 33 for issuing Chromebooks and access to online educational resources to Puente for summer use.

The group was also able to go on one field trip a week, which included a Chicago Fire soccer game, local pools and zoos, and Catigny park. "Field trips kept the program

exciting and exposed students to experiences they wouldn't otherwise have had," says Matthew McNiel, Director of Punte del Pueblo. "For some students, it was the first time they'd been at a pool, a waterslide or slip & slide."

Warrenville Youth & Family Services

The WYFS Quest summer program theme was "A Goal Written is a Goal Achieved." Leslee Cremer, Youth Prevention Specialist, says, "This summer, we focused on goal setting and attainment and personal values. To that end, students participated in a life skills small group that met twice weekly during the summer." For one of their activities, students were asked to write out personal mission statements by filling in the statement, "I create a ___ world by ___." Many students connected this project to their experience volunteering at Feed My Starving Children.

Quest students also learned life skills through a new partnership with the Warrenville Fire Protection District. A new program, called Hot Shots, was developed by Joseph Rogers of the WFPD along with WYFS staff members. Hot Shots includes afternoon and weekend activities based at the fire station. Since its inception, Quest students have become CPR certified, engaged in team-building activities, received kitchen fire safety training, and worked with the City of Warrenville Water Department to apply reflective stickers on fire hydrants to help firefighters locate them when needed.

Through this partnership with WFPD, Quest students were also invited to ride along on the fire trucks during this year's July 4th parade.

OUTREACH COMMUNITY MINISTRIES • RESTORING HOPE, PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES

Outreach Community Center in Carol Stream • Warrenville Youth & Family Services • Wheaton Youth Outreach • Outreach Community Counseling Centers
Serving at Puente del Pueblo in West Chicago and York Community Resource Center • Resale Centers: Jubilee Cars, Jubilee Furniture & Discoveries Resale



MEETING NEEDS IN WARRENVILLE

As Warrenville Youth & Family Services (WYFS) celebrates more than 30 years of service, a new case manager looks to the future.

Taylor Catron, the new case manager at Warrenville Youth & Family Services, couldn't be more excited about her role and the difference the case management program is making in the Warrenville community. "The WYFS case management program opens its doors to people in financial need due to a recent crisis that has set them back unexpectedly," she says. "We offer people practical assistance when they have nowhere else to go."

Taylor has hit the ground running. Since she started, she's trained as a Salvation Army service extension volunteer, which allows WYFS case management to partner with this valuable resource. She's also making plans to enrich the program. "We're focusing on

financial crisis aid as I settle in, but I hope to make the program more holistic," she says. "We'd like to take on more long-term cases and address the mental health, spiritual health, social needs and physical well-being of clients."

Another goal is to eventually make the program include steps toward community integration, which has been a hallmark of WYFS in its 30-year history. "At one point, a past case manager here was heavily involved in forming the Hispanic Community Council of Warrenville," she says. "This would be a good example of the community integration that case management at WYFS seeks to build."

TOM'S STORY

Looking Back 30 Years, Local Entrepreneur Gives Thanks for Life Lessons Learned at WYO

"I was one of those kids who needed something to do."

Like most teenage boys, Tom Munro was full of energy and vigor. But his mother knew that could easily turn into trouble-making. She found Wheaton Youth Outreach (WYO) in the early 1980s, when Tom was 14 years old, and enrolled him in the summer youth employment program. At that time, WYO focused its efforts on outreach to young boys.

Finding a Mentor

Tom says the program did its job by keeping him busy. "We (a group of about 10 boys) would do yard work and housework in the community; we'd help people out by cleaning out basements, garages and sheds."

Through the experience, a mentoring relationship emerged. "A guy named Randy Ellison led our group," says Tom. "Randy was involved with the work projects and would teach us how to behave. He instilled a work ethic in us. He taught us to respect ourselves, others and other people's property."

"You had to be responsible and show up on time," Tom adds. "In those days I would ride my bike on the Prairie Path from Winfield to Wheaton. I couldn't always get a ride."

According to Tom, Randy was a big influence on his life in and out of the program. Randy was also a wrestling coach at Wheaton North High School, where Tom attended school and became involved with the wrestling program. A few other Wheaton gentlemen including Jim Huck and Paul Faris helped the boys raise money for wrestling trips. "Randy mentored us in a very unique way," Tom remembers. "He created a team of people and a great environment for kids to be a part of. I remember Randy taking our group on a canoe trip somewhere in Wisconsin. It was one of the most positive and memorable experiences I've ever had."

A Career Path

Thanks to Randy and WYO, Tom grew into a responsible young man who understood the value of hard work. After a couple summers in the WYO program, he started work-

ing at the A&W drive-through in Wheaton.

Later in high school, Tom started working as a tile setter's helper for his Uncle Don and frequently worked for a tile company in Glen Ellyn. It was there that he found another mentor. "Scott Watson taught me how to read blueprints and do takeoffs (estimates). He took me under his wing and let me listen in as he worked with customers in the showroom on weekends," says Tom. "Later, Scott helped me get my first sales job with one of his tile and stone distributors. Although I lived near Wheaton, my territory was Gary, Indiana, and the south side of Chicago. It was a great experience."

Tom quickly worked his way up and became regional manager for the largest tile manufacturer in North America at the age of 21. In 1996 Tom pulled himself off the road and started his own tile and stone company. "I moved into fabricating granite countertops in 1999 and became one of the largest natural stone fabricators in the state of Indiana," Tom says. In 2012, he expanded his business by developing the Supreme Surface brand of stone care products. His flagship product is a non-toxic "All-In-One" cleaner, polish, sealer, treatment for granite, quartz and marble. Today Tom has multiple brands of specialty cleaners that are sold through nearly 7,500 marble and granite fabricators

across the United States and Canada as well as Bed Bath & Beyond, True Value and Ace Hardware stores.

Today, Tom is pulling out of the stone fabrication business and focusing his efforts on his brands of specialty cleaners and treatments. He currently travels back and forth between his offices in Indianapolis and Wheaton.

Full Circle

It turns out Tom learned a thing or two about mentoring from his days at WYO and his early career—he's had the joy of mentoring his own son in his trade. "My 24-year-old son Eliot became interested in the cleaners business and spent a few years working with me," he says. "Today he's marketing a brand of hair care products specifically developed for curly hair. My youngest son Sam attends Indiana University and plans to pursue medical school. I'm very proud of both of them."

When Tom looks back at his life and career, he credits WYO with making a huge difference. "Having people who cared and taught me how to work and respect others was so important during my youth," he says. "I can't thank Outreach enough for what it taught me when I was younger. It helped me tremendously."



(Left) Tom Munro installing his first granite countertop in 1989

(Right) Tom today with his line of specialty cleaners

Fall Events

You are warmly invited to join fellow friends of Outreach at our fall events.

- **Hearts of Grace Women's Luncheon:** October 15, 2015 with speaker Nicole Unice, popular Christian author
- **Warrenville Youth & Family Services Fall Dinner:** November 6, 2015, celebrating more than 30 years of service

Interested in coming as a guest or hosting a table? Contact Mindy Inman, Event Manager, at 630-682-1910 or minman@outreachcommmin.org. Learn more at outreachcommmin.org/events



The Women's Luncheon supports women and their children served through Outreach



WYFS Fall Dinner supports family stabilization and youth development programs in Warrenville

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Serve + Impact: Volunteer at an Outreach Site

Serve your community and make a lasting impact by volunteering at one of Outreach Community Ministries' sites. Current opportunities in our neighborhood resource centers include one-on-one tutors, classroom assistants, mentors, and front desk receptionists.

Or, volunteer at our resale centers as a store clerk or warehouse assistant. Whatever your gifts or schedule, we need you! To get started, view the volunteer job descriptions and complete the online application at outreachcommunityministries.org/volunteer.