



OUTREACH NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2018

2018 COLLEGE TOUR

OCC & PdP College Tour Hosts Largest Group of High School Students To Date

High school students from the Outreach Community Center in Carol Stream (OCC) and Puente del Pueblo (PdP) in West Chicago spent their spring break visiting colleges on the annual College Tour, as part of the College Opportunity Program. This year 32 students attended the College Tour, 16 from OCC and 16 from PdP —making it the largest tour group to date.

Students and staff visited St. Peter's University and Rutgers University in New Jersey, the University of Pennsylvania (U Penn) and Messiah College in Pennsylvania, and the University of Toledo in Ohio. The group also enjoyed outings such as dinners at local restaurants, exploring LOVE Park in Philadelphia and visiting the 9/11 memorial in New York.

"Our students took full advantage of the opportunities the College Tour afforded them," said Matthew McNeil, director of Puente del Pueblo. "I saw this occurring in two areas. First, in planning for their

academic future as they carefully processed what college might actually look like for them personally and how the tour fostered reflection, generated questions and motivated them towards increased effort. Also, I saw students capitalizing upon the insight traveling to a new place renders; for example, they took full advantage of the 9/11 Memorial to feel the depth of their nation's great tragedy, even though they did not experience it personally in 2001. I felt proud of all of them."

For Gigi Nyesoah, OCC high school and college program director, this year marked her 10th annual College Tour. "My favorite moment is when we were coming out of the tunnel between New Jersey and New York. One of the students put on the song *New York* by Alicia Keys, and there was a 'Welcome to New York' sign, and all of us cheered," said Gigi.

According to OCC staff, the majority of the students loved the University of Toledo. "So

many students bought gear from there that when we returned, another staff member asked if the school was giving out T-shirts. Nope, they just loved it that much," remarked Gigi. "Two students who had been with us on tour in the past met us at the University of Toledo and told us how much they loved the school. It was neat for the kids to hear from students who had been in their shoes and to see them being successful."

The students visited a variety of schools, allowing the group to experience different personalities and cultures represented at each campus. "One of the schools we went to was 29% African-American, 29% Caucasian and 29% Hispanic. It was really great for the students to know that exists and they got to see that kind of diversity," said Gigi. "At Messiah College, they happened to have Easter dinner the evening we visited. One of our students said, 'this is so beautiful, I could cry.' Another student said, 'you are making this so hard for me' because he liked so many of the schools we visited."

MEET OCCC'S FIRST ANIMAL-ASSISTED THERAPIST



Aimee and Paddington at OCCC

The Outreach Community Counseling Center (OCCC) welcomed Animal Assisted Therapist Aimee Maas and her dog Paddington to the team on December 11, 2017. Amy brings a fresh approach to the job through the innovative technique of animal-assisted therapy.

Prior to working at Outreach, Aimee spent the last 18 years as a social worker in the newborn ICU of Cincinnati Children's Hospital, where she began integrating dogs into the family support groups she ran. Aimee quickly realized the unparalleled comfort the dogs gave the struggling parents at the hospital. "When we started bringing dogs up, I was pretty much blown away by the impact," said Aimee.

As Aimee planned to move to the Carol Stream area to be close to family, she realized the animal-assisted therapist position at OCCC provided an opportunity to utilize her findings from Cincinnati Children's Hospital about the benefit of animals in therapeutic settings. "I love that Outreach is doing something that's so innovative and thoughtful and creative," said Aimee. "It's exciting to be able to do something that's cutting-edge and a new way to think about intervening in people's lives."

Paddington, a poodle-cavalier-bichon mix, recently passed his Canine Good Citizen Test— and can now attend official therapy sessions with Aimee's clients. As a licensed therapist, Aimee is adding an animal therapy specialization on top of her master's degree by taking additional coursework from Colorado University of Animal-Assisted Psychotherapy.

Aimee is settling into her new role at Outreach and is excited for her newfound ability to integrate her faith into her work. "Already what I'm loving about this position is that I can be more open," said Aimee. "I've had clients who have said, will you pray for me? Another client was talking about a sermon and what it meant to her, which we were able to work into our therapy session because it was so relevant. How powerful is that?"

"I think working with a dog is just another way of God's grace working in people's lives," explained Aimee. When Paddington was just a puppy, the woman who raised him told Aimee she had prayed over all her puppies that they would be a blessing wherever they are, and that God would give them a purpose. "When I took this job I wrote to her, guess what? God is listening to that prayer. I think God will use Paddington."

Paddington's presence provides numerous benefits to the client emotionally and relationally. Aimee explained that a dog's innate sense of acceptance is extremely valuable for creating a calm space in which a client can be vulnerable during a therapy session. Since the very act of petting a dog has soothing effects, Paddington is able to provide stress relief and decrease a client's overall anxiety. One relational benefit of animal-assisted therapy includes the bond formed between the client and Paddington.

When Paddington is visibly excited to see the client, this reinforces the client's sense of connection and creates incentive for the client to attend therapy regularly. Conducting therapy with Paddington also assists with trust formation between Aimee and the client. Aimee emphasizes that forming a bond with someone in therapy is not easy, but "when a client observes my interactions with my dog and sees that I care about him and that I'm careful and gentle and not hurting him, I am gaining their trust too," remarked Aimee.



Paddington with his AKC Canine Good Citizen ribbon

CELEBRATING OUR VOLUNTEERS

WYFS & DISCOVERIES HOST VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION NIGHT



The annual WYFS Volunteer Appreciation Event was held on Monday, April 16 at Immanuel Presbyterian Church in Warrenville. Warrenville Youth & Family Services and Discoveries Resale Store & Furniture Annex staff honored the volunteers by treating them to desserts, coffee and take-home thank you cookies in honor of their dedication.

Volunteers who have served for 5, 10 and 15 years received special awards to commemorate their hard work and service. WYFS Quest and LINK students welcomed guests as they arrived and were quick to help serve those who

have given time and talents to their programs.

"It was a privilege to honor and recognize our faithful volunteers, who dedicate their lives to WYFS," said Angela Mains, director of Warrenville Youth & Family Services. "We are able to better serve and positively impact our community through these wonderful people, who are so giving of their time and talents. We are grateful for all the support and encouragement they provide to our students each year."



Guests enjoyed a short program presented by Angela Mains; Donna Seiberlich, Discoveries store manager; Chris Ellerman, CEO of Outreach Community Ministries and Mindy Inman, director of Volunteer Services.

"LINK is really fun and has helped me a lot. The program really got me closer to my mentor and has got me to know more people better. I admire how kind my mentor is and how she takes a lot of time to come meet with me." -Jade, 13.

VOLUNTEERING AT OCC-VILLAGEBROOK



A volunteer group of ten members from Wheaton Bible Church, spearheaded by Heidi Diehl, recently spent a morning at OCC-Villagebrook, providing two hours of service to the classroom and families in the OCC-Villagebrook after-school program. The classroom received a thorough scrubbing; all desks, chairs, bookshelves, and windows were given a mid-winter cleaning.

The group then turned their attention to preparing for the "Sip and See" event planned for later that day by OCC-Villagebrook Program Coordinator Marissa Sabio and Lead

Teacher Mary Lundeen. The event, a celebration of the new younger siblings born in the past few months, gathered classroom families together to enjoy refreshments and admire the newest members of the Villagebrook community. "The WBC volunteers transformed the classroom with cheerful decorations and then prepared all the food for the party," says Marissa.

As a bonus, the group prepared a flu kit for each student, a bag of supplies more positively tagged "Spread Love Not Germs."

Marissa summed up the day, "I really enjoyed working with the WBC group; they were interested in learning about the work we do at OCC-Villagebrook and want to be a part of it. We are looking forward to finding more ways for them to serve with us at future events and other opportunities to support the families here."

The Villagebrook Apartments are a satellite center of the Outreach Community Center in Carol Stream.

WYFS COUNSELING PARTNERS WITH QUEST



Quest, Warrenville Youth & Family Service's after-school program, recently partnered with the WYFS counseling program interns for a four-session program related to mental health. The program is currently being offered to 7th and 8th graders focusing on measuring one's emotions, coping strategies, relaxation techniques, and living in the present. These sessions will provide students with skills and strategies they can use in everyday situations.

The program was initially introduced by Patrick Fallon, WYFS counseling intern, who wanted to gain some experience in leading groups. Pat launched the group by approaching Quest team members. "As Quest staff, we see a lot of the symptoms of misdirected, poorly handled stress," said Alicia Sremaniak, WYFS program coordinator. "It only seemed natural to partner within our own agency to provide more in-depth services around these issues. We hope to provide some more skills and ways to deal with stress and conflict. We have always wanted to have clinical interns lead a small group, so we jumped at this idea."

While these group sessions are still new, Quest staff members are already seeing positive results. "A lot of our older students took full advantage of learning new skills and while it may have been a tad overwhelming for some, I truly believe all students had a positive experience during these sessions. While being able to identify a direct difference from these sessions is hard, it

is nice to be able to reference the sessions when working through issues with students," said Alicia.

"The hope would be to continue a similar session next year with the new clinical interns," said Alicia. "While this depends on their caseloads and interest, Quest will always be open to partnering with the counseling center's team."

MORE THAN A MEAL: JV GRAD SERVES COMMUNITY



Single-handedly cooking Christmas dinner for a crowd is no easy task; one young single mother at Jubilee Village (JV) decided to express her appreciation by doing just that.

Giselle, who graduated from Jubilee Village's two-year program, has been honing her skills by working a

full-time job in the cafeteria at the DuPage County Courthouse while simultaneously attending the College of DuPage in their culinary program. Now a resident of JV's Stage II program, which allows her more independence and continued support while paying a subsidized rent, Giselle demonstrated her gratitude to Jubilee Village by offering to cook the entire dinner for JV's Christmas celebration with the girls on December 21. Giselle especially enjoys cooking authentic Mexican food, and she impressed the group with an array of incredibly tasty dishes.

"Not only is she a great chef, but it takes skill and knowledge to know how much food to make for 23 people, to time everything perfectly, and to do it without any assistance from any-

one," says Michelle DeMuir, Jubilee Village director. "Giselle has clearly incorporated all that she's learned in school, and we were all impressed with her skills and appreciative of her generosity to us."

"Giselle is not only gifted in her chosen field, but she is a lovely young woman and a great mother to her four-year-old daughter," adds Michelle. "Giselle will graduate in December of this year, and she has certainly demonstrated that her future will be bright, and her options unlimited!"

Jubilee Village is a transitional housing program for single, formerly homeless mothers, ages 18-24 and their children. Last year, Jubilee Village served 21 women and 20 children.

ILLINOIS SUPREME COURT JUSTICE INSPIRES OCC STUDENTS



High school students from the Student Achievement Leadership Team (SALT) program at the Outreach Community Center in Carol Stream (OCC) were recently treated to a visit by Illinois Supreme Court Justice, and former Chicago Bears player, Robert Thomas. Judge Thomas, who has served as the Illinois Supreme Court Justice for the Second District since December 2000 and as Chief Justice from September 2005 to September 2008, spoke to the students about his life and career.

Staff prepared a Q&A session for the judge that included questions about his education and career path, what a criminal court is like, what a typical day is like for a judge and how the supreme court is different at state and federal levels. Students were also able to ask questions during an open Q&A after Judge Thomas finished speaking.

OCC College Coach David Johnson said Judge Thomas had an impact on the students and reached a number of them in a personal way. "A few of them resonated with his story about faith and the lowest points in his life, while others connected with the path of his career," he said. "One student was very excited to meet him because she has been accepted into Loyola, where Judge Thomas did his legal studies, and she is interested in law, as well."

Judge Thomas praised the SALT program, commenting on the attentiveness of the high school students and the insightfulness of their questions. "The program has successfully encouraged these young men and women to contemplate their futures," he said.

He added, "I hope one of the takeaways from our time together was Jeremiah 29:11: 'For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the Lord, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'"

Students and staff are grateful to Judge Thomas for taking the time to visit the Center and thoroughly answer students' questions. "All students were moved by the stories he told, the wisdom he imparted and the encouragement he shared for their future," said David.

SALT is a program for high school students who are interested in developing leadership skills and pursuing higher education or vocational training. The students must be motivated to attain high levels of academic achievement, employment and strong character. Students meet with program staff during the week for discussion, activities and academic tutoring. Open gym nights and Bible study groups are optional activities. Occasional field trips, college visits and career nights are offered.

WYFS & OCC-V TURN THE TABLES

QUEST & VILLAGEBROOK STUDENTS SERVE FAMILIES



Quest Students Serve Their Families



As part of the Quest Program's Service Learning education, the WYFS students chose to host a dinner for their parents to show gratitude for their caring role in their life. Starting in March 2018, the students started planning out the evening, deciding everything from the food to decorations, and entertainment. Quest students even made most of the supplies, including the decorations and food. The dinner was hosted at Grace Church on April 13. In total, 28 students hosted 50 family members.

"The students acted as hosts, waiters, and food preparers, with the support of WYFS staff and interns," said Grace Harrington, Quest after-school program teacher. "The students gave a welcome/gratitude speech and prayed, both in Spanish and English. After dinner, they showed a thank you video thanking their parents directly. We secured a food donation from Olive Garden for 6 dozen servings of breadsticks and 6 family sized servings of salad to go along with the main course of spaghetti. One of the students even secured a cake donation from a family member."

This experience of students serving their parents and family members created a unique opportunity for fostering connection between staff and parents. The WYFS Bilingual Case Manager Rose Lachcik was also present and met many of the Quest students' parents. "Many parents expressed gratitude to the Quest staff for facilitating the event," said Grace. "Many stayed after the program to socialize with the staff and other parents."

As the culmination of their cooking classes, students from the Outreach Community Center at Villagebrook prepared and served dinner to their parents and families, an impressive feat performed under the instruction of Ms. Linda, the University of Illinois Extension Educator.

Showing off their new kitchen skills, some students were placed in charge of making soup, salad, and cornbread; others prepared place-mats and set tables. OCC Lead Teacher Mary Lundeen and Program Coordinator Marissa Sabio helped serve, along with former summer Classroom Aide Anne Hutchinson and current Program Intern Phil Stepnowski.

Thanks to the hard work of the talented kids in the OCC at Villagebrook classroom, over 30 people spent an enjoyable evening getting acquainted over a simple meal made by the young chefs. Every participant went home with a calendar containing recipes that the students and their families are encouraged to test out together, including that evening's soup recipe. Marissa remarked, "The U of I Extension educators have been a wonderful partner of Outreach in various programs over the years, and we look forward to continuing to work together to teach and empower our kids and families through their good work."



OCC-V Students Serve Their Families



MINDY INMAN: DIRECTOR OF VOLUNTEER SERVICES



"Our volunteers consistently share with us how volunteering impacts them and deepens their faith... I see throughout our agency how both programs and people come alive when we serve each other. That kind of work is inspiring and I'm thankful to be a part of it!"

-Mindy

Mindy Inman first joined the Outreach team in 2015 as the events manager, planning annual events such as Golf, Food & Wine, Women's Luncheon, OCC Spring Dinner and more. In December 2017, Mindy joined the Outreach leadership team as the new Director of Volunteer Services and now oversees volunteers at all of Outreach's 7 sites, in addition to staffing large events.

"I love the mission of Outreach and am excited for this new opportunity," said Mindy. "I want to help Outreach as they continue to grow and deepen their relationships in the community. I hope my enthusiasm is contagious and I'm looking forward to representing Outreach in the churches and in the broader community. Our direct service staff at our sites are doing incredibly important work and it is an honor to pair them with committed volunteers who believe in the work we do."

With a bachelor's degree in Christian Education and a master's degree in Theological Studies, Mindy has used both of her degrees to better understand the community in which Outreach is located. "[My degrees] have helped me understand the fabric of this community, and how many denominations come together and support a common cause," remarked Mindy. "Being a part of the leadership team at a Christian organization like Outreach, has been one of my goals and am honored for the opportunity to serve and lead in this capacity."

With growing volunteer numbers, Mindy hopes to continue to meet the needs of the sites as well as the volunteers. "Last year we had over 300 regular volunteers along with an additional 500 for service or work projects. During my first year, I'm taking it all in and trying to learn the breadth and scope of all things volunteers at Outreach," said Mindy. "We have individuals who have volunteered with us for 10, 15 and even 20 years. I want to understand what makes our volunteers so committed and how we can increase that number... because that's what truly helps Outreach be Outreach. The second half of our mission is to help the church put faith into action through service and I want Outreach to continue to be that place for those in our community who want to serve and give of their time. Our volunteers consistently share with us how volunteering impacts them and deepens their faith... I see throughout our agency how both programs and people come alive when we serve each other. That kind of work is inspiring and I'm thankful to be a part of it!"

If you are interested in volunteering with Outreach Community Ministries, contact Mindy Inman at minman@outreachcommmin.org or 630.682.1910.

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

Upcoming Event



Golf, Food & Wine Experience

June 18, 2018

The Golf, Food & Wine Experience will be held at the Butterfield Country Club and will feature a live and silent auction, a full day of golf and an evening reception. The event will raise funds for transitional housing and college and career scholarships. For more info, contact Joe Ancell at jancell@outreachcommin.org.

Plan to join us at an upcoming event! Event proceeds assist our DuPage County neighbors in transformative ways. Events are great opportunities to introduce new friends to the mission of OCM.

For details contact Event Coordinator Michelle Kelley at mkelley@outreachcommin.org or 630.682.1910.

SUPPORT OUTREACH

By giving to Outreach, you demonstrate the importance of investing in opportunities that bring about Kingdom changes in the lives of those we serve and the communities where we serve.

Your gift today will...

- Infuse needed funds in our sites' youth development programs.
- Help stabilize families through case management and counseling services.
- Provide support for older adults who are vulnerable.
- Give young women who are homeless a place to call home.

Outreach Community Ministries is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Gifts are tax deductible as a charitable contribution to the extent provided by law.

Donate today using the enclosed envelope or visit our secure website at outreachcommin.org/give. Or contact Bonnie Malcolm Chrisman at 630.682.1910. Thank you for your support!

SERVE + IMPACT

Whatever your time or talents, we have a volunteer opportunity for you. Current opportunities 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. To get started, visit outreachcommin.org/volunteer.

