A Learning Community between the North Street Community Center and RIT

This spring, seven youths from the North Street Community Center and four students from the Rochester Institute of Technology took on the latest project of RIT’s University-Community Partnership. Following on the heels of last year’s class, which produced a publication called The Way We See It, the goal was again for the youth to create a publication that illustrated how they see their neighborhood. But this year, there was a new twist: they would be working in conjunction with another program already underway, called the Bridges To Wellness/Puentes a la Salud Project, which focuses on documenting community health assets through community-based participatory research in a specifically chosen neighborhood of Northeast Rochester. Nearly all of the youth involved in this spring class are also youth leaders in the Bridges project, and through coordinating and leading focus groups that bring together community members of all ages, they have been learning more about the feelings and viewpoints of the neighborhood as a whole. Using this information, they developed projects that incorporate writing, photography, and research in order to tell the story of the positive attributes that make up their neighborhood. The inclusion of the RIT students gave the whole group a chance to explore the benefits of youth-adult partnerships and multi-faceted learning opportunities. The projects displayed here reflect the thoughtfulness, hard work, and hands-on community exploration that each member of the class has contributed over the last eight weeks.
Say hello to the team

Nikki Bridges is 16 years old and in the 10th grade, studying Global Media Arts at Franklin High School. A few healthy activities she enjoys are soccer, eating lots of fruit, and helping out in the community. Nikki has many ideas for her future, including community work, nursing, accounting, and teaching.

Eulita Browne is 16 years old and in the 11th grade at Wilson Magnet High School. One of her many positive attributes is her enthusiasm for public speaking. Two healthy activities Eulita enjoys are playing soccer and cheerleading. Her future goals include becoming a professional soccer player and attaining a degree in Dermatology.

Devon Davis is in 10th grade at Franklin High School. He is a team player and an all-around athlete at the North Street Rec center, where he enjoys playing many different sports as well as helping out around the center. He would like to become a lawyer in the future.

Jamaal Fitzpatrick is a 17-year-old sophomore at Monroe High School. He enjoys playing many different sports, including baseball, soccer, and basketball. In the future, he hopes to be a sports journalist, a Physical Education teacher, or a pro soccer player. Jamaal wants to help to make his community a better place.

Choula Lee is 22 and a 4th year Public Policy student at RIT. A few of his strengths in the group include good public speaking and a natural sense of connecting with and relating to people. After RIT, he hopes to continue to work with adults and youth, his goal being to lead them to a point of self-empowerment.

Jose Morales is in the 11th grade at Monroe High School. He loves playing baseball and many other sports at the North Street Rec Center. He plans to graduate from college and go on to college to study criminal justice, and eventually he would like to become a police officer.

Andrew Salmon, 21, is a 3rd year student at RIT. He is in the Multidisciplinary program, with concentrations in literature, creative writing, and urban studies. He enjoys helping people to achieve their dreams. He hopes to move into the city, buy a house, start a garden, learn to love his neighbors, and teach at a Rochester city high school.

Michael Serra is a 22-year-old 2nd year student at RIT, majoring in photography. One asset of his that benefits the group is his genuine sense of enthusiasm. Michael enjoys riding bicycles, running, hiking, and exploring in general. In his future, he dreams of developing a small company specializing in limited edition artist books.

Jordan Williams, 16, is in the 11th grade at Franklin High School. His positive attitude and willingness to work hard make him a great asset to the group. He enjoys eating healthy food and exercising at the North Street Rec Center. A few of his future goals include graduating from high school and going on to study college criminal justice.

Jonathan Winkle is 22 years old and a senior at RIT, studying Psychology. One of his assets is his ability to understand how people interact with one another. He hopes to go to graduate school for psychology, while staying involved in the community. A few things he enjoys doing are rock climbing and laying in the grass.
Trash Cans Can Trash
Keep a Clean Community

by Nikki Bridges

Keep a clean community.
Ugly it is, trash all around.
Everywhere you look you see it on the ground.
Chip bags, candy wrappers, pieces of paper and broken glass,
So much it almost fills up a vacant lot.
What a shame on our behalves
And when visitors come from out of town
It’s not pleasant for them to see trash outside
Everywhere lying down.
They don’t want to see a city that’s less than theirs.
They want to see a pretty city that they can talk about
To their family and friends.
Not only the clean suburbs
But our clean community in the city too.
So how do you think they view everybody?
Yes, including you.
If it was me I’d think we didn’t care
Too much about our community at all.
But maybe it’s just that people don’t want to hold trash
In their hand while walking.
So why not add a trash can on every other corner?

With so much garbage collecting in our streets, why not put a trash can on every other corner? Most people litter because they don’t want to hold or to their trash. Clean Sweeps in the community are such a big help because they bring people together to pick up trash in our neighborhood. Having more trash cans would also be a big help. People in the community can get together and decorate the trash cans by painting them, adding quotes from famous people, and actually placing the trash cans on the corners themselves. Remember that our streets reflect our community and the people in it.
North St. Helping Hands
by Jamaal Fitzpatrick

The North Street Community Center plays a big part in our community, and has for many years. One of the main things that makes up the center is the painting of black history. Something that only a few people know about is that an AmeriCorps volunteer named Peter got some kids from every rec center together and they drew and painted the murals on the walls in the hallway and rooms. North Street continues its community involvement by having summer art camp for the young kids in the neighborhood.

North Street is a community gathering place because it is the center fold of the community. Community members come here often. North Street is a safe place because you can come play, have fun, and be safe. It is just like one big family. Anyone can come and be themselves. North Street provides health programs such as nutrition, dance, and sports to help kids stay in shape and burn some calories.

Also, North Street is a good place to meet great people. From my point of view, North St. helps me be myself, and makes me and my friends better people. The programs North Street offers help me take that next step in my life.

Ms. Cindy, the person that is in charge of the art program, said that the art program is for ages 6-16, but I think that it should involve older people, too, because there is a lot of talent in our community. I asked her if she thought more people should be involved in the program, and she said, “Yes, because involvement shows their commitment.” I also asked her what the art program offers to the community, and she said it offered creativity and an open mind, helps to raises their self-esteem, and teaches people the culture of art. I asked her why the art program isn’t run everyday, and found out that because the lack of staff and participants, we can’t run it more often. I think that if were to advertise the programs we would get more people, and that would be a good thing!
Bad Graffiti Murals
Look at this graffiti. There are a lot of young people that have good talent drawing different pictures on walls of schools, playgrounds, sidewalks, trees and buildings. The negative graffiti in this collage has lasting effects that are devastating to the community. Some of these effects are spread of fear in younger youth, corrupting the youth in joining the juvenile behavior. It degrades the community, the schools, property and peoples' sense of pride. A lot of those youths can use their talent for positives things instead of negatives things to improve their community and not damage it.
Good Graffiti Murals
They can use their talent to draw positives examples and messages in their community. It also reflects the way people wanted to be represented in their community. This collage of positive graffiti has longer lasting effects that are better for the community, the schools and of people's property. It is also better because the younger youth in the community won't be so scared or bring fear to them.

Take the graffiti of PUA or as they are called From Up Above. They have a lot of good graffiti around the city like the one on the corner of Clifford Ave and Clinton at the clothing store called His and Hers. Their graffiti is amazing, they have a lot of talent. It only they can come out and teach other youth to bring their talent to good talent it wouldn't be so hard for other people to walk around without seeing gang signs' everywhere you know.
Strong Spirits, Strong Communities

Churches provide a sense of history, culture, and identity

Churches host events and classes that draw the community together

Churches offer counseling, food for the poor, help with family issues, and a strong network of support

Churches display creative architecture that makes our city more beautiful and diverse

Churches help give us a moral center and spiritual guidance

Churches are a safe place to get together, young and old, as a united community

How can churches be an asset in your community?
Block Parties
by Jordan Williams

My focus on this project is block parties. I have had an interest in block parties since I was about 8 years of age when I attended my first block party. At that party I was amazed at how many interactive activities there were to participate in. Block parties are very beneficial because they bring the community together. Through activities, food, and music the community is brought together.

When interviewing Ms. Greene I asked her the question, why are block parties important? The response she gave was shocking to me because it wasn’t an answer I was expecting. Her answer to the question was “I don’t believe in block parties. Block parties are for children. They are only beneficial when they empower the community.” After talking with Ms. Greene I came to understand her response more. I think she was saying that block parties just bring the community together to eat and have fun, but they are really beneficial when a positive outreach is added to the block party.

To illustrate the positive outreach, Henry St. residents were displeased with people in their neighborhood so through CONEA many residents organized meetings right on Henry St. The problems stopped, and many people continued to go to the meetings. To this day Henry St. is still outreaching to the community. They have made numerous changes to their street such as sidewalks and new trees.

I viewed block parties differently. I loved going to them when I was younger because of the great music, activities, food, and the chance to meet new people. My view has changed slightly since interviewing Ms. Greene. Block parties are just parties unless there is a positive message involved; this is what I learned from talking with her.
Why is Community Involvement So Important?
by Eulita Browne

I am a member of a team, and I rely on the team, I defer to it and sacrifice for it, because the team, not the individual, is the ultimate champion.

Mia Hamm
Community involvement is important because everyone should have a voice in making decisions that will affect their lives. Also, when you get involved in your community you could help make important decisions that can be vital to your future.

A community can consist of many things; for instance, schools, houses, stores, community facilities, and also parks. I believe youth involvement is most important because we as youth see the world different than those older or younger than us. Youth are the future and we are aware of the assets that could make our community better.

Mikelle Bruce, in photo 1, states that, "She would like to see more dance teams for the community". She believes that music and dancing is a very important asset that could bring the community together. Mikelle also says that the youth voices aren’t heard enough.

Even though adults and youth aren’t the best of friends, that doesn’t mean that, we shouldn’t settle aside our differences and work together. Community members, whether you’re younger or older, are still important to the community.

This idea, that was started by Wendy Ewald, inspired me because I felt her monumental portraits on buildings was a great part of her community. Wendy’s idea helped me complete my project for the publication and also gave me the vision of portraits, like hers, of people in the community on buildings in the city of Rochester. My plan is to take photos of activities at North Street Recreation Center, my girls soccer team, and also community members and hopefully being able to do the same as Wendy Ewald. Ewald’s 29 monumental portraits was such a great asset for her community and I believe it could work out the same way in our community.
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