



# On Balance

A publication of Dane County's Department of Human Services and the Dane County Juvenile Court Program

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## Three Years of Juvenile Assessment Data – What Does It Tell Us?

The Dane County Department of Human Services recently released a report summarizing assessment data collected on youth referred for delinquency during 1997-1999. As our readers will recall, in May 1997 the Department implemented the Dane County BARJ Juvenile Assessment Manual, the assessment package we've all grown to know and love. Now we have three years of data to consider and see what it can tell us about the kids in our system, about their families, their interactions with the system, and the outcomes of their cases through the court process.

Of course, it's

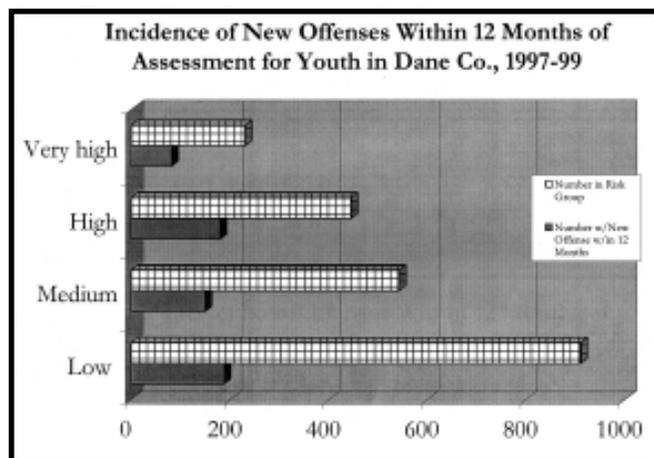
important to note that none of these data would be available except for the efforts of all of Dane County's Social Workers working with young offenders and their families. And over the years Court Social Workers David Johnson, Eileen Backus, Paula Proctor and now, Ronee Bergman, have gathered the

us? We know, looking at three years' worth of trends, quite a bit about the youth and families in the system, what they do to get here, and what happens once their case moves through the court process. And we've seen some evidence of things that we've known but couldn't really confirm – until now.

For instance, we know that:

- While boys are still the great majority of the caseload (about 70%), the proportion of girls in the system has been growing steadily over time (now about 30%);

- Reflecting a national phenomenon, we know that in Dane County, African American youth are over-represented in the juvenile justice population.



Black youth made up approximately 7% of the youth population

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information on referrals that begin the whole process. And without all the data entry provided by Karen Akrabawi and Karen Moore, none of this would be possible.

So, what do all these data tell

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# Ladson-Billings Leads Child Assessment Workshop

By **David Johnson**

On April 17, 2002 the Juvenile Service System was treated to a workshop arranged by Mr. Stephen Blue, Delinquency Services Manager for the Dane County Department of Human Services.

In an on-going effort of providing an opportunity to the kids of Dane County to develop their competencies Mr. Blue invited Dr. Gloria J. Ladson-Billings, Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at UW Madison. Her area of interests include multicultural education, social studies, critical race theory and education, and culturally relevant pedagogy. Dr. Billings grew up in Philadelphia, PA. She conducted research in the northern area of California. Her recent publications include:

- **“Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy”**. American Education Research Journal, 35, pp 465-491.
- **“Toward A critical race theory of education”**.
- **“The Dreamkeepers: Successful Teachers of African American Children”**.

She provided ways to improve the assessment process in better addressing competency development, and the needs of high risk youth, particularly youth of color.

She surprised some of us with reference to statistics that seem to imply a startling percentage of African American kids entering 9<sup>th</sup> grade are not graduating four years later. Her interpretation of those same DPI statistics shows that those

kids are not attending high school three years later. While the precipitous exit occurs as this segment of Dane’s population reaches 16-17 years old and “ages out” of their adolescence, by the time those freshmen should be reaching their senior year over half of the juveniles have departed from the traditional educational path to success.

Reviewing the same body of statistics, we can see that across the racial-cultural rainbow a lot of Dane County’s kids are not showing up for their senior year. It is believed that these young citizens are opting for alternatives including GED programs, employment, apprenticeships and parenthood. Based on these statistics questions can be raised about the commitment of Dane County to educate its children. In order for children to develop to their full potential, they must have access to our educational system, a system that takes pride in its Schools of Excellence.

Great progress and evidence of Dane County’s commitment has been made through the Schools of Hope project in areas of reading and the project is doubling its efforts by attempting to increase the math skills of the same group during their middle school years. Through Mr. Blue’s efforts with the Juvenile Accountability Block Grants [JAIBG] focus is being brought on this targeted group with

innovative after-school programming.

Professor Ladson-Billings believes that a majority of these kids possess the intelligence to succeed but for lack of a motivational and inspirational role model, we achieve the disturbing results that she referenced. She sees that many of them come from families that don’t have a strong background in academics and many of these families also do not place a value on educational accomplishments.

She believes that Dane County’s social workers and their

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## NIP Parent Advisory Council

By **Stephen Blue**

The concept for NIP-PAC has been around since 1992. After many successful years of providing quality life choice discussion groups to Dane County youth under the trade name of Right Track, we recognized a need to take the next step with parents. The rationale for the development of NIP – PAC, was to help solidify the gains that we were making with youth in many of Dane Counties challenged neighborhoods. The second part , was through a series of workshops, was to acknowledge the good parenting that was going on in this challenged communities, despite hardships many of the parent had to face. Over the years NIP –PAC has come to be a fun supportive learning opportunity for parents. The content of the workshops focus

on positive communication technique for parents, how to advocate for your child, how parents can take care of them selves in the middle of the sometime stressful family dynamic, and strategies of how to keep their children on the right track in difficult neighborhoods. Over the years NIP-PAC has expanded its content to include a wider range of topical issues and has provided a social outlet for many of its participants. The last cycle of this extremely popular workshop was held this past fall for the parents of the Bridge, Waunona, Lake Point community and was facilitated by Stan and Yolanda Woodard, certified trainers from the American Black

Family Institute. Previous sessions of the NIP-PAC were held in Allied Dr. and South Madison and were facilitated by Bea Patterson at Family Enhancement and numerous guest speakers. The next sessions



*Participants in last fall's NIP-PAC parent's workshop. The next workshop will be held in November.*

of the NIP –PAC will be held in June and November of 2002. For more information contact: Vince Carey at 273 –6603.

## S.T.A.R.S. Program Shines Light on African-American Males

The S.T.A.R.S program, (**Striving Towards Academic Responsibility for Students**) is a new initiative created by Dane County Department of Human Services targeting young African American males between the ages of 10 and 14 years, seeking cultural, academic and social improvement. Its' focus is on the over representation of African American male within the Juvenile Justice system. Research has shown school attachment at an early on set, has a direct correlation with delinquency. It is funded via the State Office of Justice Assistance through the Dane County Comprehensive Strategy Initiative.

The primary purpose of this

program is to provide **educational support for students, who are having trouble in the core subjects such as math, science, and reading.** In addition, staff from the Neighborhood Intervention Programs will provide **counseling** in other areas such as **behavioral and emotional management, along with teaching youth effective communication skills.** It is viewed as an opportunity for young males to be better prepared for the next academic school year.

Summer programming will run for 8 weeks and **the first day of programming is June 17, 2002.** Programming is 5 days a week and Dane County will provide limited transportation to and from program-

ming. Most of the programming will take place at the **Neighborhood Intervention Programs building, which is located at 501 E. Badger Rd.** Some programming may take place outside of the building, as we will schedule field trips, to Milwaukee, and other surrounding cities. **A typical day of programming will look as follows:**

9:00-10:00	Pick up at designated locations
10:00-10:50	Academic counseling in specified areas
10:50-11:00	Break

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## Juvenile Data

Continued from Page 1

of Dane County, but were 32% of those referred for delinquency. Latinos were also over-represented, but they remain a very small portion of the juvenile justice population;

- Most youth referred for delinquency are between 14-16 years of age. However, referrals of younger kids are growing, particularly among African American youth, who make up about 40% of those 12 and under coming into the system;

- More than half of youth (55%) referred live with a single parent, most always a single mother. Only about one-third of youth live in a two-parent family. African American youth are more likely to live with a single mother than are other youth, and white youth are more likely to live in two-parent families;

- Youth in the juvenile justice system are more than twice as likely to attend classes for students with

exceptional education needs than the rest of the youth population in Dane County (37% of those referred vs. 14% of all students in the Madison Metropolitan School District).

- The data also provide information about some trends in how the system views these youth, what offenses brought them into the system, what their assessments indicate, and how their cases are resolved. For example:

- Low and medium risk youth form the majority of the juvenile justice population (40% are low risk and 25% are medium risk). A smaller percentage (16%) are considered to be a very high risk of re-offending;

- Misdemeanors like retail theft, disorderly conduct and vandalism form the great majority of offenses for which youth are referred (nearly 80%). Only about 1% of offenses are the most serious offenses like armed robbery, 1<sup>st</sup> degree sexual assault and murder.

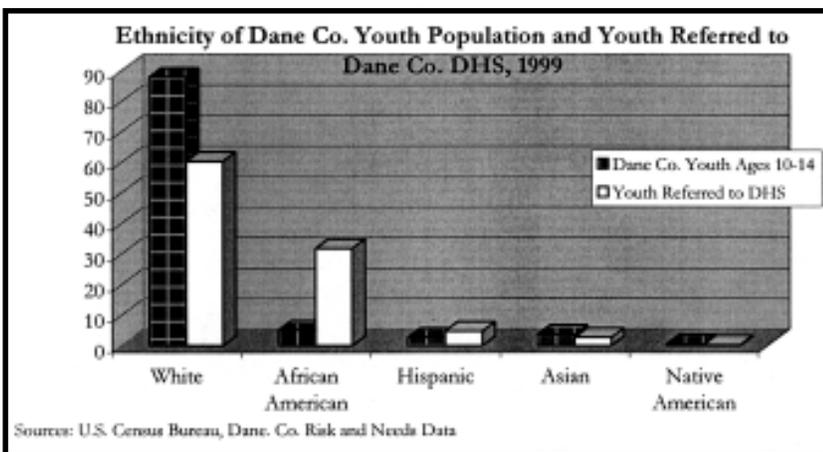
- There were few ethnic

differences among types of offenses in the less serious offense categories. However, for the more serious Category IV offenses, more than half were linked to African American youth;

- Reflecting the findings of mostly low-level offenses and the majority of youth being rated a low- or medium-risk, we find that just over half of the dispositions for youth are “informal” in nature. This means that there is no delinquency adjudication made. These “informal” dispositions include counsel and release, deferred prosecution, and consent decrees (which require the approval of the Court).

- Nearly 75% of youth referred do not commit new offenses within a year of their referral to the Department, a period of time in which many are under the supervision (either formally or informally). Not surprisingly, those who commit new offenses tend to be rated a higher risk than other youth.

In addition to these findings, the data also tell us about the relative strengths and needs of youth entering the juvenile justice system. As part of the assessment, Social Workers consider a number of questions based in BARJ concepts. Based on their assessment of the juvenile and his/her family situation, they decide if a youth has strengths in these areas or if these are areas of need. Again, much of the summary information about strengths and needs is pretty



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# Conley is New Head of JCEC

Fred Conley is the new Chair of the Dane County Juvenile Crime Enforcement Coalition (JCEC). Fred is a long-time member of the UW Madison Police Department, having served for more than 27 years with the department. He is also a member of the Dane County Juvenile Law Enforcement Association, serving for three years as Treasurer.

Besides his experience with the JLEA, Fred brings a wealth of experience in working with youth. During his tenure with the UW Madison, Fred has been active in community policing, and is the former Community Officer for the Eagle Heights housing area. In his work with this unique community representing all nations and back-

grounds, Fred was actively involved with teen residents and their families. Fred went beyond his police work with families, and connected with kids by organizing a number of outings and events for teens. In recent years, Fred has been the Community Officer for the Southeast Campus area, and continues his work with juveniles coming to the campus for various events.

In assuming his new role, Fred sees the JCEC as a vehicle for reaching some of Dane County's more troubled neighborhoods. Citing this year's group of JAIBG mini-grant proposals, he sees the evidence of need in different parts of the community, and hopes to target some resources to organizations that can help address those

needs. Fred has seen firsthand the importance of helping kids stay in school and raise their grades. He hopes JCEC can support efforts to get kids on the right track and stay there.

And speaking of being on the right track, or at least on the right road... when he's not too busy with his police work, Fred is an accomplished bicyclist. He's pedaled coast to coast to raise money for organizations fighting childhood alopecia, and made "shorter" rides (Minneapolis to Chicago) to raise money for AIDS research. Not only has Fred traveled the country in a rather unique way, he's managed to help people in the process. Way to go, Fred!

## Juvenile Data

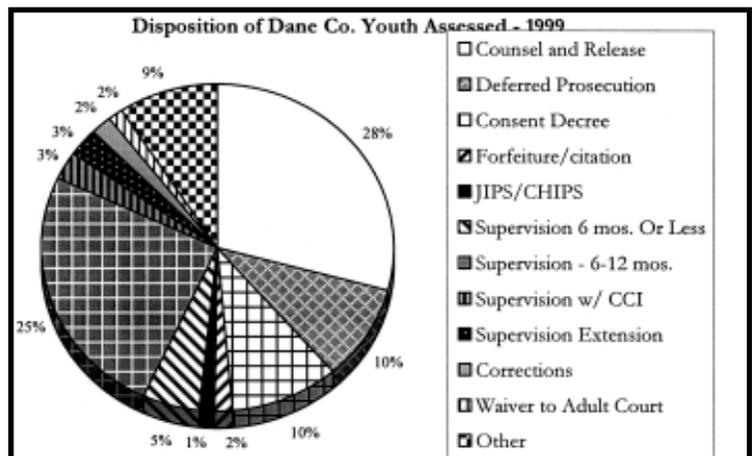
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intuitive for those who work with juveniles and their families. For instance, there were great differences between low-risk, medium-risk, and high-risk youth in terms of strengths. Low risk youth, on the whole, were much more likely to be rated as having strengths as were medium or high-risk youth. Parents of low-risk youth were more often found to be a source of strength than were parents of higher risk youth. And there were differences between ethnic groups – white youth tended to be seen as having strengths more often than did African American youth. But on the whole, all youth tended to have three common needs areas – being able to make good decisions and exercise self-control, achieving

within their educational abilities, and resolving conflicts effectively and non-violently.

Many of these findings will cause a lot of heads to nod in agreement – these are things that people have come to know about the youth and families in the system. Some of the information may be newer to some readers, but it has already had an impact on how DCDHS does business. The information in

this report has already been used to help set service priorities, allocate resources, and guide DCDHS toward measuring the impacts of POS programs. So stay tuned – you may be seeing more of this data and its impacts on the work that you do for BARJ in Dane County.



## Have They Got Support?

By Sandra Lampe, Project Hugs, Inc.

*"It was as though my family was circling the vortex of a drain, my child about to be lost forever to substance abuse and the streets... and I was powerless to stop it. Project HUGS was the hand that reached down and pulled us all up to safety. HUGS supported me until I had regained my strength, guided me in new directions and taught me new coping skills. More importantly, HUGS gave me hope for the future for my family and for my son."*

Anonymous

**B**eing a teenager is one of the most difficult jobs in the world.

Normal adolescent development alone is cause for ping-ponging hormone levels and emotional roller coaster rides leaving them feeling out of control and struggling to maintain their self-image. They need a great deal of positive support to help them cope with these normal developmental needs. All too often, however, youth chose other avenues to gain a sense of power and control over their lives. Those "other avenues" may lead them into substance abuse and other delin-

quent behaviors.

There is a societal misconception that kids who use alcohol or drugs always come from homes that lack proper guidance and discipline... or have parents who simply don't know enough or care enough. On the contrary, even wonderful, loving parents may literally be the last ones to know that their child is using. The home front is often the last arena to fall apart.

If being a teenager is the most difficult job, certainly parenting one must be the second. As anyone that has ever lived with a teen knows, parenting can be hard under the best of circumstances. Parenting a teen that is alcohol or drug involved is especially complex and painful. To complicate matters even further, youth chemical involvement is hardly ever present in isolation. Mental health problems, delinquent behaviors, youth subculture involvement and escalating levels of violence are common parallel problems.

Project HUGS (an acronym for Have U Got Support) was created to provide parents of chemically involved youth with the help and support needed to address these problems. Based on a philosophy of parent empowerment and youth accountability, the

program provides parents with information, advocacy, case coordination and support services. The agency has served over 4,000 parents throughout Dane County since it's inception in 1985.

Although the agency's mission dictates that a youth AODA issue must be present in families served, the program addresses AODA and the many parallel issues that may also be impacting the youth or family. The program also draws from resources in both the public and private sector to meet each family's unique needs and to help them accomplish the goals they have established for themselves.



*Sandra Lampe of Project Hugs, Inc.*

It has been our experience that parents are often uncomfortable speaking with systems, professionals because of their fears of being judged as "bad" parents because this problem 'is occurring in their family. For that reason, HUGS staff is comprised of "par-

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## When it comes to anger management: **Girls Are Harder**

By **Sue Milch**, Dane County  
Human Services

Are adolescent girls tougher to deal with than their male agemates? According to many professionals who work with both male and female teens, girls are significantly more difficult. But Tamiko Dixon and Rhonda Voigt, both social workers with the Neighborhood Intervention Program (N.I.P.), have risen to the challenge.

Dixon and Voigt, who together run anger management groups for girls at N.I.P., describe the teen girls they work with as “very, very angry” and “hard to redirect.” Most are court-ordered to participate as a result of battery or disorderly conduct charges.

Dixon finds that establishing relationships with girls she works with takes time. For many, sexual abuse is a core issue, but they’re not ready to deal with it. Girls “push the envelope,” she says, more than boys and in different ways. They’re more verbally challenging and self-destructive; they “run the streets or go to Milwaukee.” A five-year veteran of DCDHS, Voigt notes that girls

have become “way more aggressive, way more physical and way more likely to explode over little things.”

Over the course of 12 weekly group sessions, Dixon and Voigt work with the girls on redirecting behavior and taking personal responsibility for their actions. Discussion topics focus on understanding and controlling feelings, decision-making, resolving conflicts in constructive ways, and peer relationships.

For the girls who’ve participated, how successful has this group experience been? Voigt and Dixon admit that results have been mixed. Some girls don’t show up regularly; others demonstrate by their behavior that they can’t get past their anger. But some participants do make gains: one girl, for example, wrote an essay crediting the group for giving her more insight into her behavior and new ways to react to different situations.

Despite the challenges, Tamiko Dixon and Rhonda Voigt will continue their good work. “We still have angry girls,” says Voigt, “but they’re working on their issues, and that’s a good thing!”

## **Hugs**

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ents who have been there.” This peer relationship allows the program to work with parents in a different manner than other professionals.

Parents coming into the program can expect to receive assistance in identifying and prioritizing problems; obtaining information about options available to address those problems; and, referrals to appropriate assessment, treatment or other services in the community. Their HUGS Advocate will work with them to make adjustments in their parenting techniques that will allow them to be more effective with their child. Parents may also work with their Advocate on learning new coping skills or a variety of other mechanisms to help them do the very difficult job ahead of them. The level of intensity and length of service varies to accommodate their individual and family needs.

New referrals to the program should contact the business office at (608) 845-6140 for screening. If appropriate for HUGS services, parents will then be assigned to an Advocate for intensive individual work. A wait list currently exists for this service.

# Youth Spotlight: BRIARPATCH Choices

**Editor's note:** *Choices is a program which Briarpatch, Inc. provides under contract with Dane County Human Services. Choices provides long-term counseling, using a weekly peer support group model, to high risk young women, ages 13-17, in Dane County. The following are first hand accounts of the program from Choices participants.*

## **Trista:**

This group means so much to me. I started 4 years and some months ago. I started out a crazy and loud girl who didn't care about myself. Then I came here. I changed so much. My whole life has changed since I came to CHOICES. It helps me through my problems. Lin has been there when ever I need her. This group has basically been a support group for me ever since I started. Every year we go on this trip (camping) and go up north and that is one way for us girls to go and just have a good time! A lot of the stuff that CHOICES do is so fun and lets us get away from our lives and get to live in this world that we never had. We just act so goofy and have fun. If it wasn't for CHOICES, I would never come... I mean be the way I am. I have a lot of respect for myself and others now. I also have

a lot of self-confidence. Since I been here, I have become a nice regular woman and am ready for anything. This group has made me and will make other women become the person they should be or want to be anyways. JGZG

## **Marissa:**

My name is Marissa Vickers and I've been in this group since I was 13 years old. Now I am 18, I am very successful now. Due to this group, I came in by court order, after that was done I wanted to stay longer which ended up in almost 5 years now. I was a very troubled young teen wanting to kill myself, not be here anymore, I thought that it was over for me, until I met Lin Giovanni, she let me know that I was worth something, and for me just having this group helped me let go of all of my problems and just take in the fact of people actually wanting to know me. I was young & stupid

thinking everything revolved around me, I used to skip school, do drugs, and drink. I was at a crossroad in my life after I got locked up for truancy, and I had to do something about it, because if I didn't this would be my life for a long-time. But CHOICES has turned me from a confused wanting attention teen into a responsible adult now and always hoping that she will always be there for someone else like me.



*Participants in the "Choices" program help support each other through group activities and discussions.*

## **Stephanie:**

I think that group should stay around because many of us girls have a chance to get together and talk about what ever and have all

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**Choices**

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the support of all the members I the group. So many girls are grateful that we have a place to come where we can be ourself and not be judged on what we do this group has helped me and has helped other girls in this group. Lynn is like a mother to me and so far helped me through a lot and I'm glad she is there for me.

**Other Views:**

CHOICES is a very important

part of many of the girls lives that are active in the group. We are free to express our views without the fear of getting shot down by others. We support each other through the bad times, telling each other our situations openly knowing there is always someone who will be there to walk with us through some of the hardest times of our lives. We bond through our outings in the community. Most of the girls in the group never even something as simple as dinner and a movie in there normal lives. In a way

choices is like a second family to most of us.

**Unknown**

This group means a lot to me. It modavates me to continue going to school and think about my future. Lin Giovanni & Jamie help us my the right decisions in life. They also make us feel like we always have somebody to talk to when we can't talk to our parents about anything. So I think you shouldn't end this program.

**Unknown**



**STARS**

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- 11:00-11:50 Academic counsel- ing in specified areas
- 11:50-12:00 Break
- 12:00-12:30 Lunch (provide by Dane County)
- 12:30-1:15 Review of aca- demic counseling
- 1:15-2:15 Behavioral manage- ment, communication skills, social, and or Guest Speakers
- 2:15-3:00 Recreation and enrichment programming

One of the following sources; Teachers from MTI (Madison Teachers Incorporated), University of Wisconsin Students, and or other volunteers within the community will complete the academic work done with the student. This group of volunteers **will spend at least 2.5 hours a day working with stu- dents**. Each student will receive academic counseling and classroom work in the area he needs the most. Most students will receive help in a variety of areas. Each student will be given a pre-test during the first week of programming, to gauge their academic standing. During the final

week of programming, each student will be given a post-test as a com- parative measure of the students progress.

We feel that in addition to academic skills, students may need to **some guidance in social skills**. If we can create less behavioral issues and open the lines of commu- nication between student and staff (teachers, and administrators) at school, the student has a chance to excel academically. **Respect, responsibility, and discipline are the core principles that should be gained by the youth.**

We will **complete one community service project over the summer**. Some examples of gifts from the past are the plant-a- row project for the food banks, Earth Day clean up, and fund raiser for the homeless and hunger. Initially we will let the students try to figure out a project that they would be interested in completing. If students do not find one, staff will decide the project for the summer.

Youth that are involved in this program, should be **non-adjudi- cated** males, who has a **sibling** already in the Juvenile Justice

system. In addition to programming for youth, we will hold **Parent Counseling** sessions. These sessions will **include informative workshops** that will provide parents with **additional skills** in family management.

**In addition** to our summer programming we will **continue to work** with the youth and his family for at least **one academic year**. Staff will continue to provide **Parent Counseling sessions** and monitor youth progress throughout the year. During the school year, staff will hold **study/homework group** twice a week. Staff will also hold behav- ior management, **life skills**, and **communication skill groups** once a week and continue to provide cultural enrichment programs. We are able to do this because of our collaboration with schools, and JFF offices within Dane County.

**Our overall goal is to get youth back on the Right Track, and improve the life experience of the individual and family.** For more information on the **S.T.A.R.S** program, please contact Ty Mahone at 273-6615.

## Billings Workshop

Continued from Page 2

community partners can have a positive impact on these kids. Dane County's Social Workers believe this too and strive to build bridges connecting families to their local schools. It can all be about attitude. It can all be about respect. It can happen by reaching down to take a child's hand or reaching over to pat a parent on the back and saying thanks for trying.

### "Here's How"

*See yourself as an artist rather than a technician. See yourself as part of a community who gives something back.*

*Understand that teachers can be students and students can be teachers. Understand that teachers can connect with all not just some.*

*Believe that all kids can succeed. Believed that knowledge can be mined rather than banked.*

*Teach bridge building. Teach excellence as a culturally complex and diverse standard.*

*Let everyone play quarterback. Let knowledge be questioned not always taken at face value.*

*Encourage the class to learn together not to compete. Encourage students to learn together as a community.*

Learning is interactive, grounded, interesting and open to innovation.

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