

## **Middle Earth Lunch-Time Mentoring Program**

The Middle Earth Lunch-Time Mentoring Program served 41 cases during the past academic year from Bound Brook, Franklin and Somerville school Districts. Following are some demographics, survey results and summaries of two students that we served:

Students were referred for a variety of reasons including: attendance, academic performance, behavior, peer relationships, mental health issues, medical issues, ESL support and social skills.

We served 65% female/ 35% male students with an average age of 11. Sixty-five percent were Hispanic, 23% African American, 10% Caucasian, and 2% Bi-Racial.

All of our intended outcomes were achieved and included:

85% of participants reported having a positive experience in the program;  
81% of participants reported an improvement in academic functioning;  
72% made behavioral improvements;  
77% made improvements in their social and daily functioning.

Some highlights from surveys include:

Students reported an average satisfaction rating of 8.3 with their end of school year grades compared to an average rating of 7.2 in the beginning of the school year;  
Students rated their interactions with other youth in their home as 8.3 at the end of the school year as compared to an average rating of 6.6 at the beginning of the school year;  
Students rated their self-esteem as 9.3 at the end of the school year as compared to a 6.3 at the beginning of the school year.

### **TS**

TS was referred to Middle Earth's Lunchtime Mentoring Program at the beginning of the school year due to academic and behavioral issues. When the mentoring sessions begun TS was very constricted and initially would not share much about his personal life. After consistently meeting with his mentor, TS started to express himself. Our mentor learned that many of TS's academic and behavioral struggles were related to instability and conflict at home. At the very beginning of the school year, TS had been living at home with his mother, father, and paternal grandmother. After several domestic disturbance incidences, TS's mother left the residence to stay with a friend. TS was able to verbalize that he did not get along with his father and was hurt by his mother's absence. This family issue precipitated TS's academic and behavioral issues. The school initially had no idea of these issues until the mentor was able to advocate on his behalf.

The mentor along with TS's school counselor and CMO case manager were able to collaborate to support TS and develop a plan that would help TS succeed in school as well as cope with his home life. TS's grades and behavior improved throughout the year. TS's mentor was critical in

developing a relationship in which TS was able to express himself and offer some insight into his behavioral and academic dysfunction. He also acted as a trusted and supportive positive adult in TS's life who was able to advocate on TS's behalf.

## **KO**

KO was referred to Middle Earth's Lunchtime Mentoring Program at the beginning of the school year due to multiple behavioral issues the previous school year and what counselors anticipated would be repeated issues this year. KO was relatively new to the school after emigrating from Africa. KO's family immigrated to the US because of political instability in their home country. While he was achieving academically, he was getting into frequent fights with his peers. KO was teased about his skin color as well as his accent and would frequently react physically to taunts.

KO's mentor worked with KO on his anger management and how he reacted to conflict at school. Over the year, KO was able to share his trauma history that contributed to his behavioral reactions. KO and his mentor worked with school support staff to help KO develop an emotional regulation plan. KO continued to excel in academics achieving Honor Roll as well as participating in multiple extracurricular activities and clubs including Dance Club, Soccer, Track, and the Youth Police Academy. KO was able to improve his behavioral record by going the entire school year without any disciplinary infractions. KO attributed his successful school year in a large part to his relationship with his mentor, stating that 'S... really helped me put things in perspective. People will always have negative things to say, how I react and how I live my life is what I have control over. It's also great when you have someone whose always got your back.'

### **Middle Earth Visions Plus Program**

The Middle Earth Visions Plus Program served three youth to date with two more referrals pending.

Referrals were made due to multi-system involvement, mental health issues, lack of social supports and the need for assistance with transitioning out of the system and into adulthood.

All of our cases have been female, were from North Plainfield or Franklin and were 66% Caucasian and 34% Latino.

Below are some of the outcomes that have been achieved to date:

Two of the three participants obtained employment;  
Two of the three participants completed their resumes;  
Sixty-seven percent reported an improvement in self-esteem as well as an improvement in their social and life-skills.

Survey information includes:

On a scale of 1- 5 where 5 is the highest rating, participants rated the following aspects of the program:

Obtaining employment - 5.0  
Staff Trustworthiness - 5.0

Job Searching - 4.5  
Mock Interviews - 4.5  
Independent Living Help - 5.0  
Staff Availability - 4.5

Participants provided the following quotes regarding their experience with the program:

“ The program gave me lots of support and personal motivation.”

“ The staff has influenced me to give back to the community and to keep making progress in my career.”

Narrative:

Two of the students enrolled in program worked through Visions and were enrolled in Visions Plus due to their ongoing need for more support. Each faces significant mental health issues, have battled homelessness and one of them also has a son to care for. One student is attempting to maintain enrollment in school. Both students have shown significant progress in the program and have attained employment and improved their individual resumes. They continue to need help finding appropriate and affordable housing as well as access to additional support for their mental and physical health.

A third student is 18 years old and is working towards completing high school and going to college. This student also requires aging out support and needs to secure a full-time job. We are currently working on developing her plan and are working closely with her case manager to begin her employment readiness training. In addition, we will be providing college readiness training to her as well.

### **Middle Earth Recreational Trips**

Our first trip was held on June 26th to Great Adventure. We reached out to DCP&P, , CMO, CASA and RHCMHC as well as opening the trip to Middle Earth youth. We filled two buses with 50 youth and 15 staff and supplied lunches to all of the children. The children had a great time and were able to spend the entire day at the park. They were fortunate enough to also have great weather on that day! Our next trip is scheduled to Dorney Park on August 1st. Following that, we hope to schedule a trip to a park for some nature walks and activities. In the Fall, we are hoping to plan a Red Bulls Trip and finally, a trip to Shaffer Farms for Halloween fun!