Supporting Youth Every Step of the Way

Teens on intercession from school were busy participating in activities with the YMCA. A project to be done after the intercession break has been planned to work on a community mural at Kamehameha School's Community Learning Center at Maili on the Leeward Coast of Oahu. But this is not an art class.

It is an integral part of the Y's island wide Substance Abuse Treatment Program that addresses not only the challenges of alcohol and drug issues, but more importantly provides the foundation and ongoing support to help our youth build successful futures.

Since 1962, the Kalihi Y branch has been the YMCA of Honolulu's headquarters for Y programs focused on helping teens throughout Oahu with substance abuse and family programs. Currently, the Y Substance Abuse Treatment program is offered onsite at 23 middle schools and high schools.

In addition to treatment services, the Y initiative incorporates Kauhale, an after-care program for youth focused on relapse prevention and helping youth who are transitioning from treatment to after-care to remain clean and sober. As these youth transition to early adulthood, the Y Future Opportunity Program also supports youth with employment and educational opportunities.

On the Leeward Coast, the Y operates the Substance Abuse Treatment Program at Nanakuli and Waianae Schools and the Kauhale after-care program at a Y site in Waianae. Many of these teens lack the community-based resources to reconnect them back to school, jobs, or advancing to higher education and future careers.

The Y's pilot program at Kamehameha Schools Community Learning Center at Maili this fall offered a safe and nurturing place for teens, along with leadership and development opportunity programs. Partnerships like these help us to collectively provide the resources to support youth in need to change the direction of their lives.

40 YMCA Substance Abuse Counselors are stationed at school sites throughout Oahu working with thousands of teens each year. Their work is challenging, but inspiring. Our counselors shared a few of their bright spots....

Sean: When "K" first entered our program, she was on the brink of following the path of her peers into a world of alcohol and drugs. We were able to get "K" to connect with a new group of peers who shared her values and did not smoke or drink. Today "K" is a junior in high school and is a participant in many of our Y leadership programs such as Youth & Government and Hiroshima Exchange program.

Mia: "S" came from a broken family – his father had been in jail for most of his young life and "S" struggled with anger issues. Alcohol and drugs were his escape. After going through our program, we encouraged "S" to participate in our Y school break programs, community services projects and to go after his dreams. He did. "S" recently passed his Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery test and will be leaving for bootcamp next Spring to follow his dreams.

Mel: There was a huge void in "M's" life when her parents divorced. She felt abandoned by her mother and hid her distress behind a bad attitude, drug use and failing grades. Our Y late night basketball was "M's" spark that opened her eyes to a different way of life and whole new set of friends and mentors. Her team won the Y basketball championship, but more importantly, today "M" is drug-free, excels in school, is taking AP classes, has a part-time job and a happy attitude about life.

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I am a scholar
I am the future
I am intelligent
I am unique
When the time comes, I will be a leader
When there is injustice, I will take a stand
I will be ambitious
I will succeed because I am and always will be
A POWER SCHOLAR and an educated leader for life!

Over the summer, each day, 25 incoming sixth graders to Central Middle School recited this Y Power Scholars Academy pledge. As I watched and listened, their enthusiasm, confidence and heart took my breath away.

In this inaugural issue of our President’s Newsletter, I am excited to share with you some of the ways in which the Y is helping kids to build a strong foundation for the future, and meeting students where they are to help them succeed. In future issues, I look forward to giving you a glimpse of the impact of the Y on all ages, from toddlers to our valued seniors.

Research shows that getting the right start in school can impact the success of children throughout their school years and beyond. The YMCA of Honolulu provides programs that support youth from preschool to post-high school, to ensure that all youth have the tools to succeed, no matter their family, economic or social background or challenges.

This summer I spent a morning at the Camp Agape program at our YMCA Camp Erdman. Camp Erdman has served Oahu for nearly 90 years as a place for kids to have fun, but it is often a healing place for organizations such as Camp Agape for kids who have a parent in prison, Operation Purple for kids whose parents are deployed at war or HUGS, for kids who have a terminally ill sibling. These youths’ resilience inspires us to do our best, for our youth, our families and our community. And I hope as you read through our many stories of hope and transformation, you will be equally inspired.

Michael Broderick
President & CEO
YMCA of Honolulu
Partnerships Close Youth Academic Achievement Gap

This past summer the Nu’uanu Y was buzzing with the vibrancy, enthusiasm and achievement of 25 middle school students who are proud graduates of the inaugural Y Power Scholars Academy and well on their way to academic success.

The YMCA of Honolulu piloted a six-week, full-day academy with our Nu’uanu Y Branch and Central Middle School, where the majority of students are challenged financially and academically. The program is intended to address the summer learning gap. The incoming sixth graders attended academic sessions with certified teachers in the mornings, then enrichment, health, fitness and community service activities with Y staff in the afternoons.

Power Scholars Academy is a collaborative effort between Building Educated Leaders for Life, a national non-profit originated out of Harvard Law School, and the YMCA. As part of this collaborative initiative, Harris United Methodist Church and Saint Peter’s Episcopal Church provided free breakfasts, hot lunches were provided through the Walmart-YMCA Food Program and prepared by Kapiolani Community College, and snacks were provided by the Nu’uanu Y Service Club.

Average results for this program nationwide are a two month gain in reading and math. Our Power Scholars showed a remarkable three month gain in both reading and math.

Principal Anne Murphy described the program as empowering as it provided scholars with social development to believe in themselves, but also academic progress to close the gap well beyond their time at Central Middle School.

Vice Principal Katchia Gethers noted that the program renewed and ignited her passion for education and teaching, enabling her to focus on building relationships with these students who have so much promise and potential when given the opportunity to believe in themselves.

Read Mike Broderick’s opinion piece on the Power of Partnerships for youth in the Honolulu Star-Advertiser: http://www.ymcahonolulu.org/about/media

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Starting School Ready to Learn is a Family Affair

Most grandparents or parents drop off their keiki at school each morning, but two years ago, Grandma Loke and her granddaughter Pa’a went to school together, at the Y’s Come with Me program.

For a few hours twice a week, spaces inside a Kalihi public housing complex, a church in Palama and the Nu’uanu YMCA are transformed into temporary preschool. The free program targets low-income families who might not otherwise send their children to preschool. Parents or caregivers are required to attend so the learning can continue at home.

The effort stems from a national pilot the YMCA launched five years ago to conduct early learning programs on-site in impoverished communities, where children typically aren’t attending preschool due to either economic or cultural reasons, or both. Nearly half of Hawaii keiki ages 3 to 4 years old — some 18,000 children — are not enrolled in early education programs.

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Big Dreams Come True With Y College Camp

Two years ago AJ Alcover never considered going to college. He had no idea how to apply or afford it and no confidence that he even belonged. He thought he was all on his own. Then he attended the Y College Camp. It was the first time he said “I truly felt accepted for who I was and given the confidence to pursue my dreams.”

After graduating from Farrington High School this May, AJ began his college career in September at Ivy League Brown University.

The YMCA College Camp provides a week-long experience for students entering their Junior and Senior years of high school. Students stay at the Atherton YMCA and participate in a variety of workshops, service projects, team-building activities and tours of university campuses throughout Oahu. This year the Y added a YMCA Nanakuli-Waianae College Camp as well.

Students discover more about themselves, experience independent living in a college environment, and gain a better understanding of what they need to accomplish in high school to attend college.

“College Camp helped us to interact with each other, to get to know each other,” according to AJ. “That sense of camaraderie helped to build my confidence to apply to college, and to apply for financial aid as well. I was not afraid anymore.”

The program is free for underserved students thanks to generous donors such as AT&T, McInerny Foundation and the Hamon and Ako Takitani Foundation, which provided college scholarships to camp alumni and mentors.

YMCA College Camp has positively impacted 222 high school students and 47 college student mentors over the past five years. Of participants not still in high school, 100% have graduated from high school and about 90% are now pursuing a higher education.

Find out more about AJ’s story and fellow high school seniors headed to college in this video: https://youtu.be/IlXC98wjX5Y and featured in the Star-Advertiser: http://www.ymcahonolulu.org/about/media.