

APROPOS

BATSHAW YOUTH AND FAMILY CENTRES

FROM MARTIN LUTHER KING TO BARACK OBAMA

Gail Bell, Human Relations Agent, AM, DCFS

February 5th marked the opening of our Black History Month (BHM) celebrations at BYFC. The activities kicked off with a movie presentation which featured a CNN short film titled from “MLK to Today” by director Antoine Fuqua. The film which tells the story from Dr. King to President Obama combined the full seventeen minutes of Dr. Martin Luther King’s widely acclaimed “I Have a Dream Speech” and excerpts from President Barack Obama’s acceptance speech for the democratic nomination back in November 2008. The short movie clip also portrayed the diverse face of modern America as individuals from different races, classes and creeds recited words from the “I have a Dream Speech.”

Dr. King’s famous speech, which was delivered during the March to Washington, was part of an ongoing campaign by Dr. King and the American Civil Rights Movement to address racial inequality and injustices like lower wages, substandard working conditions, separate parks, restrooms, hotels, theaters, schools, lynchings, etc. which were common place back then. On that day, August 28, 1963, Dr. King, from the steps of the Lincoln Memorial where Barack Obama was recently sworn in as America’s 44th President, proclaimed “I have a dream, that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed — ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal.’”

The film captured the theme of this year’s BHM celebration “Anything is possible; Yes we can” as Dr. King’s vision of an America where people would be judged not by the color of their skin, but by the content of their character actualized with the election and inauguration of the first African-American President of the United States.

The movie presentation was well attended by staff members who shared their views about the significance of this historic event. They mentioned the impact on their personal lives, their families, as well as the impact it has had on some of their clients. One mentioned how an eleven-year-old client who has been exposed to this zeitgeist (spirit of the times) told her he no longer has to limit himself to dreaming about being a basketball player or rapper now he can be anything. Many positive testimonies were shared and it was agreed by all that President Obama’s election is filled with symbolic meaning on a global scale and serves as a reminder that the lives of Black, White, Brown and all humankind are inextricably linked and that together we can achieve great things.

Like President Obama, we at Batshaw, must adopt Dr. King’s vision of hope and his lifelong goal of equal protection and equal opportunity which President Obama has emulated as we transfer this message of hope to our practice and hence to our clients. “Anything is possible; Yes, we can.”

MEDAL OF BRAVERY FOR NATHALIE HERVIEUX

Faith Fraser and Kuldip Thind, Educators, DCFS

In the early months of 2009, one of our own staff will be honored with the Medal of Bravery from the Governor General of Canada. On May 30th, 2005, constable Nathalie Hervieux who has not only been a police officer for the

past ten years but also a child care worker within Batshaw for the past 15 years, prevented a suicidal woman from jumping off a terrace that was 18 metres high at St. Joseph’s Oratory. She climbed out onto the ledge and with little regard for her own safety, Nathalie was able to hold onto the distressed woman until she could be brought down safely. Anyone who knows Nathalie is fully aware that this is very much in keeping with the tenacity that Nathalie demonstrates on a regular basis regardless of her job title. Her calmness when presented with challenging circumstances reminds us all of the great job that is done on regular basis. Kudos to Nathalie for reminding us all of this. We are proud of you, Nathalie!!!

FATHER/SON – MOTHER/DAUGHTER WEEKEND THERAPEUTIC CAMP EXPERIENCE

Christine Jagiello, Manager, St. James and Intensive Probation Programs, DRTSA

The summer camp season had come to a close, but Camp Weredale re-opened its doors for two very special weekend therapeutic camping experiences. These weekends were a pilot project that was offered to clients and their families within DRTSA.

In mid-September, two educators, Larry McDonnell and Steve Blackett, along with myself, took two sets of fathers/sons to Camp Weredale to enjoy a fun weekend away and to ultimately work towards an enhancement of their relationship. A few weeks later, Sandy Parks and Karen Goodhand joined me with another set of moms and daughters. Both weekends were supported by our clinical activities specialist, Sam Barile.

Other goals of the weekend were to increase and enhance communication, to develop a supportive network between the parents and teens and to begin to see each other as a resource.

The weekend included activities that allowed for participants to have the opportunity to hear each other’s voices, and provide opportunities for validation, cohesiveness, social support, reality checking and mutual sharing.

Methods of intervention included: therapeutic group activities such as large and small group discussion, experiential activities such as games, challenges, written work, arts and crafts, and relaxation and self-care activities. Activities were suited to either an all female or all male weekend. The participants also shared in the responsibilities for cooking and clean up. During the girls’ weekend, we were lucky enough to have educator Monique Laverdure join us and provide the group with instruction on massage.

The weekends were a great success with many of the goals realized. Staff involved describe the time away as incredibly useful and productive for the families. The intensity of the weekend was described as equal to “weeks of family meetings”. Participants acknowledged that, “my daughter does care about me”, “it helped make us closer”, “my son cooks pretty well”, “my uncle is a great team mate and also an advisor”, “my greatest valued possession is my dad”. Many thanks go out to all staff involved for their hard work, their incredible creativity and commitment towards clients and families. We look forward to upcoming sessions in spring and fall of 2009.

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