



On Balance

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Why We Do What We Do...

By Martha Stacker, Ph.D.

Tupac Shakur (1999) wrote, “Did you hear about the rose that grew from a crack in the concrete? Proving nature's laws wrong, it learned to walk without having feet. Funny, it seems to be by keeping its dreams; it learned to breathe fresh air. Long live the rose that grew from concrete when no one else even cared”.

On December 1st, 2018, I attended the graduation and was the keynote of the first cohort of Ready, Set, Go!. Ready, Set, Go! is a structured educational and employment 6-week program and curriculum developed by Diana Shinall. The program encourages underserved community members in the Northside Early Childcare Zone (NECZ) to gain employment, education soft skills and confidence necessary to sustain paying



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jobs, apprenticeships, and or pursue further education.

Participants are provided childcare by paid and volunteer staff during this intense program. For those who would like to continue their education—whether pursuing a GED, college degree, or certificate program – Ready, Set, Go! provides guidance and support. Often, the most difficult part about returning to school or gaining sustainable employment is getting started. In addition, there are employment & education dinners where members share their personal and professional experiences. Six NECZ community members successfully completed the program.

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Shakur (1999) was clear that, “If you let a person talk long enough, you’ll hear their true intentions”. I had the opportunity to meet the graduates before they entered the room for the ceremony and we began to share our life journeys. We were all roses from the concrete. They spoke about the struggles and challenges of doing something different. The graduates were candid about the expectations they now had and how difficult it felt for some and encouraging for others. Some embraced the change and some were fearful of it. After the graduates walked into the room of family and friends ahead of me, I realized, there was no difference of them from me. One step away from poverty, still having family in generational poverty and incarceration, health disparities – I was reminded of my own personal and professional struggles and triumphs. During the keynote, I didn’t read what I wrote originally, but spoke from the heart about life, loss, resilience, perseverance, and accountability. I challenged the graduates to step out of the box and stand on their square – now dare someone to knock them off it, no matter how hard they might push. I tapped the hand of each child in the room that had woos when they witnessed me in my regalia. I told them they all can be a doctor, lawyer, nurse,



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anything they want, and no one gets to tell them any different. Most importantly, I encouraged everyone to always set goals and accomplish them. Before the graduates were given their certificates, their children gave them roses.

Shakur (1999) wrote, "We wouldn't ask why a rose that grew from the concrete for having damaged petals, in turn, we would all celebrate its tenacity, we would all love its will to reach the sun, well, we are the roses, this is the concrete and these are my damaged petals, don't ask me why, thank god, and ask me how". Each graduate shared a personal story of struggle and triumph with the audience or me:

1. Viola – gave the graduation speech. She is 22 and the mother of 4. Viola is the first person in some time of her family to finish high school and has become a role model. She wants to go to college and works a full-time job. She starts her day at 4a.m.
2. Mimisha – has always wanted to pursue law but has felt discouraged and pressured to not do so by her peers. She has now accepted a job with the Sheriffs Dept. and will pursue becoming a Sheriff.
3. Elizabeth – struggled with a difficult and misdiagnosed pregnancy during the 6-week course and gave birth to a beautiful son on Nov 1st. She expressed living a very impoverished life in Mississippi. She is very proud to complete the program.
4. Calvin – told the story of how he would jog four miles to high school when he missed the bus in the rural south. Or, how when his car broke down in Madison, he would walk for two hours to a fast food job because the buses weren't running when it opened. Calvin has been offered a part-time apprenticeship job with the option of full-time after his probationary.
5. Kim – has obtained her CDL license but did not feel she could get her GED. While in the program, she discovered she is one

test away and wants to pursue further education. Madison Area Technical College is helping her get there.

6. Roosevelt - he kept saying it hard to make it but he is trying . Roosevelt was offered an opportunity to attend an apprenticeship program by a company that presented at Ready, Set, Go! By the way, Roosevelt and Kim are married.

"You never know how strong you can be until being strong is the only choice you have left" (Shakur, 1999).

The Rose that Grew from Concrete, Tupac's (1999) theme statement is "people surrounded by trouble and failure can still live and succeed". This is almost an exact reflection of struggle for success. People who come from broken homes, troubled youth, failed pasts or other tough backgrounds still can succeed and make something beautiful of their life. These are the reasons why we do what we do.

"The seed must grow regardless of the fact that it's planted in stone" (Shakur, 1999).

Referenced:

Shakur, Tupac. (November 1, 1999). The Rose that Grew from Concrete (1st ed.). New York, NY: Pocket Books. ISBN 978-0-671-02844-2. Retrieved November 30th, 2018.

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Judge's Corner

By Judge Shelley Gaylord



As many of you know, there are no group homes or residential care centers in Dane County. We are grateful for the dedicated foster parents who take in youth and handle the many challenges with patience and skill. We couldn't do this without you. Although the legislature and governor have authorized creating locked residential care facilities and closing LHS/CLS, that is likely to be delayed well beyond January of 2021. In addition, hundreds of beds have been lost around the state in group homes and residential care centers. Particularly for youth with aggression issues, this results in the remaining placements declining to accept them. As you also know, LHS/CLS are under a federal settlement agreement and it is a last resort option, for good reasons. In some cases we are sending youth out of state for the care we should be providing in Wisconsin. It is difficult for families to resolve issues and communicate about how to move forward when great distances separate them. So what is left to do?

First, we try to accurately diagnose the issues on an individual basis. This may be through psychological and psychiatric assessments, alcohol and drug evaluations, looking through school IEPs or other information available through schools and generally gathering as much information as possible about our youth, their environments and home life. Second, when possible, we hope to find the right resources at the right time with the right "dosage," so we can truly find the least restrictive alternative. Sometimes that takes some experimenting to find that fit. Sometimes our youth will engage in additional delinquent behaviors, which benefits no one nor the community. For some families under child protective services jurisdiction, reunification with parents is delayed if services are not quickly available. Sometimes other forms of permanency are also delayed. We know this isn't good for youth, families and the community at large.

We need the help of all those involved in the court system and in the community to build the services and facilities we desperately need. It cannot and will not be accomplished by locking up youth or unduly delaying reunifications or other forms of permanency. We surely need more skilled foster parents, ways to attract high quality group homes and residential care centers to Wisconsin. In other words, we need YOU! Become a mentor committed to understanding and working long-term with youth and parents. If you have been through the system, perhaps you could join with efforts to engage you with parents now in the system. Be a good listener. Bring a meal or help with transportation. We're all affected by this and are part of the solution. I have faith these are issues we can improve upon if we work together. Thank you for all you already do and what you will do.

On Balance

Consumer

Corner

Recruit Parents to Help Restore the Health of Children... By Paul J.

-- What is the goal?

Implicitly, parents are usually the most valuable asset towards healing and reforming children. Explicitly, this parent argues that children are best served with unmitigated, cohesive commitment to actively engaging the parents. Questions are how to identify the parents that struggle in this area and how to recruit and empower the parents who can help?

-- Introduction

To make a long story short, our children were engaged in short series of horrific and intensely painful activities, amongst themselves. At the time, we were a family of 5: mom, dad, 11 yro boy, 8 yro boy, 5 yro girl. My wife and I were alerted when one of the children inadvertently exposed the problem by way of age appropriate tit for tat squabbling. We self-reported and we became involved in the Dane County juvenile justice system.

-- On early engagement with parents

Events unfolded quickly. Safe Harbor lovingly and beautifully gathered forensics. We received a lot of good information, what the results would be and what we would be expected to do. Monumentally impactful decisions were made. People were talking to us, but why not "with us"? How to use the parents to start breaking new trail? What options can be made? Should the trail go through a swamp or over a steep hill? How can they be recruited to (effectively) participate in designing their new life?

-- On safety

Even as freshly traumatized parents, our triage activities and the early phases of our discovery were profoundly impactful, for the positive. What is the first response of the judicial system? What is the ultimate goal? Safety? Obviously, safety matters. When can court-ordered safety measures be envisioned as being risky, short term triage? Maladjusted, safe children are not acceptable outcomes. **The goal is GOOD HEALTH OF ALL CHILDREN.** Primum non nocere. Parents can help assess risk of recidivism and sensitivity of the child-victim.

-- On empathy and judicial reactions, part 1

Early on, it was nearly impossible for us to concisely say that we, simply, needed to address our conflicting parental pains. Additional concerns and workloads were necessary, but back breaking. Imagine how you might feel if one of your children was the victim of a horrible thing. Imagine a different situation where one of your children did something incredibly awful. How would the two sets of emotions compare to each other? Now, imagine what you might feel, think and need if both of those things happened at the same time, between two of your children. It's intense. As a reminder to what all social workers know, engaging people is difficult, yet vitally important.

-- On empathy and judicial reactions, part 2

Start with empathy and academic knowledge of child development.

Easy: Complimenting people's positive efforts and soothing their pain is a good way to increase the likelihood of good health for all children. For example, at the very beginning of our case, the investigating detectives were truly helpful, with their academic knowledge, understanding and appreciation for what we were doing.

Hard: Cultivate strengths. A common phrase is, "Parents love their kids". Love needs cultivation. Use action verbs? How to find parental strengths? How to visualize court ordered goals into parental activities that play to the strengths of the parents?

-- On teamwork

Sheriff Detective, Safe Harbor, DA, GAL, Public Defender, Corporate Counsel, CPS workers, JJ workers, Judges, Commissioners, therapists, all their assistants and substitutes...Everybody personally interacts with the parents. I felt most trusted and empowered when people demonstrated that they were actively and positively communicating with each other. That too, could be a tool for recruiting parents.

Please, don't hesitate to reach out to me. I'll take suggestions on how I can help. Please reach out to the editors of this newsletter if you would like to make contact with Paul.

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Operation Giving Hope version 5.0

By Heather Crowley

For the fourth straight year, Neighborhood Intervention staff have supported Operation Giving Hope. Though OGH was started 5 years ago, NIP joined the event starting the second year, as Human Services juvenile programming expanded to support youth and young adults who are at-risk of or have been involved in human trafficking. https://madison.com/wsj/local-state-response-evolves-on-sex-trafficking/article_f45165c7-6078-5d39-af9d-2405b7928f50.html

This year OGH was a morning event, occurring on August 30 at the Motel 6 on Lien Rd. Operation Giving Hope is a multi-agency response to families residing in hotels. Madison Police provide support in working with hotel managers to allow us space and opportunity to be on the property. Project RESPECT provides support, referral, and prosecutorial advocacy for adult and adolescent victims

of trafficking. NIP provides support and safety education to adolescents at-risk. Madison Schools ensure the Social Workers assigned to work with homeless families (TEP Program) get youth enrolled for school. Briarpatch Street Outreach staff provide referral and outreach support as needed. Clothing, baked goods, personal care items, book bags, shoes, blankets and other donated goods were offered to residents of the hotel. Thus far each hotel involved yearly has been an East side location as the number of homeless families continue to increase and many of the less expensive hotels are positioned by the mall and interstate. It should be made clear, however, that there are many hotels in Madison where families reside. In addition to family shelters such as the Beacon and the Salvation Army, there are shelters for single persons which are al-

ways unable to support the population in need. Our effort was smaller this year, though we impacted dozens of families.

If you would like to donate any items or have contacts that may be interested (gift cards are always a bonus) please contact Jan at Project RESPECT (jan@RESPECTMadison.com) or Heather at NIP (Crowley@countyofdane.com) We anticipate holding another event prior to school beginning in the fall of 2019.

On Balance

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

On Balance catches up with Robert Weatherby

By Rhonda Voigt

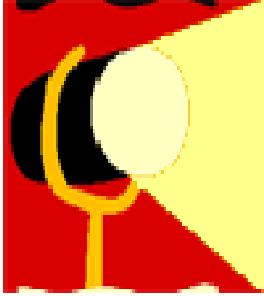


Mr. Robert Weatherby stopped by NIP for a visit recently. Robert shared many words of wisdom, as he always does. Robert reports that he retired as a CYF Social Worker in 2014. Regarding retirement, Robert recommends that everyone have a plan for activities they enjoy to help stay busy.

For Robert, his plan includes playing golf with friends and travelling with family. Robert's retirement travels have been extensive: the Dominican Republic, Cancun, Greece and trips to Los Angeles. The Weatherby's are a travelling family. They all went to Greece together for his daughter Kara's 25th birthday. Oldest son, Jamar has a vast goal to visit 100 countries – he has been to 62 so far! Robert is very proud of his children: Jamar, 40, is a labor attorney; Kara is a legal secretary and has plans to take the LSAT; and youngest son, Robert, Jr, is a UW lab technician. Robert maintains close relationships with family including nieces and nephews and their children, who visit often. He believes he is living the life he wants to live by building many lasting family memories.

Robert shares that he enjoyed his work at DCDHS. He fondly recalls meeting with families, assessing their strengths and needs and advocating for them in court. Robert appreciates the professionalism he was offered in his work, especially by attorneys and judges. He suggests that he was able to build positive relationships with our black community members by maintaining consistency in his recommendations and truly hearing the many varied family stories. During our chat, Robert reminds me that we can never please everybody. He further proposes that we have to occasionally push back or we risk being lumped in with the problem. Robert and I shared laughter both as we looked back and as we look forward to the next adventures. Thank you Robert!

On Balance



Staff Spotlight:

Nate Marzen, Initial Assessment Social Worker in Youth Justice: A Person Who Values Widespread Understanding

by

Dean C. Bossenbroek

When Nate Marzen and I scheduled a time to meet over lunch at the delightful Venezuelan themed restaurant, La Taguara, I expected to conduct an interview for *On Balance*. Instead, Nate asked me to email him the questions ahead of time, which informalized our meeting. We spent an hour getting familiar with each other and eating delicious, northern South American cuisine. What I took away from that hour well spent was a deeper understanding and appreciation for someone I already respected on a professional level.

Nate is unassuming. He is curious and compassionate. He loves baseball and good food. His family's wellbeing is paramount. Nate knows how to persevere through life's challenges. He sees the positive all around him. He cares. Below are my questions and his written responses.

DCB – What is your current familial status?

Nate – I'm a single father of two sweet daughters (6 year-old Stella, and 10 year-old Nadia).

DCB – Where is your place of birth and/or hometown?

Nate – I was born in Pittsburgh, where my father was finishing his schooling. During my infancy however, my parents returned to their native Chicago, which is where I was raised, and where my family's home base continues to be.

DCB – What degree(s) have you earned?

Nate – B.A. (Philosophy, Religion), B.S. (History, Secondary Education), M.S.W.

DCB – What led you to a career in human services?

Nate – I guess it began when I was in 8th grade. On a regular basis, a seminarian associated with my church youth group started bringing me and one of my friends to the Uptown Community on Chicago's Northside. This neighborhood was teeming with homeless folks who'd been living out of shopping carts, camped-out under L stops or in alleyways, if not in shelters. Our efforts were not elaborate – we walked up and down the streets, greeted people, and passed out sandwiches that we'd doctored on the hood of the seminarian's car just minutes prior (ham, cheese, and bread purchased from a nearby Aldi's). These very simple acts of giving really resonated with me, and set me on a course that led me to the various service jobs that I've since done.

DCB – When did you begin your career with Dane County?

Nate – In mid-2007, when I was hired as a CPS Social Worker charged to assess maltreatment allegations.



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DCB – What is your current job?

Nate – I am an Initial Assessment Social Worker in Youth Justice.

DCB – Have you undertaken other professions?

Nate – Briefly in my mid-20s I taught history and political science at a high school on Chicago's Westside. I'd had a vision of teaching philosophy to inner city teens, but different twists and turns prevailed upon me and brought me back to the social services, where I belong. There is still a teacher in me, but I am first and foremost a social worker.

DCB – Describe a client success story of which you were a part.

Nate – Well, the most gratifying thing for me over time has been the people I've come to meet and care about, some of whom I've sustained really meaningful relationships with over time. For instance in the late 90s, there was a 9-year-old kid I met through my work at the Salvation Army Family Shelter. She was just one of those people who I loved from the first. She came to leave the Shelter and the state, but then she wrote me letters from Indiana, eventually returned to Madison, and through time became family to me. We've stayed close ever since, and I'm so proud of who she's become. She is now 29, a loving mother and wife, has a strong work ethic, a good head on her shoulders, and continues to have the great heart that she displayed when I first met her. I feel very fortunate to have walked alongside her for so many years through her many trials and triumphs, to have seen her endure, learn, make strides, and continue to dream.

DCB – Your Youth Justice Assessments are the most well written of any I have read during my 24 years of reading such assessments. They are descriptive and detailed, without being verbose; they are grammatically intact. I always have a clear picture in my mind of what I will encounter, when I meet the family for the first time. What motivates you to take the time you do to write such excellent reports?

Nate – I thank you for those kind words. I would say that, of course the most important part of assessing youth and families well begins with engaging them, connecting with them in a way that might enable them to see that I genuinely want to understand, educate, and help them. If I can get my families really talking, they provide me with good information about who they are and what their lives have been like. I can use this information (along with information gathered from other sources) to understand a youth's intrinsic strengths and struggles, as well as the positive and negative forces of the environmental contexts (home, family, school, neighborhood) from which they've come. All of this informs the plan that I make with family, a plan that aims to address the youth's and family's identified needs. These things said, what good is really understanding a youth's/family's needs, and proposing a plan to address these, if other important players who wield influence on outcomes don't see the concerns and potential remedies as I do? I am grateful to collaborate with a lot of good, competent professionals who also want to do their best to help our youth and the community. So, how can I help them best play their parts, as I'm trying to best play mine? I try to have my writing help attorneys and judges better understand our youth, so that they can make more informed legal decisions about them. My assessments also help my social service colleagues, who will soon be serving the youth and family – the MDFT therapists, Briarpatch staff, my Ongoing YJ colleagues here at DCDHS, in-house program leaders, and so on. Maybe reading my assessments might subtly affect the approach that one or more of them takes in their respective roles, in a way that might enhance their own effectiveness with the youth and family. This then, is the hope that I nurture: that my assessments might simply be useful to the professionals who read them.

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DCB – Have you done any other writing for fun or for work?

Nate – I have done a bit of writing outside of work and have begun exploring other avenues for this in the past year. We'll see how things continue to develop, I guess. I certainly have always enjoyed writing and the way that the writing process has served to clarify and fuel my thinking.

Nate's Response to *This, That, or the Other*

DCB – Willy St. Co-op or Woodman's?

Nate – Woodman's

DCB – Paper, plastic, or cloth?

Nate - Plastic

DCB – Thin crust, or thick crust?

Nate – Thin

DCB – Cassette, LP, CD, or MP3? What's the latest artist you listened to from your collection?

Nate – MP3. Sufjan Stevens. A Tribe Called Quest. I have eclectic musical tastes.

DCB – Yount or Yelich?

Nate – El Mago/Javy Baez (Go Cubs!)

DCB – Corn on the cob: grilled or boiled?

Nate – Boiled

DCB – Ugly Sweater or Halloween costume?

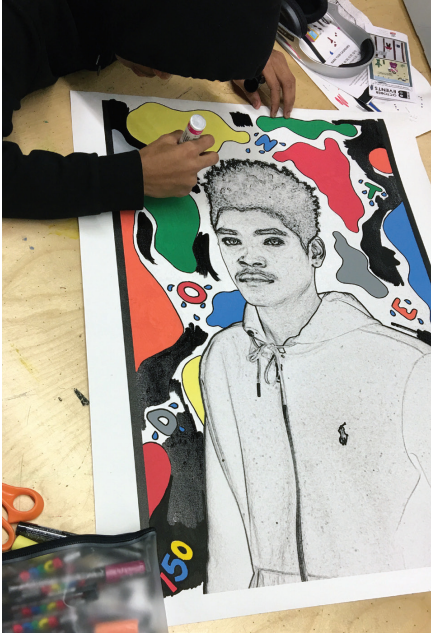
Nate – Anything that fits? My style is not very unique (ha, does that mean I have no style?), and I'm generally more preoccupied with trying to find things that will actually fit my tall (6'6") self.

DCB – Netflix or the theater?

Nate – Netflix

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FauHaus offers court-involved youth a ‘space of imagination and infinite possibilities’

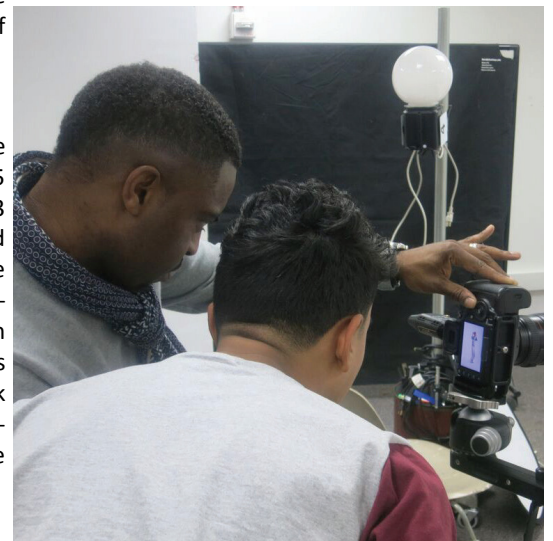


Whether presenting a new collection of artwork in his hometown of London, speaking with UW–Madison students or working with court-involved teens in Dane County, Wisconsin, Faisal Abdu’Allah isn’t afraid to draw attention to — or ask probing questions about — history, race and intolerance. “Everywhere I travel, the rubric is the same,” says Abdu’Allah, an associate professor with the School of Education’s Art Department. “I’ll meet a group of students less fortunate than myself and think, ‘If it weren’t for my strong family structure growing up, that could have been me.’”

Abdu’Allah is an internationally acclaimed artist who creates iconographic imagery of power, race, masculinity, violence and faith to challenge the values and ideologies attached to those images. He came to UW–Madison in 2013 as the Arts Institute’s Interdisciplinary Artist in Residence, and he returned in the fall of 2014 to join the Art Department as a faculty member. During this period, the Wisconsin Council on Children and Families released the “Race to Equity” report that put the spotlight on the Madison area’s profound racial disparities in education, child welfare and the criminal justice system, among other realms. Three-quarters of Dane County’s African-American children live in poverty, compared to 5 percent of white children, the 2013 report explained. Half of all black high school students don’t graduate on time. And black juveniles, the report noted, were six times more likely to be arrested than white juveniles.

While such inequities are deep-rooted, Abdu’Allah has a unique ability to infuse people with confidence that the future doesn’t have to look like the past. “Anyone with support will fly,” he says this fall while hanging out with six Madison-area teens at The Bubbler, a hub within Madison’s Central Public Library that connects artists to the community via a range of free, hands-on making, exhibitions and events. “Instead of watching young people become a representation of what some members of society expect, it’s important to help people become the very best of themselves.”

Abdu’Allah’s efforts center on utilizing the arts to connect with young people, nurture their creativity and confidence, and help give them a voice. Each semester for 15 weeks he runs the FauHaus Project, which he launched while visiting campus in 2013 and that he retooled and restarted in 2015. This project connects court-involved and at-risk youth with area artists, resources at The Bubbler, and a unit within the Dane County Department of Human Services. “When we offer this program to the court-involved youth, an arts program is often the last thing they want to do,” says Alan Chancellor, a program leader with the Neighborhood Intervention Program, which is part of Dane County Human Services’ Youth Justice Offices. “But we have this hook to get the students involved because it’s often a part of a deferred prosecution agreement, where if they take part in our program for six months and take care of some other business, the charges can go away. So it’s a critical time for them.”



When asked why he agreed to take part in FauHaus, one 15-year-old replied quietly, “I was in a bad place before, so I thought I’d give it a try.” One October evening, the students met with visiting artist Carlos Gacharná, an alumnus who first helped bring arts to underserved youth as an undergraduate taking a service learning course through Art Department Professor Gail Simpson. Over the years, Gacharná

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has taught a range of classes at The Bubbler and has partnered with Abdu'Allah and others on restorative justice projects. During this visit to The Bubbler, Gacharná led a pattern design session that included a history lesson on how patterns spread across the globe through the African diaspora. "We can connect with students in ways that aren't always possible in schools," says Gacharná, who lives in Long Beach, Calif. "It's personalized and a way to disrupt ways in which some students keep getting pushed to the margins."

Rob Franklin, also known as Rob Dz and the media projects bubblerarian at The Bubbler, adds that by the time some of the youth become involved with the FauHaus project, they are already being written off as "unworthy" or "problematic."

"That's frustrating, because these are just kids!" says Franklin, a Kennedy Center certified teaching artist for the Making Justice program who focuses on hip hop, personal branding and spoken word as a positive form of self-expression. "We've all made mistakes. These guys are only 14, 15 or 16 years old. Sure, some are at a bit of a crossroads. But programs like this allow us to make connections and help students view themselves and the world in a different way."

The students have gotten involved in art-related activities like painting, printmaking, spoken word, performance and photography, while contributing to discussions pertaining to identity and representation in visual culture. The art produced stems from the participants' stories and experiences. "I've learned that I really enjoy art," says one 15-year-old.

FauHaus is linked to the Madison Library's Making Justice Program, which was initially developed as a Wisconsin Idea initiative in partnership with Nancy Buenger and UW–Madison's iSchool. Making Justice was seeded, in part, by grants from both UW–Madison's Ira and Ineva Reilly Baldwin Wisconsin Idea Endowment and the Morgridge Center for Public Service, along with a National Leadership Grant from the Institute for Museum and Library Services. "What's unique about the program and what makes it work are the individuals involved," says Chancellor, who highlights the efforts of Abdu'Allah, Franklin and Bubbler teen services librarian Jesse Vieau. "There are many programs that try and deliver something — but it doesn't mean it's received well by the target audience or it has any value to the wider community." When asked if FauHaus has value in the eyes of the Neighborhood Intervention Program and the Dane County Human Services' Youth Justice Offices, Chancellor says: "It's extremely valuable. I only wish more kids could take advantage of it."

FauHaus is also part of the new UW Community Arts Collaboratory, which was made possible via the School of Education's inaugural Grand Challenges Engage grant competition. Grand Challenges was launched in February 2017 to back interdisciplinary teams to address critical problems that span the arts, health and education. The Collaboratory, which is led by School of Education faculty members Erica Halverson (Department of Curriculum and Instruction), Kate Corby (Dance Department) and Abdu'Allah, provides artmaking opportunities for youth to cultivate wellness and advocate for social change. "I think the real impact from FauHaus will be in the next five to 10 years," says Abdu'Allah. "We have testimony from students talking about the impact this has made on their lives. I need to think of next steps on how I can collect more data over time and prove its worth."

For now, Abdu'Allah says simply: "I'm confident that our work here, and our partnership with The Bubble, offers a space of **imagination** and **infinite possibilities**."



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Fauhaus

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The “Too Much Sauce” traveling teen art exhibition came to life during the Fall 2016 semester. This Bubbler and FauHaus project brought together UW-Madison students, staff, and the youth of greater Madison to celebrate cultural relativity, political awareness, and human growth and development.