



# On Balance

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

March 2007  
Volume XI, Number 1

## Law Enforcement Solutions for Reducing Disproportionate Minority Contact

By **Barbara Franks**, Dane County DMC Coordinator

On September 8-10, 2006, the Federal Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) and the Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ) co-sponsored the 11<sup>th</sup> Annual Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana. The Conference, entitled, "Law Enforcement Solutions for Reducing Racial Disparities and Disproportionate Contact in Juvenile Justice" presented a broad range of topics designed to identify law enforcement issues that may contribute to disproportionality and to propose effective strategies to address these issues. I and Madison Police

Officer Ken Snoddy (West High ERO) attended.

The point of contact between police and youth of color is perhaps the most critical contact in the entire juvenile justice system. The officer's account of events and description of the youth's demeanor goes a long way toward influencing decisions on how the youth will be handled in the justice system and forms the basis for the youth's perception of how "just" the system is. The youth's expectations for future encounters with police begin with this initial contact.

### What we Know About DMC in Dane County

The arrest rate of African American youth in Dane County has demonstrated a steady increase

See DMC Page 13

## Juvenile Court Recognition Awards for 2006

The 2006 Juvenile Court Recognition Awards were presented to the recipients below at the Ninth Annual ceremony held on February 28. More information about the awards and recipients may be included in the next On Balance.

This year's recipients are:  
**Bobby Moore** – *Peter Rubin Award*

**Judge Moria Krueger** – *Ervin Bruner Award*

**Camille Young** – *George Northrup Award*

Recognized for *Outstanding Service* were **Deena Williams, Cora White, Michael Dyer, and Joan Klang.**

Youth recognized for *Outstanding Achievement* were **Ashley McIntyre and Kennedy Klingele.**

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On the web @ [www.co.dane.wi.us/juvenilecourt/](http://www.co.dane.wi.us/juvenilecourt/)  
[www.co.dane.wi.us/humanservices](http://www.co.dane.wi.us/humanservices)



# MMSD Addresses Disproportionality In Special Education

By **Dennis Whitish**, Madison Metropolitan School District

The Madison Metropolitan School District has looked carefully at its statistics and determined that there are a disproportionate number of African American students placed into special education in the categories of emotional/behavioral disabilities (EBD) and specific learning disabilities (SLD). To a lesser degree, these concerns are evidenced in our identification of American Indian students as well.

The district has initiated a number of interventions to address this issue. Jack Jorgensen, Director of Special Education Services for MMSD, shared his concerns with school psychologists, social workers and administrators to define this disturbing trend as well as to work together with school staff to address this issue. In addition, the district has established a relationship with The National Institute for Urban School Improvement (NIUSI).

MMSD and NIUSI staff identified 10 MMSD Elementary schools that would be targeted for intervention to address

disproportionality. These schools include: Chavez, Emerson, Gompers, Kennedy, Leopold, Lincoln, Lowell, Midvale, Randall and Thoreau. According to MMSD Today, the goal of the MMSD NIUSI project is to "eliminate race and culture as predictors of success in MMSD by using research-based racially and culturally responsive practices to support Engagement, Learning and Relationships."

In addition to working with NIUSI, the district has been collaborating with Drs. Chiang, Fiedler and Van Horen from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, Department of Special Education. A checklist to address exclusionary factors for special education eligibility determination has been

developed. According to its authors, the checklist is a tool to assist school staff in identifying and discussing relevant external and internal factors when considering a minority student for special education programming.

School psychologists and social workers are typically involved in the referral and evaluation of students suspected of having a disability. They also work with students who have been identified in a number of ways to promote student learning. In addition, they work in their schools to help implement school-wide behavior supports, provide intervention services, and foster a school climate that embraces diverse cultural beliefs and practices and celebrates diversity.

*On Balance* is a publication of Dane County's Department of Human Services and Juvenile Court Program.

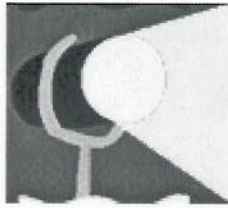
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# Staff Spotlight on: Aaron Perry

Hello, my name is Aaron G. Perry and I began working as the new Gang Squad/ Program Leader with the Neighborhood Intervention Program on April 3, 2006. I have worked with Dane County for approximately 10 total years with previous departments including the Economic Support Division and the Juvenile Court Program. During my 15-year career, I have worked primarily in the Human Services, Corrections and Law Enforcement field within the states of Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin. I have completed numerous trainings during my career including the Detention Officers



*Gang Squad Leader  
Aaron Perry*

Academy, the Police Academy and the Department of Corrections Corrective Thinking Curriculum.

I worked as a Police Officer with the University Of Wisconsin Police Department from January 2000 through November 2001. I also volunteered with the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence from 2000-2002.

In my spare time I participate in Triathlons. Last year I completed the Ironman Wisconsin Triathlon,

See Perry, Page 4

## Where Are They Now??? Buck Rhyme

By Jim Moeser

For many years beginning in the late 1970's and up through December 2000, Richard "Buck" Rhyme was one of the central participants in the development of many of the services we now take for granted in the Dane County juvenile justice system.

Buck began in November, 1978 as a Counselor with the relatively new Youth Restitution

Program, and in 1981 when the former director left assumed the Executive Director role of what then was a 5-person operation, focusing solely on working with youth completing restitution and community service obligations.

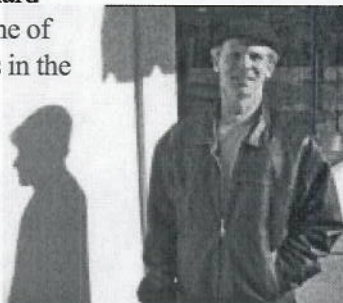
But, it didn't take long before Buck began to look at other

needs that youth and the community

had, so he took an active role in expanding services to youth employment and other forms of delinquency supervision. With the addition of those services and increasing partnerships with other programs to serve youth and families, the staff and budget of what eventually became Community Adolescent Programs grew by over 1200% during Buck's tenure as Executive Director.

Community Adolescent Programs, in partnership with the Mental Health Center of Dane

See Rhyme, Page 6



*Buck Rhyme remains active in  
the the community*



# Dialogue With The Judges

By **Dave Thorson**, Dane County Department of Human Services

Since 1999, the Dane County Juvenile Judges and Court Commissioners have been visiting DCDHS periodically in order to have a candid discussion about the state of the court system in Dane County. These sessions have been generally well received and have generated spirited discussion and questions. At the most recent meeting last fall, Judges John Albert and Moria Krueger were able to attend, with incoming Judge Bill

workers to be assertive in presenting their professional opinions especially around placement decisions, and not intimidated just because other players in the court room may have differing positions. The judges clearly appreciate when workers provide memos updating them on significant changes in case status, along with reminders when they have given kids the "this is your last warning" speech. Judge Krueger encouraged workers to try and avoid standardized, cookie cutter recommendations and focus instead on the specific problems

with the delinquents. And speaking of wishing for the impossible, they'd like hearings to actually start on time more often than not.

Judge Foust wisely kept his own counsel during the discussions. Nevertheless, it was greatly appreciated that he made time in his schedule to attend. In fact, all three of the judges who came to this meeting had legitimate reasons they could have used to beg off. It is a tribute to their dedication and respect for social work staff that they came anyway.

All of the outgoing judges will



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Social Workers began the meeting with questions about the judicial rotation, since two of the judges will be rotating out and Judge Krueger has retired. It turns out judges are required to rotate. It is also true that their staff tend to be challenged by the extra work that apparently comes with juvenile cases as opposed to civil or criminal.

Judge Albert encouraged

workers to be assertive in presenting their professional opinions especially around placement decisions, and not intimidated just because other players in the court room may have differing positions. The judges clearly appreciate when workers provide memos updating them on significant changes in case status, along with reminders when they have given kids the "this is your last warning" speech. Judge Krueger encouraged workers to try and avoid standardized, cookie cutter recommendations and focus instead on the specific problems and services needed to address them.

Getting out the crystal ball, Judge Albert wished for more fathers to be involved in cases, fewer teens getting in serious trouble, and then if only aliens would abduct Paris Hilton. . . . . Workers' wish list included returning 17 year olds to juvenile court, but only if 10 and 11 year olds went back to being CHIPS (children in need of protection and services) instead of being lumped in

with the delinquents. And speaking of wishing for the impossible, they'd like hearings to actually start on time more often than not.

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All of the outgoing judges will be missed. We certainly hope that the new group recognizes the value of meeting more informally to assess the relationship of human services with the courts, and look for ways to improve that relationship. Families and children undoubtedly benefit when there is mutual understanding and respect for both the skills and limitations of each of our roles in the court process.

## Perry

Continued from Page 3

which consists of a 2.4-mile swim, 112-mile bike and 26.2-mile run. I became the 1<sup>st</sup> African American Insulin Dependent Diabetic in the World to complete this event. On April 15, 2007, I will be one of 2000 athletes from around the

world who will participate in Ironman Arizona Triathlon in Tempe, Arizona. I recently completed my first book entitled "Through The Storm" scheduled to be released in April 07.

The message that I share with

the youth in Dane County is,

Be positive, Be productive  
and Be present.

Life is all about how we  
respond to it.

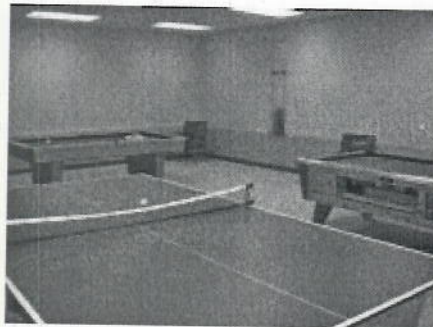


# Neighborhood Intervention Program Gets a New Home

After months of preparation, NIP finally moved into its bigger, better home late last year. The new NIP is located at 1227 North Sherman Avenue in Madison.



The facility houses a multitude of programs serving the needs of youth and their parents in our community. These programs include Right Track Second Chance, Right Track Plus, REPLAY, Spartans basketball, STARS, Future Leaders, Right Track ADDS and Right Track Discussion



Group. A new program, Focus, specifically designed to help keep youth out of correctional facilities, has its day programming in the NIP building.

Features of the new NIP include a professional suite



of offices and meeting rooms for, classrooms, lots of office space for group leaders and social workers a new kitchen, bright and spacious group rooms, areas for computer work and

research, a game room with pool tables and ping pong as well as rooms for meeting and learning.





# Subculture Corner

## Youth Subcultures Conferences Scheduled for April 2007

*What's happening on Friday, the 13<sup>th</sup>?* If we're talking about April, it's the **Youth Subcultures Conference**, sponsored by the Dane County Youth Gang Prevention Task Force. Held every

couple of years, this event brings in national and local presenters to address a variety of current issues and trends relating to youth.

This year's participants will learn about two inspirational

programs that have helped deep end youth turn their lives around. Scott Larson from Straight Ahead Ministries in Boston will discuss how his program has achieved success with challenging "throw-away kids." Juvenile Justice Ministries director Gordon McLean will highlight the exciting work his organization is doing with young male offenders in Chicago.

Also offered will be a variety of workshop topics to include: working with girls; Latino & African American street gangs; restorative justice practices in school settings;

mentoring troubled kids, white supremacy, a local and state-wide update on gangs, and hip hop/urban arts.

This all day conference will be held at the University of Wisconsin Memorial Union, 800 Langdon Street, in Madison. There is a \$30 registration fee. A registration form is included at the end of this newsletter.

For more information or to get on the mailing list, contact [milch@co.dane.wi.us](mailto:milch@co.dane.wi.us) or [jay.kiefer@YouthSOS.org](mailto:jay.kiefer@YouthSOS.org)

### Rhyme

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County also formed what has become the leading private sector provider for Children Come First services, Community Partnerships.

It wasn't just "expansion" that was the hallmark of Buck's tenure with Community Adolescent Programs (CAP) but more importantly a firm commitment to outcomes and quality assurance. Buck made continuous quality improvement part of the everyday life of the agency and successfully brought in and supported staff who reflected that commitment to quality.

In December 2000 when Buck left CAP to go into the private sector, it was no surprise that he took the lessons he'd

learned at CAP and began to apply them in his consulting work with a variety of organizations and agencies. After several years of consulting work as an individual and in collaboration with his wife, Buck became a partner in Organizational Skills Associates, a private consulting firm focusing on building the skills that lead to systematic performance excellence.

Through his work at OSA, Buck now works with a wide variety of private sector, government, and non-profit agencies. Perhaps Buck's commitment to excellence is summed up in his statement that "...being good is not enough."

When asked about the simi-

larities and differences in working with the non-profit sector and the private sector, Buck notes that there are many similarities in what makes organizations great, including committed leadership, a willingness to commit to evaluation, and a vision for excellence. As to differences, he noted that it is nice to "...work with no more reluctant clients!"

There is no doubt that Dane County is better off as a result of Buck's leadership in the juvenile justice world, and there is no doubt that through his current work with others they too will find success that ultimately benefits the community.



# Leadership Changes at Community Partnerships Builds on Strengths

By Sherri Gatts, Youth Services of Southern Wisconsin

Community Partnerships recently experienced some opportunities for leadership changes. Dr. Tom Wright served as both Medical Director and Interim Executive Director for about a year until Scott Strong was promoted to the position of Executive Director in September 2005.

A few months later, Dawn Woodard was promoted to Clinical Services Manager/Provider Network Manager. Both Strong and Woodard have been with Community Partnerships since it first opened for business in 1999. Other members of the Leadership Team are: Dr Tom Wright, Medical Director; Dusty Rogers, Quality Improvement Manager/School Liaison; Cathy Franklin and Sue Katzer, Clinical Supervisors; and Clare Kimpel, Controller.

Soon after assuming the position of Executive Director, Strong and other members of the Leadership Team evaluated the agency's existing structure, and the staff positions, to determine the best structure for moving forward. "It was a great opportunity to look at the existing structure of the agency's Leadership Team and the job descriptions,

and determine what responsibilities fit best with each position," Strong explained.

When long-time Quality Improvement Manager John Baumann resigned in 2006 to accept a position with Dane County Juvenile Court, a review of his position and the needs of Children Come First and the agency were undertaken. With input from parents, stakeholders and supervisors at Dane County Department of Human Services, it became apparent that successful community plans were often dependent on youth being successfully engaged in school. Since teaming with schools was an identified area of need,



school liaison duties were added to the quality improvement position.

Dusty Rogers, a case coordinator with the agency since October 2002, applied for the position and was promoted in September 2006. It is a very different type of responsibility, but she felt ready,

willing and more than able to take on the challenge. Within the agency.

"I feel very comfortable working with school issues, so this has been a great transition for me," Rogers commented. "It is an opportunity to take what I was already doing to the next level, in a more visible and responsible position." Rogers stays busy doing outreach with Dane County schools to let them know what CCF is all about. "I also do a lot of consulting and coordinating with schools about specific clients," she explained.

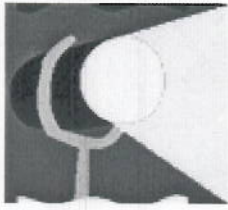
Rogers has also been busy evaluating utilization data and presenting this information to the Leadership Team and staff. The

Leadership Team hopes to use this information to better understand and improve the service array to promote better outcomes for youth.

In addition to the staff changes, there has been ongoing board development since Strong became Executive Director. He identified key areas in the community and recruited board members from those

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# Staff Spotlight on: Connie Bettin

## Dane County's New Prevention Services Manager

**ON BALANCE:** Tell us about your previous experience and why you decided to apply for this Prevention Services Manager position.

**Connie:** I moved to Madison in 1990 after working for several years as a therapist with a community mental health center in rural Illinois. After one visit to Madison, I knew I wanted to move here to live and work. I worked as an in-home family therapist for Lutheran Social Services for 6 years. As an in-home therapist, I had the opportunity to work throughout Madison and the outlying communities with families involved in both the child welfare and delinquency systems. In

1996, I accepted a position with Family Service, Inc. to oversee their



*Connie Bettin is the new Prevention Services Manager at DCDHS.*

in-home programs, Safe at Home and Families in Transition. During my 10 years with Family Service, my

responsibilities expanded to managing a mental health day treatment program for children, adult mental health and AODA services, and many of its internal operations. I value the years spent with Family Service and have tremendous respect for my colleagues there—very dedicated and creative professionals. Why would I leave something I value to join Dane County Human Services? There were many reasons, but mostly I wanted to be a part of problem solving and addressing system challenges on a macro level—an opportunity not available

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### Partnerships

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disciplines for vacant seats on the board. This includes board members with expertise in mental health, criminal justice, schools, media, and finances/budgeting. "The board members have a passion for this work and a nice level of commitment to the agency," explained

Strong. Board members have shadowed case coordinators in court, at team meetings, and at school meetings to increase their awareness of the agency and the challenges faced by the staff.

The board members and Strong believe that it is important to

establish an inclusive environment where people have a meaningful role in what happens in the agency. Strong summarized it nicely when he said "the employees of Community Partnerships want to be here to work with kids and their families."



## On Balance

### An interview with Madison Police Officer Michael Franklin

By **Bobby Moore**, Dane County Department of Human Services, NIP

**On Balance:** Mike, can you say what kind of work you've been doing professionally, socially, and why you wanted to become a Madison Police Officer?

**Mike:** I was working for a company called "Bove Density Machines", we made parts for General Electric (GE). I volunteered at the Evangeline Life Center in their youth ministry and coached football (freshman) at Madison West High School. I realized that Madison was a great place to be raised. Growing up in Madison the police were always around, and I liked that they helped kids. I also enjoyed the possibility of doing something different everyday."

**On Balance:** Do you have ideas about what you would like to focus on as a new police officer?

**Mike:** I would like to have kids feel they can come to me anytime. I would like to be a tool for kids and keep life in Madison similar to when I was growing up."

**On Balance:** How do you see MPD fitting into the overall culture of Madison?

**Mike:** I think we have done a good job with the community policing model. I feel all officers and citizens have to work together to keep Madison on the list of great places to live."

**On Balance:** As a child, were there any memories you would like to share?

**Mike:** As a child I was a participant in the Neighborhood Interven-

tion Program (N.I.P.) My participation with N.I.P. was some of the most memorable and beneficial times of my life. I loved the study groups, doing homework and playing basketball and baseball. All the things I mentioned kept me out of trouble and made me the man I am.

**On Balance:** Other than N.I.P., are there other people who help mold you into the person you are?

**Mike:** Yes, I am proud of my parents and extremely proud of my wife (Nalen), children (Tierra, Michael Jr, and

Kiyen). I am also thankful for the teachers and many friends and family members who helped keep me focused in the right direction."



**Madison Police Office Mike Franklin** was a NIP participant in his youth

### Smokescreen opens dialogue on teen drug use

Looking for a new way to open dialogue with teens about drug use? You are invited to a performance called Smokescreen...

**Smokescreen** Monday, March 19, 2007, 7:00 pm presented by Roseneath Theatre, Toronto, Canada This performance is free and open to the public How do you engage young people in a truly meaningful, balanced discussion about marijuana use and its impact on teens? Use the power of drama!

*Smokescreen* provides rich, challenging source material for discussion, and the fictional world of the play serves as a safe arena in which facts and rational arguments around marijuana use can be weighed against conflicting messages students receive from peers, the media and popular culture. Audience members have said the play is "funny, engaging, realistic and thought-provoking" without being "preachy" and that it delivers some powerful messages in

a way they are more likely to respond to than typical lectures or "Say No to Drugs" approaches. This performance encourages thought provoking dialogue with and among students.

Recommended for students 9 through 12 grade. Capitol Theater, Overture Center for the Arts

*Approximate length: 90 minutes (includes post performance discussion)*



## On Balance

### MMSD Implements New Behavior Program

By Dennis Whitish, Madison  
Metropolitan School District

At the beginning of the 2006-07 school year Madison Metropolitan School District implemented the "Above The Line" behavior program. The goal of the program is to have all children demonstrate positive behaviors that allow students to learn and interact with others appropriately. Classrooms identify "Above the Line" behaviors at the onset of the school year. When students demonstrate behaviors that are not "Above the Line," or behaviors that take away from learning and getting along with peers, they are provided an opportunity to choose either completing a "fix-it" plan or a consequence. Fix-it plans utilize restorative practices to help students identify the problem and develop a plan that corrects it appropriately. When students demonstrate behaviors that are serious, make the school unsafe, or are violations district and/or legal policies, these are considered "Bottom Line" behaviors. Students who demonstrate these behaviors are referred to administration for appropriate, district-defined consequences.

The goal of the "Above the Line" program is to have a district-wide behavior system that all students and staff understand and use across all schools. A consistent behavior program allows mobile students an opportunity to come to their new school where the rules and language are familiar and consistent. This allows for an easier transition and less time spent adjusting to different or new expectations and rules.

### Bettin

Continued from Page 8

to me at Family Service. I have also worked with many of the social workers, supervisors and managers within the Department and knew I was joining another dedicated and talented group. Lastly, the focus of my work has been on treatment throughout my career and the opportunity to focus on prevention was appealing—though I really believe that prevention and intervention are very much interwoven.

**ON BALANCE:** *What are your major responsibilities in this new job?*

**Connie:** My responsibilities include working closely with the Dane County Youth Commission and the Youth Resource Network to promote and support youth programs, initiatives and prevention efforts. I will also be working with other units in the CYF Division to identify and address prevention needs across the service system. Early in 2007, I will be working with the Juvenile Delinquency Supervision Coordination Team to take a look at the competency development arm of the Balanced Approach and determine how this area can be enhanced.

**ON BALANCE:** *What's a typical day like for you?*

**Connie:** I must say, each day has been very different. I've had the opportunity to meet with provider agencies and learn more about what they're doing to support families and provide services for youth. I've at-

tended meetings about a new initiative to enhance school readiness. I've worked with Youth Commission members on projects including the release of the Prevention Grants request for proposal, planning for the next Youth Assessment, and other projects. I'm working with Project Coordinator Emily Engel on the AmeriCorp project, learning about the work that AmeriCorp members are doing throughout the county by serving at Youth Resource Centers and other youth organizations. So, no day has really been all that typical. I like that.

**ON BALANCE:** So far, have there been any on-the-job surprises? Or has everything been pretty much what you expected?

**Connie:** Well, every day has brought something new to learn and understand. I'm not sure it's been a surprise, but I've been very impressed with the level of commitment, energy and enthusiasm I've encountered throughout the Department, the Youth Commission and from organizations serving youth and families. Everyone has been welcoming and very helpful.

**ON BALANCE:** *Do you have any short-term goals or things you want to accomplish during this first year?*

**Connie:** Keep listening and learning. Make sure that what I'm responsible for happens in a timely

See Bettin, Page 14



# Agency Spotlight:

## Wisconsin Family Ties



By **Dave Thorson**, Dane County Department of Human Services

As their literature states, Wisconsin Family Ties is “a state-wide not-for-profit organization run by families for families that include children and adolescents who have emotional, behavioral, and mental health disorders.” The agency was founded in 1987 in response to situations where family involvement and input was routinely either marginalized or excluded entirely in favor of provider/physician directed plans. Over the past 20 years, in part due to advocacy by groups like Wisconsin Family Ties, family involvement has evolved into not only an essential and an integral part of plans for youth, but are now acknowledged as the key piece in achieving successful outcomes.

There are currently 15 family advocate workers throughout the state. They provided direct service to about 1100 families in 2005. This past summer 762 family members attended their annual Family Fun Day at Mount Olympus in Wisconsin Dells. The program has a yearly operating budget of around \$400,000, most of it coming from federal grants or service contracts with counties.

Wisconsin Family Ties offers essentially four basic services to identified youth and their families:

Information and Referral, Education and Training, Advocacy, and Support. Although their target age range is birth to age 21, approximately 2/3 of the youth they serve are age 11 and up. Referrals come from schools, therapists, human services, and self-referrals by families.

Family Ties staff can refer families to support groups in their area, or help them start one if necessary. Statistics reveal that one out of 12 children in Wisconsin has a serious emotional disorder and that two of these 12 will need mental health services. It is often comforting to families just to realize they are not alone in struggling with this issue.

So who are the kids that need Wisconsin Family Ties? They frequently have very challenging behaviors to manage, even by those closest to them, and their parents struggle to effectively advocate for them with the systems they encounter. They often had troubles beginning in daycare and may have been terminated from several due to difficult behaviors. They typically have tough times in school environments. It is crucial that they be matched with a teacher who is able to view them as an intriguing individual rather than a “problem to be managed.” In addition, these youth are also more likely to be

ostracized or victims of bullying and harassment both in and out of school. Often however due to insufficient funding, an inadequate intervention plan, or staff who are not familiar with their behavioral triggers, families need assistance from organizations like Wisconsin Family Ties to help advocate for their children to have appropriate accommodations in school. Functional Behavioral Assessments of youth which identify behaviors and triggers are frequently the key to creating appropriate prevention/intervention plans. Creative assessments and plans that are followed consistently by all staff often preempt potentially difficult situations and prevent them from escalating. If the child is old enough, they also need to be given a voice and consequently ownership in whatever plan is developed. Recently, Wisconsin Family Ties has added substance abuse concerns as an issue that they will assist families with addressing. Finally, if these youth find their way into the juvenile justice system, they need strong advocates who can assist and hopefully educate both human services and the courts regarding their specific needs and abilities.

See **Family Ties**, Page 12



# GAIT (Gang Assessed Action Intelligence Intervention Team)

By **Andre Johnson**, Dane County Department of Human Services, Neighborhood Intervention Program

GAIT is an initiative which was developed in order to assess, gather, coordinate, and disseminate information related to youth gangs on behalf of the Children Youth and Families Division of the Dane County Department of Human Services.

Each DCDHS Delinquency Services unit (county-wide) has designated at least one social

worker or support specialist to be part of a specialized unit on gangs. Participants in the Gang Assessed Action Intelligence Intervention Team (GAIT) initiative attend monthly meetings and receive specialized training.

GAIT members coordinate with the DCNIP Gang Squad workers in order to give and receive crucial information related to gangs. This information is then filtered down to the units. GAIT workers are a point of contact in

their respective offices for gathering information and acting as a resource for their units on topics related to gangs.

GAIT has been meeting regularly for about a year. We are about to launch phase 2 of GAIT which will include key youth service providers throughout the county. This will be followed by phase 3 which will include neighborhood associations and neighborhood centers.

## Family Ties

Continued from Page 11

When this collaboration works well, the result is human services recommending and the court imposing individualized and realistic interventions and consequences rather than cookie cutter solutions. To take advantage of their unique perspective and expertise, Wisconsin Family Ties staff participate on the Dane County Human Services Administrative Review Board which staffs cases where CCF services are being requested, or placement in a hospital, treatment center, or corrections is being considered by the courts.

One of the most significant trends that Wisconsin Family Ties has seen over the past 10-15 years has been the explosion in the

diagnosis of autism. Currently 1 in 166 children receives this diagnosis. A positive change has been around legislation supporting children's wraparound services. Three years ago there were 30 counties in Wisconsin with children's wraparound services. Today there are 42.

Wisconsin Family Ties advocates find rewards when they are able to see families and youth regain hope and learn new skills for managing their lives. Assisting families with developing the skills to advocate effectively for themselves and their children often defines a successful case. The greatest challenge is overcoming deep-seated attitudes within various

systems that tend to label kids and blame parents for either creating or exacerbating their children's mental health difficulties.

Wisconsin Family Ties puts out a quarterly newsletter. Their office is located at 16 N. Carroll Street, Suite 640 in Madison, WI 53703. The Madison number to call is 267-6888. Parents outside Madison can call toll free at 800-422-7145. Their website is [www.wifamilyties.org](http://www.wifamilyties.org). Their current executive director, Hugh Davis, has been with the agency for three years and was the primary source for the information contained in this article.



## On Balance

### DMC

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during 2002, 2003 and 2004 while arrests of white youth have shown a steady decline. In 2002, an African American youth was 4 (four) times more likely to be arrested than a White Youth. By 2004, an African American Youth was almost 6 (six) times more likely to be arrested than a White youth. Moreover, 2004 marks a 3-year low in the proportion of African American Youth diverted from the juvenile justice system. During the same 3-year period, the proportion of African American Youth securely detained in the Dane County Detention Center peaked during the third year, 2004.

#### The Important Role of ERO's

One workshop topic examined the issue of School (or Educational) Resource Officers. There was discussion about whether the constant presence of officers results in a widening of the juvenile justice system net. School Resource Officers reported that their training has become much more complex and specialized. They acknowledged that to be effective, it is important to recognize that the needs of special education students (who are often disruptive in the school setting) differ by whether they possess emotional or cognitive limitations, despite the fact that they are all lumped together in "special

ed" classrooms. Youth who are cognitively delayed may not have the expected level of understanding rules and boundaries compared to youth of average intelligence who are experiencing the stress of traumatic events. There was also general agreement that 90% of student fights result from miscommunication and that it is better to find ways to help the student reconnect to the school rather than remove or further alienate them. School Resource Officer training is being updated nationally to include base curriculum that focuses on conflict resolution skills, de-escalation techniques and adolescent development.

The *personality* of the School Resource Officer is also crucial. A law enforcement officer from the Phoenix Police Department stated that officers chosen for this responsibility must *like* and *understand kids*. "At some point, you have to go to the bridge and find out why kids are falling through". Additionally, the School Resource Officer must ... "have passion, not pensions on their mind." More and more, Police Departments are beginning to evaluate officers not only for their performance on-duty, but also for their commitment to community affairs.

Changing the Dynamics in the

#### Community

A persistent and escalating problem in Madison has been misbehavior and violence between students on city buses and at transfer points. The Boston, Massachusetts Bay Transit Authority (MBTA) Program, which incorporates several different components to address these issues, was profiled at the Conference. Between the late 1990's and 2002, the "zero tolerance" approach to handling instances of youth disorderly conduct by Boston police resulted in an annual juvenile arrest rate of 650 students. After instituting the MBTA Program, in 2005 the number of arrests decreased to 160 annually. Law Enforcement officers currently have a constant presence on city buses and at transfer points. The MBTA Program strategy relies heavily on developing relationships between students and police officers. Training curriculum has a greater focus on understanding adolescent development and behavior, and appreciating the positive attributes in youth. Moreover, the School District and Law Enforcement representatives have developed a more efficient partnership in ad-

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# On Balance

## DMC

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dressing youth misbehavior. Where possible, disciplinary issues are being dealt with at the school level rather than relying on law enforcement officers to routinely arrest youth for what in many cases is "youthful behavior". Another aspect of the strategy is to hand out "consequence" cards to youth advising them of the effects delinquency adjudication or criminal prosecution will have on their lives and future should misbehavior continue.

Other examples of law enforcement diversion programs profiled at the Conference were the New Jersey Station House Adjustment Program, the Kentucky Field Release Program and New York State's DMC Arrest Diversion Program. The New Jersey Stationhouse Adjustment Program

allows law enforcement officers to refer first time juvenile offenders who have committed minor offenses to community-based alternatives *in lieu of arrest*. Similarly, the New York State Program, based in four cities, utilizes the Balanced and Restorative Justice program concept to refer youth for a 60-90 day assessment *in lieu of arrest*. The Kentucky Field Release Program places a "Court Designated Worker" in a community agency in each county (such as the YMCA) to provide intake services for juvenile offenders who do not meet secure detention guidelines, thereby diverting them from unnecessary penetration into the system.

### State Initiatives

Since 2004 the McArthur Foundation has worked with four states to address DMC: Pennsylva-

nia, Louisiana, Illinois and Washington. The Initiative, entitled "Models for Change" allows each state to implement a comprehensive, multi-faceted DMC strategy unique to its individual needs. Pennsylvania was the first state selected to participate in Models for Change, and information from their forum is included in another article in this issue of On Balance (see "The Philadelphia Story").

For a complete overview of the Law Enforcement Solutions to DMC Conference including all workshop materials, please visit the Coalition for Juvenile Justice (CJJ) website at [http://www.juvjustice.org/conferences/index\\_conference.html](http://www.juvjustice.org/conferences/index_conference.html).

## Bettin

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manner. By the end of my first year, I'd like to have met with every unit in the Department and gone to every JFF site. I also want to visit every agency whose contract I manage (and some I don't) to understand their experience about what is working and what is needed in the way of prevention. To meet with many of the organizations in the Youth Resource Network and understand more fully the depth and

breadth of youth programming that's in place. Then, together with other funders and provider agencies, to continue the planning process to create and maintain the most efficient and effective prevention network possible to support families, protect children and promote positive youth development.

**ON BALANCE:** When you're not working, how do you spend your time?

**Connie:** With my partner, Rebecca, and our three cats and two dogs at our home in Madison where any number of house projects keep us busy. I enjoy physical activities such as soccer, golf and (try) to work out several times a week. In the Spring and Fall, I coach a girls U12 soccer team in Sun Prairie. I enjoy what Madison has to offer, particularly dining out with family and friends.