



# On Balance

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and the Dane County Juvenile Court Program

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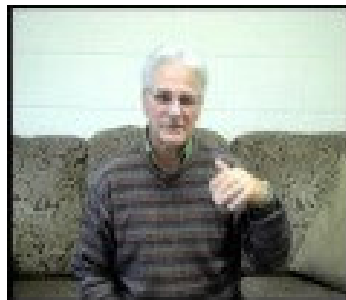
## What is Restorative Justice and Where is it Headed?

By Sheri Gatts

Restorative Justice is a different way of addressing crime that involves the victim, the offender and the community. It looks at who was harmed and what needs to be done to repair the harm. It holds the offender accountable while addressing the needs of the victim. It is not a program, but it has certain principles and practices that are being used in a variety of ways.

Where did Restorative Justice come from and how did it get started? One night in the spring of 1974, a young man named Russell Kelly went out with friends in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada for a good time. They drank beer and rode around until they were stopped by the police, who took their beer and told them to go home. Well yes, it was a different world back in those days.

The boys went home but quickly became bored again and went back out looking for something to do. In a few short hours they had slashed several car tires and seats, destroyed a car radiator and smashed car windows. They threw rocks through house windows, and damaged a boat, a gazebo and a fence. They even broke a cross from a church display case. A total of 22 properties were damaged before they finally went home for the night. The police soon figured out who was responsible and the two teenagers confessed.



Mark Yantzi, a probation officer and volunteer with the Mennonite Central Committee in Kitchener, Ontario, was assigned the case. He felt that the young men should be held accountable for the damages and ought to be expected to clean up their mess. Someone also suggested that the boys should apologize to their victims. Dave Worth, another volunteer, suggested that Mark talk to the judge hearing the case, Judge Gordon McConnell, about the idea. Judge

McConnell was interested in the idea and it was included as part of their probation order.

Mark Yantzi and Dave Worth personally took the boys around to apologize to every victim for their behavior. Some victims offered forgiveness, but others weren't so nice about it. During their 18 month probationary period, the boys had to pay the victims for the damage. This incident soon became known as the "Elmira Case" and was the first victim offender reconciliation ever recorded. The "Elmira Case" gave rise to the Victim-Offender Reconciliation Program (VORP) in Kitchener. (Information in this story came from an article written by Russell Kelly, one of the boys involved.)

Mark Yantzi and Dave Worth spread the word and took restorative justice with them when they moved to Indiana, where they started the first program using restorative justice practices in the U.S. The Mennonite Church is still very active in raising awareness about restorative justice and victim-offender dialogue (or reconciliation).

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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)

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An increasing number of youth spend a substantial amount of time on the street. They may be runaways, avoiding abusive home situations, or seeking a sense of belonging from peers on the street. The author of this article, along with other members of Youth Services of Southern WI/Briarpatch Street Outreach Team, go into areas where these youth gather and provide them with personal care items, STI/HIV prevention supplies, meal site referrals, and access to shelter. They also talk with youth about AODA issues, link them with counseling resources, and provide ongoing case management.

## At-Risk Youth and Sex Trafficking

By Tyler Schueffner, Briarpatch Street Outreach Specialist

*“Sex trafficking occurs when people are forced or coerced into the commercial sex trade against their will. Child sex trafficking includes any child involved in commercial sex. Sex traffickers frequently target vulnerable people with histories of abuse and then use violence, threats, lies, false promises, debt bondage, or other forms of control and manipulation to keep victims involved in the sex industry. Sex trafficking exists within the broader commercial sex trade, often at much larger rates than most people realize or understand. Sex trafficking has been found in a wide variety of venues of the overall sex industry, including residential brothels, hostess clubs, online escort services, brothels disguised as massage parlors, strip clubs, and street prosti-*



Tyler Schueffner

*tion.”* (<http://www.polarisproject.org/human-trafficking/sex-trafficking-in-the-us>)

This is the general definition of sex trafficking provided by the Polaris Project. The key component of trafficking is that it is an act of coercion and dominance, forcing someone into sexual act(s) for profit or an exchange of goods or resources...in a word, slavery. As

street outreach workers assisting young adults who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness, we have identified a number of (in our cases) young women trafficked for a place to stay, transportation or to obtain drugs and alcohol. We have also identified a growing number of young women who were prostituted at young ages (9-15 years old and in some cases younger) by family members or family friends. These cases of sexual trafficking are difficult to detect and often remain unexposed until the individual runs away or reaches an age that they can leave the family. Of course the physical, social and emotional damage has been inflicted and the likelihood of those individuals returning to the “trade” is substantially higher.

Madison is an inviting home to trafficking and traffickers. We have a transient student population, an increasingly large income gap, a city that is accessible (by bus and highway), is a major hauling route (trucking and train), is a business and conference destination, and is experiencing a demographic population shift. These factors lead to an exploitable population and a profitable

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

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## WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

### *ON BALANCE catches up with .... JOHN BORQUIST*



***John Borquist***

John Borquist retired from service to Dane County in 2006, returning in 2007 for a brief period. We connected with him recently to talk about his history with Dane County and what he is currently doing.

#### What were your positions with Dane County prior to your retirement?

I was very fortunate to work with Dane County Department of Human Services, Children, Youth and Families and Adult Community Services Divisions, from 1991 to 2007. I was a Purchased Services Manager and Joining Forces for Families Services Manager from 1991-2000 and Substance Abuse (AODA) Services Manager from 2000-07. For 8 years I had the privilege of serving as an elected member of the Dane County Personnel Advisory Committee. I had also worked for Dane County Social Services forever ago (1967-68) in child

welfare, foster care and unwed parent services.

#### What are some of the accomplishments that you are most proud of in your career?

I served as a social worker in the State of Wisconsin for 45+ years, being a part of many agency and service system developments in both the public and voluntary human service sectors. During my early years (1968-73) I had the opportunity to be part of enhancing a quality State-operated child caring institution for adolescents in Sparta, Wisconsin (Wisconsin Child Center). During the next season of my career at Lutheran Social Services of Wisconsin & Upper Michigan, I helped develop the adolescent and family in-home treatment program known as Home & Community Services (today Family & Community Services), serving as family therapist, supervisor and program developer. This program was initiated here in Dane County in 1975 and expanded to 21 counties in the State by 1985. I served as regional manager with LSS from 1984-91, managing a range of child & family and adult services programs in Dane and surrounding counties.

During my career with Dane County Department of Human Services I had the opportunity to work with many extraordinary people within the Department, the county and an array of public and voluntary agencies and

institutions. I witnessed many highly effective working relationships between service providers and other key resource partners resulting in critically important successes for children, adults and families. I was most fortunate and honored to be part of establishing and expanding the Joining Forces for Families Program; and helping develop and expand a range of prevention, early intervention and treatment services in child welfare, substance abuse, juvenile and adult criminal justice in Dane County.

#### Any funny or fond memories?

My fondest memories are those related to the professional and personal relationships with County and other agency colleagues and friends that I cherish and seek to continue. I believe that Dane County is, and will continue to be, an extraordinarily caring, responsive and effective community for children, adults and families. I am proud of the past and present work we all do together.

#### What have you been up to since retiring from the County?

Since 2006 I have served as a Field Education Faculty Associate in the School of Social Work, University of Wisconsin-Madison and as a Special Education Assistant for the Madison Metropolitan School District. My position with the School of Social Work,

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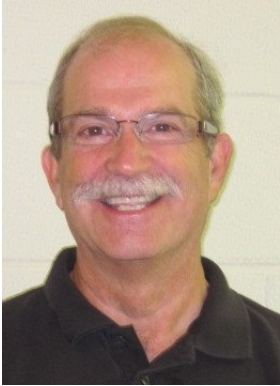
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## Staff Spotlight – DENNIS WHITISH

*By Sue Milch*

This issue of **ON BALANCE** shines the spotlight on someone who has devoted many years of a long career to working with children, youth and families. **Dennis Whitish**, social worker with Madison Metropolitan School District and one of the nicest people in the world, retired in June.



*Dennis Whitish*

Those of you who know Dennis might be surprised to find out that he started his career in adult services. “I never wanted to work with kids,” he says. In 1977, after a year of employment in Columbia County, he accepted a job in Adult Services at Dane County Department of Social (*now Human*) Services. Several years later he was called into a manager’s office and informed that he was being transferred to the agency’s intake unit to work with children and families. Despite having a distinct preference *not* to make this change and knowing little or nothing about kids and families (other than having been raised in one), but wanting to stay employed, Dennis gamely showed up to work in his new unit. He still remembers one of his very first calls involving children who had head lice.

Dennis and the Intake unit turned out to be a wonderful fit. But while working in his day job and raising his own family, Dennis led yet another life: social work student. In 1989, soon after earning his MSW degree, he was lured away by Madison Metropolitan School District where he has happily remained ever since.

At MMSD Dennis started out part-time in truancy and part-time in an elementary school, then moved to a full-time building-based position. In those days he ran a lot of groups including teaching kids how to stay safe (a carryover from his previous job investigating physical and sexual abuse when he routinely carried anatomically correct dolls in the back of his car). Over time, he worked with an increasing number of students with significant mental health issues.

Six or seven years ago when MMSD implemented Positive Behavior Support Teams, Dennis became a part of this innovative initiative. He has remained involved with it ever since. As a PBST team member, he works in collaboration with classroom teachers and parents to help kids with aggression find success in school.

When asked about changes he’s seen over time, Dennis cited the budget cuts that have definitely taken a toll. Classroom teachers are spread thin and resources to help children and youth are tight. There’s less time to make important connections with parents. He also noted that, “the intensity of cases has increased.” In the past, aggression tended to be more verbal than physical. In recent years, incidents of physical aggression have definitely become more common.

After a career that has spanned more than 35 years, Dennis Whitish has decided it’s time to enjoy retirement. But don’t expect him to be totally gone from MMSD. His daughter, Jessica, is an elementary school teacher, and you just might find him helping out as a volunteer in her classroom next year.

Dennis, we’re very glad you were transferred out of adult services and into working with children and families. Thank you for all you’ve done over these many years. We wish you well!



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## **READY IN A CRISIS: MMSD HAS REPOSE PROCEDURES IN PLACE**

*By Dennis Whitish*

Madison Metropolitan School District has crisis response procedures that are implemented following sudden death, suicide or other critical incidents. MMSD views a crisis as a sudden, unexpected and uncontrollable event that poses a serious threat to life and may result in an acute stress response. Examples of crises include death, accident, illnesses, community violence, domestic violence, abuse, neglect, assault, and/or natural and man-made disasters.

Crisis response serves four major purposes; maintaining student and staff safety; providing support to grieving and/or traumatized affected victims; screening and/or referral and follow-up of those who may need more support; and reducing the likelihood of contagion for suicide, other self-harm, and violent crises.

The building principal directs crisis responses in each building. Since no two school buildings are the same, it is important that each school decide how the school year's crisis response/suicide prevention program will be implemented. MMSD Security Coordinator Luis Yudice is involved in verifying a sudden student death or other crisis affecting a school. With support from the Dept. of Student Services, school social workers and school psychologists are available to provide additional support to a school building. Psychologists and social workers staff counseling rooms for students who appear significantly affected by the crisis. Nancy Yoder, Director of MMSD Student Services, is a key player as is Jeannette Deloya, program support for social work, in assisting schools when the need arises to implement crisis response procedures.

Teachers at each building are in a unique position to observe students for reactions to a death of a fellow student, family suicide or other crises. Teachers provide the link between the student and support staff in need of counseling or support following a crisis. Madison schools have had several occasions to implement their crisis response procedures and have received positive feedback from buildings that have utilized student services support. Indeed, MMSD was asked to provide support to Weston School when a student shot the principal in 2006. Having responded to Weston School and several MMSD buildings implementing their crisis response procedures over the years, it is comforting to know that the district has effective procedures in place during difficult periods in the school year.

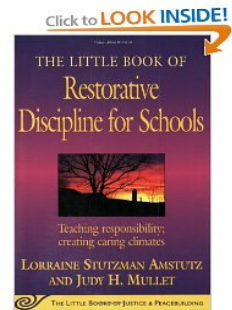
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## *Restorative Justice* *Continued from Page 1*

### What is new about Restorative Justice?

Every time I listen to someone talk about it, I see new applications for Restorative Justice. The philosophy is spreading from the criminal justice system to schools, youth courts, churches and many other community based organizations. Many schools in Dane County are using restorative practices in the form of youth courts, conflict resolution circles, and classes where students can earn credits. The same is true of counties all over the state.

The Wisconsin Restorative Justice Coalition (WRJC) has been meeting quarterly for over 15 years. In the early days it was nurtured by a small group of dedicated members who met quarterly at the Frank J. Remington Center at UW-Madison Law School. WRJC now has its own website and data base. They join with the Wisconsin Association of Restitution Programs (WARP) to hold a Restorative Justice Conference in Wisconsin Dells every spring. Attendance at the WARP Conference had dropped to about 45 people until they joined with WRJC. Attendance at the joint conference has been about 150 every year since they joined together 6 years ago to plan and coordinate the conference.



Dr. Tom Cavanagh, researcher and educator, spent about five years in New Zealand conducting research called A Culture of Care in Schools. He has brought the results of his research back to America and wants to implement the practice of Culture of Care in this country. He recently started a blog, Culture of Care in Schools, and restorative practices in schools and other organizations at: <http://restorativepracticesinschools.blogspot.com>. An excerpt from his blog follows:

Restorative justice is an innovative approach to conflict resolution which shows promising results throughout the country and abroad. It focuses on repairing the harm caused by crime and conflict rather than simply punishing the offender. Too often we rely on harsh punishments like incarceration, which prove to be expensive and counter-productive in many cases, especially when applied to youth offenders. Many school systems involve the police for non-violent incidents and feed the “school-to-prison” pipeline. More importantly, it is a victim centered process that gives the person harmed an opportunity to have a voice in the process and subsequent healing. There are many studies that show the cycle of victims becoming the aggressors when a process that allows healing is not available.

Restorative justice processes and practices can serve as a cost-effective and useful alternative. It holds juvenile offenders accountable to their victims and their community, and helps them understand the impact of their actions. It establishes a non-adversarial process that brings together offenders, their victims, and other interested parties to ask three major questions:

- § What is the nature of the harm done?
- § How should this harm be repaired?
- § Who is responsible for the repair?

It seems that the more we learn about restorative justice, the more we want to find new and innovative ways to put it into practice. The concept of “making things right” for the victims during a vandalism spree back in Kitchener, Ontario, in the Spring of 1974, has come a long way in 38 years. What will restorative justice look like in another 38 years? The same fundamental philosophy and practices will still be in use, but the different models are difficult to imagine.

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## 14TH ANNUAL JUVENILE COURT AWARDS

The Dane County Circuit Court Judges in the Juvenile Division sponsored the 14<sup>th</sup> annual Juvenile Court Awards on March 22 at the Goodman Community Center. Chief Justice Shirley Abrahamson was the featured speaker and Presiding Juvenile Division Judge David Flanagan led the event. The ceremony was a celebration and recognition of youth and the commitment others have made to the lives of families and youth in Dane County. The recipients of this year's recognition awards were:

### Outstanding Service Award

**Judge Dan Koval** - Judge Koval is the Madison Municipal Court Judge and has been in that position since 2003. Prior to becoming a Judge, he was a City Attorney, States Attorney and private bar attorney. Judge Koval has been a leader in his work with truant youth in the Madison School District.



*Outstanding Service Award winner  
Judge Dan Koval*

**Ginny Whitehouse** - Ginny has been a Dane County Social Worker in the Children, Youth & Families division for the past 24 years and has worked in both Child Protective Services and Delinquency Services. She is very dedicated to youth and families and is incredibly thorough in her work. Ginny is the "go to" person at Human Services if her co-workers need assistance or support.

### The George Northrup Award

**James Rumph** - James worked with the Neighborhood Intervention Program for the last 20 years and was a previous Juvenile Court Award nominee. He passed away on February 6. James worked in a variety of programs at NIP and was a tireless advocate for youth. His connections in the community also assisted his mission to help youth become successful. We were fortunate to know him and he will be missed.

### The Peter Rubin Award

**Greg Rossetti** - Greg is a City of Madison Police Officer and has been with the department for 13 years. He has been an Educational Resource Officer at LaFollette High School for the past four years. Prior to that position, he was a Community Officer in the Darbo neighborhood. Greg also had other assignments and has been involved in a mentoring program and the Time Bank. Greg led the effort to develop youth courts at LaFollette and in the Darbo neighborhood so this restorative justice approach was available to respond to juveniles' misbehavior.

### The Ervin Bruner Award

**Dot Crawford-Fischer** - Dot has over 31 years of service to youth and families through her Social Service Specialist position at Dane County Human Services. She has an incredible ability to build relationships with youth and families

and has been instrumental in reuniting families as well as helping children achieve permanence in alternate care settings when it is necessary.



*Ervin Bruner Award winner Dot Crawford-Fischer with son Charles*

### Outstanding Achievement Award

**Alexis Gardner** - A senior at LaFollette H.S., Alexis has been involved with the youth court since her freshman year. She has helped train other peer jurors and has also led restorative justice circles at school to help resolve other issues. Alexis is responsible, mature and has been a true leader in the development of the youth court program. She plans to attend college after she graduates this year.

**Naiheima Young** - Naiheima is a junior at LaFollette H.S. She is involved in the PEOPLE program and AVID/TOPS, as well as numerous groups through Mt. Zion Baptist Church. Naiheima has demonstrated resilience and resourcefulness in her life and has plans to attend college after high school.

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## DCDHS' New Tutoring Program Helps Teens Achieve Success

*By Kimberly Rooyakkers, UW Madison Social Work Intern*

The DCDHS Juvenile Delinquency – Teen Tutoring Program has been a work in progress since spring 2011. A UW-Madison social work intern, Krista Holzberger, recognized that many teens with delinquency records lack adequate school support. She proposed the idea for a tutoring program and sought out volunteers from UW-Madison to serve as tutors. Krista spent months recruiting volunteers, developing applications, interviewing students, and sending in background checks. The following fall when I began my internship with the South Madison Delinquency Unit, there was a base of about 8 UW-Madison students ready to be matched with teens. I immediately began recruiting teens and providing social workers with more information about the program.

The goal of the Teen Tutoring Program is to match one tutor with one teen in an effort to assist the teen in obtaining the support necessary to be

successful in school. In addition to helping with homework, the tutor helps the teen with educational planning, goal setting, and connecting to community resources. Tutor applicants must go through an interview, a background check, and a reference check. The unit supervisor reviews each applicant's file and gives the final approval. The Teen Tutoring Program matches females with females and males with males. Current tutors are primarily female and Caucasian/Asian American.

All tutoring is conducted in a public location (library, coffee shop, etc.) that is geographically suited to both the tutor and the teen. We ask both the teen and tutor to commit to meeting at least two hours per week.

Although the process for recruiting teens took much longer than antici-

pated, the teen/tutor pairs matched over the course of the year were very successful. One teenage girl entered the program with an F in science and C's and D's in all her other classes. Five months later, with the help of her diligent tutor, the teen raised her science grade to a low "B" and every other class went up to an "A". The family was very pleased with the tutor and would like to maintain the teen/tutor partnership next year.

The DCDHS Juvenile Delinquency Teen Tutoring Program is currently in a state of transition as I recently completed my internship with the Department and the next intern will not start until September. I will continue recruiting volunteers over the summer. If you have any questions, know of a volunteer or would like to volunteer, please contact me at [rooyakkers@wisc.edu](mailto:rooyakkers@wisc.edu).

***John Borquist***  
***Continued from Page 3***

Field Faculty Instructor for the County Human Services Field Unit, has enabled me to continue and expand my relationships with DCDHS and other community agencies. My special education work with MMSD allows me to assist children and youth in their educational and personal growth and development.

Anything else that you would like to share with readers?

My wife, Nancy, and I are blessed with 8 amazing children and a dozen fabulous grandchildren. We have established many "family," friend and collegial relationships with many Asian Hmong people over the past 15 years that have added immeasurably to our lives and hopefully also to theirs.



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## *Sex Trafficking Continued from Page 2*

market. Many young people relocate or flee to Madison, seeking refuge or opportunity. Housing is difficult to obtain, and employment opportunities are increasingly scarce. We also have an established and exploitable drug market. Not surprising, the drug and human trafficking markets often overlap along with organized and street-based gang activity. In many cases, youth gangs have been involved in the trafficking of “junior” members or in some cases require new individuals to engage in “sex ins” which are often video-taped and used to manipulate victims. In rare cases we have heard of cases of sex grooming - children being taught how to engage in sexual acts to be exploited in on-line pornography or apartment brothels. These cases most often involve family members.

The unfortunate reality is that these scenarios are often cyclical. Many victims of sexual violence are either re-victimized or enter the criminal justice system (often the charges are unrelated to sex trafficking). The consequence is that an already stark reality has become increasingly dire. During desperate times, many young men and women are forced into using the only asset they can identify to survive...their bodies.

Working with runaway and homeless youth, we have started to recognize that some of the young women with children of their own have normalized sexuality...often unknowingly. In many, if not all of those cases, the

mother was sexually abused or exposed to sexual content when they were young. *Traffick911*, an organization working to end the bullying and selling of children in America, quoted a pimp saying, “We don’t have to groom girls anymore. Our society is doing it for us.” Sadly this seems to be true. The other harsh reality is that pimps and organized traffickers are better at identifying and providing “opportunity” to young men and women. A client I worked with said to me, “Why would these girls choose to stop prostituting? Yeah, they are forced to have sex or dance for random men, but their needs are being met. These girls are given nice things and think their pimps love them. For most of those girls, the attention they receive is more than they have ever gotten.”

Several factors make sex trafficking a difficult issue to attack. Immigration policy makes it difficult for undocumented victims to report abuse. When a victim fears deportation and criminal charges, they will remain entrenched in this system of abuse. The criminalization of victim crimes, such as prostitution and drug abuse, creates an unending cycle of exploitation. The growth of the Internet has made it increasingly easy to profit from sexual exploitation. Prostitution no longer takes place on seedy streets. It is now a transaction that can take place in the home. Videotaping and photographing of victims keeps people

from reporting abuse out of fear. Intimate partner trafficking is increasing, especially among young and desperate couples. Finally the shame and fear of self-identifying sexual victimization makes it difficult for young people to come to grips with what has happened. A young person whose brain is in the ego stage of development assumes that no one will understand or be able to help. The natural development of our youth is, in effect, betraying them from getting help.

What can we do? We can try to identify the signs of sexual abuse and exploitation. The following are red flags: truancy, burns/scars, malnourishment, runaway/homeless, avoids eye contact, have older intimate partners, travels to other cities on a regular basis, withdrawn/depressed, scripted answers/inconsistent stories, uses sex industry terms, sudden changes in attire, branding or specific tattoos. We can also examine our ways of assessing and screening youth and young adults as they come into contact with law enforcement and provide individuals with information about community organizations that offer preventive and supportive services. And finally, we can examine our values as a community. What do we want to do to prevent sexual trafficking and exploitation? How do we engage the issue thoughtfully and proactively without further damaging the victims?

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## Workplace Trauma Can Affect Staff

*By Rhonda Voigt*

In our work we see trauma everywhere we look. These days, families often have multiple significant traumas along with chronic traumas that regularly occur over time. Being exposed to trauma through our work via the stories of our families can be traumatic for us as well. Trauma can result from one horrific event or cumulative events over the course of time. A brief web search validates that workplace trauma can have negative impact on a worker's effectiveness on the job. There can be mental and/or physical health repercussions. Normally functioning coping skills can be compromised.

Various web sources support the following as being best practice in addressing trauma in the workplace:

### ◆ **Critical Incident Debriefings**

Debriefings are best conducted by an outside, trained professional within 48 hours of a traumatic event (preferably within 24 hours). These debriefings are designed to mitigate the harmful effects of the trauma. Research indicates debriefings are helpful in accelerating a worker's normal recovery process following the event.

### ◆ **Follow-up Debriefing**

Within a couple of weeks, a follow-up meeting with the same professional is recommended. At this time, the professional can evaluate the worker's healing progress. A referral for private counseling can be made by the trauma professional if recommended in order to address lingering or ongoing concerns.

### ◆ **Management monitoring and communication with affected workers.**

An increase in communication between identified worker(s), their co-workers and supervisors can result in an improved workplace environment. A supportive workplace can stimulate the healing process.

### ◆ **Self are**

The stronger each individual is, the better we are able to cope with and assist co-workers in dealing with trauma in the workplace.

For more information, here are two websites:

<http://www.humannatureatwork.com/Workplace-Stress-3.htm>

<http://www.continuitycentral.com/feature0508.htm>

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BADGER ROCK



MIDDLE SCHOOL

*[Portions of this article have been reprinted from a recent BRMS newsletter]*



An integral part of the Resilient Research Center, the new Badger Rock Middle School (BRMS) had a resoundingly successful first year. Located on four acres near the intersection of East Badger and Rimrock Roads, the school focuses on urban agriculture, strong neighborhoods, and sustainable practices. A neighborhood center, community garden, urban agriculture center and energy research center, and a future greenhouse are all part of the design.

In its first year, BRMS opened with two 6<sup>th</sup> grade classrooms, each with 25 students. Next year and again the year after, two more classrooms of 6<sup>th</sup> graders will be added, bringing the school to its capacity of 150 students by the 2013-14 school year. A high priority is placed on this being a neighborhood school: 80% percent of students are expected to come from the Badger-Rimrock area. This past year almost 50% percent of the students were Latino and close to one quarter were African American.

Key to BRMS' success has been the dedication and commitment of students and staff, active engagement of many parents, and support from a growing corps of volunteer parents, university students and community members. Also deserving of mention are several area businesses that have "adopted" the school as part of the Foundation for Madison School's Adopt-A-School program. These businesses (Summit Credit Union, Physician's Plus Insurance Corp. CUNA Mutual, and Group Health Cooperative) have contributed financially and in-kind to underwrite some of the school's signature programs and projects to help students learn about sustainability and resilience, inquiry & design, cultural relevance and a sense of place.



## MISSION

*Badger Rock Middle School (BRMS) will prepare our diverse student citizens to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, helping them thrive as environmentally responsible, justice-oriented problems solvers and lifelong learners. Our interdisciplinary academic program thrives on authentic, community project based learning at its core, with ecological systems as our comprehensive framework. Badger Rock Middle School will be a model for environmental sustainability, culturally relevant teaching, stewardship and civic engagement, integrating best practices in sustainability education, design, and systems thinking into every aspect of the learning experience.*

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## Memorial High School's Engagement Project Helps New Students Succeed

*By Dennis Whitish*

The Engagement Project is a collaboration between Community Partnerships and the Madison Metropolitan School District and operates only at Memorial High School. Feeder middle schools involved are Toki, Jefferson and Spring Harbor. The purpose behind this innovative program is to provide 8th grade students who have mental health issues and/or behavioral issues with support to make their transition to high school more successful.

According to project coordinator Robin Gray, students with emotional and behavioral difficulties have a lower high school graduation rate due to problems with attention, attendance, concentration, memory, thinking skills and social relationships. Robin, in concert with Memorial High School support staff, strives to engage students in school leading to increased attendance, improved academic performance and increased graduation rates.

Middle school staff identifies and refers students to the Engagement Program at the end of 8th grade. Robin initiates contact with the family for their interest in the program, and once on board, she is available to transition the student over the summer, make community referrals (if needed) and support the student prior to the beginning of the new school year. All students in the Engagement Project are assigned a case manager before the start of the school year to ensure a contact person within the school for the family and student. Students can receive tours of the school, work on schedules and basically become familiar with the new school. The case manager provides early and ongoing monitoring of student attendance, grades and behavior.

The Engagement Project provides the student with voluntary student/school "mentor" matches who of-

ten are other teachers in the building that can reach out and "check-in" with the student to see how things are going. The school has also provided small support groups for the students where they can make new friends, learn how others cope with new or stressful situations and learn how to negotiate and navigate the large high school environment more successfully. Memorial student services staff meet early and often with Engagement Project students to help build positive and personal relationships.

The first group of students in the Engagement Project will graduate from Memorial High School this spring. Robin and the student services team at Memorial have reason to celebrate this achievement. The program has already received 50 referrals from two of the three middle schools for next year.