

## Testimonials from staff and participants.

\*Please note that these have not been edited.

Names of participants have been de-identified.

August 14, 2019

To: The Afterschool League and The Grail,

From: Melonee Ridgeway YWCA

Prevention Education Coordinator

My name is Melonee Ridgeway and I'm the Prevention Education Coordinator at the YWCA and I had the pleasure of working with the After School League Summer STEAM program. This summer was unbelievable. I would say outstanding! I worked with 15 amazing young people. We worked on a Teens Against Bullying curriculum and developed a PSA where the students were able to express how they felt about bullying as well as what they learned about this important issue in the world today. We focused on and discuss in detail four types of bullying; **Cyber, Physical, Emotional and Verbal**. The students participated in a series of educational activities that dealt with prevention and keeping yourself safe in a bullying situation. We looked at the rate of suicide and school shooting in the country. We worked on problem solving and how the social media has a strong hold on how young people communicate with one other. The students had to interact with each other face to face and it made a big difference on how they were able to build friendships and trust. The students were extremely respectful to each other as we discuss the subjects and were excellent at problem solving. We even did some restorative circles and practices that allowed us to dive in deep on the huge program of bullying in this country.

This group was one of the most intelligent and engaged group I have ever worked with. They all got along and were willing to work together. Even when there was an issue they were able to work out and problem solve on the issue at hand. One thing that really stuck out to me was, you could tell that their parents were present in their life and they respected their parents. They really cared what their parents and other adults felt about them. There were some kids in the group who had some real life issues facing them in their home but they knew they were loved and supported in their peer group. It was wonderful watching them hold each other accountable and so be worried when someone was late or did not come to work. They were some real and everlasting friendships built this summer. A lot of teachable moments happened with this group.

This summer I was able to participate in all of their field trips which allowed me to get to know them even more, support them and have conversations with them about life. Giving them resources that they can use right now and in the future. It also gave them an opportunity to see me in a more human light and to realize you have to stay

focused on your goals and network with the right people in order to get reach goals. We all were teaching each other some good life lessons about self-acceptance. I saw both the girls and the boys grow in so many ways. I'm very proud to have been a part of this group. They all have very bright futures. Their futures looked so bright that I had to wear sunglasses when I was around them. Smile. At the end of the program I gave each student a ROCK that had a word of strength on it like: "A Leader" "Outstanding" "Kind" "Resourceful" "One of a kind" etc. on them and we discuss why that word or phrase was given to them. I enjoyed that exercise and they did too.

Ms. BB and her staff were awesome and I enjoy working with them. A very professional team of people who are working very hard to give their best to the students that they work with. I hope that I was able to make some change in the student's lives because they defiantly changed mine.

If you have any questions, please feel free to call me at 513-570-8354.

Sincerely, Melonee Ridgeway

AB12

I have two reasons why I liked this program. One the field trips because at every field trip we learned something new. The second thing I liked was meeting new people because you don't know what they can teach you. What I learned this summer was that bullying goes to suicide and that all of us are equal. And something that I didn't like was nothing.

J W 14

In this summer program I enjoyed almost everything. I enjoyed the Youth Summit because there were kids my age I can communicate with and converse with. It was fun to be there.

In this program I really learned how to be respectful. Not only to police officers as well as people in general. When we played the game they told me exactly what to say to be respectful in many different ways.

Something I didn't like was the "act" that we did in front of Ms. Cathy. It was embarrassing but it helped me step out of my comfort zone which is a good thing.

At the end though, everything turned out to work out for the best.

DU14

July 29 2019

I have two reasons why I enjoyed this program. one the field trips because every time we went on a field trip we learned one or two things about it. The second reason why

I enjoyed this program is meeting new people because You never know what they will teach you. I wrote this because I want you to feel the enjoyable program.

I learned that bullying is a sign for help. That we are all equal and people should stop bullying. One thing that I a

Problem of is being on the stage like when we played our

Instruments and we did our skit. And I didn't enjoy the memory circle because I already new there name. I wrote this because I wanted you to know what I did not enjoy and want I learned.

I told how enjoyable this program is. Then I told what I learned After all we did in the whole summer program. Finally I told you what I did not enjoy about The program. Thank you for reading.

KM15

The things I liked about the program was when we went kayaking and when we went hiking. The reason why I chose those things is that they were fun and relaxing for me. They helped me calm down somewhat. Plus I like to be in nature it is a very calming place.

One thing I learned was how to be patient with people and I learned how to calm down when needed to. I also learned how to defuse an argument between people. I learned how to try and help people if they have problems and try to help them solve them. I choose those things is because they helped in prove my people skills and my personality.

A challenge that I had was to try and not argue with other people when they didn't make any sense.

DR17

I enjoyed going on field trips because they introduced me to activities I never thought of doing before. Activities such as identifying plants, using musical instruments i never heard of before, and playing jeopardy. Some field trips I enjoyed were kayaking going to evergreen holistic learning center and going to the zoo to perform.

I learned that there are multiple types of bullying such as cyberbullying, physical bullying, emotional bullying, and verbal bullying and a host of other kinds. Physical bullying is when someone does something to cause pain or injury to someone else. Emotional bullying is when someone does something to embarrass someone or just make them sad or angry. Verbal bullying is when someone insults someone or says something hurtful to them. Cyber bullying is when someone does something online to embarrass or offend someone else. An

example is when someone posts an inappropriate picture of someone else or spread rumors about them.

Something that challenged me during the program was doing yoga. Doing yoga was difficult because my body is not in shape. Doing yoga was also difficult because I had to hold a pose until everyone got it right and by the time everyone got it right I couldn't hold it any more. I want to strengthen my body so I can be better at yoga in the future. I learned that doing yoga teaches perseverance and stress management

BM17

I lost my Mother this past fall. The loss of my mother was one of the most tragic experiences I've been through in my whole life. When I lost her, I lost a part of myself, I didn't want to go to school or hang out with my friends. I just wanted to be alone, but I knew that those feelings would start to fester into something worse. So I decided to reach out to people that would help me handle this better. The After School program really helped me through this rough patch in my life, and helped me realize that there are people who are always watching out for you. Thanks to Ms. BB, Ms. Meg, Ms. Shannon, Mr. Harris and Mr. Greg. I had a lot of the adults that work here reach out to me and offer support. This made me very hopeful.

I passed all of my classes, I enrolled an AP class. I took safe dating classes through the YWCA sponsored by the after school program. I've created a PSA, and also guided students through developing their own.

The Summer STEAM program really helped me during the summer. I thought it was going to be really rough because it would be my first birthday without her. So I didn't know how it was going to go, but all of my colleagues were really encouraging and helpful. I am so thankful to be able to work with such great individuals. I wouldn't have been able to get through this summer without the help of all of the wonderful staff and student workers. Who took time out of their day to teach us and help us grow in places we didn't know needed growth.

LW18

The after school league was a really exciting and fun experience for me overall. When I first started out I thought I would be doing stuff I really didn't want to be doing like organizing papers for someone or constantly handing out things and giving out directions, but it was the complete opposite. Because I was here to work with the art teacher from Woodward Ms. Burns and Mr. Harris they actually helped me build some skills that I would be able to use in college and later on for my art career.

I learned how to use a high end camera and how to take pictures of events and groups of people doing activities. This helped me build my skills with a camera, which I had 0% experience with before I came to this program but now I know base level knowledge on how to handle a camera. Mr. Harris also taught me a lot about

art in the area of Cincinnati and what it's like doing what he does. I learned the difference between taking photos that just look pretty and pictures to go in a montage or presentation/portfolio and how to take pictures that people can use for posters or add text to. Not everything was hands on, I got to see Mr.Harris film and take audio of the group and the events we went to and how he goes in and edit them to make them presentable and professional. All of this really made me more interested in photography and really helped me get a head start and lay down the fundamentals I needed for my minor in college( photography).

What I will take away the most from this experience isn't the skills I learned but the moments I shared with my co-workers. Even though most of them were younger than me I taught them stuff and they taught me stuff. It's always great working with other people around my age from different backgrounds because we see life from different perspectives. I Will always remember lunch time everyday having one on one or group conversations with all of them and just having fun. I felt like some of the things I told them got through to them like some of the things they told me got through to me.