

STATE'S ATTORNEY'S OFFICE TRUANCY PREVENTION PROGRAM



June 2017

MONTGOMERY COUNTY

Truancy Prevention Program (TPP) - SY 2016-2017 Report

312 middle school children from Montgomery County Public Schools were served by the Truancy Prevention Program in the SY 2016-2017

78% demonstrated improvement in their attendance, and **173** students or **55%** successfully completed the Truancy Prevention Program

Over **60** volunteers serve as Facilitators, Site Coordinators, Mentors, and Tutors each school year

A total of **652.30** hours were served by volunteers this school year. At the established rate of \$23.17/hour of volunteer service, that amounts to **\$15,113.79** on investment towards the success of the children in Montgomery County

THANK YOU SCHOOL YEAR 2016-2017 TPP VOLUNTEERS

You made a difference in the lives of over 300 children.

Alan Lipschultz
Alan Parver
Alessandra Portillo
Almudena Diaz
Amishi Sabnis
Bob Okoroajuzie
Cathy Haver
Chadwick Dunefsky
Charles Brinkman
Elizabeth Wilcox
Hanna Vohra
Harold Wooten
Hon. Marielsa Bernard
Julia Wolz
Leora Raskas
Lorraine Santo
Mady Nadje
Maia Martini
Maria Vincent
Mario Lagman
Mamta Rajan
Mel Gelman
Michael Gruenberg
Nicole Griffith
Rashida Bright
Sara Yassin
Steve Dutky
Terry Irwin
Terry Melo
Victoria Hamilton

Yanique Royal
Ben Assefa
Ebuka Osinach
Daniel Lechner
Elizabeth Chadha
Gabriella Vazzana
Jaime Jacobson
Nick Schaufelberger
Rachel Jiang
Sandy Sellman
Tam Pham
Taylor Jones
Trevor Addie
Xavier Audick
Ofc. Bobby Blackmon
Dep. Cynthia DeFriece
Ofc. Diane H.-Neal
Ofc. Joseph Lowery
Ofc. Kristie Palmer
Ofc. Marcus Dixon
Ofc. Melissa Coligan
Ofc. Michael Prather
Ofc. Oliver Janney
Ofc. Percell Gregory
Ofc. Russell Larson
Ofc. Sharif Hidayat
Ofc. Shate Jackson
Ofc. Steven Pascali
Sgt. Sabrina Pirtle
Det. Wayne Wiltshire

An Evening of Gratitude and Celebration

May 31st marked the culmination of the school year 2016-2017 Truancy Prevention Program (TPP). The event was held in the Ceremonial Courtroom and it was packed with honored student graduates, joyful family members, and proud supporters.

This was an evening full of gratitude and celebration. The Hon. John McCarthy, State's Attorney, recognized everyone involved in the Program. He thanked the students, the parents, the County Executive, Council members, school staff, TPP staff and volunteers. He expressed immense appreciation for each one's effort, dedication and contribution to the success of the program. Mr. McCarthy told the story of how he brought the TPP to Montgomery County. He said that it was through a partnership with the University of Baltimore School of Law that the Program came into fruition. Piloting in 2 schools in 2010, the program has since expanded to 17 more.

The Hon. Judge Karla Smith, reminded the graduates that everyone they see in the room is interested in their success. "Recognize that it is not lip service,"

she said, "recognize that you are not alone."

Judge Smith shared her own story as a young graduate, feeling fortunate that someone took a chance on her, and gave her an opportunity which led to where she is today. "You can always change for the better," she added. Pointing out that while it is not always easy to do so, and that change is usually scary and challenging, one must try and make the commitment to change and do better. Judge Smith, concluded with, "Seek out YOUR ENDLESS POSSIBILITIES."

Ms. Lynda Earle, transitioned the program to the most awaited part of the evening's event, which is awarding the students with graduation certificates. "Thank you for entrusting your children to us; they have become **our** children," Ms. Earle said. And to the students she remarked, "You showed up, you showed up on time; you not only improved but helped others to improve which is remarkable."

CONGRATULATIONS to the TPP Graduates and to those who made significant improvement with their attendance and academic performance.

TPP GRADUATION SY 2016-2017



George Simms



Judge Karla Smith



John McCarthy, State's Attorney



Ariana Cruz,
student speaker



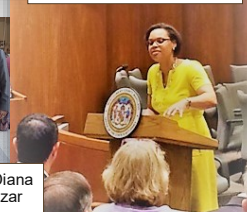
Volunteer mentors with Rexanah Wyse



Joseph Hooks



Half the TPP Team with Diana Plazas and Yasmine Eleazar



Lynda Earle



Volunteers

FROM THE BRIGGS CHANEY MIDDLE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL'S DESK

March 16, 2017

Dear Mr. McCarthy,

I am writing this letter to express my appreciation for the Truancy Prevention Program at Briggs Chaney Middle School. Your encouraging, supportive and compassionate approach, as opposed to a punitive stance, in helping our families with attendance issues has made a tremendous difference. Over the course of three years, this program has assisted more than 45 families.

I especially appreciate the facilitator of our program, Ms. Lynda Earle. She truly cares about the importance of this work and our students. The high quality team that accompanies her is very personable and does an exceptional job of getting to know our students and their families. As you know, intervention programs in schools void of commitment, passion, and relationship-building is fruitless. Fortunately, Ms. Earle and her team have made a positive and sustainable difference for families who otherwise may not have received the resources and supports to address complex and intense needs.

Please know that we are grateful for your vision and action. On behalf of the Briggs Chaney Middle School Counseling Team and myself, please convey to Ms. Earle and her team how very much we value their partnership.

With gratitude,

Dr. Tamitha Campbell



WHAT DID THE STUDENTS LEARN?

I learned

- many lessons, but the one that impacted me the most was that I can accomplish anything I put my mind to. It also helped me with my relationship with the staff, and generally improved my attendance.
- how to make it through middle school using a variety of techniques such as there's a right place and time for everything, and also how to calm down.
- that school is important and so is education. In order to achieve success in life, work comes first above all.
- that you can be successful if you try and if someone is motivating you.
- to set goals.
- that coming to school is very important because if you miss days your grades drop and it's not easy to bring your grades up. This program is very helpful because it got me out of trouble and helped me get to school on time, and get good grades.
- that attendance is important in everyday life and if you don't keep it up, it can come back to bite you in the future.
 - that if I go to school, then I can really get some really cool stuff and also you can get a nice job. Plus, I got a chipotle gift card, and I was happy.
 - how to manage my time better so I can have enough time to get ready and still be on time for school.

WHAT DID THE STUDENTS LEARN?

I learned

- to do my absolute best to succeed in school, and to plan go to college, and to be the best person I can possibly be.
- how to have a schedule and a plan.
- that attendance is important and if you ever miss even one or two days of school, that could drastically drop your grades.
- to ask more questions, be more involved, work harder, and wake up on time!
- that it is important to come to school because the more you miss, the more you will fall behind.
- that coming to school affects your grades positively.
- to keep trying and never give up on yourself.
- that after this program, it doesn't mean I should stop doing what's right and following my dreams, but it means to keep on with it.
- school is an important part of our life.
- that just being late can actually affect your grades.
- my attendance affects my grades and that I can push myself to do even better.
- that through effort there will be good results.

MESSAGE FROM A VOLUNTEER MENTOR TO HER MENTEES AT PARKLAND MS FALL 2016

Good Morning Graduates,

I am so sorry that I am unable to be here to celebrate this wonderful moment with you all. I am extremely proud of each and every one of you for working so hard and pushing yourselves to the best of your ability. I have seen each and every one of you grow and work hard. I wanted to share a quick quote with you that I read somewhere:

"Now is the time for us to shine. The time when our dreams are within reach and possibilities are vast. Now is the time for all of us to become the people we've always dreamed of being. This is your life. You are here! You matter! The world is waiting."

Some of you will be 8th graders next year. You will be the leaders of this school. People who are younger than you will look up to you, so always remember to do your best at setting a good example. As for the rest of you, High School awaits. You will be starting a new chapter in your life, one that will bring many challenges and many accomplishments. Anything is possible if you believe in yourself and work to the best of your ability, never give up!

I believe you all will do great things. You are here! You matter! The world is waiting. So go now and show the world what you got, because I know you will do amazing things! Congratulations!!

Almudena Diaz

Argyle MS Principal James Allrich,
on the importance of attendance:

Half the battle is showing up.
Even if you don't feel like it,
by being present, something could inspire,
or motivate you.

"Magic happens just by being present."

WORDS OF WISDOM

Excerpt from Remarks
by Kedren Sudan, TPP
Graduate, Neelsville MS



"What encouraged me to come to school everyday was knowing that every Thursday the Truancy Team would be there to discuss my day and any issues, and if I had good attendance I would be rewarded.... After completing the program I feel inspired and motivated and I am willing to prosper through any obstacles. As a result of the Truancy Program, I've taken my education more seriously. I hope somebody finds the program as encouraging as I did. The truth is it works and you will benefit from it by getting better grades which will lead to better jobs, which will lead to a better life."

The SAO TPP Team:

George Simms. Assistant State's Attorney, head of Community Outreach Unit. TPP Facilitator in 3 schools.

Phil Andrews. Co-leads the Community Outreach Unit with George Simms. Director of Crime Prevention Initiatives. TPP Facilitator in 4 schools.

Diana Plazas. Assistant TPP Coordinator. Diana served in 6 schools as Site Coordinator.

Joseph Hooks. Assistant TPP Coordinator. Joseph served in 6 schools as Site Coordinator.

TPP: The Hunt for the Right Button By Harold B. Wooten

State's Attorney John McCarthy's decision to establish a truancy prevention initiative is in the tradition of community prosecution models that reduce crime by offering a hand-up. Mr. McCarthy is betting that keeping kids from dropping out of school will reduce young adults in jail.

TPP is based on the premise that within the middle school timeframe there is an opportunity to 'surround the student' with caring adults to guide, support, and coach the student toward effective life skills, such as getting organized. This approach is often called a wrap-around model, meaning that TPP teams and school staff *wrap* themselves around the student with an array of expertise and care.

One theme of resilience helps explain why some people survive difficult situations and others don't. For this age group, the ability to make connections with safe people is salient. Predicting *who* that safe person will be for a particular student is next to impossible. Will it be a caring mentor, a school counselor or assistant principal, a TPP facilitator, coordinator, a pupil placement worker, or a family member?

One story illustrates this mystery.

A young 7th grader was the subject of *multiple* unsuccessful interventions by the TPP team. Nothing was working. His single parent mother worked long hours and was seemingly unable to meet with the TPP team. Almost as an after-thought, the facilitator began to probe into stories the student shared about his two older brothers – both of whom were successful in business. The facilitator called both brothers and delivered this message: "You are a successful community member. Your brother is doing poorly in school. He's on a path to be a dropout. Would you be willing to sit down with us and figure out together what we can do to help him? Oh, and is there anything you can do to get Mom to attend?"

In a subsequent TPP meeting with the presence of the two brothers and Mom, the brothers took over. Behavioral consequences were immediately administered by them. They took him under their wings. The old patterns of behavior gave way to the student's new, 'take charge of my life' behaviors.

He turned the page over and continues to do well in school.

We can only control the front end of change. TPP teams thrive within the mystery that they never really know what buttons to push. So... we push a lot of them.

Harold Wooten is a veteran Truancy Prevention Program Facilitator for two schools. He conducts workshops on Building Resilience and Coping Skills for organizations.

Lynda Earle. Assistant State's Attorney. TPP Facilitator in 3 schools.

Rexanah Wyse. Assistant State's Attorney, and TPP Program Manager. Rexanah served in 6 schools as Site Coordinator.

Yasmine Eleazar. AmeriCorps member on 2nd term as Volunteer Maryland Coordinator; TPP mentor; and TLZ Coordinator in 4 schools.

**VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION RECEPTION
MAY 4, 2017
Gordon Biersch, Rockville, MD**



VOLUNTEER FEEDBACK

"I have thoroughly enjoyed my participation with TPP at SGMS...This program is planned for and executed very systematically, and in a manner to help ensure success!" "Thanks so much for involving me in such a valuable program with such an amazing group of professionals."

"I am so grateful for this opportunity, and I really hope that the students have gained as much from the program as I have."

"I loved volunteering for this program. I enjoyed talking with the children and being a part of such a wonderful group of people!"

"Thanks so much for always emailing briefings and encouraging mentors to be part of the input...Also, I wish to thank your office for giving me the opportunity to be part of such a rewarding program. I am enjoying meeting, motivating, and engaging the students."

"I enjoyed seeing kids and parents change their attitudes and behaviors toward attending school regularly."

"It was valuable for me to serve in a community outside my own. We live in such a large, diverse area, and it is sometimes difficult to see outside your own neighborhood. It helped me understand my neighbors better."

Please stay in touch and spread the word: The Truancy Prevention Program needs volunteers for the 2017-2018 school year beginning in late September.

Contact Yasmine Eleazar for questions, feedback and suggestions. Call tel. (240) 777-7501, or email: yasmine.eleazar@montgomerycountymd.gov