



WCS Connection

April 2022



From the desk of the Wisconsin Community Services, Inc. CEO:

Closing Health Disparities

Very few people are aware that the month of April is designated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as National Minority Health Month. It is easy to understand why awareness may be low with so many public events vying for our attention in April. This is especially true in Wisconsin where you have elections, the emergence of spring weather, the opening of the major league baseball season, and the beginning of NBA postseason featuring our own Milwaukee Bucks. Our local and national elections notwithstanding, I dare say none of these events is more critical to the health and wellbeing of our communities than addressing the significant health disparities that exist between whites and communities of color. According to the Centers for Disease Control, April is designated as National Minority Health Month to underscore the importance of improving health outcomes for racial and ethnic minorities. The importance of addressing the gap in minority health equity has always been critical and now, even more so since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has affected racial and ethnic minority groups and people who live in rural communities by causing more severe illness and death than other groups because of discriminatory practices and a lack of access to quality healthcare. It is imperative that we realize when we talk about health that we are talking about both physical and behavioral health. There exist significant gaps in both areas that have been widening in recent years.

While there may be a tendency to believe that we can isolate health disparities to a health dimension, we need to realize that this growing problem manifests itself in many ways. Because health is holistic, it impacts poverty and income, academic achievement, violence, crime, incarceration, and more. It is not a problem that is only common to certain communities and racial and ethnic groups, it is a problem that impacts all of us and some more directly than others. Mahatma Gandhi often reminded us that the measure of a civilization is how it treats its weakest members. While the language that Gandhi used 100 years ago is different than what we use today, the message is the same. We do have the resources available to change and improve health disparities. We have a responsibility to address and improve negative conditions. With the awareness that April is National

Minority Health Month, we can use the next several months to work together and make a commitment towards improving health outcomes for racial and ethnic minorities. Hopefully this work will lead us towards a time when we will no longer need to have a designated month.

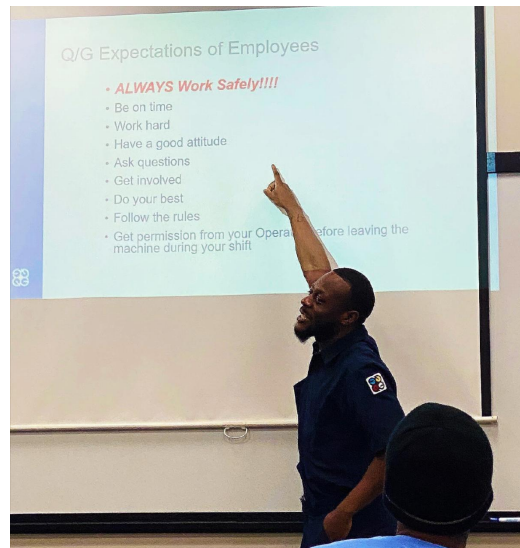
Clarence Johnson



With Determination and a Smile

By Leah DeMarco, WCS Parsons House RRC Employment Coordinator

Last October, Javion came to the WCS Parsons House Residential Reentry Center (RRC) to complete his 96-month incarceration. Javion arrived with a solid plan in place to do everything he could to never go back to federal prison. Initially, he obtained employment at Pepsi Co. working 2nd shift loading trucks. Although the job was great, he encountered transportation barriers getting to work. So, Javion decided that he needed to work on getting his driver's license and finding a job with easy transportation to and from work since he didn't have access to a vehicle.



Javion teaches a new employee class at Quad.

Leah DeMarco, Employment Coordinator at Parsons House RRC, suggested that he try joining the Running Rebels/Quad cohort which provides transportation to the Quad plant in Hartford, a place that would otherwise be very hard for him to each day for work. Javion was accepted into the group, completed the weeklong workshop, and started training at Quad on December 20. From there, he entered the Quad employee training program to learn the company's machines. About a month into his probationary period at Quad, Javion was recognized not only for how quickly he learned but also for his ability to teach his peers. His supervisor and the Quad Human Resources Department envisioned bigger things for Javion – they saw his ability to communicate with new employees, his supervisors, and his coworkers. And, he ALWAYS has a smile on his face! Before Javion even finished his probationary period, he was promoted to a Retention and Acquisition Specialist. He went from working three to four 12-hour shifts each week to having a salaried position and getting his own cubicle!

Javion obtained his learner's permit and is getting ready to take his road test in a few weeks. When he passes, he will have his own car that Quad has helped him buy. Currently it is in the employee parking lot waiting for him! Javion was released from the Bureau of Prisons on March 11. With the assistance of Quad, he moved into his own apartment. His supervisor, plant manager, peers, and even the front desk staff at Quad have nothing but kind words about Javion, expressing what an outstanding individual he is and a great asset to the team.



YES Program Receives Wonderful Donation

WCS was honored to have the Youth Enhanced Support (YES) Program selected to be the recipient of the money raised at the Forest Park Presbyterian Church's Annual *Gathering for a Cause* fundraiser. The small church, with approximately 100 members, was looking to focus its fundraising efforts on education and youth in their community, which aligns perfectly with the YES Program's goals. On March 26, the congregation showed their support at the fundraiser. The evening featured great food, live music, entertainment, a silent auction, and lots of raffle prizes. The event also included a special presentation about the YES Program provided by Katie Castro, the YES Program Coordinator, and Mary Sweeney, Director of WCS Waukesha and Jefferson Court Services.



Pictured above left to right:
Mary Sweeney, *Director of WCS Waukesha and Jefferson Court Services*;
Katie Castro, *YES Program Coordinator*, and
Rev. Kimberly Trimboli of
Forest Park Presbyterian Church.

WCS 110th Anniversary Fun Facts

In 1928, WCS started to receive funding from the Milwaukee County Community Fund (later known as the United Way). Today, WCS receives over \$350,000 annually from the United Way of Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha County (UWGMWC). In 93 years, WCS has received over \$18 million in funding from the UWGMWC to support several of the agency's programs. Currently several WCS programs receive support from UWGMWC. These programs include the Center for Driver's License Recovery and Employability (CDLRE), Employment and Training Services, Community Support Program (CSP), Targeted Case Management (TCM), Unlimited Potential Outpatient Mental Health and Substance Use Clinic (UP), the Youth Enhanced Support (YES) Program and several of our youth-serving programs that benefit from the Healthy Youth Initiative.

Career Opportunities at WCS

WCS is seeking reliable and compassionate individuals to fill the following positions:

Case Worker – Conditional Release Program

Looking for a challenge? Become a Case Worker for the Conditional Release (CR) Program, an innovative program that serves individuals who have been found guilty of committing a crime but not criminally responsible due to mental disease or defect. A Conditional Release Case Worker helps enhance

Did You Know?

The Youth Enhanced Support (YES) Program was created in 2017 and is based upon other WCS juvenile programs that successfully address behaviors of youth that

community safety by identifying program participants' treatment needs and provides effective high-quality mental health services. In this role, the Case Worker will coordinate, plan, and monitor community treatment for program participants as well as engage and develop one-to-one therapeutic relationships with them. Minimal qualifications for the position include a bachelor's degree in a related human services field and experience in case management and service coordination.

are at risk. The program is funded through support from the United Way of Greater Milwaukee and Waukesha County.

Youth Care Worker (Part and Full-Time) – Youth Shelter Care Program

WCS is searching for individuals who are passionate about working with youth to fill the exciting role of Youth Care Worker. The Youth Care Worker provides supervision of the young people placed in the WCS Youth Shelter Care Program. This includes implementing the daily schedule of activities, providing group educational activities, recreational activities, following up individually with youth, and serving as a mentor and role model for youth. Applicants need to have at least three years of experience with youth. Weekends are required.

Youth Treatment Specialist – Bakari Youth Residential Care Center

This is an exciting opportunity to work in a therapeutic environment serving male youth, ages 13 to 17. The Specialist will embrace working with youth, teaching them life skills, and empowering them through the programming. They will also provide supervision of the youth as they take responsibility for implementing the daily schedule of activities which includes educational and recreational activities as well as educational support. Qualified applicants must have a high school diploma or equivalent, a bachelor's degree is preferred. They must also be at least 21 years old, be able to work a flexible schedule, and have a minimum of one year of experience serving children/youth with mental health needs.



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Wisconsin Community Services, Inc. (WCS) advocates for justice and community safety, providing innovative opportunities for individuals to overcome adversity.

WCS is a 501(c) 3 non-profit agency that provides services in southeastern Wisconsin.
WCS has been serving the community successfully for over 110 years.

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