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Community Building Event Helps Young Adults

A youth in SaintA's Independent Living Services program who attended a recent Community Building event came in on the Saturday of the two-day program looking like she was carrying the burden of the world.

By the end of the day Sunday, she had a big, broad smile and she looked like she was floating on air.

"I feel so much better," the young woman told ILS Supervisor Jane Doolan, who said the change was physically evident. "I feel the heaviness was lifted from me."

That kind of reaction fulfilled the goals of the event as well as the case managers at SaintA who work with young people in ILS, many of whom are former foster children, trying to help them successfully transition to adulthood.



The Community Building event that SaintA sponsored March 21 and 22 is part of a nationwide effort. Participants spend two days together with trained facilitators to intensively examine things that have come up in their past, to look at places where they might be stuck, things they need to explore and let go, and to focus on building a more positive future. The event included 19 young adults in SaintA's ILS program.

"The facilitators help bring out past pain and difficulties and help the participants realize they are not alone in their struggles," said Frank Gaunt, Director of Community Services. "The idea is that the community of others who are there help support each other."



the Table MKE

SaintA staff did not actually attend the sessions. But case managers picked youth up and brought them to SaintA for the event and cared for about a dozen of the clients' children from infants to 5 years old so their parents could participate.

SaintA Earns Eighth-Consecutive International Accreditation

After the event was over, facilitators told Frank that it was evident that SaintA case managers do a great job of helping and caring for these young adults. Jane said that because of the case managers' closeness with youth in the program, they were concerned about some of them after Saturday's session.

Program Seeks to Keep Kids out of Child Welfare

"Some of them were unraveled; they were visibly uncomfortable," she said. "But I guess the process was to unravel them and then put them back together into something better and stronger."

Youth Program Manager Works to Make Services Accessible

She said the fact that all of the ILS youth returned for Sunday's session showed a lot of strength and commitment to each other.

From Bedside Nurse to Family-Centered Caregiver

And the personal explorations seemed to really resonate with the youth, Jane said.

Family Services Supervisor Joins Panel About Vel Phillips

"One told me it was a great event, that she felt more grown up, and that she has more courage to think about her own history. And she said she got to know other participants better."

Aspiring Women of Color Continues for Second Year

In fact, after the program was over, the group wanted to get together and go shopping, which is not the sort of thing they usually would do with each other, Jane said.

"Overall it was an unnerving experience for staff, because of our concern that everything was OK after the first night," Jane said. "But by Sunday evening we knew it definitely was a good experience for our group."

Frank said Community Building recognizes the importance of understanding that these young people have experienced trauma in their lives and makes a connection with the trauma informed care that SaintA employs.

"It's a real alignment with our beliefs and philosophy," he said.

Frank said SaintA expects to offer the young people the opportunity to get together again with themselves to continue their conversations or to help facilitate a similar endeavor in the future.

"From what we saw with our young people, this was a success."

Interested in learning more about trauma informed care? Attend a community training session.

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