



# On Balance

A Dane County Department of Human Services & Dane County Juvenile Court Program Publication

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## Disrupting for Good: Innovation in Human Services

By

**Dr. Martha Stacker**

The human services field faces a multitude of challenges: rising community needs, limited resources, and outdated systems. But within these challenges lies an opportunity for positive disruption within the CYF team and stakeholder efforts.

Disruptors are innovators who challenge the status quo, evaluate traditional strategies, revise policies/practices and introduce new approaches to tackle complex problems. In CYF, here are some examples that disrupt:

- **Leveraging technology:** CYF has a division-based case management system that can be expanded over time for the first time. Traverse is a cloud-based document management, forms management, and mobility software purpose-built for human services agencies. Watch this overview video to learn more about how it's designed to help everyone at human services work efficiently and effectively.  
<https://info.teamnorthwoods.com/traverse-overview-video>

- **Personalized services:** CYF staff and various stakeholders are participating in the Tailored Dispositional Orders (TDO) process of review and revisions in YJP and CPS. This statewide project works toward a goal to individual needs and circumstances, ensuring they are culturally competent and accessible. There are several reasons to consider revising TDOs to prioritize reunification while ensuring child safety, potentially reducing the number of children, youth, and families in formal and often racially disparate systems, and in more timely manners. The revised TDO approach can address the specific needs of each family, leading to more successful reunifications and improved family well-being.  
<https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwportal/tailored-dispositional-orders>

- **Focus on prevention:** Investing in early intervention and preventative measures to address

issues before they escalate.

- YJP Youth Justice Innovation Grant is expanding access to restorative services for youth in Dane County to divert youth away from the formal court system, provide interventions geared toward reducing disproportionate minority contact, and assist youth in problem solving around encountered barriers and building positive community ties. The target population(s) are youth referred to the YJP court diversion or the formal intake unit for at least the following five misdemeanor offenses: battery, resisting/obstructing, disorderly conduct, criminal damage to property, and theft. The key features are a subcontract with Briarpatch Youth Services to provide Victim Respondent Conferences (VRC) and Restorative Justice Circles (RJC) to youth referred on state charges as close to their home as possible.
- Mandated reporting procedures involve the reporting process itself. This could include the reporting system, improving access to training for mandated reporters, addressing racial disparities in reporting or clarifying guidelines to reduce confusion and encourage more accurate reporting. <https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/community-collaboration-reimagining-mandated-reporting/id1645546128?i=1000644486459>.

By embracing disruption, we can create a human services landscape that is:

- **Equitable:** Ensuring everyone has access to the support they need, regardless of background or circumstance.
  - CPS officially has a new Targeted Safety Supports Funds (TSSF) Unit in the division! CYF is so excited to move forward with the significant goals to continue stability and further sustainability with reunification for families in homes. Compliments to DCF for recognition of TSSF implementation by Casey.org <https://lnkd.in/gctBZiri>.
  - The CPS family and community engagement (FACE) unit applied and is participating in a countrywide cohort of the County Guaranteed Income Solutions Sprint. We also partnered with community health, public health, and the housing division. This initiative will focus on chronic neglect and families that are bordering on being ineligible or no longer receiving various formal financial assistances. Read more here: <https://lnkd.in/gtgbfa5a>
- **Outcomes-driven:** Focusing on measurable results that improve people's lives. Youth Justice and Prevention (YJP) presented evidence-based data that shows we are serving the community well from their feedback. The survey also acknowledges that we still have community work to do, which is helpful for future planning. YJP should be very proud of the team outcomes that was submitted from the community served. Well-done YJP! See the outcomes here: <https://lnkd.in/gMNuupt>

Disruption isn't about tearing down what exists, but about building upon it. It's about harnessing creativity and innovation to empower those who serve and those who are served. Implementing change is a complex and challenging process. Change is meant to disrupt "business as usual"; it's uncomfortable at times too and that's why it is sometimes met with resistance. Resistance is neither good nor bad and can provide valuable information that can help consider, plan, and implement changes.

Let's embrace the role of disruptor, because the human cost of inaction is simply too high. Together, we can continue to build a future where human services are not just a safety net or temporary solution, but a springboard to a sustainable and better life.

## **UW Speed Mentoring Event for Legal Studies and Criminal Justice Certificate Programs, Center for Law, Society, & Justice at University of WI-Madison**

**By Dr. Martha Stacker**

On March 13<sup>th</sup>, Benjamin C. Gonring and Dr. Martha Stacker attended the UW Speed Mentoring Event for Legal Studies and Criminal Justice Certificate Programs, Center for Law, Society, & Justice at University of WI-Madison. Each fall and spring, UW holds a speed mentoring event to provide the students and community members with an opportunity to connect one-on-one. The event is organized as ten 10-minute rounds of one-on-one conversations. Benjamin C. Gonring, Attorney Manager, Youth Defense Unit, has attended for several years!

Ben said,

"I have been participating in the UW Criminal Justice Certificate Program 'Speed Mentoring' event for over a decade. I am actually not sure how long the event has been in existence, but I have been a participant for almost the entirety of that time. I absolutely enjoy doing it because I find it to be mutually beneficial. On the one hand, undergrads can get exposed to what I do and ask any questions that they might have. Given that many are contemplating going to law school, the students are very interested in exploring all areas of law, as well as looking for answers about preparing for law school. On the other hand, I get the opportunity to talk about something that I am very passionate about. I try to take advantage of any chance I am given to shine a light on the privilege of representing children. Moreover, the energy of the students is rejuvenating. I appreciate their enthusiasm and idealism. A very worthwhile event!"

*Benjamin C. Gonring, Attorney Manager, Youth Defense Unit*

Martha added,

"Speed mentoring with students is a rewarding experience for several reasons. The fast-paced format keeps the conversations engaging and focused, allowing me to share knowledge, experiences, and guidance on a variety of topics. It also exposes me to a diverse range of students and their unique perspectives, which can be both refreshing and inspiring. In a short amount of time, we equally can make a positive impact on the student's academic journey or career aspirations. I love it!"

*Dr. Martha Stacker, CYF Division Administrator*

## **What's New at Grow Academy**

**By Ben Trolinger, Grow Unit Supervisor, DJC**

New things are happening at the Grow Academy! Grow has successfully transitioned to DBT (Dialectical Behavior Therapy) as the main treatment approach, and DBT is now incorporated into Grow's daily schedule. Youth complete daily DBT diary cards and participate in routine DBT groups facilitated by Grow staff.

Frieda Brown started at Grow on January 2nd as a Youth Counselor-Advanced/Vocational and Career Coordinator and has quickly become an integral part of the Grow team. Frieda has extensive experience working with youth and has jumped right in with assisting youth with career exploration, finding volunteer opportunities, and building lasting relationships with the community.

Zoe Slattery started as the primary Grow teacher on January 15th following the retirement of Jonathan Davis on January 12th. Jonathan worked at Grow for 10 years and the team will miss him dearly. Zoe was previously the LTE teacher at Grow and is currently pursuing a master's degree from UW-Madison in Clinical Rehab Counseling. Zoe brings an exciting new philosophy and is working to redesign and develop the existing curriculum to encourage more vocational skills and community-based learning.

Following a successful partnership with Madison Public Library's Bubbler program this fall, Bubbler will be coming back to Grow in early spring for another round! With Bubbler in the fall, Grow youth worked to create a unique brand that best represented their most authentic self. Youth learned about the screen-printing process, shoe design, and hydro-dipping, as well as worked to develop beats and recorded music.

## What to Expect This Spring and Summer at Briarpatch

By Dominique Smith

Briarpatch is consistently thinking of innovative ways to provide resources for youth and families by maintaining a support system of qualified and experienced staff that are ready to serve in our mission's purpose. We focus on establishing communication, maintaining supportive relationships, and advocating for the youth's best interest. Read more about our upcoming opportunities for Briarpatch-connected youth.

**New Group "Choices":** Choices is a group that focuses on a combination of Mindfulness, Peer Mediation, Recreational Activities, and Service Projects as part of the group structure.

**Saturday Work Team:** Weekend work teams are still readily available for youth to participate in with a more frequent and structural schedule. The work teams are held the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday of each month.

**FLEEK (Financial Literacy and Employment Etiquette Knowledge):** A group that is structured to provide an insight into financial security, economic knowledge, and employment etiquette to offer resources that will help the youth to be responsible, productive, and financially stable citizens. The next session will begin June 2024.

**In My Shoes:** "In My Shoes" is designed for youth that struggle to see perspective or have empathy during a conflict or situation. We will have open discussions about the basics of improv/acting and how tone, facial expression, body language, and word choice can impact a situation. Our mission is simply to build the bridge between what a person MEANS and what a person SAYS.

This group started March 18th. Since this group is easy to start anytime, we will hold continuous sessions every OTHER week on Mondays!

**Youth Resource Center:** We have partnered with local businesses to provide employment opportunities for youth and young adults ages 14 to 22. Frostwood Farms, Henry Vilas Zoo, The Memorial Union and Madison Mallards/Breese Stevens all have positions available this summer. Please apply through website provided below.

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdRFzr4dynuJ\\_0kCokjlhDntKZwSKew1XKSq0vOYYryuk9wog/viewform?usp=sf\\_link](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdRFzr4dynuJ_0kCokjlhDntKZwSKew1XKSq0vOYYryuk9wog/viewform?usp=sf_link)

### Welcome to the Crew In Orange And Blue!

Parent Support Manager: Angie Thomas

Restorative Justice Program Manager: Dominique Smith

Restorative Justice Advocates: Shanelle Taylor and Menku Maat

Youth Restitution Specialist: Simona Simkins

Youth Restitution Advocate: Anthony Johnson

## Summer Camp Opportunities

It's time to think about summer camp. Registration is already open for a number of camps, from day camps to week-long overnight programs. Wisconsin is blessed to have many summer opportunities for kids. Some are focused on sports, religion, or the outdoors. Some are local and some are far away. Most have reduced fee options. The following list is in no way exhaustive but only a sample to share with your youth and families:

**MSCR Camps** – Afternoon camps opposite summer school at multiple school locations. For elementary to high school students.

Cost: Varies; there is a fee assistance program to make it no cost for qualifying candidates.

More information: <https://www.mscr.org/programs/after-school-camps/>

**Junior Naturalist Summer Camp** – Lussier Heritage Center at Lake Farm Park. A weekly full day camp for ages 6-14. It explores all things outdoors including hiking, biking, and canoeing.

Cost: \$300; there is a fee assistance program to lessen the cost.

More information: <https://lussierheritagecenter.com/Junior-Naturalist>

**YMCA Camps** – Full day camp options in three locations in Dane County (West, East, Sun Prairie). For elementary through middle school students.

Fee assistance: Varies; reduced fee application available; child care state subsidy applies.

More information: <https://www.ymcadane.org/programs/21389090/summer-camp/?locations=-1>

**Boys and Girls Club Camps** – Different weekly themed camps for kids, teens, and families. Multiple locations.

Cost: Depends on program and number of weeks attended, scholarships available.

More information: <https://www.bgcdc.org/summercamps1>

**Bethel Horizons** – Week-long overnight camps for various ages. Transportation from Madison to the camp in Dodgeville area available. Themed weeks featuring outdoor adventures, art, and music.

Cost: \$600-650; Application to waive fees for families working with Human Services available. Deposit requested.

More information: <https://bethelhorizons.org/>

**Holiday Home Camp** – Week-long overnight camps for 2<sup>nd</sup> through 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Transportation from Madison to the camp in the Lake Geneva area available. Themed weeks all include hiking, swimming, boating, archery, and outdoor fun.

Cost: \$475; application to waive fees available. Deposit required.

More information: <https://lakegenefreshair.org/holiday-home-camp/>

**Camp to Belong Camp** – A camp designed for kids who may have separated from their siblings in the foster care system. This camp provides youth opportunities to develop and maintain a connection and relationship with their siblings. The week-long camp held in Plymouth provides opportunities for siblings to enjoy various activities together and create lasting memories. Camp provides a welcoming, safe environment for all that supports emotional and relational health for youth, including activities such as horseback riding, swimming, craft projects, campfires, and so much more.

Cost: Approx. \$1,000/week, possible scholarships available.

More information: <https://www.ctb-wi.org/programs/#summer-camp>

## YJP Boys' Groups



**During the winter session**, more than 10 boys joined programs at Youth Justice and Prevention with program leaders Joe Muellenberg and Rick Naylor. These youth took part in various activities with guests. Albert Watson, Lead Juvenile Court Worker, cooked alongside the boys at FEED Kitchen and they also prepared their own meals. They explored job opportunities and visited Warner Park Community Center for open gym

sessions. The boys discussed topics like healthy relationships, emotions, decision-making, and setting life goals. An informative session on the history of racism and racial unity was conducted by a guest speaker. Additionally, individuals who had firsthand experience with the criminal justice system shared their stories of making wrong choices and finding the right path.



## Where Are They Now?



**Diane Prellwitz**

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

Social work supervisor, first at the Neighborhood Intervention Program and then in Ongoing Delinquency (January 1997 until I retired in September 2011).

*What are some of the accomplishments that you are most proud of to date in your career?*

My strengths are my ability to engage and work with all kinds of people and focus on their strengths. I loved supervising social workers and trying to figure out how to use the "system" to make a positive difference for the youth we served. I also liked working with the families we served and coming up with case plans that were accepted by the court and making them happen (along with the assigned social worker or when I was covering a case). My time with DCHS was one of many challenges but I learned a lot and really liked the camaraderie we shared.

*Any funny or fond memories?*

I think fondly about all the people I worked with and had a connection to, especially the social workers I supervised. I also chuckle when I remember how I would get so excited when I made a plan come together for a kid. You would think I won the lottery or something. Of course the plans didn't always work out...

I also remember an embarrassing time at a Unit Meeting. I was in a "mood" and had to present yet another change in how we had to do things. Everyone was complaining and I lost my cool. I abruptly and loudly announced the meeting was over and made an escape to my office. They sent D.L. Bridges, our Social Services Specialist, to check on me. Not a moment to be proud of but still rather funny. We did all get past it :)

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

I retired early because I met Jack on vacation and he lived in Southwest Kansas. If we were to be together, one of us had to move, and for a variety of reasons, it made most sense for me to make the change. For a woman who likes to be in control of things and doesn't make changes easily, it was a big adventure. We bought a house in the country and got a puppy black lab (Maddie). I turned into a vegetable gardener with mixed success and started volunteering at a very nice local nursing home doing

activities with residents, which I still do and love. Jack retired December 31, 2022, so now we can do our daily walks with Maddie together. Taking care of a large property in this area surrounded by farm fields can be frustrating but there is also a lot we love about country living. And we are fortunate to still be in good health.

*Any words of wisdom?*

A smile goes a long way to staying connected with others.

## Looking Ahead to Summer Programming/Employment

By Amanda Wiza

Now that spring is finally here, it's time to look ahead at the variety of summer programming options available to youth in the area. Below are some highlighted opportunities designed to empower Dane County youth through education, experiences, and social skill building.

**YJP Summer Groups:** For youth currently involved in the Dane County Juvenile Court program, DCDHS Program Leaders will again be hosting Youth Justice & Prevention Summer Groups. The GRIT program will be hosting their summer groups for youth connected to GRIT workers throughout Dane County. The Court Diversion Unit Program Leaders will be hosting a summer boys group for low-medium YASI risk-level youth. This group runs for eight weeks from June 26<sup>th</sup> through July 14<sup>th</sup> and will feature field trips, guest speakers, and social skill building activities. Please connect with the youth's assigned DCDHS Youth Justice Social Worker for information regarding the referral process and openings.

**MADYM:** The STEM-based educational organization MADYM has multiple programs throughout the summer for both middle and high school youth, including a special session just for girls. Topics include sustainability solutions, artificial intelligence, robotics, video game development, and a creator's lab. Registration can be completed online at [Maydm](#)

**CEOs of Tomorrow** has several summer programming opportunities for youth focused on foundational business and entrepreneurial skill-building. This includes both virtual and in-person opportunities with scholarships available. [CEOs of Tomorrow](#)

**Junior Naturalist Camp:** For middle school youth, Lussier Heritage Center will be hosting their first Junior Naturalist Summer Camp with fee assistance available. This program is for youth up to 14 years of age. [Junior Naturalist Summer Camp](#)

**The Henry Vilas Zoo** will again be offering their Teen Summer Zoo Program running from June 21<sup>st</sup> – August 16<sup>th</sup>. Scholarships funds are available for select program participants. Program questions can be sent to the Outreach Coordinator: [frankovic.chloe@henryvilaszoo.gov](mailto:frankovic.chloe@henryvilaszoo.gov)

**Job Opportunities:** For youth looking for a paycheck while learning new skills, seasonal hiring is available for youth 15 and up through Madison Parks. [Madison Parks - City of Madison, Wisconsin](#). Youth connected with Briarpatch Youth Services can access their Youth Job Center services for a variety of opportunities for employment and mentorship. There are upcoming job fairs in April and May featuring open positions with Madison Mallards, UW-Madison Memorial Union, Henry Vilas Zoo, the Farm &

Garden Program, and Work Ready Mentorship program. For more information, visit [Youth Employment Services | Briarpatch Youth Services Youth Services](#).

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

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