OLIVIA SMITH AWARDED TRUMAN SCHOLARSHIP

We are thrilled to share that one of our students, Olivia Smith, has been named a 2015 Truman Scholar. Awarded by the Harry S. Truman Scholarship Foundation, this scholarship provides $30,000 to a college junior to pursue graduate studies in public service. The scholarship is tremendously competitive and just over 50 students receive the award each year.

Olivia is a great fit for the scholarship; she has demonstrated a strong commitment to her community and has extensive service experience during her time at Seattle U. Olivia enrolled in the Seattle University Youth Initiative leadership seminar course, volunteered at Bailey Gatzert Elementary, has worked with United Way of King County’s free summer meal program, and more. She is currently involved with her alma mater, Cleveland High School, mentoring truant youth through the Youth Ambassadors Program.

With the help of her Truman Scholarship, Olivia hopes to attend the University of Chicago’s law school. She wants to become a prosecutor in order to pursue restorative justice as opposed to more traditional, punitive forms of justice. She explained that, in her view, because prosecutors represent the best interest of the community at large, reducing recidivism and legal costs through restorative justice should be a priority. Her time with Youth Ambassadors was particularly eye-opening in this regard. She learned about the program’s effectiveness and ability to dramatically reduce legal fees associated with truancy court. She shared what a powerful experience it was to take the time to get to know people and learn their stories to better address the cause, not simply the behaviors.

EMERGING PARENT LEADERSHIP IN STRENGTHENING FAMILIES PROGRAM

The Seattle University Youth Initiative Family Engagement programs are designed recognizing that parents are the first and primary educators in their children’s lives. Interim Family Engagement Manager Ann Dunn explains, “Our model of parent engagement is very intentional in creating an inviting atmosphere for parents to come and learn and be more empowered in their involvement in their children’s education.”

Through the years of family engagement programming, parents have grown from participants to leaders. Kamonwan “Yui” Dhevaraj is one example. Yui began with family engagement in 2011 with the Strengthening Families Program (SFP), which helps to facilitate healthy communication and conflict resolution between parents and children. In 2012, she became a facilitator of SFP, leading discussion groups and running the program. Yui has also participated actively in Bailey Gatzert’s Play and Learn Program which is a pre-k program designed to help parents make playtime with their children educational.

As parents rise to leadership, bringing in other families, the family engagement model becomes more self-sustaining as parents support each other in raising and educating their children.
Jeri Chonle, longstanding volunteer coordinator at Northwest Harvest, is set to retire this year. Jeri has quietly and consistently been a co-educator of Seattle U students for years. With compassion, care, and humility, Jeri has advised, mentored, and engaged literally hundreds of Seattle University students, creating an environment where they can learn and stretch their boundaries. By our estimates, she has worked with over 750 service-learning students!

We are inspired by Jeri’s commitment to justice and her passion and talent for educating college students. Thank you for your years of partnership, Jeri!

STAFF POSITION OPENING AT WASHINGTON

Thanks to a generous grant from College Spark, the CSCE will be hiring a full time School Success Coordinator at Washington Middle School.

This comes at a time when we are looking to deepen and expand our engagement at the middle school level, continuing to strengthen the Seattle University Youth Initiative pipeline of support for neighborhood youth. Jonathan Ruiz, our School Success Coordinator at Bailey Gatzert Elementary, has proved pivotal in our ability to provide tutoring and mentoring support during and after the school day. We are thrilled to be able to expand our services and provide more opportunities for middle school aged students to learn and be mentored.

MIDDLE SCHOOL YOUTH GO TO WE DAY

By working on projects to promote the importance of social justice, sixth grade students from Washington Middle School (WMS) in the Seattle University Youth Initiative after school program earned their way to We Day 2015. We Day is “a movement of our time, empowering a generation of young global citizens through an inspirational event and year-long education initiative.”

SU AmeriCorps member Chris Caculitan and his team of SU volunteers facilitated after school programming for the We Day participants. Throughout the academic year, WMS participated in different service teams. One team ran an anti-bullying campaign and covered the campus in positive messages. Another team raised money to support families in Haiti through a penny war competition.

Fourteen WMS students and their SU volunteer chaperones joined 15,000 of their peers at the event on April 23. The agenda was broken up into four topics of empowerment: economic, technological, social and educational. Speakers and performers included: Dr. Mae Jemison, Laila Ali, Coach Peter Carroll of the Seahawks, as well as a big group of Seahawks and Sounders FC players, among many other celebrities.

Of the experience, SU volunteer at WMS Paul Beshire says, “I am confident that the year of service the kids completed will not end here but will continue to change Washington Middle School, the greater community of Seattle, and the world for the better.”

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