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youth matters

a newsletter of alternatives for youth

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spotlight: james gurule



Grade: Junior at Frederick High School

AFY Program:

James began working with the Community Advocate at Frederick High School, Heidi Weekley, in January 2009. Heidi started working with James because of low school attendance. About how the program has helped him, he said, "I'm going to class now. I used to ditch because I thought I could get away with it, but I don't anymore."

What He Likes about the Community Advocate Program:

Community Advocates work one on one with students and parents to help students improve their attendance. As James said, what he likes is "the mutual respect between Heidi and me. She's helped me stay on track."

What Keeps Him Busy:

Outside of school, James likes to hang out with his friends, eat and sleep. He loves to play baseball and used to play hockey. He said, "I'm planning on being on the baseball team this year because last year I wasn't eligible. My grades are better this year, so it looks like I'll be able to play!"

Dreams:

First things first, James wants to graduate high school. After that, he said, "I'd like to go to a

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Dear Alexa,

Almost one month has past since the beginning of school, and Alternatives for Youth's programs are going full force. We are excited to welcome all of the new and returning students to our continuum of programs and to get to know them and their families.

September 11, 2009 marked the beginning of September 11 as a [National Day of Service and Remembrance](#). With this in mind, we want to thank all of the volunteers who help make AFY's programs happen, thank the programs through which some of our students volunteer, and encourage youth (and adults) to explore how they can help their community through volunteer work all year long. Even one hour a week can make a big difference to a non-profit, school or individual. And often volunteers get as much out of volunteering as the recipients!

We hope the first month of the school year has been full of learning and new opportunities!

it's about community

Volunteers Vital to AFY

Last month, 23 volunteers from Nordstrom's spent the day at Alternatives for Youth as part of United Way's Day of Caring. The volunteers worked outside, spreading mulch and repainting lines in the parking lot, and worked inside, cleaning, painting, and assembling our new brochures. It was a great surprise for our students to return to a cleaner and newly painted building! We greatly appreciate these volunteers' contributions.



As we thank these volunteers, we also want to thank volunteers who:

- Tutor in our afterschool Homework Club
- Help clean and set up for our fundraising events and community celebrations
- Tutor students at Clearview Educational Center and
- Clean our offices every other week through community service.

Volunteering is an important part of AFY's work in another way, as an opportunity for our students to learn. Clearview students participate in regular service learning at Joder Arabian Ranch and, new this year, with Open Space in Mountain Parks. Through service learning, Clearview students learn to work as a team, discover their own strengths, get to know new people, connect classroom learning with real life experiences, have new experiences, experience that they can make a difference, and learn about giving back to the community.

For similar reasons, Celebrando la Familia also encourages youth and parents to volunteer in the community and offers them opportunities to do so through the Summer Program and annual community celebrations. Each summer, 20 youth volunteer as teen assistants with our Summer Program, spending the summer mentoring, chaparroning and tutoring younger students. Teen assistants report that the experience helps them learn to take care of younger kids and to be more responsible. Our youth start to develop a sense of caring for something bigger than themselves, other people and the community.

Thank you to all those who volunteer with AFY, making our work possible, and to those who give our youth the opportunity to volunteer in the community. Volunteering is such an important way of giving and learning.

afy: fyf



Program Updates

AFY's programs are up and running, expansions and all! Following are highlights from our four programs:

Celebrando la Familia started Homework Clubs at Heritage Middle School and Columbine, Spangler and Rocky Mountain Elementary Schools

the third week of September. Each location is beginning to enroll students and providing bilingual tutoring and assistance with organization after school.

Celebrando's Folklorico Dance Group is continuing practices and getting ready to perform at this year's Dia de los Muertos Family Celebration on

community college and study history or science. Those are my two favorite subjects. I want to do something with those." James also dreams of playing baseball in college and "I just want to have a house and a family, but that's about it!"

save the date!

Upcoming AFY Events

September 18 - AFY and Jazzgoods will host a booth at [Longmont ArtLink](#), a free evening of art exhibitions, music, live theatre, dance and children's activities on Longmont's historic Main Street.

October 10 - "[Honoring Days of the Dead](#)" exhibition and activities begin at the Longmont Museum and Cultural Center. See our Folklorico Dance Group perform on Saturday, October 31.

All check out our [Calendar of Events](#) online for more information.

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Saturday, October 31 as part of the Longmont Museum and Cultural Center's "Honoring Days of the Dead" exhibit. The Longmont Museum has a month long exhibit and activities around "Honoring Days of the Dead," most of which are free. More more information, [click here](#).

Along with other local agencies and nonprofits, we began holding Latino Parent Involvement in Education meetings. Meetings are held once or twice a month at a local school and aim to help parents better communicate with their children and help their children succeed in school. All meetings are free and include childcare, light dinner and Spanish translation. A complete list of meeting dates and topics are available from our [Calendar of Events](#).

NorthStar classes began at Heritage Middle School with seventh and eighth graders and will soon begin at Erie High School. Classes follow [The Council for Boys and Men](#) curriculum, a strengths-based group approach to promote boys' and young men's safe, strong and healthy passage through pre-teen and adolescent years. The Longmont Daily Times-Call published a wonderful article about NorthStar and the difference it is making in the lives of boys. You can read the article on [our website](#). Emanuel Barr, NorthStar Program Director, also teaches NorthStar evening classes, offering a total of six sessions in the fall semester. Dates of the evening classes can be found on our [Calendar of Events](#).

Community Advocates began their work with truant students at Heritage Middle School and Frederick and Skyline High Schools. New Community Advocates are being interviewed and hired to work at three more schools, an expansion made possible by the success of the Community Advocates in spring 2009 through a Colorado Dept of Education grant through the St. Vrain Valley School District.

Clearview Educational Center began the school year on August 22. Expelled middle and high school students are attending a full day program, taking classes in math and science, English, social studies and electives, taking P.E. at the YMCA, as well as attending group and individual counseling. This year, three new programs are supplementing class work: service learning with Open Space in Mountain Parks, helping to prevent forest fires; CU's Arts Bridge program, in which an intern will work with the English teacher, Rhea Maze, to include art as part of the curriculum; and the Colorado Symphony's Play It Forward program, which will bring an intimate concert and discussion to Clearview. Clearview began the school year with 18 expelled students, and our Transition Advocate is providing services to 12 students who graduated from Clearview and returned to their home school.

no "kid"ding...

Did You Know?

Boulder County has one of the highest percentages of nonprofit organizations per capita in the county. With the great number of nonprofits in our community, we have so many opportunities and fields in which to volunteer and to encourage our young people to volunteer. And volunteering benefits not only organizations and those they serve - you can make such an impact in someone's life! - but also those who volunteer. Did you know:



- Through their work, volunteers

- Learn and develop new skills, including interpersonal and communication skills. One research study indicates that 68% of the surveyed volunteers developed better communication skills.
- Gain work experience.
- Meet new people, connect with others, and make networking contacts.
- It's fun! Volunteers often say they get more out of the experience than those they helped.
- Thank an organization that may have assisted them in the past.
- Build self-confidence.
- Develop a sense of community and strengthen the community.
- Learn about issues a non-profit addresses.
- Build pride in a community and a feeling of, "I did that!"
- Directly improve lives.
- Transform their own lives.

- In addition, recent research indicates that volunteering provides health benefits. Those who volunteer have increased life expectancy, greater functional ability, and lower rates of depression later in life than those who do not volunteer.

- Two ways volunteering helps improve health is by helping people who volunteer to heal and to connect with other people.

- Volunteer opportunities come in a variety of shapes and sizes that can work for your schedule. Some organizations even offer virtual volunteer opportunities that can be done from home.

- Young people can connect to volunteer opportunities in Boulder County that are especially for youth through Boulder County's Volunteer Connection's Youth Guide.

- Volunteering has special benefits for youth, such as

- Through volunteering, young people can explore extracurricular and career interests.
- Youth can exercise choice to volunteer in an area of interest -

such as with animals, kids, sports, outdoor activities, cooking, in the medical field or sciences, and in performing arts.

- Young people meet people outside their normal group of friends - elderly, people from other countries or with very different upbringings, people with different medical conditions, and people with physical and mental challenges.
- Through volunteering, young people can learn a lot about and apply classroom learning to the real world, including social issues, medical advances, public policy and other fields.
- Volunteer work looks great on college applications and resumes, building a picture of who the youth is and giving a picture of what he or she can do. Supervisors of volunteers can also be great references for a young person entering the work world.
- Connecting with the community and learning that she or he can make a difference, even at a young age.
- Connecting with others and building friendships.

You can find more information about volunteering and opportunities for volunteering at the following websites:

[Corporation for National and Community Service](#)

[Energize, Inc.](#)

[United Way - Benefits of Volunteering](#)

[Volunteering at Teens Health](#)

[Volunteer Connection](#)

[Youth and Volunteering](#)

Note: The above is provided as information and does not indicate an endorsement by Alternatives for Youth of the listed websites. You can find past No "Kid"ding . . . Did You Know? articles on our website by clicking here.

Alternatives for Youth, Inc.'s mission is to promote academic persistence and success of youth by instilling values that lead to positive choices and positive community impact and by encouraging social, cultural, and self development. Since 1978, Alternatives for Youth has been providing services to youth and their families in the Longmont community. Last year, over 1,000 youth and their families received services through Alternatives for Youth, including after-school homework clubs, parenting education, an alternative school for expelled youth, positive recreational activities, youth leadership opportunities, academic enrichment activities, and service learning activities.

Thank you for your support!

Alexa Van Dalsem
Resource Development Director
Alternatives for Youth

get involved!

Yes! I/We want to help young people succeed! I/We wish to support Alternatives for Youth's work in helping youth succeed by:

Volunteering

Making a gift donation of: \$

Name:

Address:

Phone:

City, State, Zip:

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You can make a secure credit card donation to Alternatives for Youth using GivingFirst or Google Checkout at www.alternativesforyouth.org/contribute.html. To make a donation by check or cash or to volunteer please return this form to Alternatives for Youth, 24 Ninth Avenue, Longmont, CO 80501 or call 303.776.8184.

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