“I aspire to be…” was the theme for the annual State of the Child Luncheon held May 9th, 2012 in the Terrace Ballroom at The Greater Columbus Convention Center. Over 25 youth from Ohio Avenue Youth Center performed at this year’s luncheon crowd of 500 people.

“I’ve been here thirteen years and this State of the Child was the best one yet,” stated John Cervi, Program Director for Directions for Youth and Families. The program was stacked with youth performances from Ohio Avenue and Short Stop. This year, both youth centers featured outstanding musical and performing arts groups as well as video montages highlighting the youths’ aspirations.

Channel 10 news anchor, Angelea An, and Ken Montera from Limited Brands, were the Masters of Ceremonies, helping to share the message of hope DFYF provides for its clients through its counseling services and after school programs.

At Ohio Avenue Youth Center, the youth began preparing months in advance. Mr. Sam, Music Coordinator, has turned a group of hard working boys into the World Percussion Ensemble. With their ever-expanding repertoire of instruments available to the youth, the music group was able to broaden their unique sounds to include the Steel Drums, Marimba, and Vibraphone. The World Percussion Ensemble accompanied the dance group in a collection of Caribbean songs. In this first ever collaboration, the dancers and percussionists were in sync with their musical vibrations and dynamic movement. The set included Yellow Bird, Guantanamera and Matilda.

A.J., Brenton N., Darrius M., Isaiah H., Juan B., Keyshawn P., Terrence B., Tavares J. and Walter L. took turns on different instruments demonstrating their musical talents.

Ms. Nickeisha, the new Dance Coordinator, has done an outstanding job in the short time she has been at Ohio Avenue. The Caribbean Dancers included seven girls: Courtney J., Deara C., Deneisha H., Helena W., Kennedy R.W., Teara C. and Yvonne B. The girls looked the part with their colorful skirts and feathered headdresses. Their movement mirrored the beats and sounds of the World Percussion Ensemble.

Youth Aspirations Fulfilled at 2012 State of the Child
Ohio Avenue also showed off their dance skills through their piece “Beautiful People,” choreographed by our own Ms. Nickeisha. A group of 15 diverse youth stormed the stage, sharing their stories of various backgrounds and aspirations through their powerful dance and costumes.

Another Ohio Avenue performance included a musical duet between Kennedy R.W. and Teara C. They presented “Someone Like You”, the popular song by Adele. Kennedy’s pure voice resonated through the crowd on vocals, while Teara shined on the keyboard.

A video sharing the youth aspirations of Ohio Avenue rounded off the presentations. The video provided a glimpse into the activities and daily programming at the after school program. The smiling faces of the youth provided messages of hope.

Visual arts from Ohio Avenue were visible throughout the State of the Child. Each of the 50 tables were decorated with flower pens, color mosaics, and thank you cards made by the youth. The youth artists have been working hard to create one of a kind pieces for this event. They made over 450 individual handmade art works for the State of the Child. Additionally, the youth work year round to create artwork to be sold at the event. Jewelry, photography, ceramics, and painted tiles were highlighted this year at the art sales. The funds raised will be used to replenish art supplies at Ohio Avenue.

Ohio Avenue Youth Center is proud of its youth participants who provided music and dance performances as well as the more than 50 youth artists who helped provide the artwork. Thank You for your hard work and success!

Zombies for Community Service

With popular zombie themed TV shows and movies like the “Walking Dead” and “Zombieland”, Zombie Walk Columbus 2012 was a fun way for the youth of Ohio Avenue to get involved in an event with a deserving cause. Mr. Vance, Prevention Coordinator, wanted a unique activity for the kids in the Healthy Leaders group to participate in. Healthy Leaders is a prevention program offered at Ohio Avenue Youth Center, in which one area of focus is community service.

On Saturday May 12th, siblings Sha’Mario, Summer and August along with Mr. Vance joined 3,500 other supporters in a zombie march through the Short North. Summer and August were dressed as hippie and ballerina zombies, while Sha’Mario stated he was playing the part of the “lone human survivor.”

Zombies for Community Service

The Zombie Walk Columbus 2012 is an event sponsored by the Mid Ohio Food Bank and the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society. The event claims it is “The day that the dead feed the living,” playing upon the idea the “zombies” can provide food by donating items for their canned food drive.

This year Mid Ohio Food Bank collected 4,264 pounds of food. This amount is triple from last year. Ohio Avenue helped contribute about 100 cans of food, collected among the after school program participants.

The youth enjoyed participated in such a different kind of community service project. Healthy leaders will continue to reach out to the community not only to help out, but also as a way for the youth to learn from the experiences.
Camping in Kentucky

This year over spring break, the Ohio Avenue Youth Center and Short Shop Youth Center joined together to attend the Tim Horton’s Children Foundation Camp Kentahten. Located in Campbellsville, Kentucky the camp is situated on the scenic Green River Lake.

About 50 youth and 9 staff set off early (6am!) Friday morning on April 13th for the 5 1/2 hour drive to the camp. The youth from the two youth centers set out to getting to know one another on the long bus ride, while enjoying movies and chatting.

Upon their arrival, the kids were greeted by the giant 4 story climbing wall at the entrance to camp. The youth got going right away, settling in to the boys and girls bunk houses with bunk beds and log cabin décor.

The kids were excited to try out new and challenging activities. Camp Kentahten offers a wide range of programming for the youth. Over the course of the weekend, the kids participated in activities designed to help youth develop essential skills like teamwork, decision making and responsibility. The youth participated in low ropes courses, the Tango climbing tower, Native American games, nature hikes, arts & crafts, a camp fire complete with s’mores and an entertaining talent show.

The Tango Tower was the highlight of many youths’ trip. The kids are guided through safety and “challenge by choice”, which encourages kids to push further per their own will, while in challenging situations (like climbing, for example). The kids learn how to be on the belay team, to help secure climbing ropes and get the opportunity to climb the wall. Many youth climbed to the top, proudly slapping the top rung. Additionally, the “swing” was a popular activity. The kids are hoisted up in the air to the top of the tower (4 stories up!) and swing down for an adrenaline rush.

The talent show on our last evening there was a spectacle. Kids put together their own skits with many different themes. Several groups brought the crowd to hysterics with their hilarious tactics. The dance group performed last, inviting everyone to join them in a “flash-mob” like group dance.

The kids returned home worn out with new memories and great times shared by all.
The Tastes of Spring

We all know that April showers bring May flowers. However, those rainy days also bring spring fruits and vegetables! The growing season in Central Ohio is in full swing, and grocery stores, farmer’s markets and community gardens are offering more and more options. The benefits of eating local, seasonal foods are abundant and the Fit Foods program at the OAYC is reaping it in!

May has already brought many varieties of leafy greens such as spinach, cabbage, turnip greens and fresh basil. Greens such as these are packed with fiber, vitamins and antioxidants that help prevent heart disease and cancer. Fit Foods, which meets twice per week has included some of these seasonal foods into the program this spring. One favorite amongst the youth is pesto tortellini pasta (recipe follows). Youth make the pesto fresh using basil from either the grocery or from a local community garden. The OAYC summer programming collaborates with Four Season City Farms to provide environmental education. Youth are able to see the process from plant to dinner table. Youth plant the seeds, water, harvest the leaves, make the pesto and enjoy the pasta!

As spring turns to summer, more fruits and vegetables will be available and advantageous. Local strawberries, broccoli, zucchini, squash, tomatoes and sweet corn are just to name a few. Local foods are fresher, tastier and less expensive when there is no need to transport from other regions. Buyers can also help out the local economy when purchasing foods from area markets, farms and gardens.

Ohio Avenue Pesto Tortellini Pasta: (serves 4)

1 bag frozen cheese tortellini pasta
1 lbs chicken breast (marinated/baked)
½ package grape tomatoes

Pesto:
1 cup basil leaves
¼ cup olive oil
¼ cup pine nuts
1/8 cup grated parmesan reggiano cheese
1 clove fresh garlic
¼ tsp salt
¼ tsp pepper

Directions:
1. Marinate (with fresh herbs and lemon) chicken and bake.
2. Boil water and cook pasta according to package.
3. Slice tomatoes into bite size pieces.
4. Prepare pesto: In food processor, add basil, pine nuts, garlic, salt, and pepper. Pulse until blended. Slowly add olive oil while food processor running. Add cheese and pulse briefly until incorporated.
5. Mix pasta, pesto, tomatoes, and chicken together. Enjoy!

Technology Blooms at Ohio Avenue

This Spring the Ohio Avenue computer lab hosted the Worthington Library Technology Petting Zoo, where the library staff demonstrated the following technologies: Apple IPad, Amazon Kindle, Barnes and Noble’s Nook and several pieces of educational software. The kids received hands-on experience and engaged with the latest technology available.

Over the past couple of months we have been involved in learning the HTML programming language. Students designed their own websites and learned how to use ‘code’ to add pictures, create links, navigation techniques, their own content choices and a number of other features.

Currently in the lab there are two student groups. One group is learning basic computer concepts such as network infrastructure, hardware and operating systems. While the other group, Shutter Bug, is learning basic photography skills. The kids each get to use a digital camera to learn technique, design and how to transfer pictures to the computer. Once the student’s pictures are loaded into the computer application, we will be using the software Pixlr to edit their photos.

Of course, it’s not all work and no play; we had fun with a First in Math game challenge! The students enjoyed the gaming and the competition, with everyone receiving treats and two winners with extra prizes. We will continue doing this type of activity in the future.
Ohio Avenue Parent Night

On March 22nd, Ohio Avenue Youth Center hosted a parent night for the parents of the after school program youth. Parents were invited to join us for refreshments, performances by the music and dance groups and to join their child(ren) in the evening activities. Over 20 parents attended the center for fun and activities.

The World Percussion Ensemble performed Caribbean inspired songs they have been learning for the State of the Child event. While playing, a Conga line formed among youth weaving through the room while dancing to the upbeat music. Parents and younger siblings of after school participants enjoyed the World Percussion Ensemble.

Likewise, the Dance group performed their newly learned “Beautiful People” piece. It was exciting to see the youth excited by the possibilities of dance with the addition of new Dance Coordinator Nickeisha Robinson.

After the performances, parents joined their children in after school program activities. In the art room, four parents joined in on a printmaking lesson. Youth learned how to create images on a recycled piece of styrofoam that could then be transferred onto paper by printing with colorful paint and brightly colored paper. The parents joined in with the youth, working side by side with their children.

Parent night is a regularly scheduled event to connect parents with the after school program staff, to enjoy activities together, and to recognize their child(ren)’s achievements.

Ohio Avenue Takes 2nd Place at Talent Show

This past Saturday, May 19th several Ohio Avenue youth participated in the Barack Community Recreation Center Talent Show. The World Percussion Ensemble and the Caribbean Dancers performed three songs, Anaja B. sang and played piano to the song “Jar of Hearts” as performed by Christina Perri, and duo Kennedy R.W. and Teara C. performed their rendition of Adele’s “Someone Like You”.

The Ohio Avenue World Percussion Ensemble and the Caribbean Dancers, as well as vocalist Anaja B. received second place in their categories—Creative Arts and Vocals respectively. Approximately 15 groups competed with 100 in attendance. Mr. Vance stated “The kids did great. You could see their dedication and the fun they were having during their performances.”

Summer Camp 2012

What: Summer Camp 2012- Free to TANF eligible youth
Who: Youth ages 8-13
Where: Ohio Avenue Youth Center
When: June 11th- August 3rd : 9:00am -3:00pm
How to enroll: parents/guardians must sign up their child during scheduled times:
Monday May 21st -Thursday May 24th: 3-7:30pm @ Ohio Avenue Youth Center
To enroll, after these dates: during business hours @ DFYF 1515 Indianola Ave.

To Enroll:
Please have ready: social security number for child(ren) and 1 of the following: Care Source, Medicaid Card, Letter from school stating Free or Reduced Lunch, or Last 2 work stubs showing financial eligibility