



Gloria Gates Memorial Foundation

Opening the Gates to a Brighter Future
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Diversity

By Becca Brown, GGMF Staff Member

When working with children, the refrain “every child is special and unique” is often heard. While this is most certainly true, it rings even truer at our after school programs. We are so fortunate to be surrounded by children of differing ages



and backgrounds. Little kindergarteners are often giggling as they sit beside older

elementary or junior high students who patiently explain the rules of the board game they are trying to play for the seventeenth time. But even more than the range in ages, we appreciate that the students represent a wide range of cultures, countries, races, religions, and abilities.

Perhaps most remarkable about our diverse and unique blend of students is how they embrace each other and take their differences in stride. If a little girl has a physical problem that prevents her from running as fast as some of the others, the other children just sit and play a game of baby dolls with her. If a little boy, still a recent immigrant, forgets the English word to something he wants, the other children just point at things until they figure out what he needs. There’s never any

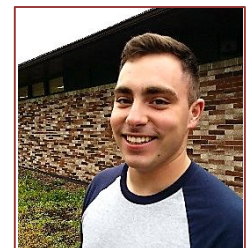
frustration or judgment towards our students from their peers. The children are amazing at looking past the things that might divide them and seeing the friends right in front of them.

A Unique Perspective

By A.J. Fink, GGMF Staff Member

Sometimes, we as adults forget what it is like to look at the world through the lens of a child. When I first arrived at the Fairview Hills location for my first week of program, I got the usual gauntlet of questions like “ Why are you here?”, “How old are you?”, “What’s your favorite superhero” and so on. It felt like I was going through an interview process with the students. I quickly learned that the students did not hide what they were thinking, and when they had a question, no matter how out of place it seemed at the time, they were going to ask it. I’ve grown to like how genuine and upfront the students can be.

I am a 2nd Lieutenant in the army, waiting for orders to leave for my Basic Officer Leadership Course in the spring, which means I have some military obligations here and there until then. When I told one of our students I would be missing a day that week for the army, she scowled, and said in a frustrated tone, “Well can’t you just tell the army that you need to



help me with my homework?" I wish it was that easy. I was also told by students that I should just quit the army so I don't miss any more days.

I graduated with a history degree from Penn State, so I try to incorporate history and world cultures when I interact with the students. We have many students who are first generation Americans. We talk about the history of the countries they came from, and also the history of the United States. To reinforce one of our discussions, I invited Professor Jared Frederick to visit the students. Jared is a faculty member from Penn State's history department. He let the kids try on authentic World War II uniforms from US soldiers, sailors, and even Rosie the Riveter. The students loved the experience. The GGMF staff members continuously try to make learning fun.

Connecting Youth in Blair County

Executive director Toni Bilik and all three site directors had the opportunity to attend the Summit on Connecting Youth in Blair County, an extension of the Rural Impact County Challenge led by the Healthy Blair County Coalition. The summit focused on Blair County's youth not enrolled in school or in the workforce. It drew a large crowd of representatives from local school districts, businesses, outreach organizations, healthcare providers, and government. The county's rate of disconnectedness is 14.4%, which is higher than both the national rate (11.9%) and statewide rate (12.3%).

The summit focused on school attendance, workforce development, community



interventions, mentoring, and pro-social activities and engagement. The Gloria Gates Memorial Foundation was acknowledged by speaker Judge Jolene Kopriva as one agency that already works toward prevention of youth disconnectedness. We're glad to see a coordinated effort to help youth to stay in school or to find employment so that they have a purposeful future. We will stay involved.

Curriculum Development

The Gloria Gates Memorial Foundation strives to not only support our students in their successes, but our staff as well. The foundation has appointed a Director of Curriculum Development to create and assemble lesson plans for use by staff at all three after school programs. Becca Brown, Site Director at the Fairview Hills GGMF program, has been given the additional position. She been at work since the summer creating a series of ready-lesson boxes. These boxes contain lesson plans for a specific topic, detailed instructions and necessary materials. Each box provides several hands-on activities and demonstrations to enhance students' interest and understanding in the topic.

Ready-lesson boxes have already been created for a wide range of topics, including the scientific method and experiment design, color theory, the five senses, and most recently, conductivity and circuit building. Staff at any after school site are free to pick up and use these boxes with the children for a day of fun-filled learning.



responsible charity rather than the blanket distribution of free items, we always watch for a child in need. We respect the fact that parents are responsible to provide for their children. We only offer assistance when we see a child in need of new shoes or a new coat, and then we contact the parents and offer to help. We only provide Christmas toys to parents who make a special request when they are unable to provide for their kids. We want children to see their parents as providers so that they understand the role of parenting, working, budgeting, and supporting the family. However, we are always ready to assist when a family faces an unexpected hardship.

Holiday Gifts for the Kids

At this time of the year, caring people worry about children who come from families with limited resources. Will the kids have warm coats and hats? Will they get a few new toys? The Gloria Gates Memorial Foundation wants to reassure our donors that even though we practice

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Please consider making a holiday donation so that we can continue our mission to break the cycle of poverty through after school programs. Thank you!



Name: _____

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Amount of Donation : \$25___ \$50___ \$100___ \$200___ \$500___ Other ___

Make your check payable to Gloria Gates Memorial Foundation, PO Box 89, Altoona, PA 16603.