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Amani *United*

COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

If You Can Open a Locker, You Can Open a Book By Quan Caston

Before school started this year in mid August, the principal of Auer Avenue School, Ms. Felice Beal and Ryan Hurley, the community school coordinator at the time, approached me as a resident and experienced artist in the arenas of both art and literacy throughout the Amani neighborhood. They wanted to turn the upstairs middle school lockers into an Art Literacy type of art piece in which the lockers themselves would appear to be books. The project was named, *"If You Can Open a Locker, You Can Open a Book."*

Having worked with most of the students at Auer Avenue School in the past, I knew immediately the right team I had to pull together for this project. I recruited fourth grader Deon (DJ) Edwards, Jr., fifth grader Sammie Butler and eighth graders Cory Taylor and Darius Butler. We met for two weeks straight to produce an art piece that would ultimately reflect one of the most recognized iconic images of literacy there is, the "Bookshelf."
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Storytelling Potluck By Tynetta Oliver

During the holidays, people celebrate time with family. To add to that wondrous time, some community partners including COA, Auer Avenue School, Dominican Center for Women and the Milwaukee Reparatory Theatre came together to plan an event called the Storytelling Potluck; the goal being to bring the community together to share stories of family traditions and sample holiday treats.

Held on November 23, the Storytelling Potluck took place at the Goldin Center with excitement in the air. There was an array of food including types of dressings, turkey and gravy, mashed potatoes and meatballs. COA youth even made delicious banana pudding for dessert.

Storytelling began with Denzel Sloan, a COA employee, sharing a tradition of making "Bacon Tart" with his grandfather. "We only make this dish on Easter. We started back in 2007," said Denzel. He added that the baked tart is simple to make consisting of "bacon, onion, cheese... and anything else that tastes good with bacon." Other community members followed, sharing their customs and traditions.

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Introducing the New Community Schools Advocate at Auer Avenue: Michelle Allison

As many of you may know, Ryan Hurley has been promoted and is no longer the Community School Advocate at Auer Avenue School. We are pleased to introduce you to Michelle Allison who has taken his place. The majority of her work experience has been in community outreach, organizing and youth services. Prior to taking the position at Auer Avenue, she worked at Morse Marshall School for the Gifted and Talented as a Parent Coordinator. She has been with Milwaukee Public Schools for the past eight years.



Her past community experience involves working at Sherman Park Community Association, Planned Parenthood, SEIU Labor 150, Daniels-Mardak Boys and Girls Club, COA Youth and Family Centers Community Learning Centers, Wheaton Franciscan Health Care as well as on a few political campaigns.

She is the mother of two, a native of Milwaukee, graduate of Messmer High School and the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee with a degree in Community Education. She enjoys socializing, event planning and helping others. If you have not already met Michelle, you will start seeing her at community events. Please help us welcome her to the neighborhood!

Restorative Justice at Auer Ave By Ryan Hurley

The Auer Avenue Community School Team has decided to pursue Restorative Justice as a tool to develop deeper relationships, resolve conflicts and create a positive school climate. Restorative Justice has been proven to reduce school suspensions and expulsions by providing opportunities for peer mediation and community-building circles. According to Fania E. Davis, Founder of Restorative Justice for Oakland Youth, "School-based restorative justice offers a more sustainable, equitable, and respectful alternative to dealing with misbehavior, from minor infractions to violence. It can also be used as a proactive strategy to create a culture of connectivity and care where all members of the school community can thrive." Stay tuned for Restorative Justice workshops that will be open to all community members.

(Storytelling Potluck *Continued from Cover Page*)

To end the event, families were given Thanksgiving baskets donated by North Shore Kiwanis Club. The baskets included holiday fixings and a \$25 gift card.

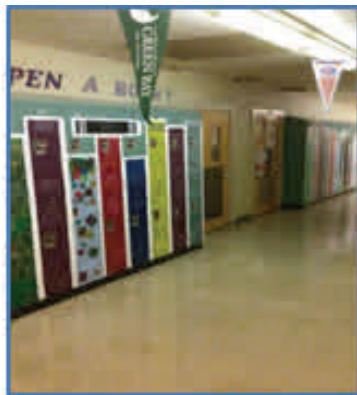
Thank you to all the partners and community members who assisted with and attended the Storytelling Potluck. The event was such a success that we hope to make it a holiday tradition at the Goldin Center.

(If You Can Open a Locker, You Can Open a Book *Continued from Cover Page*)

A second goal, somewhat improvised, was that the art piece could also become a series of math puzzles and games using the locker numbers themselves. We aimed to have the entire project completed before the first day of school on Tuesday, September 1st, which meant we had less than two weeks. And we did it! The four students that worked on this project displayed a genuine gift for their main assignment, which was to choose and apply the right colors. Because this was a “sectional design” project they had to do so at the right times. And they did it! All those I have asked, students and staff, have stated that they really like and enjoy the locker art piece. Perhaps not surprisingly, their favorite locker is called the “Chess Book.” However, as is the case with all art itself, here are a few pictures and you can be the judge.

Auer Avenue School has Ms. Beal, Mr. Hurley and four of their very own students to thank for a project well done. As a resident, first and foremost, I am extremely pleased to be a part of what is, in my professional and personal opinion, a legitimate “Community School” model which helps to address the enormously comprehensive issues of intergenerational literacy throughout the Amani community. To further substantiate this point, there are two other notable Art Literacy projects I am currently involved with at Auer Avenue School. One is the creation of an official Auer Avenue Art Club for grades five through eight. It will involve up to ten students who genuinely display an aptitude and vocation for academic excellence and creating art. The newly formed Auer Avenue Art Club will meet downstairs in the art room on Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 2:30p.m. to 3:30p.m. with both Mrs. Mary Ellen McClure and me with the goal, once again, to help create artwork throughout the school which will reflect and promote the importance of enhancing reading, writing and comprehension skills throughout our neighborhood.

I look forward to letting all parties concerned know exactly how this and other similar Art Literacy projects are going throughout the entire Amani Community.



The Amani Resident Leadership Elections By Quan Caston

On Tuesday, October 27, 2015, at COA the Goldin Center, located at 2320 W. Burleigh Street in Milwaukee, a well attended group of approximately 30-35 active residents and neighborhood stakeholders held their second annual Amani United Neighborhood Group leadership election to fill the positions of lead chair and secretary. Ms. Arlene Patterson and I, both Amani residents, campaigned for the position of lead chair. Ms. Patterson’s campaign was based on her 20 plus years as a neighborhood home owner and the continuation of the many positive accomplishments achieved during her first term. My campaign was based on my specific areas of professional expertise which are inter-generational literacy, resident programming, resident pay and compensations and positive black male leadership. Ms. Katrina Mitchell, also an Amani resident, was seeking the position of secretary. Active residents could cast full votes and stakeholders, such as COA, Auer Avenue School and The Dominican Center for Women (DCW) could cast half votes. The election was presided over by Ms. Pepper Ray, the current secretary for Amani United. Ms. Ray is an Amani resident and The Building Neighborhood Capacity Program (BNCP) Site Coordinator for The Dominican Center for Women.

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Community Happenings

All events take place at the COA Goldin Center, 2320 W. Burleigh Street, unless otherwise noted *in italics*

January

Monday, January 18: Martin Luther King Day, No School for MPS

Friday, January 22: Parent/Teacher Conferences, No School for MPS

Tuesday, January 26: Amani United Meeting **4:30-6:30pm**

February

Monday, February 1: Professional Development Day for teachers, No school for MPS

Monday, February 15: Mid-semester Break, No School for MPS

Tuesday, February 23: Amani United Meeting **4:30-6:30pm**

Gill Family Resource Center (GFRC) located at COA Goldin

Family Drop-In: **Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday: 12:30 PM-1:30 PM**, Fun Movement: **1:30 PM-3:30 PM**

Family Drop-In: **Thursday, Friday: 10:00 AM-12:30 PM**, Fun Movement: **12:30 PM-1:30 PM**

Parent Education: **Wednesday: 10:30 AM-12:00 PM**

UPCOMING ELECTIONS: *Spring Primary—February 16*

Spring Election—April 5

DREAMGIRLS By Kelly Scroggins

Recently, Goldin Center teens and more than 70 people from the Amani Neighborhood had the opportunity to attend the groundbreaking musical production, DREAMGIRLS, at the Milwaukee Repertory Theater. This night of fun and entertainment was made possible through a partnership between COA, The Milwaukee Rep, Amani United Neighborhood Association and the Dominican Center for Women. Transportation was provided from the Goldin Center to the theater. To begin the evening, the guests enjoyed dinner and backstage conversation with the stars of the show. What a night!

This six time Tony Award winning musical was simply spectacular! Nova Y. Payton, who played Effie White, mesmerized the audience with her powerful voice as she belted out the tune “And I’m Telling You I’m Not Going.” The audience sang, danced, and laughed along with James “Thunder” Early, played by Cedric Neal. This production was energized and electrifying.



As the audience watched the play based on the lives of the Supremes, they were encouraged to dream big and to never give up on their dreams. For some of our teens and families, this was a first time experience.

(The Amani Resident Leadership Elections *Continued from Page 3*)

Prior to the casting of votes for this election, I suggested to Ms. Ray that the co-chair position be filled by whoever received the second highest amount of votes. This was the action taken for the co-chair position in the first such election that was occupied then vacated by Amani resident and national activist Ba-Ba El. Ms. Ray posed the question to the voting body at large of about 20 voters who overwhelmingly agreed by a show of hands. As I sat and watched I remember thinking to myself that this is precisely what we “super residents” refer to as a win-win situation.

The votes have been counted. I am very happy to report that Ms. Arlene Patterson was voted into her second term as lead chair, and I, Quan Caston, am now the newly elected and enthusiastic co-chair of the Amani United Neighborhood group.