

# **Promise Newsletter May 2015**

## **Our Next Generation Partners with PROMISE**

Our Next Generation, a community nonprofit serving Milwaukee youth and families, announced it has entered a partnership with PROMISE, a national initiative working to improve services for youth receiving Supplemental Security Income (SSI). This exciting collaboration will allow Our Next Generation staff to bring many additional opportunities to High School's we serve as well as the youth who are currently served by Our Next Generation, as well as extend the reach and ability of the agency to impact additional youth in the Milwaukee community.

"We believe that enthusiastic collaboration among community-serving agencies is vital to successful community development," said Our Next Generation President & CEO La Toya Sykes. "We welcome this opportunity to partner with the PROMISE initiative and are extremely excited about the opportunities it will provide for students in our city."

Wisconsin is one of six sites participating in the US Department of Education's demonstration of a promising path to success for youth receiving Supplemental Security Income. Wisconsin Promise will help youth and their families meet their school and work goals in order to better their income and financial stability, and reduce poverty. The collaboration with PROMISE is consistent with the mission of Our Next Generation's High School program, which seeks to provide students with the information and support they need to make informed decisions about post-secondary education and career opportunities.

We are privileged to fuse PROMISE into our agency to reach our families and community members beyond our normal scope. To promote our new found partnership, we will advertise all of the wonderful benefits and opportunities as an agency program. We will hold workshops to ensure our families as well as community members have accessible access to essential information regarding adequate benefits. At each of Our Next Generation (ONG) community events and workshops, we will provide opportunities for families to sign up for PROMISE benefits immediately. We plan to visit all high schools in the Milwaukee area to ensure individuals and families are becoming involved. We want our families and community members to become empowered and utilize all available resources offered. PROMISE is an amazing program and the collaboration will create a sense of pride and ownership for all participants.

## **About Our Next Generation**

Our Next Generation, Inc. is a non-profit, community-based organization providing academic mentoring and associated support programs for kindergarten through high school youth in central Milwaukee. The organization serves nearly 600 neighborhood children from 25 schools and is supported by hundreds of volunteers providing thousands of hours of time annually. Its programs focus on improving educational outcomes and life skills by building an effective, collaborative team of parents, families, teachers, volunteers and staff through one-on-one relationships. For more information, visit <http://www.ongkids.org/> or follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).

## **I Enrolled in Wisconsin Promise Because...**

Wisconsin teens and families are enrolling in Wisconsin Promise for a variety of reasons. We decided to highlight a few of these enrollment reasons in this fun interactive [infographic](#).

### **School Outreach - Beloit**

Promise is working closely with the Beloit School District to let youth and families know what Promise has to offer! We anticipate reaching many eligible participants through district mailings, and appreciate the Beloit School District's participation in this project. but they would never send me to a place like that.

### **Financial Independence – the Video**

Plan for a bright future by finding out more about Wisconsin Promise: [Enroll in Promise](#) and [Find out more about Financial Counseling Services](#). Click [here](#) to access the video.

### **So Freshman - Blog**

#### **All dressed up with nowhere to go.**

It has been many years since I was in high school, but I remember feeling that was the best way I could describe my experience.

I had been waiting my whole childhood to live the life I saw on Saved by the Bell or Beverly Hills 90210 (for all the kiddos out there, picture a beach-y version of “Glee” minus the stunning musical interjections and witty dialogue)... but my personal experience of high school offered me a discovery I believe others would be able to relate:

**The cruel reality about actually entering this period of time where your entire life is being shaped with virtually every decision is that everyone around you still treats you like a child.**

I can recall the critical consideration of which classes to enroll in and an awareness that achieving good grades would be more important than ever. These were some of the factors that made curfews and the lurking existence of parental supervision seem like I had been handed the keys to the car, but forbidden to put it in the ignition.

[Read more here](#)

[More about Anna](#)

### **Promise Community Events**

#### **TIG Night at CESA 6**

By Tania Hanford

On Tuesday March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2015, I had the pleasure of attending and presenting at the YOUR CHILD CAN Work! Parent night/transition event at CESA 6 in Oshkosh, WI. The event was attended by a collection of teachers, school administrators, DVR, PROMISE, TIG, ADRC, parents and students. Each agency gave a short presentation on their role in the youth

transition process. Parents also received transition organizational materials and established community connections. Overall the night was a great success and a number of parents voiced appreciation on how informative the event was!

## **Community Conversations**

WI-Promise organized a Community Conversation in Green Bay on April 21, 2015, at the Kroc Community Center. Kristyl Thomas and Deborah Rezac-Brown facilitated the event which drew over 60 participants. Mayor Jim Schmitt and Green Bay Area Public Schools Superintendent Michelle Langenfeld welcomed and thanked the group for coming together to engage in discussions about how the community can expand employment opportunities for youth with disabilities and those considered at-risk. The attendees talked in small groups throughout the evening to brainstorm ideas and then shared with the large group the strategies that resonated most with them. Some common themes emerged ...such as the need for more mentoring opportunities for youth and for businesses, the importance of building awareness and educating others, working with the chamber of commerce to make sure hiring people with disabilities is a topic they discuss, and finding ways to go to businesses to share information with them. Event organizers will compile all the notes from the conversations to share back with attendees. We look forward to seeing some of the ideas generated being a catalyst for further action.

## **Meet The Promise DVR Counselors**

### **Meena Pandian**

*"there is always room for fun and laughter in everyone's life..."*

**Meena Pandian** received her Masters of Education from The Pennsylvania State University in Rehabilitation Counseling, and her Bachelors of Science from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in Rehabilitation Psychology. She is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor and a Licensed Professional Counselor. She has several years of experience working with individuals with disabilities and families. Meena loved her time as an In-Home and Community-Based Therapist, helping families achieve their dreams. She came to Promise with the hope and passion to continue doing so. Her work is primarily based on behavioral techniques and strategies. She also enjoys listening while helping individuals address the issues they choose to tackle. Her sessions are typically filled with fun activities of the teen or family's choice, as well as structured conversations to help everyone move through the process. Meena believes that even though tough decisions need to be made from time-to-time, there is always room for fun and laughter in everyone's life.

To meet more Promise DVR Counselors, visit <http://promisewi.com/counselors/>

## **PROMISE Intake Coordinators (PIC) Update**

As of April 27th, 310 youth have worked with a Promise Intake Coordinator (PIC) to navigate the enrollment process or receive their gift cards. If you know of a family who would like to work with a Promise Intake Coordinator to complete enrollment, please have them call Erin at 855-480-5618.

We'd like to welcome five new PIC's to the WI Promise team! They are Jane Reilly-Smith in Weston, Eddie Camara in Milwaukee, Nicole Malcolm in Menomonee Falls, Latasha Collins

in Racine, and Hector Portillo in Madison. We are fortunate to have these individuals on the ground working to enroll youth in the Promise program.

Don't forget: Erin can work with families over the phone to complete the intake form and help facilitate the enrollment process. Encourage parents with eligible children to take advantage of this new option and call today.

### **Need Promise Promotional Items for an Upcoming Event?**

We have a variety of items promoting Promise including pens, pads, decals, lip balm, water bottles, etc. which you can now order online. Although we can't guarantee requests for specific items, we'll do our best to accommodate you! Order Promise promotional items for your next event online at <http://promisewi.com/materials/>.

### **Include Us in Your Newsletter!**

Do you connect with youth and their families through a newsletter, or know of an agency that does? Let us know if you'd like information about Promise to include in your newsletter - we'll gladly provide a brief article and graphics. Simply contact us at <http://promisewi.com/contact/> or 1-855-480-5618.

Testimonial

*"Thank you for being the person u r. And caring for my family the way u do. That means a lot to me. I trust u with my family. Thanks so much"*

### **Enrollment Update**

Program	Usual Services	Total	%of target achieved
368	380	748	37%

### **Calendar of Events**

[Click Here for Calendar](#)

### **PROMISE Grant Acknowledgement**

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