Detroit Food Academy

Storytellers Project

By: Patrick Lightbourn and Destiny Stewart

Detroit Food Academy is a youth-led leadership program that encourages young Detroiters to grow and explore by building their own community-focused food business. Too often, youth have little to no role in developing, implementing, or improving youth-led programs. To give youth a voice in structuring youth-led programs DFA has created the Storytellers Project, youth voice of evaluation. The methods used are the following: a 5-page packet (goal-setting assignments), video documentation, and journal entries to record feelings about program operations. This helps staff learn from our students what they are getting out of the program: What goals they set for themselves over the summer; Reflection on how they are achieving these goals; Best practices in programming and learning as identified by the students; Suggested areas for growth/improvement. DFA hopes to establish a system of reflection, interviewing, and analysis that can be used and built upon during subsequent summers as well as during our year-round program. The goal of the Storytellers Project is to capture students’ goals and feedback over the course of the 6 week summer program, engaging in reflection, exploration, and analysis. The end goal for DFA is to identify a set of best practices or experiences that most support students’ growth as healthy, connected, and powerful young leaders. What we have discovered is a conflict between program structure and youth-led practices resulting in adultism. Based on the results from student video interviews, DFA has implemented better definitions of adultism and student-led activities. DFA youth were able to express their own desires of a youth-led program which helped future program structuring.

Summer in the City

Views from the D

By: Ariel Ragin

As a member of the Program and Staff Qualitative Assessment team, this summer’s research project consists of assessing various aspects of the Summer in the City’s programming, including work with the youth camps and community partners in addition to measuring staff and volunteer commitment in Detroit. The first project consists of collecting data and performing an assessment of one of the program’s largest events, The Belle Isle Field Trip where over 200 students, 200 volunteers, and 50 crew members come together to fellowship on the grounds of Belle Isle State Park in the city of Detroit. This project includes, but is not limited too, collecting unbiased data, conducting surveys, interviewing students, volunteers, and crew members, as well as looking at proper paperwork and budgeting. The second project consists of assessing the impact and reception of the camp’s additional programming, primarily program painting and gardening. Other tasks include researching potential opportunities for the program demographics research, and researching for future funding by taking into account the logistics and financial needs of the program. The objective is to increase retention rates in the program as well as ensuring the services to fulfill the greater need of the Detroit community remains invaluable.