

Reconnecting In Tough Times



Mary Maas

Business is booming at Amicus' Reconnect and that's a sad thing.

Mary Maas is in charge of Reconnect, Amicus referral program for offenders re-entering society. Amicus puts them in touch with resources for jobs, housing, family services, transportation, clothing and more. Mary's been working with Reconnect since the late 1990s, first as an intern, then as a volunteer and later as staff. She said she's seen many changes in that time.

"When I first started there were tons of jobs available. If somebody wanted a job they could get one, Mary said.

Mary has noticed that the picture has changed dramatically since then as the job market gets tighter and a felony background eliminates the possibility of many positions.

Reconnect staff and interns see clients on a daily basis. The number served per day has been growing steadily. One day in March 2009, 29 people received services.

"Some of them are real discouraged and it's hard to lift them up," Mary says, adding that a few of those who are down mention they feel they don't have any option other than criminal activity. "That saddens me," Mary said.

She said others are more optimistic.

"Some, even a few who have been trying to find work for months, surprise me. Not too long ago, one man told me, "I know god's got a plan for me. I know it will happen when it's meant to happen."

Mary believes the lines at Reconnect will get smaller when and if society starts paying attention to those in need before they end up in a correctional facility.

"We have so many people incarcerated and they really need the help. I think Reconnect's going to be here for a long, long time."

Men of Rafiki Honored With Communities of Color Grant

Men of Rafiki, Amicus' transition program for African Americans leaving a correctional facility, recently received a General Mills Celebrating Communities of Color Grant. The program was one of 50 selected from over 220 applications. Founded in 1997, Men of Rafiki takes African American men through a 13-week pre-release class designed to build community and life skills in an atmosphere which addresses many issues, including their identity as African American males.



Amicus President Louise Wolfgramm, Ellen Goldberg Luger, Executive Director, General Mills Foundation, and Men of Rafiki Coordinator Haywood Kemp

Giving Girls a Voice

by Louise Wolfgramm, Amicus President



Can we talk?

One of the best and worst things about the age we live in is that if you have an opinion, there's always a way to make it be known.

It's not hard to find missives representing opinions on every part of the criminal justice system. But one voice that's often missing is that of the accused or the offender or particularly the juvenile entangled in the criminal justice system.

That's why I'm so excited to be nearing publication on the Amicus Girls Study. This year-long project has involved hundreds of interviews, focus groups and literature reviews. Most telling though, are the interviews with the girls themselves.

Sometimes what we hear is reassuring:

"I went to (my counselor's) office because I knew I was headed for a relapse. I went to her and talked to her and formed a relationship and I never relapsed."

Much of what we heard was troubling:

"I came to treatment because of truancy and this place started me smoking weed."

"Once you get on probation you might as well say forget it...I don't even know what I'm on probation for."

We're working on the final phases of the Amicus Girls Study now. It will be posted on our website www.amicususa.org when it's finished and I encourage you to take a look. You may agree with the findings or disagree with them but I think it will give us all something important to talk about - the future of Minnesota girls.

EVENTS

5/9 - Men of Rafiki Mother's Day Pancake Breakfast

Men of Rafiki is partnering with Mount Olive Lutheran Church in hosting a pre-Mother's Day pancake breakfast fund-raising event.

The breakfast will take place the morning of Saturday, May 9 2009, at Mount Olive Lutheran Church (3045 Chicago Avenue S. Minneapolis, MN 55407) between 8 a.m. and 11: 30 a.m.

Contact Haywood Kemp at 651-231-2118 for more information.

WISH LIST

\$2500 - Funding for a VISTA!

The Americorps VISTA program has played a vital role in expanding the capacity of Amicus, especially during our recent budget cuts. VISTA's are involved in virtually every part of Amicus, from One to One, Reconnect, Amicus Institute and Academy and more. One has even become a valued staffmember after leaving the Americorps program.

This year, Amicus is asked to provide \$2500 in support of each VISTA working here full-time in 2009-2010. It's a wonderful bargain for Amicus but we need your help for the seed money. Please consider a gift in support of a VISTA position!

Donate Now

HAVE US VISIT

Have Amicus President Louise Wolfgramm or other Amicus representatives visit your office or organization. You'll hear stories of hope, redemption and humor as we relate what it's like to help those seeking a new start.

Contact Us