

Briarpatch Bulletin

Fall Issue

September 2020

Briarpatch Executive Director Retires



Casey Behrend, Briarpatch Youth Services' Executive Director, retired on 09/11/20 after leading the agency for nearly 20 years. Casey's skill and experience

have led the agency through periods of tremendous growth.

Casey was chosen to lead the agency in 2001 when Briarpatch Youth Services was known as Community Adolescent Programs. He oversaw the merger of Community Adolescent Programs (CAP), and Briarpatch in 2003 followed by a merger with Project HUGS in 2009. Casey's vision for a new facility to serve youth and families culminated in the opening of the agency's new facility on Rimrock Road in 2014.

He then helped lead efforts to open the region's only shelter for runaway and homeless youth in 2015. Casey plans to remain in the Madison area with his retirement providing more opportunities for he and his wife to spend time at their cabin in northern Wisconsin.

Board of Directors Chair, Kate Reilly, states "Casey's leadership has been exceptional and his achievements remarkable - a new building, a new homeless shelter, a strong financial foundation - all while providing services to about 3,000 youth each year. Over the last 20 years he has steered the agency through a period of remarkable change, growth, and the current COVID-19 crisis, with a great deal of skill and success."

THANK YOU, Casey, for your years of dedication to the youth and families in Dane County!

Jay Kiefer, Program Director, will step in as Interim Executive Director until the new leader has been chosen.

These are sad times in America. Our history of brutality and injustice perpetrated against Black people continues. Black people continue to experience discrimination and racism in their daily lives while engaged in everyday activities such as going for a walk or standing on a street corner waiting for a bus.

Briarpatch Youth Services condemns the recent injustices perpetrated against Ahmaud Arbery, Christian Cooper, George Floyd, Tony McDade, Breonna Taylor, and countless other Black people in America. The indiscriminate killings of Black people must stop. Police brutality must stop. Systemic racism must end.

Our local, state, and national leaders must take those steps necessary to end discrimination and systemic racism. This will require bold and determined leadership from our elected officials. The insidious nature of systemic racism will be difficult to overcome - but it must be overcome. We must demand and expect equal justice and equal opportunity for everyone.

We encourage elected officials to begin making changes that safeguard the lives of Black people while also offering opportunities for a better life. Some initial actions that can be taken include: 1) making physical restraint techniques that obstruct breathing and interfere with cardiac function illegal; 2) implementing policies that require an independent review, by a civilian oversight group, of all law enforcement actions that result in death; 3) identifying and eliminating discriminatory practices that contribute to the gross overrepresentation of Black people in the criminal justice system; 4) broadening access to affordable health care for everyone; and 5) raising the minimum wage to \$15.00 per hour.

Eliminating systemic racism cannot be accomplished overnight. It will be a difficult journey with obstacles along the way and resistance from those who prefer the status quo. Let us begin this journey now.

*Respectfully,
Briarpatch Youth Services*

What is going on with Teens Like Us?

Teens Like Us support group celebrated Pride Month in June with a virtual meeting and welcomed new group facilitators Ollie Schaal and Emily Walden.



Ollie, studied Art Therapy and Gender Studies at Edgewood College and is passionate about using art as a tool to help people work through questions surrounding their own identities.

In addition to working with Briarpatch Youth, Ollie is involved in a number of work and volunteer interests in the Madison area.

WELCOME OLLIE & EMILY!

Emily studied social work at Carthage College in Kenosha, where she earned her bachelors degree, and earned a Master of Social Work at UW Madison. Emily's concentration is with Children, Youth and Families. Emily is passionate about working with young people and is excited to use her personal and professional skills in a group to support LGBTQ youth.



More new faces at Briarpatch

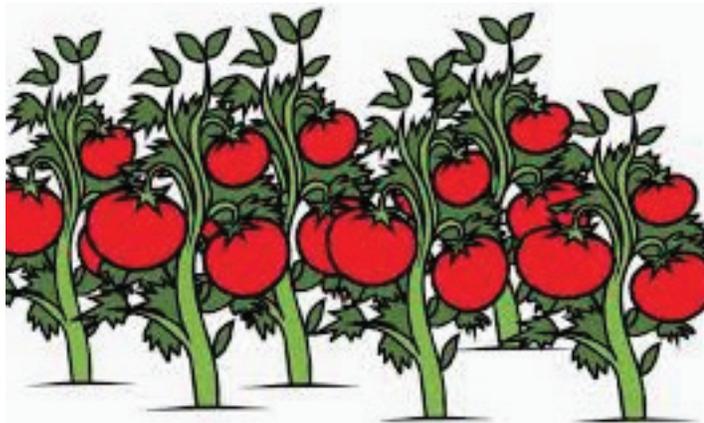
Claudia Parkes returned to Briarpatch as the Restorative Justice Program Coordinator after serving as a student intern with the program last winter. Claudia's abilities to connect with youth and families in a genuine, caring manner, as well as her understanding of the challenges facing our clients make her a great choice to lead the Restorative Justice Team.



Lisa McGuire joined the Briarpatch team as the Parent Support Program Coordinator. Lisa comes to Briarpatch with experience in the education system

and brings a wealth of knowledge in group facilitation. Lisa is holding the Parent Support Group virtually every 1st and 3rd Tuesday of the month from 6-8 pm.

WELCOME CLAUDIA & LISA!



Youth Employment: Farm & Garden Program

The Madison Farm & Garden Program finished up the season with a reduced capacity group of 12 youth.

Work began on June 15, 2020, with schedules running Monday - Friday from 9 am - 4 pm. These youth had the opportunity to learn team work skills while helping a local family-owned farm raise and harvest tomatoes and other produce. All harvested produce was donated to local food pantries. Youth completed their work on August 28th.

Farm work can be challenging in the Midwest summer heat. Youth participants met this challenge while gaining employment experience and learning teamwork and time management skills. Briarpatch staff are proud of each of them for their hard work!

If you know a youth who is at-risk and needs help, Briarpatch offers supportive and caring staff who work with young people every day. We can be reached 24/7/365 on our helpline at

**608.251.1126
Toll-free 800.798.1126**

**For more information, visit our website
www.briarpatch.org**

Youth Arts Festival to be held virtually

The Youth Arts Festival, originally planned for Saturday, June 5th, will be a virtual event and is scheduled for Saturday, November 21st.

Youth artists who are interested in selling their visual artwork may do so through our online platform and will receive all the money from sales.

Performing artists, including vocal, dancing, instrumental, spoken word, etc. will also be part of this event. Youth are asked to submit a video of their performance; all performances will then be combined to create a YouTube Premier video to be shared on November 21st. Performers will also be compensated.

Interested in participating or know of someone who might be? Contact Jackie Wehrenberg at jackie.wehrenberg@briarpatch.org, or call 608.819.2775 x1105 to register or inquire with questions.

Below: The young man pictured here was a hip-hop artist who entertained the entire crowd. Many youth participated in last summer's Youth Arts Festival.



Runaway and Homeless Youth Program

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, our Runaway and Homeless Youth staff have continued to provide essential services to youth including counseling and emergency shelter. We are grateful to this dedicated group of staff who remain committed to serving this vulnerable population of youth.

*You are
ROCK STARS!!*

Briarpatch is grateful for our many supporters. As a nonprofit organization, we depend on public support through grants and both corporate and individual donations.

We are humbled to acknowledge that many of our donors have been supporting us for decades. Perhaps you had a child or family member who was involved in a Briarpatch program or a friend who sought help through our Parent Support Program. Whatever the reason for our donor's support, we are grateful for the long-term relationships and commitment to our agency.

THANK YOU!

Essential services during COVID-19 crisis

Briarpatch continues to provide services in all programs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Safety protocols currently in place include temperature checks, mask wearing, social distancing and meticulous sanitization.

Some youth are meeting with staff in small groups, while others, such as Teens Like Us, are keeping up on Zoom. Our COVID-19 protocols were implemented for everyone's safety and we appreciate everyone's willingness to follow these guidelines when they enter our facility. For information about specific programs and their scheduling, please call Briarpatch at 608.245.2550.

Donors step in for pandemic needs

The pandemic continues to bring about challenges across the globe, from learning to work remotely, assuring school-aged children continue to learn, and keeping a watchful eye on our elderly family, friends and neighbors - ALL while doing everything possible to stay clear of the virus. This brings challenges to everyone, but hits our at-risk population especially the hardest.

Briarpatch, along with other Dane County homeless service agencies, issued a request for support of PPE and necessities to keep some of the most vulnerable safe during the pandemic. Community members recognized the need for those at-risk in our community and went over-and-above with donations. We are grateful for the generosity of those who stepped up in this capacity during this unprecedented time. THANK YOU!

Contact Us

Interested in learning more? Contact us at:

Briarpatch Youth Services

2720 Rimrock Road
Madison, WI 53713

- Phone: 608.245.2550
- Helpline: 608.251.1126
- Text: 608.285.2776

Email: contact@briarpatch.org

Or visit our website at www.briarpatch.org



United Way
of Dane County