

Q3 2021

play it forward



A quarterly newsletter for the Afterschool Development movement across America.

IN THIS ISSUE:

Play it Forward is a quarterly newsletter that introduces you to the builders and influencers in the field of Afterschool Development, offers updates on the latest and most innovative thinking and practices in the field and lets you know how you can become involved. Play It Forward also provides a forum for exploring some of the latest topics of interest in the Afterschool Development community.

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Building the future of afterschool development

On-the-ground practitioners and leaders are moving the field of afterschool development forward through new kinds of partnerships and collaborations. According to Julie Lenner, Senior Director of Philanthropic and Community Partnerships at the [All Stars Project](#) (ASP) of Chicago and a founder of the Chicago Afterschool Development Working Group (ADWG), “Over the last 20 months, many of us in the Working Group have been especially interested in pursuing new kinds of collaborations that ‘add value’ to the lives of young people in ways our organizations can’t do alone.”

“**We’re discovering that these collaborations also allow staff and other adults to grow, to stretch and to take some risks, which is wonderful.**”



Chicago Lights and All Stars Project of Chicago staff

In August, ASP of Chicago and [Chicago Lights](#) partnered in giving 30 City Lights summer camp participants and staff the opportunity to play in new ways with peers and counselors (with a lot of laughter and community building thrown into the mix!). The one-day project was the brainchild of Lenner and Chicago Lights’ staff leaders Armedia Houston, Debra Evans and Karen French to bring together elements of All Stars’ performance and development activity with the Chicago Lights summer camp experience. A Chicago Lights staff member remarked afterwards, “There was a very positive energy in the group, different from what we have seen this summer.”

ASP of Chicago Associate Director of Youth & Community Development, Dwayne Dixon, who led the play-filled festivities, agreed: “Everyone performed ‘bigger’ than they typically might and discovered the joy of creating something new together.” Register for fall Working Group meetings [here](#).

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On the cutting edge

What kind of training do youth work professionals need to be truly effective? According to [Peter Harris](#), a researcher at Newman University, UK, an “improvisatory disposition” should head up the list. In “The youth worker as jazz improviser: foregrounding education ‘in the moment’ within the professional development of youth workers,” an article that appeared in [Professional Development in Education](#), Harris presents an overview of literature on “how jazz improvisation can be a model for professional preparation for working in and leading youth programs,” i.e., whether/how it can be of value to youth workers and whether/how improvisation can be taught.



Peter Harris

“Improvisation “may represent a more fitting response to the complexity of human relations in which youth workers operate and thereby help to preserve the integrity of process-based practice”

Based on this exploration, Harris concludes that training in improvisation could serve to “strengthen practitioners’ confidence in their craft and importantly, help foster greater public understanding of the value of youth work practice.” He feels that great youth work is all about process and involves responding and building on what is happening “in the moment.”

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Philanthropic Partnerships

When [Dome Construction](#) opened its doors out of a living room in suburban San Francisco in 1969, it was with a commitment to not just do things better, but “to do things differently,” which meant, among other things, ensuring that philanthropy and social good would always be an integral part of Dome’s business model. Under the leadership of [Mark Bley](#), who served as President and CEO until 2019 and now acts as Chairman of the company’s foundation, the company has created an “atmosphere where participation in community development is encouraged and where volunteering becomes part of everyday life for our employees.”

A significant number of Dome employees have come together around the need to “...mentor underprivileged youth and provide them with the tools they need for a bright future.” Dome currently supports [Empowerment to Employment \(E2E\)/Urban Services YMCA of San Francisco](#), [Genesys Works](#), [All Stars Project](#) and [ICA Christo Rey Academy](#), giving generous financial support, as well as sponsoring internships and other person-to-person support for youth.



Mark Bley and youth from the ASP Development School for Youth

For Dome, funding and partnering with multiple organizations in the “same field” and that have complementary missions maximizes impact. According to Mark Bley, “The Dome Foundation focuses on outside of school because young people are our future, and they need more environments and experiences that create futures filled with hope and opportunity.”

“ No one solution is right for every young person, so it is important to support a range of programs that are resolving issues for all different kinds of students. ”

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A new conversation about Evaluation



Louise Doherty and Tania de St Croix

“Evaluation methods need to capture more fully the everyday value and influence of youth work and its remarkable contribution to the enrichment of young people’s lives.”

In an article for *Youth & Policy* entitled, “[The everyday and the remarkable: Valuing and evaluating youth work](#),” researchers [Tania de St. Croix](#) and [Louise Doherty](#) explore the disconnect between how youth work practice is “recognized and valued by those most deeply involved” and how it is “measured, monitored and evaluated.” Both long-time youth workers, de St Croix and Doherty are now working together at King’s College London on the research project, [Rethinking Impact, Evaluation and Accountability in Youth Work](#). In an interview with *Play It Forward*, de St. Croix spoke about what she and Doherty mean by “the ordinary and the remarkable.” Evaluation methods need to capture more fully the “everyday value and influence of youth work and its remarkable contribution to the enrichment of young people’s lives.” For them, the “remarkable” was inspired in part by “...the many times young people would spontaneously come up to us at the youth work settings we visited to share how the program had saved their lives. I remember thinking, ‘That’s a strong statement to make to someone just visiting,’ but it happened all the time. So, while I don’t think we can reduce youth work to saving lives, it is important and not easily captured through standard evaluation.”

Among the “non-standard” approaches de St. Croix finds valuable are more “democratic and dialogic” methods and evaluation tools that youth workers and young people are involved in designing. These methods include dialogic storytelling, which she loves as “an opportunity for youth workers to dialogue with each other and evaluate their practice together.” “We are starting to see a greater openness to new ways of evaluating youth work,” de St. Croix says, “and I’d call that a small win.” De St. Croix is also reaching out to youth work professionals in the US to include their experiences in her and Doherty’s research, and is inviting anyone with an interest in impact and evaluation to a free, online [Rethinking Impact conference](#) on November 4.

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The Power of Ensemble Building – An Interactive Workshop on Engaging and Developing Youth

Friday, November 5 – 12pm ET, 11am CT and 9am PT

In this free 90-minute workshop, you'll learn how building ensembles can lead to greater engagement and help young people learn new things about themselves and about others. The workshop will include hands-on practice in creating and directing ensembles.

The Afterschool Development series is led by a dynamic team known for their pioneering thinking and practice and deep commitment to youth and community – Bonny Gildin, Ph.D. (All Stars Project), Gloria Strickland, M.A. (All Stars Project), Carrie Lobman, Ed.D. (Rutgers University) and Shadae McDaniel, MSW (All Stars Project). For full bios, [click here](#).

For detailed information or contact Kathy Fiess at kfiess@allstars.org or (212) 356-8487.



let's talk

Please share your responses to anything in Play it Forward and thoughts you have on Afterschool Development and what it means for our communities and country.

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coming up

In the Next Quarter Issue of *Play it Forward*:

In the Field – Profiles of people on the frontlines in our communities who are changing lives and making a difference.

Building the Future of Afterschool Development – Updates on the issues that practitioners, academics, and business, civic and community leaders are coming together to discuss in Afterschool Development working groups and conferences.

On the Cutting Edge – The latest developments in thought leadership, research and policy helping to shape the conversation about Afterschool Development, education and poverty in America.

Philanthropic Partnerships – Featuring partners and funders who are stepping up and investing in Afterschool Development and its growth nationally.

A New Conversation about Evaluation – Highlights of the growing national conversation about evaluation and the need for new tools.



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