As I write this, we just wrapped up a fun summer at Peace Neighborhood Center, and our kids are back at School! A full menu of summer programming and activities kept our staff busy and on the go. Multiple field trips each week and three transformational road trips meant kids had the chance to explore new places in their own backyard and beyond—from the Ann Arbor Skatepark and U-M’s Neuroscience Department to the Everglades. All provided unique hands-on learning experiences.

Our kids had the chance to play, open a new book with a friend, dance, float, sing on the bus, ride a zip line, bite into a fresh cucumber, try a new taco recipe, and enjoy a hotdog just off the grill at Silver Lake.

A highlight for me was a lunch-time visit with former U-M quarterback Devin Garner who first came to Peace as a U-M social work intern. Devin talked openly with our middle school kids about his experience with what felt like failure, how to shift the script inside your mind to the positive, what it means to work hard, and the need to adjust your dreams and be prepared when new opportunities arise. All important life lessons.

All summer, Peace kids were encouraged to try new things, learn new ideas, explore new interests and develop new skills, make new friends, and step beyond their comfort zones. Experiences that expanded their world lens and seeded new growth.

Last week we hosted a great Back-to-School Night and welcomed over 80 young students and their parents for orientation and a shared meal. Kids also got to pick up new backpacks fully loaded with school supplies. All in, we expect to enroll over 130 K-12 students for our After-School Programs this year.

Thank you to all who made this summer and our kids’ transition back to school a great success! Whether you helped tend our garden; led a special interest club; visited with Peace campers; hosted a group at U-M or on one of our road trips; donated backpacks and school supplies; or made a gift to support Peace’s 2022 summer camps—your continuing support opens up a world of possibilities for our youth and families. We could not do it without you!
We filled this summer with fun new places, new learning opportunities, new friends, new hobbies and interests, a new picnic table, and of course, a few Peace traditions.

24+ Field Trips
To Toledo’s Imagination Station, Greenfield Village, Matthaei Botanical Gardens, area metro Parks, local playscapes, the Ann Arbor Fire Station, U-M School of Architecture, U-M’s Neuroscience Dept., the Ann Arbor Art Fair, and Silver Lake meant Peace youth were on the road most of the week.

10 Weekly Special Interest Clubs
gave youth the chance to explore and experience a range of activities: tennis, gardening, dance, skateboarding, teen cuisine, conditioning & training, spoken word, design/build and STEAM.

9 Camp Counselors-in-Training
received a summer stipend, leadership development, and on-the-job skills training as they helped lead camp activities, and served as role models for younger campers.

240+ Hot Dogs grilled at Silver Lake

6,200+ Miles logged on the Peace Van for three Transformational Road Trip-

10 Pick-up Football games

1 New Picnic Table for Peace’s Back Patio
that our middle school youth helped to design & build

The number of times we sang *Row Mac-A-Roni* on the bus? We honestly stopped counting:)

Thank you!

To all of our community partners who offered their time, talents, and perspective to provide unforgettable learning experiences this summer.

- **Tom Pachera**, AAPS Director of Career & Technical Education for leading the Design/Build workshop.
- **Victor and Felicia Vjocek** for arranging a deep-sea fishing excursion in Florida.
- **Kristin Lozon** for hosting Jr. Stars at her summer home on Lake Michigan.
- **Devin Gardner**, former U-M Quarterback and Peace Social Work Intern, for meeting with Peace middle-school youth.
- **Jada Wooten**, Brown University student, who led the Dance Club, and taught us new dance moves and fun choreography.
- **Muni Harrison**, Youth Poet Laureate who worked with middle school youth to create special spoken word projects.
- **Michigan State University Extension** for hosting our Teen Cuisine Club.
- **AAPS Title I Teachers** for providing a new Mobile Book Exchange for Peace youth.
- **Friends of the Ann Arbor Skatepark and Girls Who Skate** for introducing Peace kids to skateboarding.
- **Ann Arbor Area Tennis Association** for providing fun tennis instruction and play.
- **Master Gardeners Elizabeth Lindsley and Patricia Patail** for leading Peace’s Summer Garden Club.
- **U-M Taubman School of Architecture & Urban Planning** for the comprehensive tour and learning activities.
- **U-M LSA Neuroscience Program** for a full day of hands-on learning activities to explore how our human brain works.
- **The Henry Ford Museum** for hosting 80 Peace campers for a fun day at Greenfield Village, free of charge.
- **Washtenaw Camp Placement** for providing scholarships to ensure Peace middle school youth had the chance to spread their wings at overnight camps.
We logged over 6,200 miles on the Peace Neighborhood van this summer with transformational road trips to Florida, Atlanta, and northern Michigan.

In June, Bonnie Billups and Peace staff took a select group of middle and high school students to south Florida for our first long-distanced road trip since 2019. For many, it was the first time these young men had the chance to travel that far south and/or dip their feet into the Atlantic Ocean. The trip’s highlights included:

- Deep sea fishing off the coast of Ft. Lauderdale aboard a fully equipped 60-ft fishing charter with two experienced Captains.
- A studio visit with Miami artist Christopher Carter whose work is featured in the National Museum of African American History and Culture in DC, and a walking tour of Miami’s Art District.
- A boat cruise through Everglades National Park and the chance to “kiss” a small alligator up close.

A group of middle school girls from Peace’s Leadership Development Camp chose Atlanta as their summer destination. Trip highlights included:

- A visit to the Martin Luther King Center, where we learned more about MLK’s philosophy and his idea of a Beloved Community.
- A tour of the Georgia Aquarium where we enjoyed all kinds of aquatic creatures, including Beluga whales and a Dolphin show.
- A Driving tour of two historic black colleges: Spelman and Morehouse; and
- A “drive by” of Tyler Perry Studios — one of the country’s largest motion picture studios.

In late August, Peace’s Jr. Stars enjoyed three days up North on Lake Michigan as part of our new Wellness Program activities—courtesy of our generous host, Kristin Lozon. Favorite moments included:

- Swimming, floating, paddle boarding, and kayaking, in the big Lake, even with chilly water temps;
- A spa night complete with buttercream facial masks;
- A tour of the “world famous” Mystery Spot in St. Ignace to experience a crooked house’s optical illusions and ride a zip line with views above Lake Michigan;
- A “peaceful” beach walk every morning; and
- Lake Michigan Sunsets and star gazing in their pj’s.
Launched last Spring, Peace’s new Wellness Program is off to a great start!

Peace has long recognized that to be able to help our youth and families change the trajectory of their lives, we need to engage the entire family—helping them address the underlying issues that impede healing and growth, including trauma and mental health issues.

Our new Wellness Program is intentionally designed with three integrated components to help improve our families’ physical, spiritual, emotional, and mental health and well-being.

1. **“Low-risk” Wellness Activities and Outings are designed to improve physical and spiritual health**—while building engagement, trust, and community. Activities have included yoga, walk & talk, arts & crafts, nutrition, and special outings—including a trip to Comerica Park for a Tiger’s game with Peace fathers and a three-day trip up North to Lake Michigan for our Jr. Stars group.

2. **Weekly support groups foster deeper discussions, provide vital strategies to manage stress, and build mutual supports and connections.** Two initial support groups, “Mom-2-Mom” and “Jr. Stars” for their daughters, have provided a valuable space to share personal stories and challenges.

3. **Individual and Family Counseling at Peace offers more intensive trauma-informed care at a safe place our families know and trust.** Bernice Hardman and MaryAnn Johnson, both licensed clinical social workers, offer behavioral therapy for those who need more support. A critical addition to our wraparound services, offering onsite counseling also helps eliminate barriers to care.
Peace High School Graduates Continue On to Higher Education

Last June, ten Peace high school seniors donned a cap and gown for their graduation. This August, we helped eight start college. Two are taking gap years to work. All are the first in their families to attend college; and most received scholarships and aid to help cover tuition.

From a young age, Peace kids know that our vision and expectation for their future includes college or trade school. Our College & Career Prep program helps students set goals; provides individualized academic support and guidance; and helps students navigate the entire college application process to help make this vision a reality. Each Spring, we share the Peace Promise with our graduating seniors and their families to remind them that we will continue to help them reach their goals.

Victor Parker (pictured with Bonnie) started attending Peace programs when he was five. His first paid job was at Peace as a Counselor-in-Training where he loved “to see kids grow up and cooperate, knowing I was [once] one of them.” When schools moved to remote learning in 2020, the Pioneer High School student received in-person support at Peace during the school day. He found remote learning “tiring” and was thankful he was able to get help at Peace. He shares, “They made sure I had hope when I needed it most.” Asked about his experience growing up at Peace, Victor shared, “It’s a fun place and you can learn a lot when you go here, [including] how to stay organized, how to be helpful and be kind to others.”

THE PEACE PROMISE

Recognizing the challenges many of the students who graduate from our College & Career Prep program face, Peace Neighborhood Center makes a promise to each: to continue to support you and be a safety net that will always be there, even when all other resources have been exhausted.

This promise is meant to show each of our graduates that they are not alone. We believe in their power to live up to the greatness that is inside each of them — to live a life that is happy and fulfilling; not only for themselves, but also for their family, their future family, and their community. This promise is good until the day of their college graduation and beyond.

A New Summer Mobile Book Exchange!

This summer, Peace’s Summer Day Campers were treated with a new opportunity to read during quiet time after lunch. Every Wednesday, a new Mobile Book Exchange, provided by AAPS Title I teachers, would catch up with Peace at a local metro park to deliver a new supply of books to choose from. Peace’s 4th and 5th grade Reading Buddies would read to 1st and 2nd graders, while 3rd graders could read on their own or share. Favorite children’s series included Dog Man, Elephant and Piggie, and Pigeon.
Helping Peace youth learn and succeed academically can be life-changing — for both our students and volunteer tutors.

Providing one-on-one academic support for K-12 students has always been an integral and important part of Peace's after-school programming and support. Peace kids learn from a young age that our expectation is for them “to find their greatness, set their own goals, work hard, and continue to learn and build a positive path forward. Always supported by their Peace Family.”

Peace’s Youth Program staff monitor each student’s academic standing and progress through their Power School account, Schoology for homework, and open communications with teachers. Working with Peace staff, volunteer tutors help students with homework and core academic subjects, including reading, writing, and math.

Tutors are asked to make a commitment to meet at least once a week with a young student throughout the semester, from 5:30 - 6:30 pm, on either a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday. Tutors can commit to volunteer on multiple nights. Peace’s volunteer tutors include U-M students, area high school students, retired educators, and adult community members. Some make a multi-year commitment.

Ruhi, a junior at Grand Valley State, still keeps in touch with the after-school tutor she had at Peace during her elementary school years—someone she continues to look to as both a mentor and friend. When we reconnected with Ruhi and her tutor last summer, she was quick to note: “Make no mistake, being able to have a long-term relationship with Ruhi has been helpful for both of us. I’m really really proud of her.”

Pictured: Mary Louise O’Connell, a long-time Peace volunteer tutor

Sign up to attend a September Tutor Orientation & Training!
Available dates include: Thursday 9/8 • Monday, 9/19 • Wednesday, 9/21.
All sessions start at 6 pm at Peace Neighborhood Center.

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Yes, I/We would like to make a gift to support Peace Neighborhood Center’s programs for youth, their parents, and families.

AMOUNT

☐ $2,500  ☐ $1,000  ☐ $500  ☐ $250
☐ $100  ☐ $50  ☐ Other _________

I/We will pay via:  ☐ Check  ☐ Credit Card
If by credit card:  ☐ Visa  ☐ Mastercard  ☐ Amex

Card # ___________  Exp. Date___________
Signature ___________  Date___________

☐ Yes, I/We would like to learn more about including Peace in my estate plan.

To Give Online, please visit: peaceneighborhoodcenter.org/donate
SAVE THE DATE! THANKS FOR GIVING
Thursday, November 17, 2022

OUR VISION
A community where personal growth, opportunity, and diversity are constant; the cycle of poverty and social and economic inequality has been broken.

OUR MISSION
To provide programs for children, families, and individuals who are affected by social and economic problems. Peace helps people discover options, enhance skills, and make choices that lead to self-sufficiency and positive community involvement.

For updates & news, visit: peaceneighborhoodcenter.org
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