

Peter Paul Development Center Summer Workshop Instructor Request

Introduction

The Peter Paul Development Center (PPDC), a community center located on the east side of Church Hill, serves approximately 110 inner-city youth through after-school enrichment programs and full-day summer programs. (See attached Quick Facts Sheet for more information about PPDC.)

During the summer of 2008, PPDC will offer a series of workshops to introduce the concepts of creative writing, and to encourage a love of writing among students who have likely never been encouraged in this area before. PPDC will offer two workshops each to elementary and middle-school students. Each workshop session will have a maximum of 12 students. The session schedule will be as follows:

- 10am – noon, Monday July 14 – Thursday July 17: elementary school.
- 10am – noon, Monday July 14 – Thursday July 17: middle school.
- 10am – noon, Monday July 21 – Thursday July 24: elementary school.
- 10am – noon, Monday July 21 – Thursday July 24: middle school.

PPDC Workshop Needs

PPDC is looking for instructors to lead the four workshops. Experience working with children is certainly helpful but not necessarily required. PPDC would welcome teams of two instructors per workshop, as well, if such an arrangement would be better for the instructors.

Compensation

\$200 per workshop is available for compensation. (Note: if instructors choose to teach in teams, they would have to split the compensation.)

Workshop Goals

The goal of each workshop is to have children become aware of the process of writing, and how creative written expression is tied to their sense of who they are. Ideally, we will have the opportunity to present students with a booklet of their work at the end of the workshop.

Methods

Workshop leaders are free to employ whatever methods they think will most effectively encourage the students. The following are some basic and general ideas of useful methods when working with kids:

- Employ sensory experiences: music, photographs, etc. Describing the way they feel in reaction to specific sensory experiences can help kids understand that words hold emotional content in the same way as sounds and images.
- Focus on the kids' everyday experiences: their neighborhood, their school, their family.

- Teaching from a prepared booklet is often helpful. The booklet may contain writing exercises, examples of poetry, prose, etc., as well as workshop goals and behavior expectations.
- Heroes and aspirations. What makes a hero? Who are the kids' heroes? What do the kids want to be when they grow up? Why? Get them to imagine a meeting with their hero and write the scene.
- Given the introductory nature of the workshop and the relatively short instruction time (only eight hours of total time together), instructors might want to think about sticking to one or two writing assignments over the course of the workshop. This would allow the kids to focus their thinking, and possibly allow for some revision of a piece of writing so the students can see how a piece of writing develops with careful attention.
- If instructors wish to think about the performance aspect of writing, Richmond's first ever Poetry Slam Grand Champion, Rasul Elder (aka, Rasul the Nobody) works at PPDC and has offered to help with either a student poetry slam or perhaps with bringing in a few other slam poets to give a performance.

Environment

Given the center's location, it is natural for people to inquire about safety. PPDC is located across from St. Peter's Episcopal Church and there is ample parking in front of the center. In nearly 30 years of operation, PPDC has never had an incident involving a volunteer or visitor.

PPDC operates in a brand-new building (opened in November 2007) that offers classroom space, a library, and a computer lab. Despite (or perhaps because of) their disadvantaged circumstances, the PPDC kids are engaged, hopeful, and hungry for all kinds of interactions with caring adults.

Conclusion

PPDC is grateful to James River Writers for its generosity in helping to find instructors for the summer workshops. We feel very strongly that exposure to the arts is an essential part of helping children to form a vision of what is possible for themselves, and we believe very strongly in the value of partnership to make this happen.

We look forward to meeting with any and all members of James River Writers who have an interest in the workshops or Peter Paul in general. Please contact PPDC board member Chris Moore (673-4830, christopherjmoore@verizon.net) to discuss any next steps you would like to take.

Thank you once again for your concern for the children of Peter Paul Development Center.

Peter Paul Development Center Quick Facts

Peter Paul Development Center
1719 North 22nd Street
Richmond, VA 23223
(804) 780-1195
www.peterpauldevcenter.org

Executive Director: The Reverend Lynne Washington

Education Director: Sue Houdyshell

- Founded in 1979 by John Coleman, Jr., whose vision was to strengthen and rebuild the east-end Church-Hill community and its families.
- Provides educational and support programs in an area characterized simultaneously by intense gentrification and extreme poverty.
- Four of Richmond's largest public housing projects are within one mile of PPDC.
- The median household income of families served is \$17,441.
- Single parents comprise 41% of neighborhood households.
- 46% of residents over age 25 do not have a high-school diploma.
- At least 45% of children in PPDC programs are in foster care or live with a grandparent.
- 1,500 school-aged children live in the Church Hill area.
- Woodville and Fairfield schools, located 1/10 of a mile apart, have over 650 children in first through fifth grades.
- In a national testing program administered by VCU in the fall of 2007, 40% of PPDC children tested two or more grade levels below their academic grade.

