

Feature Story 1a (2nd in a series): Youth Voice Band/Care principles in action.....

Forward

This story is an addendum to the first article and part of a series about the Youth Boys Band from Hillside Family of Agencies and written by Kim Draheim.

This article and ones to follow will be available on the Cornell RCCP Website, <http://rccp.cornell.edu/>, featuring a new article each month.

The core membership of an early version of the band had been together for a while and was quite accomplished. We had developed an eight to ten song repertoire and could play a pretty tight 45 to 50 minute set, well over an hour if we added a follow-up Q&A period. The star of the band was the charismatic and very talented drummer, Mitch (not his real name), who we featured in a couple of songs with drum solos.

We were invited to play at Hillside's Snell Farm Campus for a mid-morning school assembly. Snell Farm is outside of Bath, NY, and more than an hour drive from the Varick Campus, home of The Youth Voice Band. We set off around 7:30 am with three agency vans, the 8-piece band, and four support staff. We arrived with just over an hour to unload the vans, set up all of our gear, and get in a quick sound check before our scheduled 10:15am show.

When we were about a third of the way unloading the gear from the vans, I realized that the other staff and I were doing all of the work. The young people in the band were just watching us unload the vans. I told the other staff to hold up a minute and directed my young band-mates to start helping. They answered me with nothing but averted eyes. I asked them if they intended to start helping. Mitch told me that they were not going to move equipment because they were "the band". I told him that was not how it works; that staff and I were not their roadies; and they were not rock stars. I told him that he and the others needed to

start helping. Mitch shook his head and remained where he was, as did the other young people.

I told staff that the show was cancelled and to start putting the gear back in the vans while I went to make our apologies. Mitch said, "You're not going to cancel the concert." I assured him that I was and that I intended to explain and apologize to the Snell school principal. When we were about halfway through loading the equipment back in the vans, Mitch approached me and said the band wanted to play. I told him we had wasted a lot of time and ALL of us needed to work really fast to get back on schedule and make it happen. And that's what we did. I think we ended up starting about five minutes late and proceeded to put on one of the best shows in the history of The Youth Voice Band, followed by a very robust Q&A.

After the show Mitch asked to speak to me privately. Here's that conversation:

Mitch: "It was me."

I said nothing.

Mitch: "It was my idea that the band shouldn't have to move equipment. It was wrong. I'm sorry."

Me: "I accept your apology, Mitch."

I shook his hand.

Me: "This band is lucky to have you as its leader."

Mitch looked at me incredulously and said, "You're the leader."

I replied, "Not even close."