



NEIGHBORHOODS USA NEWSLETTER AWARD  
FIRST PLACE WINNER!

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This year East Madison Community Center held its first annual Adult Holiday party. It was a winter wonderland of icy blue and snowflakes everywhere. There was lovely holiday music in the background and fancy lighting to get in the holiday spirit. Attendees were able to make ornaments and take holiday photos with props and silly glasses.

The food was generously donated from Chick-Fil-A. We played a number of games and the competition was fierce when we played "Make a snowman" with toothpicks and marshmallows. We also played the White Elephant game and everyone received a gift. Kelly LeGrand brought in her handmade jewelry, keychains and tote bags and donated them to the party so everyone received a couple of those as well. ■



*Hopefully a new & fun tradition has started!*



Visit EMCC's website at [www.eastmadisoncc.org](http://www.eastmadisoncc.org)

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# Kids Ho-Ho-Holiday Party!

**O**n Monday December 11th, 2024 EMCC held The Annual Children's Holiday Party for Truax and Webb-Rethke pre-teens ages 2 – 10. There were fun activities and crafts for all to do. There were not one but two bouncy houses so the little kids could jump too. We had the face painter from Fancy Paints who did fantastic animal face masks and sparkly designs for the girls. The balloon twister from Twist & Shout Balloon twisters made everything from crowns to swords to dogs and cats. There were also games to play like fishing where everyone wins a prize!



The families enjoyed making the variety of ornaments that were available from felt craft snowmen to the plastic multi colored paint ornaments. They also enjoyed

the sugar cookies from Hyvee where they decorated them with holiday candies and sprinkles, needless to say most didn't make it home but in little tummies.

DJ Moriah was a new DJ this year and was great for being only 14 years old. Pizza and tacos along with fruit and chips were available to munch on.

The Fire Department were rock stars once again at making sure that every child made it to see Santa Claus in his fabulous den. Presents were donated from the ladies at St. Dennis Church and were fabulous as always.

Thank you to John Harmelink and all the Youth Staff that worked so hard to make this year's holiday party a fantastic event as well as the EMCC Staff and volunteers that made this year a holiday success. ■



facebook



**We are on Facebook!** On Facebook, we have our up-to-date schedule of events. You will also be able to see pictures of EMCC events. Give us a "Like", so you stay up-to-date with what is happening in the community.

YOUTH PROFILE



**Josiah Brown-Weatherspoon**

**Age:** 11

**School:** Isthmus Montessori Academy, 6th Grade

**Favorite School Subject:** Math

**Years Attending the EMCC:** 2 years

**Favorite EMCC Program:** Learning Center

**Hobbies:** Playing Video Games

**Favorite Food:** Steak

**Music You Listen To:** All types

**Adult Role Model:** My Dad

**Plans After High School:** Be an Author

**Dream Job:** Asthma Specialist – Doctor

**Kids Cafe serves up meals, snacks & smiles**

By Sarah Jacobsen, Youth Program Nutrition Coordinator

Last year, EMCC had ready to heat meals sent to us for dinner. This year, our Kids Nutrition Coordinator has expanded and adapted her job responsibilities to take charge of the planning and prep work of EMCC’s after-school snack and dinner. The Second Harvest program trusts that we want the best and healthiest possible food for our kids. Knowing that time and money are the biggest obstacles, the Second Harvest program saves time by partnering with a produce and dairy supplier that can make deliveries 6 days a week, with only a 24 hour advance to place the order. This allows our snacks and meals to be fresher and to save on limited fridge space. The variety of the produce and dairy supplier allowed EMCC’s kids meal program to increase its variety of fresh produce to include kiwi, mango, and watermelon with Tajin as a snack: a fan favorite. Another focus of the meal program this year is diverse protein sources such as berries and cottage cheese for snack, beans in soups, and veggie burgers.



While some kids love the changes and others are hesitant, the exposure to new healthy foods is so valuable. The best example of this is a West African Peanut Stew that had bell peppers, onions, sweet potatoes, spinach, garbanzo beans, peanut butter, and chicken in it. Three batches were made and frozen to be served once a week over the following weeks. After the first serving, one student, Zach, said it had too many vegetables, and he didn’t like having to pick around them. By the third serving, Zach walked into our multi-purpose room for dinner, saw we were having West African Peanut Stew, and yelled to everyone else, “No way!!! This is my favorite! Let’s go!!!”. Within 3 meals, a homemade, healthy soup with lots of veggies and protein became a student’s favorite! This wouldn’t be possible without the flexibility and adaptability of Second Harvest’s meal programs. ■

YOUTH PROFILE



**Laniyah Black**

**Age:** 8

**School:** Hawthorne Elementary, 2nd Grade

**Favorite School Subject:** Spelling

**Years Attending the EMCC:** 3 years

**Favorite EMCC Program:** Alternatives to Violence

**Hobbies:** Traveling, Playing with Friends, Going to the Center

**Favorite Food:** French Fries

**Music You Listen To:** All types

**Adult Role Model:** My Dad

**Plans After High School:** Go to College

**Dream Job:** Chef

YOUTH PROFILE



**Richard Xiong**

**Age:** 16

**School:** Madison East High, 10th Grade

**Favorite School Subject:** Musical Studies

**Years Attending EMCC:** 11 years

**Favorite EMCC Program:** Boys Group and Alternatives to Violence

**Hobbies:** Watching Movies, Listening to Music and Playing Games

**Favorite Food:** Steak

**Music You Listen To:** Hip Hop, R&B, Pop, sometimes Rock

**Adult Role Models:** Nate Savado & Spider Man (Yes I know, corny!)

**Plans After High School:** Film School

**Dream Job:** Film Maker – Writer & Director

# EMCC HOPE'S PROGRAMS

HOLISTIC ORGANIZATION OF PARTNERS FOR ECONOMIC STABILITY

## PPP Ping Pong Parkinsons

Carol Cameron and Karen Staebell collaborated in getting the PingPongParkinson® Madison WI program off the ground in March of 2023. Ninety six sessions later, the group celebrated their one year anniversary. PingPongParkinson® Madison WI is the first chapter in the state of Wisconsin and one of the earliest chapters to start up outside of the state of NY.

On March 21, twenty three people gathered together to play a "Final Four Competition", they also played "Pong Bowling", "Ping Pong Lottery", "Fearsome Foursome", and several other games which were the brain children of Tom Stolzenberg, one of the participants. Following the games, the group gathered in the multipurpose room for a light lunch and community. The goal of PingPongParkinson® Madison WI is twofold; to offer a setting for people with Parkinson Diagnosis and their care partners to let the worries and frustrations float away, and to slow the progression of the Parkinson symptoms.

Individuals with Parkinson or a brain disease diagnosis are welcome to join us to exercise and play. We meet in the EMCC Gym (at 8 Straubel Court) on Thursday at 10:00-11:30am and Sunday at 2:00-3:00pm every week.

Along with our weekly volunteers, the Madison Table Tennis Club, and the EMCC have been essential partners to the PingPongParkinson® Madison WI chapter. We are indebted to their kindness and generosity. Thank you, Karen. ■



## Safe at Home Assessments

The Safe at Home program recently joined EMCC during the weekly food pantry and shared Safe at Home information. Safe at Home offers free home safety assessments to seniors in partnership with local retired health care clinicians, e.g. occupational and physical therapists, and Madison College Occupational Therapy Assistant students and/or students enrolled in other occupational therapy or nursing college level programs. The program is in collaboration with Safe Communities Falls Free Dane coalition, local medical providers, RSVP, NewBridge, and the Aging and Disability Resource Center. ■

Call 608-230-4445 or E-mail [info@agebettertoday.org](mailto:info@agebettertoday.org) to schedule your FREE home safety assessment today!

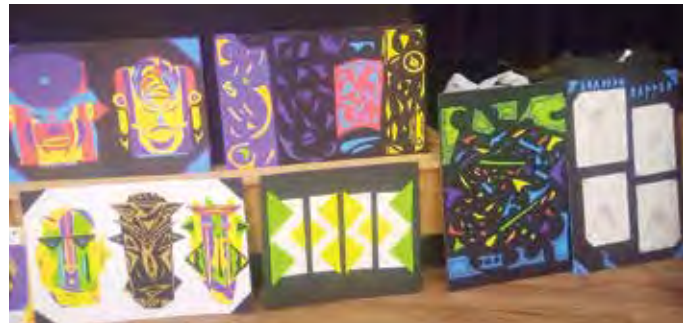
You will receive:

- home safety assessment
- medication safety screening
- information and resources packet
- night light and medication box
- list of recommendations based on the assessment provided
- follow-up calls from AgeBetter staff to help you connect with resources and services



## A Not for Profit Art Display comes to EMCC

Darhyl Moore a community volunteer in Dane County came to East Madison Community Center on Saturday, February 24th, 2024 and displayed over 100 pieces of his artwork for the youth to look at and ask any questions that they may have regarding the different media forms that he displayed. Darhyl gave away a number of his art pieces to the kids. ■



American Family Insurance is pleased to help underwrite East Madison Community Center's newsletter.

**THANK YOU**  
to American Family for printing Centerpoints!

Save <sup>the</sup> Date

**28th EMCC Bowl-a-thon**  
November 2nd, 2024

EMCC **HOPES** PROGRAMS...continued



**Understanding Alzheimer's & Dementia**

On Tuesday, February 13th, EMCC hosted the Alzheimer's Association for an introductory workshop: Understanding Alzheimer's & Dementia. Participants learned that Alzheimer's disease is not a normal part of aging, the impact of Alzheimer's, the difference between Alzheimer's and dementia; MCI, stages and risk factors; current research and treatments available for some symptoms.

This workshop is designed for a general audience – those living with dementia, caregivers, interested community members, neighbors and friends. If you missed the workshop, you can learn more at:

[www.alz.org/wi](http://www.alz.org/wi) 24/7 • Helpline: 800.272.3900 • Hablamos Español: 414.431.881. ■



**Literacy Network Tutoring**

Literacy Network offers FREE 1-1 tutoring for adults who want help building basic skills in reading, writing, computers, and math. Essential Literacy Tutoring class meets at the EMCC on Thursdays, 10:00am-12:00pm and at other sites around Madison. Tutoring is focused on your goals at your pace! ■



**Interested? Call or text Laura Hametta at 608-999-4114.**

Literacy Network also offers FREE 1-1 tutoring for adults who want help studying for their GED/HSED. If you are just getting started on your GED/HSED or just finishing up, we can help! GED/HSED tutoring meets at the day/time that work for you, in-person or virtually. In-person GED/HSED tutoring is available at the EMCC or other public sites around Madison. ■

**Interested? Call or text Marie Knibbe at 608-268-6542.**

Learn more about EMCC programs at [www.eastmadisoncc.org](http://www.eastmadisoncc.org)



**Behind on your bill? MGE is here to help.**



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**EMCC INTERN PROFILE**



**Adam Mennenga**

"I'm currently a senior at the University of Wisconsin Stevens Point, majoring in finance. In January, I had the opportunity to intern at EMCC, where I absolutely loved my time. It was a fantastic learning experience, and I gained valuable insights during my time there." ■

**BOARD MEMBER PROFILE**



**J. Alberto Quiroga**

J. Alberto Quiroga has been on the board since 2022 but has been volunteering his services and advice to EMCC for over 20 years. He makes himself available for EMCC clients to get some basic idea of legal policy and procedures and puts them so

much more at ease with their predicaments. Alberto is currently a Court Commissioner for Dane County. He enjoys golfing, traveling, music concerts when he can and spending time with his extended family, sons and grandson. ■

# Learn how to protect your family from PFAS forever chemicals

*The Intervene Against COVID-19 Coalition, the EMCC and UW-Madison collaborated for PFAS education in March.*

by UW-Madison Students  
Margaret Mackinnon,  
Hailey Fox, Shelby Jantz,  
and Pacheng Vang

Our group arrived about an hour before the event started so that we could tour the entire facility, and we were able to meet several of the children the center serves on the tour. We helped cut apples and do dishes before the event. We learned a lot from Sarah about the interworkings of the community centers and the different obstacles they face in trying to serve the community's needs. The East Madison Community Center event had a great turnout of interested citizens who wanted to learn more about PFAs exposure. There were three speakers at the event; the first presenter was Tod Wickersham, who has a background in toxins and is now a health coach. The second speaker who was there to answer questions about the government's response was Chee Thao from Dane County Public Health. Overall, the event had a way bigger turnout than expected, to the point that EMCC had to purchase more food during the event. We presented third and gave more of an overview and call to action. Our presentation went well and provided an excellent overview



to finish the presentation portion of the event! We had several questions, including the types of makeup containing PFAs, if there is government regulation around PFAs and different alternatives that can be used for products containing PFAs. We handed out half sheets of paper with an overview of the three calls to action and the QR code with the link to the template to send to legislators. We also walked the attendees through how to use the federal legislator's websites because they do not have a generic email to which you can send your concerns. Finally, every family received a cast iron pan to use as an alternative to non-stick pans containing PFAs

and 25-dollar gift cards for all the residents of the housing surrounding the EMCC. In the end, many of us were inspired by the EMCC's work and asked Sarah to keep in touch with us about volunteer opportunities in the future!

It seemed to be like a very novel issue to many people in this community and there were lots of questions. The impact it had on the participants seemed to be one of awareness and a little bit of frustration. Many of the comments and concerns were ones about everyday products like dental floss and waterproof makeup. We had lots of engagement outside of the presentation, which helped

us get even more info to the community and also connect with them as a possible resource. There was a general sense of motivation to understand this issue and strive towards its elimination. The audience was also given information on their own cooking items and even given a cast-iron skillet to help them reduce PFAs intake, this knowledge will help them reduce the risk of PFAs in their households. Overall, the impact that will continue outside of the event will be a change in the way this community goes about their lives in the world of PFAs. They will be more diligent in the areas where it is accessible and continue to spread awareness. ■

Certified Functional Nutrition Counselor & Lifestyle Practitioner Tod Wickersham presented and included a cast iron cooking demonstration. Thanks goes out to Mr. Wickersham for the interesting demonstration. Participants enjoyed dinner and door prizes including cast iron pans and gift cards.

**Special thanks** goes out to Mya Whitson and Abha Thakkar with the COVID-19 Coalition for coordinating Tod Wickersham's presentation and to Sarah Jacobsen, EMCC Youth Program Coordinator, for organizing the UW student presentation.



# COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



## GOOH GROCERY

Welcome "back" to the Neighborhood. GooH Grocery just opened on Washington Avenue on Madison's east side. GooH Grocery is located a short walk from EMCC, an area that was designated a food desert because of the lack of access to quality, fresh foods. Owners Samba Baldeh and Jerreh Kujabi said the name symbolizes their goal for the store. "GooH in the Fulani language, means number one, striving to be the best, basically," Baldeh said.

Baldeh and Kujabi are both from Gambia and met as students at Madison Area Technical College 20 years ago. EMCC welcomes them back to the neighborhood and is thankful for their efforts to bring fresh grocery market to the neighborhood. ■



## ST. AMBROSE STUDENTS

St. Ambrose students spent a few hours at EMCC for a school service day. They gave some TLC to the pre-teen book and recreation room, First Impressions Closet, and the many art boxes and supplies. Thank you to students Anthony, Jacob, Andrew, Penny and parent chaperone, Steve. ■



## UW HOSPITAL

UW Hospital volunteers from the Surgery department were divided into small groups to tackle several cleaning, cooking and organizing tasks at EMCC this past winter. The kids' meal program and kitchen got a boost with snack prep and closet organization. The book and toy room was cleaned and tidied while others helped in the food pantry distribution. ■



## JPCULLEN

JPCullen employees volunteer often at EMCC and get a lot done in a short amount of time. The kitchen tasks for the kids' dinners, preparing a mailing, stocking shelves, cleaning the garage aren't glamorous jobs, but they sure do get the jobs done with a smile. ■



# EMCC FOOD PANTRY

Tuesdays from 11:30 am to 1:30 pm



## ASSOCIATED BANK

Welcome Back to Associated bank volunteers who spent a good amount of time organizing the garage and holiday items and with the set-up/clean-up of the household and clothing distribution. ■



NEIGHBORHOODS USA  
NEWSLETTER AWARD  
**FIRST PLACE WINNER!**

Current occupant or

E M C C C E N T E R P O I N T S

EMCC 2024 VOLUNTEERS

**Youth Volunteers**

Antuan Graves-Haskins, Jaiden Hill, Zach Burton,  
Zaniya Lewis, James Moore, Brayden Maggit

**Food/Clothing/Household Items Distribution**

Steve Bradley, Angela Braebender, Marbeli Bruno, Mary Cuccia, Martha Galston, Rosie Haskins, Linda (Jami) Jamison, Margaret Joof, Vicki McDonald, Judy Morhoff, Melonita Morment, Tami Niemisto, Roxanne Russell, Mylas Sparks, Tobi Spatola, Matthew Steensen, Nayriah Tillman, LC Williams, Susanna Yangzapata, Ryan Zelen, CDA East

**Program Volunteers**

Param Bhandare, Marbeli Bruno, Karen Contreras, Barkwende Flore, Martha Galston, Melissa Gundlach, Rosie Haskins, Cynthia Walton-Jackson, Sutton Johnson, Gerry McDonnell, Adam Mennenga, Zach Robinson, Sara Scott, Tegawende Segrado, Ascendium Education Group, Associated Bank, Madison College Service Learning Academy, FindHelp.org, TruStage

**Graphic Design/Newsletter**

Sandy Wagener, MTH Design

**Board Members**

Erika Brown, Marbeli Bruno, Keia Freeman, Larry Hamlin, Neri Haried, Rosie Haskins, Tracy Lomax, Meghan O'Dell, Jamal Palmer, Sharon Rice, Tauri Robinson, Je'Dauri Robinson, J. Alberto Quiroga, Alex Shade, Bejay Udchitz, Cynthia Walton-Jackson

**Resource Development**

Larry Hamlin, Bunny Lenburg

*thanks!*



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- Youth Prgm. Mngr.: John Harmelink
- Assistant Youth Prgm. Mngr.: Eric Peters
- Head Youth Worker: Nate Savado
- Admin. Assistant: Typhanny Greene
- Assistant Food Pantry Coordinator/Office Assistant: Martha Galston
- Accountant: Bonnie Krattiger
- Youth Nutrition & Garden Coordinator: Sarah Jacobsen
- Youth Workers: Ashley Bruno, James Xiong, Elijah Smith, Richard Xiong, Shavonna Williams

Janitors: Kingdon Kleaners -Steve & Zina Staples

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