



GAME OF LIFE (GOL)

Creating options for young people

“GOL creates options for young men who thought they had no options,” shares Winston Bell.

Winston, a family therapist and consultant, is the program lead for Federal Way Youth Action Team’s Game of Life (GOL) program.

GOL was the first program to come out of the Federal Way Youth Action Team (FWYAT). FWYAT was formed in 2016 in response to statistics released about the number of juveniles in South King County being referred to juvenile justice services. FWYAT was looking for a way to connect to young people involved with the juvenile justice system, or at risk for becoming involved in criminal activities.

Developing a new program can take a while, but Winston knew he could help right away by reaching out to his connections in the community and starting a group around something most kids love--sports.

GOL is a gateway program that provides community intervention

and outreach to youth and then connects them with appropriate resources in the community. GOL works with youth 15-25 years old twice a week in a gym and space donated by the local Boys & Girls Club. The youth are referred to the program through community service providers and the juvenile justice system, or recommended by a current GOL participant.

“A lot of these kids dream of playing pro ball, so this is a way to connect with them,” says Winston, who has coached basketball at local middle and high schools.

The youth play basketball and have a good meal, and they learn that winning isn’t everything, but that it’s also about how you get there with integrity.

Most importantly they talk with and get to know the program leaders who can then assess their needs and refer them to additional programs in the community, including connections to employment or trade careers. They also hear from guest speakers on varying topics including non-traditional career paths.

The program is about physical fitness, but also about emotional fitness. “These kids may have been homeless, involved in gangs, need anger management skills, among many things. The sports, along with the counseling, helps them open up to receive services and move into employment,” said Winston.

Winston grew up in Chicago and he’s seen this before. He wants to make sure that the youth here in our community keep themselves out of the dangerous stuff, and one of the best ways to do that is to incorporate them into the community and help them build a healthy network.



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