



**CLIENTS** Youth (Elementary to High School) & Whole Families

**NUMBER** 330 youth and families

**ETHNICITY** African, Asian, Black/African American, Immigrant, Latino, White/Caucasian

**INCOME** Low income (see Health Equity)

**DIAGNOSES** ADHD, Anxiety, Autism, Conduct Disorder, Depression, ODD, PTSD

**"When I am mindful, I treat others nice."**

*"It helps me stay still because I'm really wiggly."*

*"I feel good about myself and I want to share."*

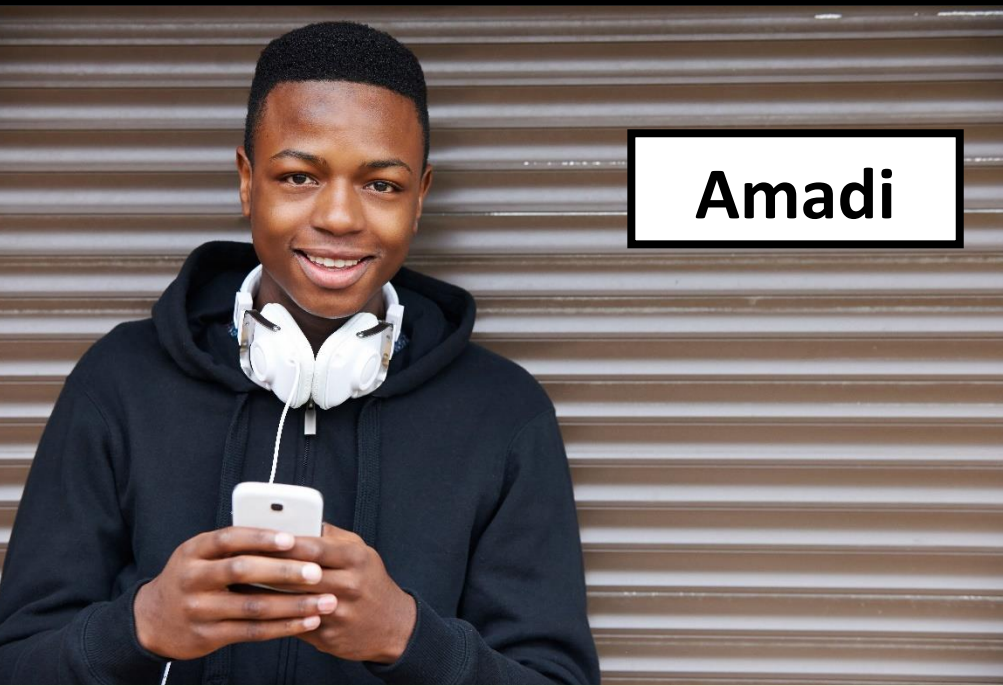
*"I will use mindfulness when I feel angry and want to punch someone."*

*"I learned how to focus and relax. It helps with tests and before games. I don't get as nervous."*

*"When are we doing that Mindful thing again? I really liked it and felt better."*

**YOUTH RESILIENCE SUPPORTS**

- Youth reported that they are changing how they respond to emotional triggers and stress.
- Staff observed positive youth behavior changes
- Triggered youth utilized the new mindfulness, biofeedback, and resilience tools to de-escalate.
- Staff reported that the Calm Down Room was so peaceful that some youth in crisis would briefly fall asleep or ask to stay in the room.



**Amadi**

**PROBLEM/CHALLENGE**

Amadi and his family are immigrants from Ethiopia. He lives in public housing with his younger sisters. Club staff enjoyed working with Amadi and noticed several positive leadership qualities in him. But, he seemed on-edge and his quick temper often got him into trouble with his peers. Staff was concerned that if he couldn't get his emotions under control, he would not be able to continue at the Club.

**IMPACT/SUCCESS**

The group discussed feelings, stress, fight/flight, and how the brain works. Soon, Amadi was able to reflect on his own struggles. Amadi says that he used to "worry about things or emotions like anger that hadn't really happened yet, which led to more anxiety." He "learned to pause, ask myself if I am just making things up, or if there was anything I could do about it. Then I learned to focus on the moment I am in, not things in the future which may or may not be true. By focusing on that, I am now able to remain calm in situations that would normally make me angry, change how I respond, and reduce my stress." Today, Amadi is a Club peer leader.

**INTERVENTION**

Club staff invited Amadi to attend the Mindfulness Program. At first, he joined the group with some suspicion and admitted that he thought it was weird. His opinion of the coach was that he was a little strange- possibly trying to trick the kids somehow.



## Ramsey County Children's Mental Health Collaborative (RCCMHC) Funded Services

**FUNDED AGENCY:** Boys and Girls Club is a youth development and out-of-school time program provider. Grant funding impacted youth at the Mt. Airy branch.

**FUNDED PROGRAM/SERVICE:** Youth Resilience Supports

**PROGRAM/SERVICE DESCRIPTION:** RCCMHC funding supported a 12-week Youth Mindfulness for Resilience program, participation in a Social Emotional Learning study using the Harvard Holistic Student Assessment (HSA), and the establishment of sustainable resilience tools and supports for at-risk youth at the Club and in the RCCMHC family training program. The mindfulness program was led by mindfulness coaches 3 times per week for the three age groups of K-2nd, 3rd-6th and 7th-12th graders and 2 times per month at the RCCMHC family program. The Club also offered two Mindfulness Family Nights.

**LENGTH OF GRANT TERM:** October to December 2016

**AWARD:** \$21,800.00

**DATA COLLECTION:** In addition to interviews, surveys, and observation- Boys and Girls Club used the Harvard Holistic Assessment with 65 youth.

### IMPACT AND OUTCOMES (and how they relate to RCCMHC vision and goals)

**RCCMHC Vision: Every Child in Ramsey County Will Function at the Highest Possible Level of Mental Health.** According to the Harvard Holistic Assessment, 3 of the top challenges for Boys and Girls Club youth are: "Emotional Control, Critical Thinking, and Empathy." RCCMHC funding expanded the Club's capacity to address these areas of need through positive youth development, mindfulness, and social emotional learning approaches. The Youth Resilience Supports strengthen healthier relationships at home and school and provide youth with the tools to manage emotional reactions to triggers and to learn which triggers or stresses- if left unexamined- would be most likely to lead to disruptive outcomes.

**Goal A: Cross-System Collaboration.** The Club collaborated with local mindfulness coaching agencies and RCCMHC's monthly family program

**Goal B: Health Equity.** 85% of Boys and Girls Club youth are in the free and reduced lunch program. By offering resilience supports at the Club, we are increasing access to at-risk families and youth and those lacking access to traditional services. Issues related to poverty, racism, and youth/family history of trauma and chronic stress all serve to dismantle relationships, de-stabilize family systems and negatively impact work life, school life and life choices.

**Goal C: Whole Family Wellbeing.** By including family nights in the program along with regular RCCMHC events, we addressed individual and family-system behaviors that can either help or undermine family well-being.

**LESSONS LEARNED:** We face many behavioral challenges in the Clubs. The results of the Holistic Student Assessments underscore the need to address trauma and other related emotional issues. We observe youth with an inability to sit quietly, follow instructions, and manage their behaviors even for short periods of time. Our youth are often at such an extreme level of stress or triggered historical trauma, that they often lacked basic skills for educational impact. This program had several success stories and it "demystified" mindfulness and holistic health techniques. Increasing family engagement- which is always a struggle with our population- would really make an impact. Our shortened timeline in addition to the holiday season may have limited participation. Coaches noted that having adults who reflect the make-up of the youth (race, culture and perhaps age) may provide for a more open emotional exchange and cohesive experience.

