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Sep 19 · 4 min read

M.O.M moves to East Passyunk

Murals of the Mind Project, a local organization aiming to engage youth with various forms of literacy, is kicking off a workshop at Columbus Rec Center.



Founders of Murals of the Mind Project Kenyetta and Jamil Overton (Photo special to South Philly Review/by John Taggart)



When Philly natives Kenyetta and Jamil Overton relocated to Newbold a decade ago, they noticed a lack of literacy resources throughout the neighborhood—particularly for its youth.

In efforts to counter any idle activity lingering in the streets, also fused with inspiration from reading programs at their son's school, the couple established Murals of the Mind Project, a nonprofit aiming to foster reading, writing and comprehension skills in Philly's students in hopes to tap into their creative abilities, opening opportunities for their futures.

“When we moved into the South Philly area,” said co-founder Kenyetta Overton, an independent consultant professional services consultant and Drexel graduate with a masters of sciences in arts management. “We realized that there was a void of enrichment programs in our immediate area and thought that we could expand our writing program to engage youth in our community.”

In recent years, Murals of the Mind has dedicated the past several years to quarters west of Broad Street, specifically partnering with a branch of the Mighty Writers education program based in the Graduate Hospital area.

However, lately, Murals of the Mind is refocusing its efforts toward other parts of South Philly, noticing this particular academic need among all youth, especially those living south of Washington Avenue.

Although their efforts have reached as far as Camden, Murals of the Mind's upcoming pupils occupy Passyunk Square, as, starting in early October, the Columbus Recreation Center will host free M.O.M workshops for children between 10 and 18 years old. The workshops, which will take place among a fall and spring session, plan to center upon college career and readiness, essay writing and creative writing and performance.

“This is a re-establishment of this program in the community,” said co-founder Jamil Overton, an alternative funding broker/business consultant and graduate of Cheney and Temple Universities.

After M.O.M connected with the Columbus Square Recreation Center, the Overtons say families of that neighborhood immediately expressed interest in this type of curriculum.

From learning about essay citations to expressing theatrical spoken word, Kenyetta and Jamil stress the importance of encompassing all forms of literary throughout the workshop.

Every session, which is currently scheduled as college readiness on Thursdays from 4 to 6 p.m. with creative writing, performance and essay writing on Saturday afternoons, will feature guest guidance from local young professionals and performers, including a potential appearance from from a Juilliard School graduate.

“We use (spoken word and poetry) as a way to bring kids out of their shells, harness a lot of their energy into a positive way and to validate what how they see and interpret the world through words,” Kenyetta Overton said.

Whether gaining interview techniques or crafting a haiku, literary skills acquired through the workshop strive to not solely excel standardized test grades but also build bridges of communication.

The workshops could range anywhere between six to eight weeks, depending upon the amount of attendance and engagement.

“We believe that (the workshop) helps kids with their education and their understanding of community, their value within the community and how to relate the work that they do in class in their everyday life,” Kenyetta Overton said.

“And to develop and maintain a sense of civic involvement,” Jamil Overton added.

Info: All workshops are free.

Workshops are open to kids and teens ages 10 to 18-years-old.

There is open ongoing enrollment.

Minimum of 10 participants; maximum of 20 per workshop per session

Workshops begin Oct. 4 and 6.

Stop by Columbus Square office to learn more and to sign up. Parents can send their child’s name, grade, cell and email; along with their name, number and email to contactmom@muralsofthemind.com.

For more information, call (215) 825–3300 or (215) 588–4389.