

Titan Tribune

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MYA students reflect on the coronavirus

By D. M.

The coronavirus is getting very serious. Thousands of people are dying all over the world because of COVID-19. Even famous people, like basketball players and actors, are getting sick.

Before the coronavirus gets better, it is actually getting worse.

I honestly hate this virus because I can't see my people for two months or more. Hopefully, they find a cure to save a lot of people who don't deserve to get sick and die from something so small.

Hospitals are taking over a lot of places to put beds for the people who are sick from the virus. I tell my family to always wash their hands for over 30 seconds to clear off the germs. Don't touch anything with your hands and then touch your face or items that someone else can touch.



By T. K.

The coronavirus is a very dangerous virus that is taking the world by storm. It's getting worse by the day.

It seems almost everyday there are new cases and more people are dying from the airborne virus.

The virus started off slowly in Wuhan, China, but then had a rapid outbreak and is all over the world now.

There's really no cure for it, just your body's immune system.

As of now, the virus is looking like it's making a slight change and a turn for the better. But only time will tell.



By K. R.

To begin with, it all started when there was a man that traveled from China to the United States to get away from the virus that was going around. When this man went through the process and finally took his seat in the plane, there was an old lady next to him, coughing up a storm and the man ignored it.

Later on, when he finally arrived in the U.S., he started to feel sick. He went to the beach to try to catch some sun. Hours passed and he goes to his hotel, where he finds himself coughing up a storm and his head bursting with pain.

He was concerned and went to the hospital to complain about his problem. They called the man up to the front desk, where they told him he had COVID-19.

By Y. P.
(translated from Spanish)

The disease is very serious. It is going viral in all countries.

We have to take care of ourselves. We must wash our hands. We must separate ourselves from the people who are sick. We must maintain cleanliness.

No more than 10 people together. Businesses closed. We must stay at home. We must not have much contact with other people.

You have to have a mask, something that protects you. People who are sick have to be in a room apart from the others.

WELCOME

This is the sixth issue of the Titan Tribune, a newspaper about Miami Youth Academy that is reported and written by the journalism students here. This April edition marks one year of publication.

The class and newspaper is a collaboration of MYA, Exchange for Change and Miami-Dade County Public Schools Division of Educational Opportunity and Access. Exchange for Change is a Miami non-profit that teaches writing classes in youth commitment and adult correctional facilities.

The paper is edited by retired newspaper reporter Mr. Henry Unger, who is an Exchange for Change volunteer, and Miami-Dade teacher Mr. Jesus Gonzalez. The layout and design was done by Miami-Dade teacher Mr. Daniel Wynne.

Coronavirus causes big changes at MYA

By J. E., Anthony S. and Nathan F.
Titan Tribune Staff Writers

The following is a wide-ranging interview with MYA lead-teacher, Mr. Daniel Wynne, about the ways that the coronavirus pandemic has impacted the lives of students at MYA.

Q: What do you think about the coronavirus?

A: I think this is a wake-up call for society. We are really interconnected in so many ways. This virus just illustrates our impact on each other.

Q: What do you think about school buildings being closed because of the virus?

A: Schools are an important tool for parents to be able to go to work. If schools are closed, parents have more difficulty engaging in work and other important social functions.

Q: How do you feel about video learning online?

A: It's really important for teachers to develop virtual teaching and learning skills. Teachers who have become complacent and not involved in virtual learning are really at a disadvantage in this type of scenario. Teachers need to develop skills in distance learning to adequately assist their students.

Q: Explain the new teaching situation at MYA.

A: Each school day, the teachers utilize Google Suite of tools to interact with the students to facilitate live educational meetings with the students from 8:00 a.m. until 12:00 p.m. We use video chat on Google Meets.

Instruction and feedback are being provided directly by the teachers from their homes via Google Classroom Virtual Class and the video chat. To differentiate instruction, paper-based assignments are sent to the program staff, who are physically at MYA, to be printed and distributed to each student.

Additionally, the students are engaging in several online learning programs including Reading Plus,

Florida Ready to Work and Typing.com. There are also supplemental educational activities with frequent video visits and instruction by the journalism teacher, Mr. Unger, and the art teacher, Ms. Cohen.

The exchange class with the University of Miami is still operating. Additionally, students from a secondary school in Bergen, Norway, have sent letters through Google Drive to me. I will share the letters with MYA students, who will reply and begin a letter-writing campaign with their partners in Norway.

Q: What's happening with visitation here?

A: Parent and mentor visitation has been temporarily suspended as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Anyone entering the facility must complete a COVID-19 screening. A thermometer is used for measuring temperatures, as needed.

Q: When do you think the virus will be defeated?

A: I think it will eventually subside. We're currently in an acute phase of controlling the impact. Hopefully, our medical system will not be overwhelmed. Unfortunately, I think we're going to be addressing this virus and variations of it for the foreseeable future.

Q: How can we help vulnerable people?

A: The virus has a disproportionate impact on older, sicker people. Young people generally are okay with this virus. We need to be responsible by reducing contact with older, more ill people.

Q: That's not easy, right?

A: The social distancing we are doing now goes against everything we have hard-wired as a society. We are social beings, drawn together by our social constructs. We need to go against our evolutionary development to implement widespread social distancing.

Poetry Corner

Hear my cry

By A. S.

The name is A. S.

I'm a young black adolescent whose fallen victim to the system, but won't fall victim to the games
People all around me showing love, but I see a lot is like plastic fake
Even the Garden of Eden had serpents, so in this world I've always gotta watch my back, so many snakes

Locked away in a program due to the consequences of my actions and I'm the only one to blame
Like a dog in the pound, I'm locked in a cage
Society looks at me and I feel like all they see is a delinquent when they look at my face
Constant battles between my heart and mind
Just trying to escape these invisible chains
Make it out of the program and show the world I've changed
Every day struggling, having to get it on my own because when I was starving—no one put food on my plate

The name is A. S.

I'm just a young man trying to feed his family, stuck in a repeated cycle every day
Just trying to escape the insanity and regain my sanity
But release date so far away, going home soon is nearly a fantasy



Locked Away

By N. F.

Dark days, dark clouds
Lot of smiles, lot of frowns
Closed walls, cold ground
Cold food, cold salad
Level Zero, no sound
Level One, too loud
Back to Zero, closed mouths
Don't comply, score down
Lost in thoughts, might drown
Repeated cycle, like a merry-go-round
Constant repetition, what now?

My Solar Eclipse

By A. R.

All my life it's been like a solar eclipse
I have good days and I have bad days
Like when the sun is out I have good days
But when the moon covers the sun I have bad days
My days go from good to bad
I try to hold it in
I try to keep calm
But when the solar eclipse happens I tend to fall
I tend to fall when the sun goes down
But when the sun comes out I tend to rise
Then I look up at God and I pray to him
Please let me survive the eclipse and bring back the
sunshine

Bad situation, but in situations like this is where humbleness and qualities of greatness are found
Will you spread your wings and fly, or let the invisible chains hold you down?

Open the cage
I will not be the system's slave
It took time to paint the picture you see portrayed
But now I spread my wings and fly away
I have a bigger vision than money or fame
And right around the corner is my release date
I am released from these invisible chains
And no longer will I be locked away



Spotlight on GED Teachers

Titan Tribune staff writers J. E., A. S. and N. F. interviewed the teachers who help students prepare for and pass the GED tests.

Q: What motivates you?

Mr Rudd: Over the years, I have seen many people with great potential do many great things. Unfortunately, some of those people never get the opportunity to fulfill their potential because they can't get started. I've worked for several companies that won't even consider a person for employment unless they have a high school diploma and sometimes they require a college degree. It may not seem fair, but it is the way many businesses operate. I believe a high school diploma is a key that everyone needs to unlock doors of opportunity in their lives.

Mr. Gonzalez: I believe education is the most important thing you need to focus on. Having grown up with not much, being quite poor, I have experienced the benefit of getting an education. I was the first in my family's history to graduate from college and set the example for my brother and sister who did the same. We are all doing well. Hopefully, I can help you guys achieve success in any way that I can. You all have a long life ahead of you and education is paramount.

Ms. Edith: To empower you to have the opportunity to be successful in whatever you choose to do with your lives.

Ms. Sanchez: The biggest motivation to me is the effect passing the GED creates, how it builds such a sense of accomplishment and how it sparks the realization of the endless possibilities for the future. Through the years I've noticed that some students feel like they are spinning their wheels, going nowhere, and that where they are in this exact moment defines them. No matter how many students I help with the GED and the successes I witness, the positive energy and perseverance is contagious, not only for my students but for myself as well.

Mr. Wynne: Seeing students succeed keeps me going. All of the teachers feel a great sense of accomplishment when one of our students passes the GED.

Q: What does it mean to you to be a mentor figure to all of the students?

Mr. Rudd: It just means I try my best to set a good example. We all have flaws, but trying to be the



MYA's teachers, Front row, L to R: Ms. Sanchez and Ms. Edith.
Back row L to R: Mr. Wynne, Mr. Gonzalez and Mr. Rudd

best example I can helps me show the youth that being a "Sherm" might not be a bad thing.

Mr. Gonzalez: It's an honor to be able to help youth achieve their goals and try to set an example for them.

Ms. Edith: It means that if they work hard enough they can achieve their goals, but it takes sacrifice.

Ms. Sanchez: I consider it an honor to be a mentor, being able to share my knowledge and experiences in the hopes of helping others to be successful.

Mr. Wynne: It's important to be supportive and honest. Sometimes you need to redirect or correct students. As long as you maintain honest interactions with students, praising them when deserved or correcting when needed, students will respect your message if it's offered honestly and without judgment.

Q: What are some hardships you face while preparing students for the GED?

Mr. Rudd: A huge problem is that often my students don't really understand why they need it, so it isn't very important to them. If they saw a reason to get it, other than being told you have to get it, they might be more determined. Another issue is that many students feel

UM Exchange Class hears from former inmate

By C. C.
Titan Tribune Staff Writer

Not long ago, just before the coronavirus secluded us at MYA, our exchange class with the University of Miami went there to hear from a former Florida inmate. I, along with nine other youths at MYA, visited the Exchange for Change class on a Friday, which was odd because we usually go on Mondays.

When we arrived at the class, the change in day made sense. We were introduced to Mr. Francis Cesar, a former inmate in the State of Florida. It was a different experience. Mr. Francis Cesar was really motivational.

Mr. Cesar spent 17 years and 9 months in prison. He talked about what it was like in prison and why he was there. Most importantly, he wanted to help us not to follow in his footsteps and do what he did.

The main message from his presentation was to emphasize that we make choices. Anyone can end up in prison based on their choices.

Mr. Cesar described some of the choices he made and explained how many of his fellow in-



Mr. Francis Cesar speaks with MYA and UM students about life in prison.

mates were just normal people who made bad choices.

"You have an opportunity at your program that 100,000 guys would like to have," he said. He was referring to our opportunity to redirect our lives in a juvenile program and avoid adult prison.

Spotlight on GED Teachers, continued

like their brains work differently than the other kids. They think it comes easy to everyone else. I want my students to understand they are normal and with practice and perseverance they will get better at learning.

Mr. Gonzalez: The greatest hardship is filling in the gaps some of the students have. There is a lot of material and many times students have missed out on a lot of schooling and learning. Also, there is a lack of dedication and motivation from some of the candidates.

Ms. Sanchez: The biggest hardship is keeping students from becoming discouraged if they don't make a passing score. It's important to always remember that at times we all stumble, but picking yourself up and moving forward is key.

Q. What are some strengths you have to help prepare students for the GED?

Mr. Gonzalez: Patience!

Ms. Edith: Perseverance! Don't quit, just keep trying.

Mr. Rudd: Patience and perseverance. Also, I have several examples of previous students who have achieved and some who haven't. Those examples help me shape my efforts.

Q: How do you prepare students for the GED?

Ms. Edith: I assist them with the writing section of the GED. Students are taught to properly cite from the text and to use transition words in their writing.

Q: What do you feel students struggle with the most while preparing and taking the tests?

Ms. Edith: I believe they struggle with making time to study on their own. Many students have a difficult time asking for assistance from the teachers, as well as from other students.

Mr. Wynne: The biggest challenge for most students at MYA is believing in themselves. Many students are tied to a narrative that they cannot achieve greatness. We need to help students see their amazing potential.

Mr. White is Jack of all trades

By G. G. and D. M.
Titan Tribune Staff Writers

Mr. Anthony White, who does all the maintenance work at MYA, cares about the environment the students have to live in while spending their time here.

As the only staff member responsible for making repairs to this facility, Mr. White is constantly on the move, interacting with lots of the staff. He said he likes the variety of projects he works on because it expands his knowledge.

He also likes the fact that he can teach different skills to the students who help him.

Mr. White, who has worked at the program for about a year-and-a-half, said he has learned more self-control through his interactions with the students. He said he has realized that when students are disrespectful or angry, it can be because they're thinking about what may be going on at home that they are missing. His best advice is for students to think first, before acting out, which has consequences.

Mr. White grew up in Jamaica in a good neighborhood that had lots of kids to play with as a child. He enjoyed track and field.

One of his saddest experiences was finding out that his grandma, who he was very close with, had died. He said he had a difficult time coping with losing her.

When asked if he could change one thing about his life, what would it be, Mr. White said he would have stayed in school and finished college.

Still, he added, he is grateful for the life he currently has and wouldn't want to change it.

When he was a child he wanted to be a police officer but even now with the position he has at the program he wouldn't want to change anything because he appreciates what was given to him and is grateful for the life he currently lives.

Mr. White wants the youth to know that it is always better to think before you act because once you act before thinking you cannot change the outcome.

Mr. White also said his grandma has passed and due to his close connection with his grandma he had a difficult time to cope with the loss of a loved one.

He is a very caring/motivated person and he is a hard working man who deals with the maintenance of the program and cares about the envi-



Mr. White meets with students G. G. and D. M.

ronment the youth have to stay in while they spend their time here at MYA.

Like most people Mr. White faces challenges at his job and can often overcome many obstacles that are given to him at the job.

The main challenge he faces at his job is dealing with the youth because many of the youth often think about home and things that are going on with their life and become angry or in their feelings so they start to disrespect many of the staff at MYA but he has learned self control and can maintain himself in difficult situations.

One of his worst experiences that Mr. White faced when he was a child was finding out that his grandma has passed and due to his close connection with his grandma he had a difficult time to cope with the loss of a loved one but he also had good experiences as a child, doing track and field.

He likes his job not only because he can expand his knowledge in making and repairing things but because he can teach different skill sets to the youth that help him around the program.

He also has been working at the program for about 1 year and a half. Mr. White also stated that he likes the fact that the staff are very respectful, friendly, and compassionate, but he is the only maintenance man in the program so he gets called upon a lot and has to be constantly be on the move throughout the program.

When he was a child he wanted to be a police officer but even now with the position he has at the program he wouldn't want to change anything because he appreciates what was given to him and is grateful for the life he currently lives.

Mr. White wants the youth to know that it is always better to think before you act because once you act before thinking you cannot change the outcome.

Mr. Perlingieri says the key is making smart choices

By M. S.
Titan Tribune Staff Writer

Mr. Dave Perlingieri, a youth case worker, enjoys his job the most when he sees a student go home after learning to make good choices here.

He said his most important message to students is: The stay here may be temporary, but the change you can make while you're here can last a lifetime.

Originally from New York, he relocated from the Tampa Bay area to Miami four years ago to work at MYA. In Tampa, he also worked in alternative education for more than 20 years.

Mr. Perlingieri said the toughest part of his job is seeing students struggle to find their way.



Ms. Garcia wants to make a difference



By A. R.
Titan Tribune Staff Writer

Ms. Anyela Garcia, MYA's Transition Services Manager and Director of Case Management, likes working with the students here, despite the challenges. They include behavior issues and parents who may not be as involved as they should be.

Still, she knows she can make a difference in students' lives.

Ms. Garcia, who is originally from Peru, has worked here for seven months. Her goal is to complete her master's degree.

Previously, she worked at the Dade Juvenile Residential Facility (DJRF).

For fun, she enjoys spending time with family and friends. As a teenager, she said she liked to swim and play volleyball.

J. B. returns home with a new Chromebook, courtesy of Launchbook

By Daniel Wynne
Special to the Titan Tribune

MYA student J. B. was released from the program April 6 with a new Chromebook, courtesy of Launchbook, an initiative of the Center for Educational Excellence in Alternative Settings.

The Center operates educational programs for system-involved youth in New Orleans and they support educational initiatives in juvenile justice programs throughout the country. MYA's instructional Chromebook is one of those initiatives.

MYA is one of six programs nationwide that are benefitting from the donation of 150 Chromebooks by the Center's partners, Google and Clover Wireless. Originally designed to support re-



J. receiving his new Chromebook from Mr. Wynne



J. showing off his new Chromebook

cently released students, the focus of Launchbook has changed slightly in reaction to school closings in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Launchbook was originally intended to launch access for students previously incarcerated," said coordinator Kat Crawford. "In its current state, Launchbook is connecting students to education otherwise inaccessible due to school closures in response to the pandemic."

Ms. Deborah Sanchez assisted J. in setting up a Google account for his Chromebook. J. plans to enroll at Broward College, where his new device will prove instrumental to educational access.

Upon receiving the Chromebook J. offered a heartfelt thanks to the teachers at MYA, the funders of Launchbook and the Center.

