

Community Conversations Harvest #2

Date: 6/1/2011

Location: First Christian Church Olympia

Hosts: Joy Lile and Angie Kelly

What community partners helped to support this cafe?

FSC, POWER, First Christian, Oly Childcare Collective, Downtown YMCA, volunteers

How many participants? 6

How many children? 4

What was the purpose for this café conversation?

To offer a space for families who have struggled with homelessness or low-incomes, and isolation as a result of these barriers. To come together to perhaps find common bonds and to form powerful connections with each other, and to recognize the strengths it takes to endure such a struggle. To build on previous conversations and talk about our shared values, challenges, and strengths around parenting.

What questions were used at this Café?

Introductions: What is a dream you have for your children?

Question 1: What helps build a sense of belonging for your children?

Question 2: What do you do to take care of yourself?

What were some highlights, insights, themes from the café?

- What are our dreams for our children? A healthy planet, strong educational opportunities, access to community resources and community ties, self-confidence, an end to poverty, for them to follow their own path and listen to their own voice, for people to hear them and listen, to connect with people on a deeper level, to share what's real for them.
- There is a value to kids having personal time and space to daydream and be quiet. It helps you understand who you are and develop your self-identity (the same is true for adults.)
- It's a "developmental step" for kids to go out in the world and play, to have time to imagine and create.
- Ways to help foster this in our children – making boundaries around computer and cell phone use, making "safe space" where they can have thoughtful quiet. It's important to teach our kids about using technology, and teach them to make safe and healthy choices – being safe about who you share with online, not using the computer all the time, paying attention to what they do while still keeping the boundaries of trust and respect.
- Value of family time as well – trips, playing together, eating meals together. Ways to develop this include rules about the dinner table and cell phones, setting aside time to be together, making time together a reward (instead of time on computer).
- Lead by example – as parents we should have boundaries for ourselves and make sure our kids know what we value.
- It's important to have real interaction with people face-to-face, even at the grocery store.

- Kids and adults have different motivators – kids value maturity and feeling older than they are, adults often value time away from responsibilities and feeling younger than they are.
- What helps your child build a sense of belonging? Having input and say about what happens, including them in the discussion – educational choices, bullying, etc. A sense of fairness and equality. Seeing them as a person, not gendered. Helping them maintain their connection to their inner self, emotions and needs.
- People should be treated like people! Respect their personality and choices. Your kids shouldn't have to fit your expectations and your desired role.
- Growing up, we were already thinking about what we want for our kids. What are they thinking about our parenting?
- Selfcare: being in nature, reading, good chocolate, connecting with pets

What thoughts or new learning did you have as a host?

(Joy) It was exciting to see parents coming together and talking deeply about their values in raising their children. It was an easy conversation that went several different directions, but we kept coming back to the theme of kids having their own voice, personality, and self-identity, and building mutual respect with them. I was impressed that even with our different backgrounds (3 of us not having children of our own, being raised in different ways and different cultures, etc) that we still shared similar values and beliefs.

(Angie) The discussion was structured in more of a free-flowing order due to the small number of attendees, but it worked well in this group. There was a feeling of ease around the discussion simply because of the small group all sitting around 1 large round table, eating and talking about what was important to us for our children. We ended on the question of "What do you do to take care of yourself," in order to remind ourselves that we can dream and try to create greatness for our children, but that we have to take good of ourselves to really be effective parents and people in general. The conversation felt casual, comfortable, and affirming. As Joy mentioned, there were many topics that were reiterated by the participants, all coming from their own experiences, but finding commonalities in some key basic human values.

What did the Kid Café consist of?

The kids got to go to the YMCA. They visited the childcare room and got to see what else is available there.

What's next for this café community?

We have 1 follow-up Cafe and we will go from there. We will invite people to come to POWER meetings and to join the TimeBank project which is upcoming.

Who will you share this harvest with? (The Community Café Leadership Team posts harvests we receive on our website. Let us know if you prefer that we not post your harvest.)

FSC, POWER, First Christian Church, CCLT, Facebook,