YOUth Have Stories

The Role of Digital Storytelling in Making Change

Juvenile Recovery Court   STASHA Peer Education

Clark County, Washington

Brad Finegood   Angela Zahas   Anna Lookingbill

Meet the Presenters

- **Brad Finegood, LMHC**
  - Clark County Superior Court Therapeutic Courts Coordinator
    - Superior Court Therapeutic Courts: Adult Drug Court, Family Treatment Court, Juvenile Recovery Court

- **Angela Zahas, MSW**
  - Clark County Prevention Specialist
    - County-wide substance-abuse prevention, coordinates STASHA Peer Education

- **Anna Lookingbill, MSW**
  - Juvenile Recovery Court Resource Coordinator
    - Coordinates education, vocational training, employment support, community engagement opportunities for JRC

Format of Webinar

- Clark County's Digital Storytelling Project

Part 1: Preparation
- What is digital storytelling?
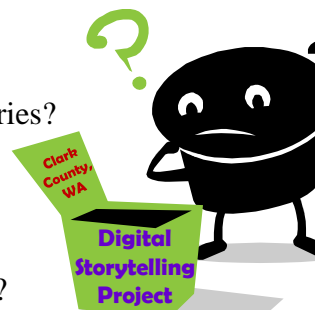- Where can a person train?

Part 2: Production
- How did we make it work in Clark County?
- How did we pay for it?

Part 3: Completion
- What did we do with the finished stories?

Part 4: Impact
- Did it matter to the community?
- How did it make change for youth?
- Are there future plans for the project?

Clark County, WA

Digital Storytelling Project

Participating Youth Programs

- **JRC: Clark County Juvenile Recovery Court**
  - o Youth 15-17+ years of age
  - o Substance abuse/dependence diagnosis
  - o Involved in juvenile justice system
- **STASHA Peer Education: Strong Teens Against Substance Hazards and Abuse**
  - o Youth 7-12th grade volunteer for 1 year
  - o Can have past substance abuse history
- **Options: Columbia River Mental Health**
  - o Youth 15-24 years of age
  - o Mental health diagnosis
  - o Risk of homelessness
- All programs serve youth in **Clark County**

STASHA
Clark County Peer Educators

OPTIONS
your power • your right • your choice

Workshop 1
12/20/10-12/22/10

Workshop 2
4/4/11-4/6/11

Workshop 3
4/7/11-4/9/11

Digital Storytelling **Preparation**

- Angela trained for a week at the **Center for Digital Storytelling** in Berkley, CA. www.storycenter.org
- Brought back **specific story format** and elements:
    - o Point of View
    - o Dramatic Question
    - o Emotional Content
    - o Economy
    - o Voice
    - o Sound track
    - o Pacing

CENTER for DIGITAL STORY TELLING

- Anna helped adapt the curriculum for **at-risk youth.**

Important Definitions

- **digital story** (dig·i·tal sto·ry)
  - A **short, first person video narrative** created by combining recorded voice, images and music or sounds.
- **digital storyteller** (dig·i·tal sto·ry·tell·er)
  - **Anyone** with the desire to document **life experiences**, **ideas** and **feelings** through the use of story and digital media.
  - **Usually someone with little to no prior experience** in the realm of video production but time to spend a few days attending a workshop and developing a story with creative support and technical assistance from compassionate, highly experienced facilitators.
- Anyone can become a digital storyteller. **Anyone!**

Definitions from Center for Digital Storytelling website: www.storycenter.org

Digital Storytelling **Preparation**

- Modified to **3-day workshop @ 6 hrs/day = 18 hrs**
- Youth from multiple programs:
  - **Juvenile Recovery Court**
    - Some court-ordered, some voluntary attendees
  - **STASHA Peer Education**
  - **Columbia River Mental Health's Options Program**
- Workshops held over winter and spring school breaks (3 total sessions) due to intensive time requirements
- Attrition of youth from **ALL** sessions
  - Recruited 8 youth per workshop
  - All workshops lost 2-3 youth along the way
- Youth in **crisis** may struggle with emotional aspects

Digital Storytelling **Production**

- Sessions were co-facilitated, **2 adults minimum**
  - o Utilized extra youth and adult volunteers all sessions
- Materials we used:
  - o **Laptop or computer for every workshop participant**
    - Specific software requirements:
      - Audacity- audio, free
      - LAME- audio converter, free
      - Picnik.com- images, free
      - Windows Movie Maker- free
  - o Other **technology** we used:
    - Digital cameras
    - Digital video camera*
    - USB drives
    - Microphone
    - Audio mixing board
    - Head phones
  - o **Food** provided for workshop participants

Story Time
How Will You Tell Your Story?
(a digital story about the process of digital storytelling)

Digital Storytelling Production

- How we supported our Digital Storytelling Project
  - **Collaborative funds: JRC & prevention block grant**
    - Sending Angela to train at Center for Digital Storytelling
    - Grant funds to purchase equipment: microphone, mixing board, headphones, digital camera, digital video camera etc
    - Food for youth at workshops
    - Renting a public venue for screening
  - **In-Kind: Partnerships within county agencies**
    - Staff time for workshop facilitation
    - Training location
    - Computers with needed software
    - Staff time for support services

Going forward, costs for the project are relatively nominal.

Digital Storytelling is sustainable after the initial training and purchase of technological requirements.

Digital Storytelling Completion

- We had **15 youth** ages 14-20 create digital stories

Digital Storytelling Completion

- Stories were incredibly **diverse**!
  - o **Families**
  - o **Identity**
  - o **Resilience**
  - o **Transition**
  - o **Love and connection**
  - o **Loss** or **grief**
  - o **Addiction and recovery**
  - o **Overcoming trauma**
  - o Involvement in **juvenile justice** system
  - o Stories in the form of poetry or lyric rhyme
- Most stories had **NEVER been shared.**

Youth were NOT told what to write their stories about.
(i.e. recovery, probation, etc)

Youth chose stories from their lives about things they feel are important.

Story Time

We are sharing 4 stories from the youth workshops

To protect confidentiality, copies of the stories will NOT be available to the public outside of viewing them "live" during this webinar. Youth have their individual stories and may share as they choose.

Digital Storytelling Completion

- What did we do with the stories?
- We organized a **Digital Storytelling Showcase:**
  - Chose **April 20, 2011** (4/20) to put positive focus on day traditionally associated with marijuana use
  - Rented a high-school auditorium with 20 foot screen
- We invited the public to attend.
  - Invited **entire community** including friends, family etc
  - Invited elected officials, juvenile court, social service and youth-serving professionals from Clark County
  - Articles ran in newsletters, list serves, local newspaper
  - All youth in JRC were required to attend
  - **Youth artists spoke at the event**

Digital Storytelling Completion

- Showcase brought in over **200** people
- Response has been **overwhelming positive**:
  - o All youth were proud sharing digital stories with others
  - o Many youth artists had their first experience with public presentations
  - o Youth made friends across programs
  - o Youth received support from peers that did not participate in workshops
  - o Social service providers see youth in "new light"
  - o Requests for project replication in community groups
  - o **Youth are requesting additional workshops**

Digital Storytelling Impact

- What does digital storytelling **teach**?
  - o **Academic** skills such as writing and editing
  - o **Technological** skills related to using computers etc
  - o **Communication** of sharing/listening to others
  - o **Advocacy** skills to speak up for oneself
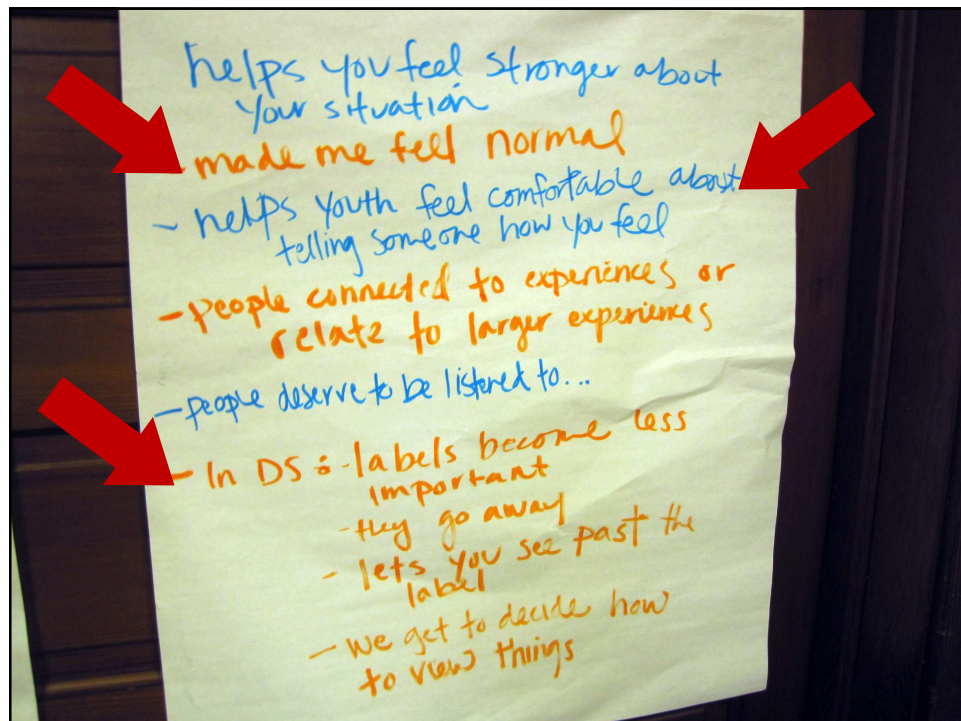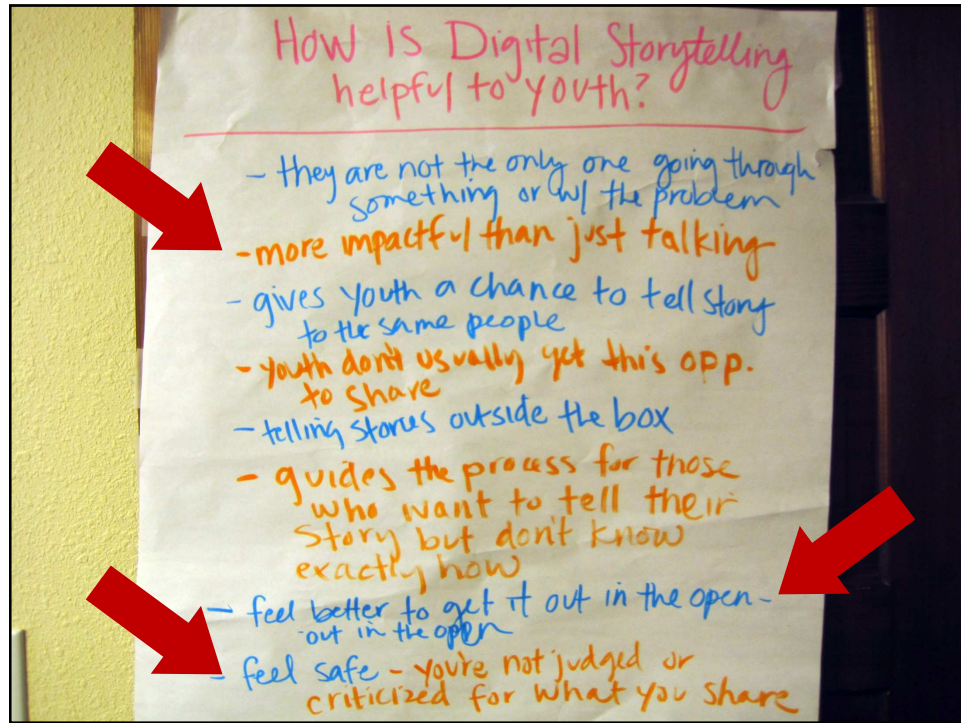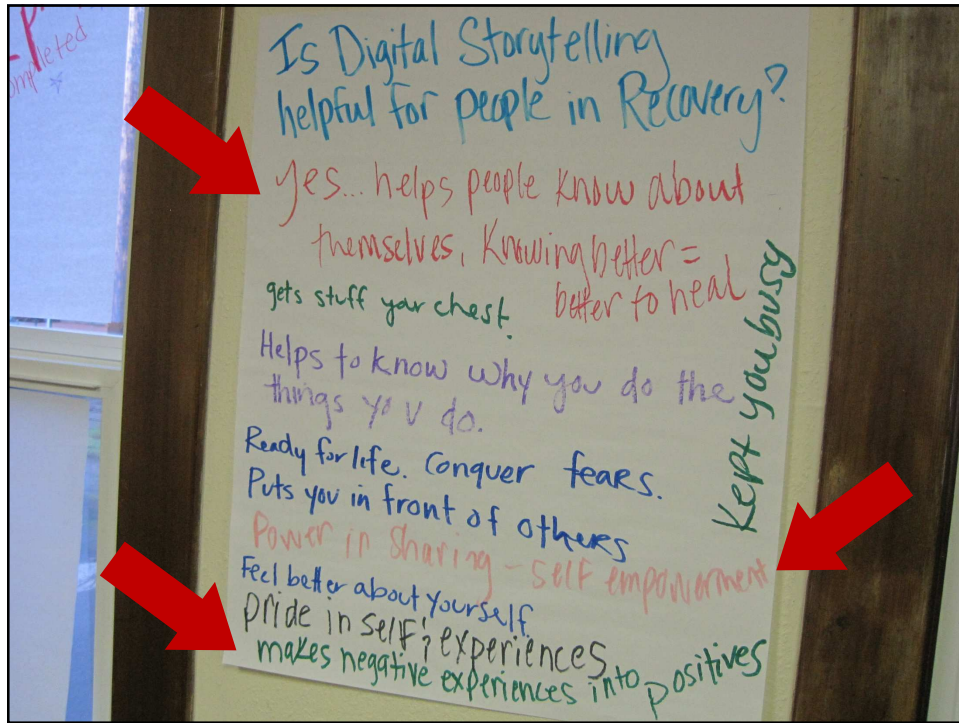 - o **Leadership** skills of presenting to an audience

Digital Storytelling Impact

- Does digital storytelling make **change** for youth?
  - o**Every time youth feel empowered, valued and listened to, it matters!**
  - o It matters when youth are "**experts**" of their own lives and given mastery over their experiences
  - o It matters when adults and peers pay **positive attention**

How Is Digital Storytelling
helpful to youth?

- they are not the only one going through
  something or w/ the problem
- more impactful than just talking
- gives youth a chance to tell story
  to the same people
- youth don't usually get this opp.
  to share
- telling stories outside the box
- guides the process for those
  who want to tell their
  story but don't know
  exactly how
- feel better to get it out in the open -
  - out in the open
- feel safe - you're not judged or
  criticized for what you share

helps you feel stronger about
  your situation
- made me feel normal
- helps youth feel comfortable about
  telling someone how you feel
- people connected to experiences or
  relate to larger experiences
- people deserve to be listened to...
- In DS : - labels become less
            important
          - they go away
          - lets you see past the
            label
          - we get to decide how
            to view things

Digital Storytelling Impact

- We're taking youth to **present** on digital storytelling at the **Spring Forum**, **May 18-19**.
  - o The Spring Forum is a statewide youth substance abuse prevention conference held in Grand Mound, WA
  - o We invited all youth participants to attend
- Future Digital Storytelling workshops?
  - o Need to be planned into program structure
  - o Intensive requirements of staff and youth time
  - o May need to train other adults to support project
  - o Perhaps include to youth from other programs?
  - o Overwhelmingly **YES!** There will be more workshops

The Columbian
December 27, 2010

Anna: "We want youth to feel good about it, proud about it."

Mitchell: "It wasn't hard to tell but it made me realize things about myself."

Camas Post Record
April 26, 2011

Angela: "I believe in giving youth voices and tapping into their wisdom."

Jaycob: "I thought it would just be a good time to tell people about what I was feeling. [The story] gets better each time you tell it."

Thank you for being here to experience the impact of stories created by youth.

We encourage you to continue listening to the stories of young people.

Contact Information

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