

Oakland University hosts Pontiac Initiative Fine Arts Camp

At one point in time, the idea of a Fine Arts camp just for Pontiac students on the campus of Oakland University was just that: an idea. The idea started about a year ago during a town hall meeting that was being held as a collaborative between Oakland University and Pontiac. The project was chaired by Dr. Carl Byerly, Co-Chair of the Pontiac Arts Commission and OU Music Professor Mark Stone.

Last week that idea turned to reality for over 100 Pontiac students, 5th-8th grade, who attended the week-long fine arts camp. The families paid only \$25; the Downtown Pontiac Business Association, Canvas Pontiac and the DIA sponsored fees for 20 students who could not afford to pay. Oakland Community College sponsored the evening performances by Professor Mark Stone with an African Drum and Dance Ensemble and Professor Miles Brown and the Miles Brown Jazz Trio as well as the stipend for an art teacher. The remaining camp costs were offset by the generous support of Oakland University.

The sponsorship allowed for Pontiac students to "have an introduction to the arts as well as enhance the abilities that they already have," said Byerly. For many students, it was the first time away from mom and dad and the first time on a college campus. The final performance allowed students a chance to perform in front of a crowd at Varner Recital Hall.

Participants self-enrolled in beginning classes that required no previous experience, such as dance, drama, visual arts, band and choir. Advanced classes were also offered. Evening recreational opportunities including swimming, basketball and volleyball were also part of the camp schedule.