

**City of Lawrence
Semi-Annual Grantee Report
January – June 2011**

Van Go uses the JAMS program to accomplish its mission to improve the lives of high-needs youth, using art as the vehicle for self-confidence, self-expression and hope for the future. In order to achieve this mission, JAMS keeps youth busy during the risk-prone after-school hours of 3 to 6 p.m., as well as during the summer. This strategy and the many layers of social support offered by JAMS deter high-risk behaviors such as drug and alcohol use.

Van Go is on track to meet the objectives stated in our grant request. Over 75 youth were interviewed for the 64 available spots and 95% of youth in Spring JAMS improved their employee evaluation scores. Additionally, Van Go is on track to include the 32 drug/alcohol lessons set as a goal in this grant. Some of the activities that have occurred during the past 6 months include:

1. Life skills lessons were provided by the Van Go social worker and social work intern. These sessions included information on topics such as suicide; STDs, AIDS, nutrition and other health issues; law and employment; drug and alcohol education; art therapy and money management. Life skills training also featured visiting speakers Douglas County AIDS Project, Douglas County Dental Clinic and a number of health and fitness presenters during the current Summer JAMS session.
2. Youth received economic opportunity through arts-based employment, as they earned an hourly rate (minimum wage) to work and learn at Van Go. With teen unemployment at an all-time high, many JAMS youth would have great difficulty securing or holding employment so JAMS employment offered sorely needed wages they likely could not find elsewhere.
3. The youth-to-adult ratio at Van Go during the six-month period was approximately 4:1
4. Youth received job training, with special attention given to important “soft” skills: punctuality, respect for co-workers and supervisors, and completion of tasks. The JAMS program director provided constant oversight of these behaviors.
5. Academic mentoring was provided by Van Go’s AmeriCorps volunteer.
6. Youth received public recognition of their work at Van Go, including participation in the annual Art Car parade and at What Floats Your Boat, Van Go’s annual fundraiser. Such recognition encourages a sense of pride and community among youth, decreasing the risk factor of social marginalization that may lead to dangerous behaviors such as substance abuse.
7. Youth received nutrition education, opportunities for physical fitness and stress reduction, and healthy living life skills lessons, as well as nutritious snacks and lunches as part of Van Go’s GO Healthy! summer program.