

CENTRAL TIME



Students in the academy are taught to write an opinion piece and a profile. *Public Domain.*

New Initiative Trains Next Generation Of Journalists

Madison365, Boys And Girls Club Of Dane County Have Partnered Up To Offer Students Journalism Boot Camp

By Scottie Lee Meyers

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Journalism has seen many changes in recent years, including growing efforts to bring people from different backgrounds into the newsroom.

Madison365, a multimedia news outlet that's geared towards Madison's communities of color, has launched a new initiative in partnership with the Boys and Girls Club of Dane County to recruit and train the next generation of journalists of color.

The Madison365 Academy Summer Program welcomes 10 students in high school or on their way to college for a three-week boot camp to learn the basics of community journalism. Each student writes three stories - an opinion piece, a profile and a local news event -- with the support of professional reporters.

For Chelsey Erstad, journalism was never the career path that she envisioned. She said she has always been driven to become a veterinarian and will begin the pre-veterinary medicine program in the fall at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. But, she still found the camp provided her with applicable skills.

"I thought they would help me with my writing skills, and with any career I'd be interested in the future," Erstad said.

During her time at the camp, she wrote an opinion piece on [allowing convicted criminals the right to vote](#) after serving their time in jail and a profile of [a local community organizer](#) who turned his life around after spending time behind bars, and is now helping teenagers stay out of trouble.

Erstad said she found interviewing strangers difficult, but said she can see how having gone through the process will help her with the interpersonal job skills required down the road.

"Interviewing people is pretty hard for me," she said. "I learned how to do that better. And to keep an open mind and to pay attention to everything they were saying so that you could think of a question based off their words instead of focusing on what your angle was."

As a two-sport athlete at Verona Area High School, Sie'anna Mitchell wants to one day become a sports journalist, maybe even on ESPN.

"I thought a little about it because I want to be a sports journalist," she said. "So when a teacher asked me and other students to do it, I was kind of excited."

Mitchell's opinion piece was about ensuring [women have access to birth control](#). For her profile, she looked at University of Wisconsin-Madison's [men's basketball assistant coach](#) and also covered a [local charity walk event](#).

She, too, found the interview process difficult at first, but soon "got the flow of it." It was thrilling to see her byline for the public to see, she said.

"It was kind of weird because I've never seen that before, but it was exciting at the same time," Mitchell said.

While Erstad and Mitchell are unsure they'll be producing any journalism in the future, they found the program helpful and both now appreciate and engage with the news in a new way.

Read more stories produced by the students at Madison365's [website](#).

Host:

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Producer(s):

Haleema Shah

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