

have been tried. Why not this? Why not introduce mindfulness and holistic living? Given the response to the open mics and the themes of such a lifestyle, Salomon and Mills may be on to something. This can only help. It can only be a positive thing.

The original idea — a program to expose urban youth to holistic living and mindfulness activities — took place this past summer as a pilot program. They named it KYDS, for Konscious Youth Development and Service. Sessions were held once or twice a week and an average of seven youth attending the sessions. A total of 21 youth participated.

But it's the broader all-ages movement here of introducing holistic living and mindfulness into a troubled community that really caught our attention. We've never heard that tried before on a large scale, and there's nothing more we'd love than to see Salomon's and Mills' initiative grow into something much bigger.

"It's holistic intervention with mind, body and soul," Mills said of their efforts. "It's holistic intervention for the whole community."

"We all have a role to play in the village," said Salomon. "I've seen the common connection among people in the region. The essence at the core is all the same. Mindfulness and meditation and yoga are keys to keeping me in balance. I recognize how much pain I release."

Both men graduated from Monmouth University and they've gotten masters degrees, with Mills getting an MBA and Salomon getting a masters in management.

Their jobs also involve community building. Salomon, who's from Marlboro where he still lives, works at the Asbury Park High School as a youth development specialist. His position encompasses pregnancy prevention, young men mentorship, academic support, employment support and life intervention.

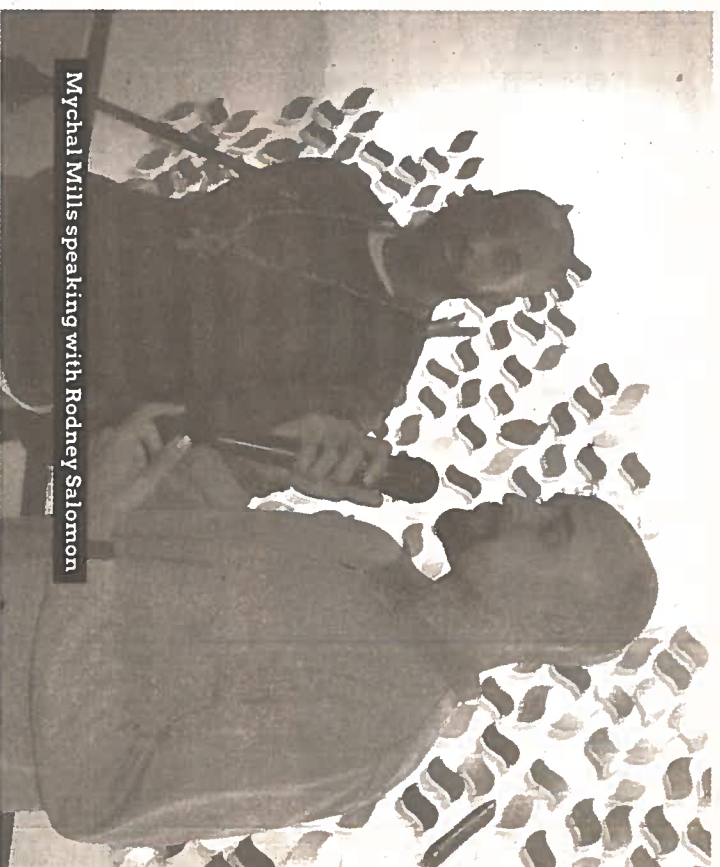
Mills, a Neptune native and resident, works at the Monmouth and Ocean Foodbank in Neptune as the food sourcing supervisor, where his job is to coordinate the food coming into the facility.

Dean Nelson of Dean's Natural Foods met them both while they were in his

store. He just started chatting with them and was taken by what they were doing. The two had been paying for food for the open mics out of their own pockets and Nelson quickly took over that role. He also has served as a mentor for them to grow their program, arranging for them to start the process to become a non-profit 501(c)(3) corporation, as well as providing strategic advice. With the triCityNews, he served as their press secretary as he urged us to do a story about them — and he was right.

"These guys are 28 years old. They are amazing guys. There isn't a bad bone in these guys' bodies," said Nelson. "Their purpose is just so pure. It's so refreshing. It's everything I'd want to do if I had to do it again. I'm blessed to be in a position to help. This is what life and community are all about."

For more information, you can email Rodney and Mychal at kyds.nj@gmail.com or follow the group's activities on Facebook. You'll find them under Kyds.



Mychal Mills speaking with Rodney Salomon



Participants in one of the open mics at Kula Cafe