



Juvenile Networking

Volume 4 Issue 2

"Many Ministries—One Mission"

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Facts You Can Use:

Females accounted for 24% of juvenile arrests for aggravated assault and 33% of those for other assaults in 2004, far more than their involvement in other types of violent crimes.

Source: OJJDP December 2006

Between 1980 and 2004, the juvenile arrest rate for simple assault increased 106% for males and 290% for females.

Source: OJJDP December 2006

The juvenile arrest rate for motor vehicle theft declined consistently and substantially between 1990 and 2004, falling 66%.

Source: OJJDP December 2006

After completing TYC's competency-based Re-socialization® program, the majority of youth are not re-incarcerated in either TYC or adult prison three years after release.

Source: TYC Research Webpage

"I don't know what your destiny will be, but one thing I know, the only ones among you who will be truly happy are those who have sought and found a way to serve."
Sir Winston Churchill – Prime Minister

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Former TYC Chaplain Speaks Out!

By Pamela Wiebe—Former TYC Chaplain Gainesville State School

"I loved working for TYC so this whole scandal saddens me even though I'm glad that the truth has finally come out. I believe that the ongoing investigations are bringing a new day for youth and staff. Working with delinquent youth is a very difficult job and it is even more difficult when the *many good staff* working in the trenches feel that they are not heard or believed when trying to stand up for the rights of the youth. For every negative staff in TYC, I still believe that we have twice as many that are great. One problem is- those who are seen as an advocate for the youth are not always accepted by other staff that don't share their same caring or optimistic attitude.



Pamela Wiebe

Over the my years in the system I witnessed the loss of many dedicated staff and volunteers who initially came there with the hopes of making a difference in the lives of damaged youth but were quickly discouraged by the reigning predominately pessimistic attitude. I don't know how it is on all campuses, but where I worked, the staff that demonstrated genuine care and concern for the kids were often treated as being weak, unprofessional or even suspect. A person can only take the pressure so long before either leaving or becoming uncaring themselves. I'm not amazed by the high stats of employee turnover. It shouldn't be surprising that all kinds of abuse can fester in an atmosphere where the kids are already written off as hopeless in the minds of those running the program.

I was especially concerned to read that the Gainesville State School announced that its chaplain had been put under investigation because some staff complained about him "having some youth in the chapel on occasion by himself". If there is some evidence that he is indeed guilty of some inappropriate behavior, then I agree that it could be considered newsworthy. But from what I understand, there have been no allegations of improper behavior made by students against this chaplain. It sounds like it is purely a cautionary investigation because he had counseled students alone. This seems strange since a lot of staff have reason to have 'youth on occasion by themselves' and they are not being investigated as far as I know. Even though I have never met this chaplain, to see the release of such damaging information and then the media making this a headline issue seems unreasonable to me. This could be just another way of trying to undermine the importance of chaplains. It could also be the work of someone trying to rid the campus of or discredit the influence of a chaplain who actually loved the kids and was willing to put his neck on the line for the for their rights. Whatever the reason, these insinuating news articles end up casting a shadow over the credibility of all chaplains.

Due to today's stringent confidentiality laws and the Constitutional rights of youth to have access to private pastoral counseling and clergy confessions, the chaplain and other clergy are put in a tough place. Similar to the doctors, psy-

"Three things our youth must have to make it successfully in and beyond the gates of TYC". Go to www.jjmnt.org for article.

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Air Chapel Restoring Justice for Juveniles

By Shirley Orr Smith



The **Air Chapel Community Learning Center** provides volunteer faith based services for the Cooke, Fannin and Grayson County Boot Camp. Air Chapel is located at the Grayson County Airport, Denison, Texas, just across the street from the Boot Camp. The boot camp serves as a "judicial alternative sentence" for convicted young felons ages twelve to eighteen from eighteen Texas counties.

*"We expect troubled youth to have a personal transformation."
Terry Dyer, Director Air Chapel*

The heart of the Air Chapel mission is to oppose crime in our communities by changing the attitudes, beliefs and values of those most likely to conduct criminal activity.

Air Chapel is a ministry of the Community Services Network, Inc. (CSN) is a faith based interdenominational company of volunteers dedicated to the moral excellence, humanity, and

emotional intelligence of our people. CSN networks community people and positive groups that express joy, faith, hope, and high social standards. Teaching specific skills related to good character is a CSN mission.

Specific needs of Juvenile Detention Center (JDC) children and their families are a concern of the community. CSN bridges community, church, civic, law, and justice departments with people needs. Resources are identified and developed to help our community. The youth are learning from the community of faith; the community is learning from the children.

Multi-denominational worship services, spiritual lessons, civic talks, art and culture appreciation, youth group music, skits and games are currently being made available through community outreach volunteers. Emphasis is on positive and exciting programs to the Boot Camp theme of operation. Air Chapel mission increases the ability of our community to raise and care for our children.

Air Chapel looks for opportunities to work with other groups or individuals in the community. Two young men, shown with their respective parents, have been granted the Eagle Scout Award at a ceremony conducted in Air Chapel gazebo. The work that these young men completed on the gazebo complex served to satisfy the requirements for "Community Service".

What does Air Chapel expect to accomplish?

As stated by Terry Dyer, Director of Air Chapel, "We believe personal transformation is important because it increases the self-realization that God loves us and He is the single most powerful meaning of our existence." Dyer

Air Chapel is a place for family rest, meditation and classes relating to restoring justice for juveniles.

continued, "We are convinced that programs that promote community and faith can reduce the recurring dependence to correctional institute living. Air Chapel is a place for family rest, meditation and classes relating to restoring justice for juveniles.

Mr. Dyer can be contacted by phone at (903) 786-5899 or email: dyer@mail.airchapel.org
Website: www.airchapel.org

Listen to Parenting Today
Monday—Friday 8:00pm
North Texas 100.7 FM
Hosted by Don Smarto

Snow By Marc

Marc penned this poem while in a Juvenile Correction and Treatment Center. Snow is a street name for Cocaine

*When I first met snow, I was caught in the
Flow of the most dangerous time
My heart will ever know.*

*Snow was a girl white as can be
She picked me up and made me see
A life with snow was the life for me.*

*I told all my friends
That was when my addiction begins.*

*I started to love her, she started to know
That was when our love started to grow.*

*All of a sudden she ran out the door
Leaving me there still wanting more.*

*So next time I see snow
I will let her know
That she broke my heart so I'll just say no.*

Former TYC Chaplain Speaks Out!

Continued from Page 1

chiatrist and attorneys who serve the youth, chaplains have confidentiality issues to deal with. Due to the 16-hour day scheduling, they have to struggle to have access to the students that are constantly requesting their counsel. The hardest part in TYC is that the chaplaincy is a one-person department that usually has no other staff assigned to help or to supervise them while they attempt to perform their job duties. This is why chaplains can go through specific training each year in order to have 'sole supervision status' with the students even though being alone with them is a risk to themselves for several reasons. I put my life and my reputation on the line to do my job and I never regretted it. I admit that after seeing this week's news, I would have second thoughts now. This is another reason that not only does every campus need a chaplain, but they also need at least one assistant chaplain.

Chaplains and the hundreds of religious volunteers they draw in from the community serve as a balance in the system because their presence helps hold TYC staff accountable in their behavior towards the students. It was my experience that if the chaplain has a solid rapport with the youth, they are the one that a youth opens up to first when there is abuse going on. This is because a Chaplain is usually viewed by the youth as a "safe person", someone that is "on their side" inside the fence. Chaplains are the only staff that can legally pray with the youth and help them deal with matters of their soul. Dedicated chaplains (not all are) have a great influence in the healing process of our kids and since we know that 'hurting people hurt people', they are doing their part in helping TYC send less dangerous people back into society. Most people are surprised to learn that most TYC facilities (institutions and half-way houses) don't even have a chaplain on staff to protect the religious rights of the youth and meet their many needs. Supposedly it is from lack of state funding.

One of the most disturbing things I discovered was that the provision for spiritual and moral development of our incarcerated youth seems to be

one of the last things on the agenda of our great state. Even with all the hoopla concerning faith based initiatives, little money is allocated towards providing chaplains or religious program opportunities for the students in TYC care. The Faith Based dorm program at the Gainesville State School has statistically shown that providing the opportunity for spiritual and moral training in the daily lives of the youth brings a positive change in their behavior. Yet after over eight years, it remains the

" . . . most TYC facilities (institutions and half-way houses) don't even have a chaplain on staff to protect the religious rights of the youth "

only dorm of its kind in TYC even though it focuses on two hot topics - mentoring and moral character building. This program and the many volunteers it has brought into the lives of TYC youth has proven invaluable yet it looks like it has basically been ignored in regards to funding or expansion to other facilities.

I think that it is high time that our lawmakers reconsider where our true values lie. TYC not only has a great opportunity to initiate lasting transformation in the lives of the youth in their care but they also have a great responsibility to the victims and the taxpayers who are paying them to do so. If we are going to have some of the toughest juvenile laws in the country, then we should also pride ourselves in investing the most resources to transform in the body, mind and soul of our youth while they are incarcerated and even more after they return to the community. I believe that it is time to spend our tax-dollars to develop more programs that accentuate a positive atmosphere for youth and staff, hire more chaplains and provide extensive aftercare resources instead of building more lock-up facilities. From what I've read, *Texas is 47th out of the 50 states in spending on at-risk youth, but 2nd on prison spending. Something is out of balance!*

It is my experience that our incarcerated youth, are looking for the same things all youth long for - TOUGH LOVE. Tough by its self doesn't work- love by its self doesn't

worth either. It takes the combination. We know that this is a critical moment in TYC and the pendulum will swing once again. I'm personally not in support of the youth being given more privileges or not being held responsible for the terrible crimes they are committing, but for them to be treated with more empathy, respect and given fair opportunity to have God as a part of their rehabilitation if they choose. On top of that, they desperately need some type of active support after they return to the community. Not until we help our youth to embrace the 'hope to' change, can we work on providing them the 'how to and the means to' stay changed.

I am not one to talk about problems without being willing to do my part to come up with solutions. I drove to Austin and met with the executive director to share my concerns and some ideas before deciding to resign from my position. I don't know what impact, if any; my visit made because I decided I had done all I could to propagate change and it was time for me to move on. The people I spoke with in Central office seemed very interested and concerned about what I had to say but they also seemed out of touch with what was actually happening in local institutions. We now have oc-

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casation for the hope-hearted people to let them know! It is time for the little people to be heard. Together we can stop the ill-treatment of our incarcerated kids that leads to the re-victimization of the community. The good news is that TYC is getting an overhaul and some of the bad apples are getting thrown out. I just hope that some good apples aren't

Pamela Wiebe is a former Chaplain with the Texas Youth Commission. She has an extensive background in working with incarcerated youth. She is an ordained minister that holds a bachelor's degree in counseling from the University of North Texas and a master's degree from Trinity Theological Seminary.

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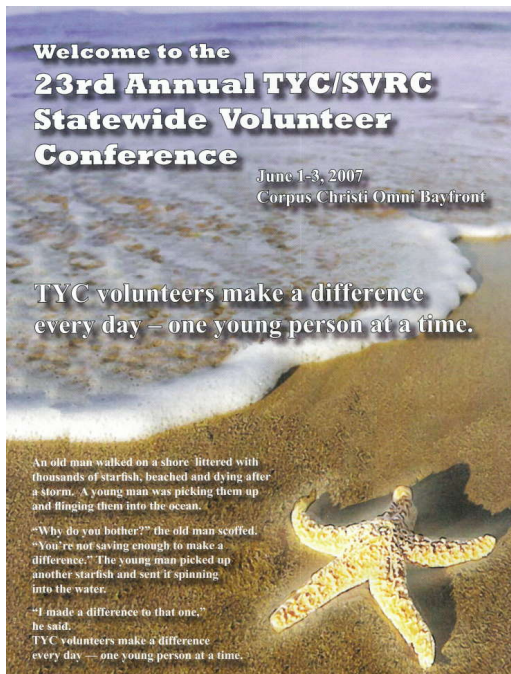
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Upcoming Juvenile Justice Ministry Events!



23rd Annual TYC/SVRC Statewide Volunteer Conference
Corpus Christi, Texas June 1-3, 2007



Juvenile Justice Ministries Network of Texas

PO Box 765156 Dallas, TX 75376-5156

"Many Ministries—One Mission"