



Juvenile Networking

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"Many Ministries—One Mission"

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Facts You Can Use:

In 2005, 8.8 percent of youth aged 12 to 17 (2.2 million persons) experienced at least one major depressive episode (MDE) in the past year.

Among youths aged 12 to 17 who were at risk for alcohol initiation (i.e., those who had never used alcohol previously), those who experienced a past year MDE were twice as likely to have initiated alcohol use in the past year as those who did not have a past year MDE (29.2 vs. 14.5 percent).

Among youths who were at risk for illicit drug initiation, those who experienced a past year MDE were over twice as likely to have initiated use of an illicit drug as those who had not experienced an MDE in the past year (16.1 vs. 6.9 percent).

Source: NSDUH REPORT May 2007

"Example is not the main thing in influencing others; it's the only thing."

Dr Albert Schweitzer
Missionary Doctor

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Effective Religious Volunteer Programs

by Mike Gahan



The media was at its hound dog best in sniffing out the story and bringing the shocking abuses in the Texas Youth Commission (TYC) to light. The legislature and the governor have responded by enacting reforms in the system and new TYC executive management is in place implementing the reforms.

Sadly, what was once regarded as one of the best run juvenile justice systems is now being painted as one of the worst by some critics. All because of the shameful acts of a few! True, some reforms were needed and welcomed. But I wonder how much time these critics have spent up close inside these institutions working with the staff and the youth. Do they really have a clue about how difficult it is to take a youth whose life has been trashed and turn them into a model citizen? Reforming the worst 2% in the juvenile justice system is not for wimps.

The Juvenile Justice Ministries Network of Texas (JJMNT) member organizations have spent thousands of hours in virtually all TYC facilities working closely with TYC employees. The consensus is that the overwhelming majority of TYC staff are dedicated caring professionals. These individuals have invested their lives in helping troubled youth. They deserve our respect, trust, and appreciation.

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Partnerships for Change

by Don Smarto

The "bottom line" of prison ministry is a changed life. Society as a whole, including other faiths and totally secular viewpoints, desire no return to crime. Everyone wants a safer community. Christians may retort, "Isn't ministry about people going to heaven?" The quick response may be "Yes", but consider several other viewpoints.

If an ex-offender goes to church every week but cheats on his income tax, is that good? If an ex-offender reads the Bible daily, but shoplifts, is that genuine change? If an ex-offender does good things, has an inspiring testimony, and looks religious but robs a bank, was the prison ministry effective?

It is wonderful when a prisoner accepts God and lets Jesus be the Lord of their life, but inheriting eternal life must be coupled with a new direction that abandons crime. This is not an easy process for a person with long habits of vice and a warped value system. Change can happen, but not the change of a two minute prayer and a name on a decision card.

I am convinced lasting change is a process that involves accountability

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A Tragic Need—Discovery Farms

By Roy A. Teague Jr., Chaplain



Chaplain
Roy A. Teague Jr
Lyle B. Medlock

It has been my great joy and privilege to serve our Lord now for nearly a decade as the Senior Chaplain for the Lyle B. Medlock Youth Treatment Center, Dallas, Texas. The Medlock facility is a long term (6 to 9 months), secure rehabilitation facility which houses ninety-six resident male juvenile offenders in Dallas County. It has been just over 4 years ago that a deputy director for Dallas County Juvenile made known to me a very sad and tragic crisis that nearly a third of the juvenile residents face regularly.

Imagine the following scenario facing you personally as a fifteen to seventeen year old incarcerated youth. You have been working hard over a 5 month period to achieve your "Phase 4" designation for being able to be released back "into the free", as the youth say. You look forward to being released in 3 weeks with this achievement. You are finally getting another chance at going straight and succeeding with your life. At the end of your school day your dorm supervisor informs you that your caseworker needs to see you and so you are escorted to his or her office. You are surprised to see your Parole Officer (PO) is there, also. After the usual greeting your PO congratulates you upon your achievement of your exit status. However, your PO then informs you of an unfortunate dilemma.

You hear the following words from your PO, "I have just left an appointment with your judge to discuss your exit. I take no pleasure

in telling you this but Child Protective Services (CPS) has determined your home to be severely dysfunctional and inappropriate for you to return to that setting. Since you have no extended family, the judge is placed in the position of having to issue an order for your placement into a Texas Youth Commission facility until you reach the age of 18, or it could be until you reach the age of 21."

A second and just as terrible scenario is that your family completely abandons you. The result is the same; you are sent to a TYC facility until you are considered an adult and no longer a threat to society. Can you possibly imagine the emotional let down and disappointment a youth in this position experiences? There is astonishment, anger and disbelief, all coupled with the tearful thoughts "nobody cares, nobody loves me, I'm trapped with no way out, what's the use of even trying to do what's right anymore?"

"I take no pleasure in telling you this but Child Protective Services (CPS) has determined your home to be severely dysfunctional and inappropriate for you to return "

It is not uncommon that the youth then begins to act out all his frustration with angry disruptions of all sorts for several days. They may assault a fellow resident or even a staff member which then results in additional criminal charges and demotion from their exit status.

What words of comfort and hope can even be said to a youth in this position? A glimmer of hope for the youth comes only if they have become wonderfully born again and received new hope and new life attached to their faith in Jesus Christ. As a Chaplain, I can then share with the youth scriptures such as Deuteronomy 31:6, "*Be strong and of good courage, do not*

fear nor be afraid of them; for the LORD your God, He is the One who goes with you. He will not leave you nor forsake you" or Jeremiah 29:11,

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the LORD, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope." As powerful and as true these words are from our Lord, it is still so very difficult for a youth to find hope and comfort to which they may cling.

Is there a solution that can offer hope to a youth facing such a crisis? The body of our Lord Jesus Christ cannot be idle with the revelation of such a great need. Praise the Lord for Scott Larson and the "Straight Ahead Academy!" They have been working with exiting juveniles in the Boston, Massachusetts area for a number of years offering short-term residential aftercare and guidance.

But what about those in need of long-term aftercare that fit the description of those aforementioned whom have literally no place to go? Foster families are seldom willing to take in a teenage offender and "halfway houses" for ex-offender youth do not exist.

Please go to www.jjmnt.org to read the rest of this article about A Tragic Need.

Chaplain Roy Teague can be reached by email at Roy.Teague@jjmnt.org or by phone at 214-718-7679.

Due in part to the visibility the TYC scandal has received; state and county juvenile justice systems are scrutinizing their programs and procedures, including religious volunteer programs. As the largest juvenile faith-based network in Texas we have gained a clear perspective about effective religious volunteer programs. The following criteria are based upon our membership's extensive experience serving in state and county volunteer programs over the past decade.

Religious Program Criteria

1) For a youth to achieve wholeness, rehabilitation or re-socialization programs must include the mind, the body, and the spirit. Accordingly, staff chaplains in juvenile facilities coupled with religious volunteer programs are vital in achieving this outcome.

2) Religious volunteer programs are an integral part of ministering to the spiritual needs of incarcerated youth. Religious volunteers and organizations are perceived as a key factor in reinforcing positive social values and in facilitating a youth's suc-

cessful re-entry into the community.

3) Incarcerated youth must be allowed to discuss their spiritual concerns and prayers with religious volunteers in a confidential manner. The right to meet with youth on a *one to one basis* is an essential process in ministering to youth. Eye supervision of institution staff is encouraged for the protection of all concerned.

" For a youth to achieve wholeness, . . . programs must include the mind, the body, and the spirit. "

4) Attending religious services is not a privilege to be earned. Denying youth the right to attend worship services because they have not reached a certain level in their program is counter productive to their spiritual development and undermines the rehabilitation of the youth.

5) Juvenile facilities must have documented scheduled times for regular religious services. Religious service times must be included in their institution master program schedule. One time special events should be encouraged

by the institutions administration and should be perceived as an important part of the religious program.

6) Faith-based ex-offenders that have demonstrated successfully re-entry into the community should be permitted to participate in religious volunteer programs. They bring unique insights and inspiration to youth who are struggling with similar destructive lifestyles.

7) Religious volunteers and organizations are encouraged to make themselves available for ministry to facility staff if requested and after duty hours.

8) Volunteers and volunteer organizations must conduct themselves as ambassadors for Christ while in a juvenile facility, respecting and adhering to the rules and policies of the institution, including submitting to essential security clearances.

More about the Juvenile Justice Ministry Network of Texas at www.jjmnt.org

Partnerships for Change

By Don Smarto

and many people working together. Just as the hand is not greater than the eye, all are important.

Evangelism is essential for salvation comes by hearing the word. Bible studies are also important so men and women grow in their knowledge of the scriptures. When released, a church is important and a mentor to guide and disciple.

Ministries need to work together because no one can do everything alone. But ministries need to work with government agencies, too. Partnerships with cor-

rections, chaplains, parole, and probation, and prayer support for wardens and judges is important.

We are all on the same side. Everyone wants a safer community, but each of us plays a different role. Without facilities that allow ministries access and freedom to visit, there would be no evangelism. Judges who see the criminal as a person worthy of a second chance will order treatment, and less restrictive community corrections.

Without partnerships we are weaker. The community of cor-

rections includes police, wardens, judges, volunteers, and chaplains. We are all stronger by working together. Our religious views may differ but no one disagrees with a changed offender who is stable, a good worker, and never returns to crime.

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

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Upcoming Juvenile Justice Ministry Events!

Going Home with Troubled Youth

Billing Graham Center Wheaton College
Wheaton, Illinois October 5-6, 2007
www.bgcprisonministries.com

Youth Direct Evangelism Event

Saturday, October 20th
McFadden Ranch
Roanoke, Texas (near Ft. Worth)
www.youthdirect.org

Epiphany #11 at Mart #2 for Friday Nov. 9,
through Sunday Nov.11. Contact Dale Dean at
817.741.1920 or Phil Oliver at Phil.Oliver@jjmnt.org

Juvenile Justice Ministries Network of Texas membership is open to Christian ministries, churches, and individuals. To join with us go to our website: [**www.jjmnt.org**](http://www.jjmnt.org)

- Mentor Youth
- Small Group Bible Studies
- Chapel Services
- Spiritual Direction and Counseling
- Evangelism Events
- Aftercare and Specialty Programs



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"Many Ministries—One Mission"