

Second Chance News



GREENE COUNTY YOUTH ACADEMY

Volume 2, Issue 2

October 2010

Overcoming Challenges with Opportunity

Those who follow Greene County Youth Academy on FACEBOOK know that there have been major challenges and changes since the March newsletter, which would explain why it's taken awhile to get this next newsletter out!!



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The biggest challenge was the loss of the GCYA location on Main Street. Add to that a decrease in funding. But challenges equal opportunity and the opportunity to make positive changes was undertaken by a group of various community and Juvenile Office volunteers. This group formed the GCYA Planning and Implementation Team, also known as (PIT). This larger steering group formed several sub-committees. The five sub-committees focus on programming, policy and procedure, safety/security/staffing, relocation, and fiscal management.

The first challenge is finding a new location. This is an on-going process as a community based "home" is the ideal but unfortunately an affordable option has not yet presented itself. In the meantime, GCYA has relocated to 1111 N. Robberson, occupying space that once was utilized by detention before a significant decrease in the detention population was accom-

plished through the development and safe use of detention alternatives. The GCYA residents and staff occupy separate space from that used by detention.

The GCYA residents regularly leave 1111 N. Robberson to attend appointments, events, and other activities in the community. Of special note is the fact that they leave each school day to attend school. As has always been the case, Springfield Public Schools provides a teacher and a Title I Instructor in a contained classroom for the residents who are enrolled in Springfield Schools. However, their classroom is now located in space provided at EXCEL school by the



Division of Youth Services. This is especially important as it allows the continuation of the day treatment component of the program for those boys who need all day structure and academic opportunity but don't need a 24 hour residential program. Special thanks and recognition goes to the Division of Youth Services for their generosity and awesome hospitality.

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Overcoming Challenges with Opportunities

The Greene County Youth Academy is also grateful to the Division of Youth Services for their continued financial support with diversionary grant money to run the program.

However, due to severe fiscal constraints on the state level, the grant funding has been reduced. This means that more than ever, GCYA must rely on resources available in our community. The programming subcommittee has indentified several of these resources that have been, or soon will be, in-

corporated into the program. These resources include; A Sporting Chance, Family Centered Services offered by Children's Division, treatment groups and educational evaluations funded by Reclaiming Futures, mentoring and other opportunities through Missouri State University and Big Brothers/Big Sisters.

Further, the programming subcommittee is looking at ways to expand the existing community service component of the program so that GCYA youth may

give back in a more meaningful way.

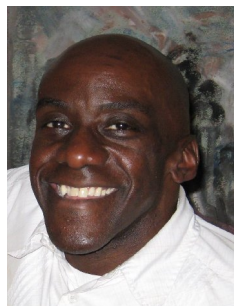
Sustainability of a program that reduces recidivism of Juvenile Court involved youth diverted from the Division of Youth Services is the mission of the PIT team. The goal is to develop programming policies and procedures that will live on, withstanding the obstacles that will inevitably come, and incorporating the best of what the community has to offer.



Volunteer Highlight

Every Monday late afternoon there is excitement in the air at GCYA. The questions are predictable and apprehensive. "Are we having Crossroads tonight?" "Have we heard from Samson yet?" One would think that we were planning a night out on the town.

The fact is, Samson Latchinson has been tending to the spiritual needs of the GCYA boys on a volunteer basis for the last decade. Having arranged for the regular use of the facilities of a local church, Samson visits with the boys about their relationship with God. True, they do look forward to the ice cream he personally provides so faithfully,

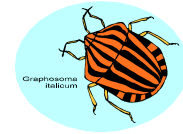
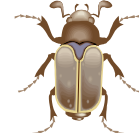
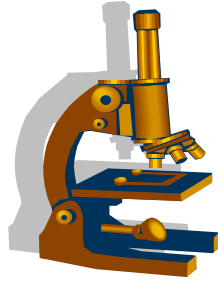
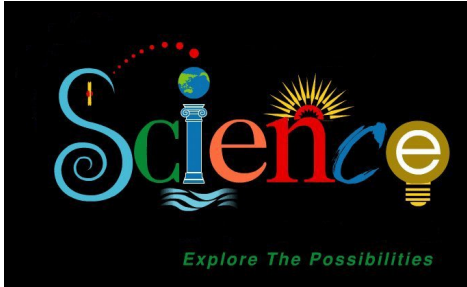


but its more than that. Samson exudes love and acceptance to everyone around him and this draws the boys to him like a magnet. Their listening ears are tuned in when Samson talks to them about what is important in life, that they are now at one of many "crossroads," and how God wants them to experience fulfillment.

It just so happens that Samson played a major role in the development of the GCYA program during its inception. In fact, he was the first Program Coordinator! Samson's service to all the boys at GCYA over the years has been and remains invaluable. One teaching quote used at GCYA is, "fame can come in a moment, but greatness comes with longevity." Samson is truly great!



SCIENCE THE PATHWAYS OF DISCOVERY



Putting The “WOW” Into Education

Thanks to the Turner family “Reading Awards for Excellence in Teaching” and the “Back to School” grant, both administered by the Foundation for Springfield Public Schools, the Greene County Youth Academy residents get to experience science and literacy programs that take their education to the next level.



Barbie Mooneyham, who teaches both at GCYA and at Juvenile Detention, is the recipient of both grants. The Turner grant was awarded in April, 2010 in the amount of \$2,000 and the Back to School grant in September, 2010 in the amount of \$5,280. These

funds provide an out of the seat, interactive, learning experience that demonstrates Scientific principals while enhancing reading and literacy skills. The Science group is an after school curriculum that the youth in detention and at GCYA all benefit from. The biggest benefit might be in discovering that learning can be fun !!!

How can a science group be fun and put the

WOW into education? Mostly through unique and unconventional approaches such as; becoming a geologist, learning about rocks and sediment, and then panning for gold. Another favorite is studying bugs and insects and looking at goldfish through a microscope.



Then there is using litmus paper and learning about phenolphthalein for acid/base day and studying the effects of potassium nitrate in forming precipitates. Most fun of all is manipulating the temperatures of solutions to determine the effects of various chemicals, like sodium chloride, otherwise known as making ice cream!!



EMPLOYEE HIGHLIGHTS



OUR GCYA YOUTH SPECIALIST

Along with all the other changes occurring at the Greene County Youth Academy is the welcome arrival of new staff. There are three new full time Youth Specialists. Jarod Denney and Josh Jones both joined the team in June, followed by Harold Richardson who started in July, 2010. In addition, two part time staff have also come on board. Joe Eldred began in March and Jamie Stage started in July, 2010. The Youth Specialists are responsible for the supervi-



sion of the boys; they implement the rules and expectations while providing feedback and encouragement. They are role models, and each has an assigned boy for whom they provide individual attention or “coaching.” Of course, there is also lots of paperwork and documentation that goes with the job.

A youth specialists is required to have a minimum of 60 college credit hours majoring in sociology, psychology, criminology, education, or a related field. One of the youth specialists is working on a Bachelor degree in Criminology and has well over 60 hours invested. Two of the full time youth specialists have completed their Bachelor degree, and one of the two has started working on a Masters Degree in Criminology. Add to that the fact that the two

part-time youth specialists each has a Bachelor degree, and one of them is also working on a Masters degree, it becomes clear that as a unit these individuals meet a higher standard by exceeding the educational requirements for their positions.

Further, the new Youth Specialists come to their position with experience. Three of the new staff are familiar with working with adolescents. One was a summer intern at the Greene County Juvenile Office and another worked at a Juvenile Office in Missouri as a community service supervisor. A third staff person has extensive history as a case manager for homeless youth. The other two have experience working in the adult system as a jailer and interning for the Greene County Community Alterna-

tive Sentencing Program. It is noteworthy that the new staff are applying what they learned in previous positions, while expanding their experiences to include the lessons and opportunities associated with working at the Greene County Youth Academy.

Training for new staff is offered to assist the newly employed youth specialists continue to be quality youth workers. In addition to a new employee orientation, there is on the job training and in-service training at monthly staff meetings. Further, the youth specialists recently participated in an intensive 5 hour training covering the treatment and documentation processes. In addition, training opportunities are offered by the Division of Youth Services. These training modules include suicide prevention and other relevant topics. The staff who attended this training came back and formally shared what they learn with other staff at meeting presentations.

For any organization to be successful, for the youth at the Greene County Youth Academy to receive the best care, a highly qualified staff is required. It is a pleasure to welcome the five youth specialists highlighted in this issue to the team. .

GCYA Treatment Process: A View from a Provider

For over 15 years I have had the privilege of working with Juveniles involved with the Juvenile Justice System. Starting as a young Juvenile Officer my options for intervention were limited. Not only were the options limited, but society and the Judicial System's outlook on how to intervene were limited. As a society, we have been caught in thinking errors similar to those of the typical offender. Offenders will frequently assert that they had no choice. They had to steal something because they needed it, or they had to hit someone because that person had offended them. Offenders often have difficulty identifying other behavioral options. As a society, we have been thinking that the only choice we have in responding to crime is to get meaner and meaner until we frighten people into behaving as we wish. But that is not the only choice we have for managing behavior, and fear is not the most powerful motivator. We now know from years of research that positive forces are more powerful motivators than negative forces, that relationships shape behavior more than fear. With that being said, I am excited and proud to be a part of GCYA's efforts in applying this knowledge to the way we respond to juveniles who violate the law.

As a counselor I provide individual, family, and group therapy for the residents at GCYA. My approach in therapy is to promote cognitive awareness in hopes of bringing about change, growth and development. One thing I have

learned is that juveniles will have normal physical growth, but sometimes their emotional growth gets off course. I believe this occurs for several reasons related to a young person's life experiences. During their journey in life young people experience a variety of situations, emotions and influences, all of which serve to develop certain internal beliefs about themselves and the world. Their belief system determines their behavior and outlook on life and forms the "lens" through which they view life and respond to everyday situations. Because they are so identified with their beliefs, they do not easily give them up, even the ones that are self-defeating or undermine their happiness. Problems arise in these young men's life when their core beliefs create unwanted conditions such as resentment, anger, guilt, sadness or fear. It is the unwanted conditions that most often bring them to us. GCYA does a great job in allowing these young men to recognize that the source of their problems is their unexamined belief system.

In my group therapy I promote leadership by introducing principles from the book; *Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens*. The goal of the group is to create a paradigm shift and have the young men base their decisions and choices on principles. Principles like honesty, service, love, hard work, respect, gratitude, fairness, integrity, loyalty and responsibility. My job is easy, I attempt to teach

this, but the real work comes from the staff living these principles with the boys in the program. When they really learn is in the environment they are living in at GCYA.

GCYA staff is skilled at separating the behavior from the individual. They confront poor behavior and communicate disapproval, while still holding out a hand to assist the juvenile by designing unique forms of responsibility that fit the particular case and give meaning to the expectations placed on the juvenile. In these processes, staff is using the same skills which characterize good parenting. One question I have asked myself throughout my career is; "is the community stronger after the intervention than it was before the crime happened?" Fifteen years ago I wasn't sure, today, when I think of the juveniles that have been through GCYA, I can honestly say the answer is "yes."

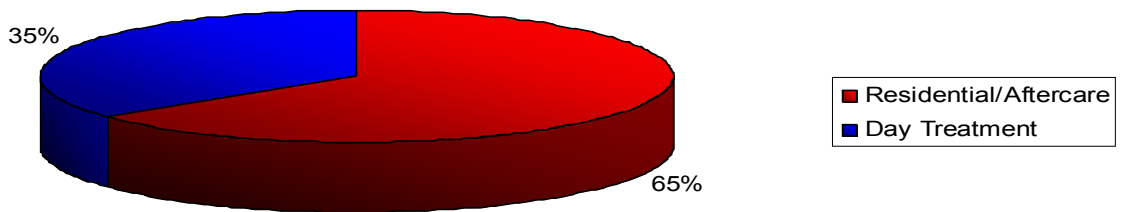
*Bob Fisher M.S., LPC
GCYA Therapist*



INFORMING WITH DATA

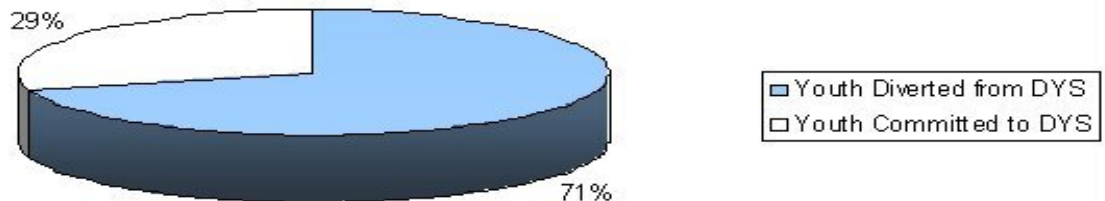
Since the beginning of the program, 348 youth have been served.

Youth Served 7/1/09 to 6/30/10



Fiscal year 7/1/09 to 6/30/10 Greene County Youth Academy served 31 youth. Of those 31 youth, 20 were residential/aftercare boys and 11 were day treatment boys.

Youth Diverted from DYS 7/1/09 to 6/30/10



Of the 31 youth served in fiscal year 2010, 9 boys are still involved with the program and 13 have been diverted from commitment to the Missouri Division of Youth Services.

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INFORMING WITH DATA

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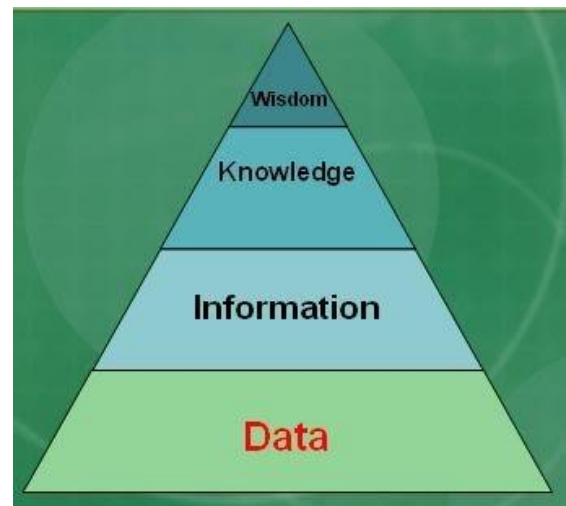


In the September, 2009 newsletter it was reported that the OHIO assessment, which measures change over time, had been initiated. At that time the findings for the five youth who were involved with the program long enough to be assessed on admission and at least one other later time showed that all, or 100%, had measureable improvement. This trend continues in that since September 2009, 100% of the two boys who have completed the program, and the two boys with multiple assessments who are still involved with the program, all have shown improvement as measured by themselves, residential staff and their parent/guardian on the OHIO.

What is significant is that the OHIO is showing that even for youth who don't successfully complete the program, some of them still show measureable improvement. There seems to be support for the theory that ALL youth who enter the GCYA program receive "some benefit" even if they are unsuccessfully released or committed to DYS.

ANOTHER DATA FACT:

Records dating to 6/20/08 reflect a total of 252 urinalysis tests were given to 37 youth to test for substance use. Only 8 youth have tested positive for a substance or 21% tested positive. Of those 8 youth 50% only tested positive once during their time with the program. By comparison, approximately 50% of youth who entered detention, including GCYA residents pre-treatment, tested positive for a substance.



Find us on FACEBOOK

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Greene County Youth Academy The Greene County Youth Academy FACEBOOK page has over 100 followers!! That is special....what else is special about GCYA? Its a community based residential program for Juvenile Court involved boys with a 67% success rate emphasizing positive youth performance, family involvement, and transitional aftercare.



Suggest our page to a friend !!!



Greene County Youth Academy Wednesdays are volleyball game night at the Greene County Youth Academy thanks to A Sporting Chance. Being part of a sports team and engaging in friendly competition is a valuable life experience as recognized by this great not for profit group. Check out their link for more info.



A Sporting Chance

www.asportingchance.net

About USA Sporting Chance is a Not-For-Profit Organization, headquartered in Springfield, MO. A Sporting Chance serves all counties in Missouri and will also allow other athletes from other States to participate in our programs. A Sporting Chance is a 501-(c)(3) organization recognized by the ...



What's happening for Kids



Greene County Youth Academy What's happening for Kids - a weekly post of local, state, and national information and events that GCYA considers relevant to our youth. Keep checking back for more of What's Happening for Kids.



Greene County Youth Academy Without the support of the Missouri Division of Youth Services, the Greene County Youth Academy wouldn't exist. We are so proud of our DYS partner !! For more about the "Missouri model" check our this link http://criminaljustice.change.org/blog/view/missouris_miracle_is_a_model_for_juvenile_justice_reform



Greene County Youth Academy The Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiative is a national juvenile justice reform effort sponsored by the Annie E. Casey foundation. Greene County requested to participate in this initiative and was selected as a JDAI site in 2005. Greene County was one of four Missouri sites selected and now, due in large part to the success of these Missouri sites, the Annie E. Casey foundation is hosting its October, 2010 national inter-site JDAI conference in Kansas City where Missouri's efforts and positive outcomes will be highlighted. For more about JDAI, check out this link.

<http://www.jdaihelpdesk.org/Pages/Default.aspx>



Greene County Youth Academy "Academy Gives Youth a Second Chance" - Ilga Vise explores the opportunities that are available through the Greene County Youth Academy to young people who have broken the law. Click on the KSMU link below to access the radio interview featuring Marie Swope, Detention Superintendent and Director of Residential Services.



Academy Gives Youth a Second Chance
By: Missy Shelton

www.ksmu.org

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Ilga Vise explores the opportunities that are available through the Greene County Youth Academy to young people who have b...

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