



The Connection

Quarterly newsletter from Grayson County Juvenile Alternatives, Inc., dba North Texas Youth Connection

From the Director

Greetings!
Part of my orientation when I began my leadership role at NTYC was the mantra



“Choices, Challenges, Changes.” Pretty simple. That’s the message we try to instill in every youth and family we serve — the importance of making good choices, facing the challenges that are set before us, and embracing change to enable youth and families to develop a positive, healthful lifestyle. This message has been especially important not only to the families we serve, but also to the staff as we move forward in 2006.

For the staff – there have been choices – and each of us has chosen to serve our families to the best of our ability. Challenges come with the territory but it has been exciting to see the staff embrace the challenges before them. And

inevitably, there have been changes – as we continuously examine what we do as an agency – not only what we do well – but what we want to do better – we never stop looking ahead and are always seeking out opportunities that will help us better serve this community.

So, as we begin this New Year of “Choices, Challenges, Changes.” - I want to thank all of our colleagues, our partners, our volunteers, and our donors for your commitment to this agency. Our Community has been especially hard hit with the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina and every non-profit’s struggle for assistance this year. We are honored that you have chosen to share your valuable time and energy with us. I know it sounds cliché but we just wouldn’t be able to do what we do without your commitment to helping all the kids and the families that walks through our doors. I don’t know if you realize what a difference you make – but to us **you make all the difference!** So for all you do – thank you!

Meet this month's featured board member Ken Taylor

Ken is a realtor with Virginia Cook Realtors in Sherman. After graduating from R.L. Turner High School in Carrollton, Ken continued his studies in programming at Eastfield Community College followed by an 18-year career with Fisher Controls in Sherman. He later worked as an area and regional director with Youth for Understanding International Exchange and AFS Intercultural



Programs. He and his wife, Bobbi, also hosted 20 exchange students.

Ken is a member of First Baptist Tom Bean and has served on the Board of Directors for the Rehabilitation Center.

Ken said he chose to serve on the Board of Directors for North Texas Youth Connection because he enjoys working with youth. He had toured the former location several times and really believes in what NTYC is doing for the community. He is impressed by the strength of the organization and the direction it is going, and the strong

Wish List

In addition to cash donations and volunteers, we need the following items:

- Copy paper, 8.5"x11" and 11"x17"
- Office supplies
- Hygiene products (shampoo, soap, deodorant, Kleenex, toilet paper)
- Makeup, hair & nail products
- Tennis shoes, boys & girls, varying sizes
- Dress shoes for special occasions, such as school recitals and dances
- White t-shirts, socks, underwear – both male and female, all teen sizes, NEW only
- Sheets, towels, washcloths - NEW
- Groceries and staples for shelter
- Clothing, boys & girls ages 10-17
- Phone calling cards for shelter youth to call their family long distance
- Appropriate books, videos/DVDs, CDs, Playstation 2 games, board games, puzzles, card games (no mature or R-rated items)
- Gift cards, movie cards, etc., for birthday gifts, good behavior rewards
- Parenting & young children's videos from chosen group (see STAR staff)
- Tickets to sporting events, museums, etc. for shelter youth group trips
- Printing (brochures, annual report, business cards, newsletter, etc.)
- Outdoor equipment; outdoor makeover (flowers, plants, etc.)
- Makeover of front lobby
- Professional mural painted on side of building
- Updated copy of extensive bilingual dictionary – book and computer CD
- Pretty, live potted plants for office and shelter décor
- Central heat & air vents installed in director's office
- New mini-blinds where needed throughout building
- New countertops in shelter kitchen



Participants in the Diversity Conference attempt to communicate in a new way

Congratulations to
Nate Dickinson

Director of Residential Services,
for obtaining designation as a
Licensed Administrator
through the Texas Department
of Family and
Protective Services



Bill Bristow with Grayson County Juvenile Probation speaks to parents, teens and interested members of the community about Teen Violence at our January Community Meeting held at Community Specialty Hospital in Sherman.



Students from the Montessori Academy in Sherman made blankets, held a coat drive and did other projects for youth in the shelter. Shown above are some of the students giving blankets to our staff.

Diversity Conference

Our Bi-Annual Diversity Conference was held Thursday, December 1 at First United Methodist Church in Sherman. Gene Cambridge, Training Coordinator with Rainbow Days, Inc. of Dallas, facilitated the conference. It was a great success with a record number of teens (53) from area high schools. The conference, which had a huge impact on the students, was a free one-day event with breakfast and lunch provided thanks to the generous donations of the following businesses: .

- QT Convenience Stores: sodas, water
- Papa John's Pizza: discounted pizza
- Starbucks: pastries
- ESP Designs: discounted t-shirts
- Texoma Medical Center: wheelchairs
- Resale Barn: wheelchairs & crutches

Out of Diversity grew a Bullying Prevention Workshop

The Outreach Department collaborated with members of the Tom Bean High School FCCLA club who had attended Diversity to develop a two-day workshop held at Tom Bean Elementary School to educate students about the negative effects of bullying. The high school coordinators used concepts and sessions similar to those they had participated in at Diversity.

We received positive feedback from the students, parents, and the community of Tom Bean. The FCCLA members will enter their curriculum at the state FCCLA competition later this month. Hats off to Mrs. Sharon Stevens and the group of students. Read the Herald Democrat article on our website at www.ntxyouthconnection.org/pressroom.htm.

All current and potential Safe Place sites are invited to our Safe Place luncheon on Friday, March 24 11:30-1:30 at NTYC offices, RSVP not required



SafePlace

We received a \$2,000 grant from QuikTrip Convenience Stores for maintaining *Safe Place* sites at QuikTrips in Denton, Lewisville, and The Colony.

In an effort to increase public awareness of Project *Safe Place*, we are sponsoring a *Safe Place* drawing contest for youth grades K-12. We are asking participants to illustrate what "Safe Place" means to them.

Prizes will be given to the top three winners of each grade division (K-5, 6-8, & 9-12), judged on creativity & design. Selected drawings will be used in a coloring book, which will be issued to each school that has students participating, as well as a learning tool when promoting *Safe Place*.

Entry forms are available from our website (www.ntxyouthconnection.org/forms/safeplace.pdf) or our office. Entries are due before 5:00 p.m. Wed. March 15. Winners will be announced during the Safe Place luncheon on Friday, March 24. Participants are not required to be present to win.

Shelter Activities

During December, youth in the shelter over the holidays were able to have small dreams come true on Christmas due to the generosity of CIGNA employees and individuals in the community. Christmas vacation from school saw the youth delivering lunches for elderly Sherman residents through Meals on Wheels, baking cookies for our neighbors, decorating the shelter Christmas tree, painting ornaments and building gingerbread houses.

During the past several months, we have seen an increase in the number of runaway youth, as well as an increase in the number of older youth close to "aging out" of the system. We are planning with the "Continuum of Care" process to possibly address the latter with a Transitional Living Center, which will be a long process requiring financial support from the community. Watch our newsletter and website for more details about this program as it develops.

What Are the Signs that my teen might be thinking about running away from home?

“You’ll be sorry when I run away!” What parent hasn’t heard those words or even said them when they were a teenager? While no one can say for certain which teens will run and which teens won’t, here are some signals for you to look for:

Changes in behaviors or patterns mean something is wrong:

Teens who suddenly stop eating or begin to overeat, sleep all day or never sleep, spend all their time with friends or never want to leave their room. Sudden mood swings mean teens are unsettled and restless. They’re not coping well with stress.

Rebellious behavior is often the start of trouble:

Dropping grades, truancy, breaking rules at home, picking fights with the family are all symptoms that your child is having problems.

Disclosure of intentions to run away:

Some teens will hint that they want to run away and some will outright threaten their family with running. Sometimes their family will hear rumors through friends, school, or other parents that their child is thinking of leaving home.

Accumulation of money and possessions:

To survive, runaways need money and resources. Some runaways prepare for their run by slowly withdrawing cash from their savings accounts. Keeping a bag or backpack of clothes in the closet might mean they are waiting to make a quick escape.

It is important to confront your suspicions right away.

Contact STAR Family Connection at 1-800-568-7776 for help dealing with crisis issues, family conflict, or a teen who is running away. Clearly and calmly let your teen know you are concerned about them and their behavior makes you afraid they might run away from home. Invite them to talk with you or someone else about what is troubling them and be supportive of finding positive ways of dealing with their stress. Let your teen know you don’t want them to run away and you’re committed to helping the family work things out. Give them the phone number of the National Runaway Switchboard (1-800-RUNAWAY) so that they can find safe options while out on their own if they do run. Tell them they can also use the NRS to stay in touch with you if they choose not to stay at home.

Upcoming Events

Friday, March 24

Tour - noon at NTYC offices
Safe Place lunch - 11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. at NTYC offices

Tuesday, March 28

Community Meeting - Where to Go for Help, 5:30 - 7:00 p.m., Community Specialty Hospital

April

Child Abuse Prevention Month

Tuesday, April 25

Community Meeting - Healthy Families and Family Communication, 5:30 p.m., location TBA

Thursday, April 27

Tour - noon at NTYC offices

Friday, May 19

Tour - noon at NTYC offices

Tuesday, May 30

Community Meeting - Internet Safety, 5:30 p.m., location TBA

Planned Giving online calculator available

Confused about the many options available to make a bequest or planned gift to your favorite charity (such as North Texas Youth Connection)? You are not alone. But there is an easier way to determine the tax benefits of some of the differing bequest vehicles.

Now a free website can help make your choice of which giving vehicle to use just a little easier. Go to <http://pcalc.ptec.com/hosts/demo> and you will find two free giving calculators. Staff favorite is the "Compliance NOW" calculator. With this, you can determine an estimate of your charitable contribution deduction. Also, since the IRS requires proof of the steps used in your contribution deduction, this calculator will provide a detailed report you can print to keep on file.

Neither this column nor the recommended website(s) are a substitute for professional opinions - as with anything that affects your taxes or estate, please be sure to consult with a tax or legal professional to clarify your questions and the impact your choice will have.

Want your gift to go to work faster?

Now you can make a donation to North Texas Youth Connection easily and quickly online through the security of industry leader PayPal!

Go to

www.ntxyouthconnection.org/donate_now.htm and click on the

Make a Donation

button.

Thank you to the many business and individuals who have supported our program over the past several months:

Cash Contributions

Cash donations allow us the flexibility to provide the items and services most needed by the youth in our programs at any given time.

American Bank of Texas
Bayless-Hall Insurance
Bobbie Hoenigman
Dorset Foundation
M.R. and E. Hudson Foudnation
United Methodist Women
University of Texas at Dallas
A Christian Fellowship
Dave Long
Dr. Truman Wester
Tom Redwine
Trinity United Methodist Church
QuikTrip Convenience Stores
Texas Department of Protective &
Regulatory Services

United Way
Administration for Children & Families
Emergency Shelter Grant Program

In memory of Joe B. Meade - Dr. and
Mrs. G. R. Stephens, Jr.

In honor of Mrs. G. R. Stephens, Jr.
- estate of Claire Doss Simmons

In-Kind Donations

In-kind donations provide items needed by our office and the youth in our shelter, allowing us to keep cash free for other programs and services.

Arthur Ballard
CIGNA
Deanna Stepken
ECI Texoma
Lisa Engle
Montessori Academy
Rachel Williams
Stormy Brooks
Teresa Ripley
Vicky Penn

Heather Molsbee
Bettye Finnell
Encore Wire
Long John Silver's
Mark Stephens
Red Lobster
Roxie Brannum
Starbucks
Anonymous
DSB Worldwide
Keyport Self Storage
WR Starkey Mortgage
Howe Methodist Church
Julie Johnson
Rosie & Doug Pilcher
Faye Roberson
Dairy Queen
Women's Federation for World Peace
Community Series, Inc.
3-D Entertainment

*If you are interested in providing a donation of goods or services, please view the **Wish List** on our website.*



**P. O. Box 1625
Sherman, TX 75091-1625**