



Prevention Approach to Gang Violence Garden Pathways Comprehensive Mentoring

QUARTERLY REPORT: DECEMBER 2008

Success Stories

Agreement with Garden Pathways Mentoring for the provision of Services and Programs aimed at Combating Gang Violence through Prevention and intervention strategies in accordance with the Gang Violence Prevention Project

These letters were written by adults and youth who participated in Garden Pathways comprehensive mentoring services to prevent gang violence. The names of participants have been changed.

ADULT PARTICIPANTS:

A letter written by “Lana”

I was skeptical about this parenting class. I wasn't sure what to expect; however, I thought, "It won't hurt to give it a try." I have to say that I believe God brought me here. I now realize that **I can make changes** and that **it's never too late to break from negative habits**. I also realized the **power of forgiveness** and that you don't have to wait till someone says "sorry" to forgive. Forgiveness is for "ME." I want to be free!!! I am now more **conscious of my anger** towards my children. I am aware that I have to pick and choose my battles. I also am going to work on my "controlling" behavior mainly towards my kids. I want to help them to become **independent adults** who know and can make their own choices and decisions. I am going to continue practicing the Danny Silk method (tool used in workshop). I have enjoyed my experience and will continue working on myself.

Update on Lana

When Lana came to Garden Pathways she was involved in a very unhealthy relationship. Her eldest son was attending Grizzly Youth Academy (a program structured like a military boarding school for delinquent youth). Since completing the workshop, Lana has continued to attend on-going group mentoring. She has grown. Her self-esteem has improved. Her relationships with her sons have improved. Lana's son completed Grizzly Youth Academy and returned home. He is now influencing her younger son to make positive choices. Lana's husband has become more involved with his faith. Lana meets regularly with her mentor and feels very encouraged and supported by her. Lana is currently applying for jobs.

A letter written by “Pam” (to herself)

When you first came here I remember how reserved you were and how you shut down. You were thinking, "O God, why am I here?" And then...little by little after hearing your classmates share their stories (that were somewhat similar to yours), it started a flood gate to flow (slowly of course), then triggers started to happen, and you didn't quite understand what

was really going on. “Man, do you have a lot of junk in your trunk!!” But don’t you feel better girlfriend! And isn’t it great to know that there is **hope!** And there is someone who **understands** what you’ve been through and can **identify** with your story. Remember, most of all that God is carrying you at this time. God will see you through!!!

Update on Pam

Pam feels encouraged and more at more peace with her life. Her relationships with her family have greatly improved. She is excited about the upcoming year. She is enjoying having a mentor.

A letter written by “Mary”

I am 33 years old. I have 3 kids, ages 15, 13 and 2 ½. I am married. I needed to focus on positive thing for my family who I love a lot. Coming here was amazing. I thought it was an anger management program, but this program was much **deeper**. I was amazed. I was glad to know other people have been there (gone through similar things) and noticed it could have been worse. Coming to this class I learned so much. First I learned I am **worthy** and I have a **purpose in life**. I am learning how to **handle things in my life differently** (for the better). I also learned its okay to **speak out**. I learned **communication tools** to better my life. I also learned about myself and how important **forgiveness** is. I was amazed. Finally reality hit home. I was **happy and overjoyed**. I am so thankful and blessed to come, and these awesome ladies to take their time to give us the **tools I could use with my kids**. I plan to continue this journey.

A letter written by a mentor regarding her mentee “Susan”

Since beginning the program, Susan’s life has been totally transformed and it has impacted the lives of her children, family, and friends. I have observed the following changes:

- From being homeless to having her own home;
- From depression to having hope for the future;
- From jobless to training for a new job;
- From anger and unforgiveness, to peace and restored relationships with her family;
- From poor communication and parenting to a peaceful home and open communication with her children instead of yelling or cursing;
- From children being suspended on a weekly basis to no suspensions and better grades;
- From survival to giving back to the community and helping others at the homeless shelter.

Susan continues to make progress in her life weekly. Susan has been able to release more hurt and pain in her life and is experiencing an increase of joy and freedom. She truly shines.

YOUTH PARTICIPANTS:

A letter written by a mentor regarding his mentee “Frank”

Frank started the program in July 2008. He was referred by the Probation Department because his attendance at school was very bad. They considered him “truant.” Soon after this, I became his mentor. During our mentoring sessions we would discuss the importance of attending school every day on time. We set short range goals: 1) improve upon his anger management and 2) help his grandma around the house. In November, Frank’s probation officer met with us. She was very pleased with the improvements he had made. His **attitude had improved** and his **attendance at school had improved**. She credited the hours he had spent in the mentoring program towards his community service. She explained that if Frank continued to do well that he would not have to come back to court again. As of December, he is **off Probation** and continues to have a **good attitude** and **regularly attends school**.

A letter written by “Al”

I am very grateful for the gifts you brought. You guys and women went out of your way to buy me some clothes. I really needed them. I am very grateful for what you did for me. You helped me get out a lot of stuff that was on my chest for a long time. I am **happy** now. I don’t have to worry about it anymore. I can **forgive** not because I want to get the person out of my face, but because I really care. You ladies and men made me look at everything. You broke it down and made me really realize that I need to straighten up, act right, and move forward in life. Man, when Mr. Castro told me to come to the office I thought I was in trouble or something. But he had a big bag there for me from the coolest adults I have ever met or gotten close enough to. You actually made me feel comfortable and **safe** to let you know how my life was going (from the past to the future). Thank you for everything you have done for me. It made me feel like someone cares about what is going on in young people’s life these days. Thank you for everything.

Excerpts from letters of youth participants

- I realized I am **not alone** and **I can make it through**. If people who have been through worse (guest speaker) and made it, I know that I can make it.
- I feel like I can **do the right thing** now. I know people that **trust** me.
- I learned how to **forgive**. My uncle beat my back with brass knuckles and I had a lot of anger built up inside of me because of that. Now I know how to forgive.
- Even though you have to take two hours out of your day, it’s really good to go (to the workshop). You meet people who **understand** what you’re going through, and it helps you realize you are not going to struggle through it by yourself. I learned that everyone going through the foster care system has gone through the same things.
- You have to **love** yourself.

Observations from parents/guardians or mentors of youth

- less **disciplinary issues**
- able to **communicate** more openly
- doing better in **school**
- **maturing** and developing **character**
- **leaderships skills** are being developed
- **self esteem** and **confidence** has greatly improved
- **relationship skills** have improved
- learned to **respect** themselves and others
- **anger management** skills have improved
- ability to **focus** has improved
- have set **goals** for their lives
- have **hope** and a **future**
- **grades** have improved
- **attitude** has improved
- knows someone **cares**