



**Prevention Approach to Gang Violence**  
**Garden Pathways Comprehensive Mentoring**

**QUARTERLY REPORT: JUNE 2009**  
**Success Stories**

*These stories and letters highlight participants who were referred to Garden Pathways' **Family to Family Mentoring** program for comprehensive mentoring services. Adult and youth participants initially attended a one-week group mentoring workshop and then voluntarily returned for additional group mentoring and/or individual mentoring. The names of participants have been changed.*

**YOUTH**

**Synopsis of reports provided by Rico's mentor**

Rico was referred by his high school to Garden Pathways because he was continually truant and had criminal problems. At the Garden Pathways workshop, Rico revealed that he was currently **in a gang**. He was very angry towards his father because he had no relationship with him. Rico lived with his mother in an apartment complex that was filled with gang members. He was often around them, found acceptance, and joined the gang when he was **eight years old**.

During the mentoring workshop, Rico learned that there were **choices in life** and that **he could choose a different path** other than his current path. He chose to continue with group mentoring sessions that provided encouragement and support and fostered essential life skills. Rico's mentor built a relationship with him that enabled Rico to trust him and look up to him as a father figure. His mentor talked to him about the pros and cons of the gang lifestyle.

At one of the group mentoring sessions, Rico had visible bruises on his body. He revealed that he had decided to leave the gang. Rico had gone through his first beating to be "jumped out." He subsequently endured a second beating to be "jumped out" and he is **now free from the gang lifestyle**.

Rico's natural father began contacting him — desiring to build a relationship. At first, Rico was very angry and wanted nothing to do with his father. His mentor encouraged him to give his father a chance. He did, and they now talk on a regular basis. Rico has moved to a new school. His **attendance and grades have improved**.

Excerpt of a report provided by Cooper's mentor

Cooper was referred to the Garden Pathways program because he was “messing up” at school. The Garden Pathways staff discovered that Cooper had deep anger toward his father and mother who are divorced. Cooper lives with his father and step-mother; however, he really wanted to live with his mother because she is more lenient and allows him to have his own way. Cooper's father, who recognizes his son's impulsive behavior, told him, “Your anger gets you in trouble, which is why I don't let you go out and hang out in the neighborhood.” Cooper was **getting in trouble at school** and had a **rebellious attitude toward authority figures**.

I became Cooper's mentor and started working with him on positive ways to deal with his anger, how to respect others, and how to focus at school. Over the last year and a half, I have seen wonderful changes in his life. His **attitude has improved**. He is **no longer getting in trouble at school**, his **grades have improved**, and he is using school to help him **achieve his goals in life**. Cooper is learning to show more respect toward his step-mother. His father and step-mother have seen great improvements in their son and they are very happy that he is in the mentoring program.

Letter written by Beth's mentor

I have been Beth's mentor for over six months. During that time I have seen a great deal of improvement from her. All of her family has battled drug and alcohol problems at one point in their lives. Some still suffer a great deal due to drug use. Beth's **father passed away from an overdose** when she was just a kid and her **mother continues to battle alcoholism** in her own everyday life. Beth currently lives with her sister despite all of the talk about her moving out to live with her boyfriend's family as soon as she turns 18.

When I first met Beth she was very naive and thought she knew everything. She was **at risk of not graduating high school** because she was struggling with several classes as a result of **lack of discipline and belief in herself**. All of her personal problems at the time made it even harder for her to believe that she could actually accomplish something great in life. Beth didn't know how to do much on her own and always needed the help of someone else to get things done (mainly her boyfriend and sister, who baby her all the time).

It was very difficult trying to get close to Beth because she didn't trust people, and she thought she had everything under control without the help of outsiders. After meeting with her for several months, and offering her my friendship (not my advice or guidance), she slowly started coming around and confessing things to me that she had denied in the past. She once said that she felt like she didn't know much of anything and needed the help of someone at all times to get things done. Beth's **biggest fear** in life was to grow up to be **just like her mother – unemployed, alcoholic, poor, uneducated, dependent** on others, and **miserable**.

Beth has recently opened up to me significantly and comes to me for advice for almost

everything. Through this program, I have seen Beth change from a young girl to a **strong woman that knows what she wants in life** and has **great aspirations**. She has **graduated from high school** and has obtained her driver's license. For the first time she is **actively looking for a job**. She is **starting Bakersfield College** in the fall.

I foresee great things for Beth in the future and I am a true believer in the mentoring program at Garden Pathways. I have personally grown and learned so much from it and have gained life experiences to use in the future for myself and in my own career. Without the program, Beth and I would not be where we are now. Thank you, Garden Pathways.

## ADULT

### Letter written by LaKeisha's mentor

Stay Focused referred LaKeisha to the Garden Pathways' Family to Family Mentoring program in November of 2008. She came with a negative attitude and had **no hope** of moving forward in life in a positive manner. LaKeisha had a history of **dysfunctional romantic relationships**. Her four children, ages 16, 14, 10, and 6, have three different fathers, one of whom is serving time in prison for gang-related activities in Kern County. LaKeisha was living in a two-bedroom house with her grandmother, her children and cousins, in an area known for gang activity. Her **son** was being **influenced to join the local gang**.

LaKeisha attended the group mentoring workshop and received **hope** and tools to move forward. She realized that she had a lot of negativity and was holding a great deal of **anger** towards her mother. She had **unmet expectations** of her father which led her to become involved in dysfunctional relationships. LaKeisha gained knowledge of how to work through her anger and begin to **forgive** those that had so deeply wounded her. I began to meet with her after she completed the initial workshop.

Now (eight months later) LaKeisha has moved into her own three-bedroom apartment in an area that is safe for her family. She has been blessed with furnishings and beds for her children. She is **positive about moving forward** and wanting a better life for herself and her children. LaKeisha's next **goal** is to be a **better mom** and a **good role model for her children**. She continues to attend group mentoring sessions and she is faithful to meet with me on a regular basis. She is currently working on her **reading and math skills** to prepare her to attend the Bakersfield Adult School to obtain her **GED**.

LaKeisha's **son** (whose father is in prison) has joined the Garden Pathways youth mentoring program. He is positive and **motivated to reach his goals**. He has been **getting good grades**. He is trying out for the school football team and is also speaking positively into a best friend's life that came from their old neighborhood.

**Letter written by Marta to herself after completing the initial workshop**

I have learned many different abilities to help better my future. This class has been an emotional roller coaster for me. I have been dealing with emotions that I had struggled with for ten years. I was able to release those frustrations by crying and letting them go.

I learned to know that I am on the right path. I learned that it is okay to talk to people about my problems. I learned that the past is the past and I can **move on with my life**. I don't have to feel like everything is my fault. I can be happy and have a normal enjoyable life. I learned a little more about who I am and how much **strength and beauty** I have. I can be a princess just like my father said I was. Rethinking the way you think is okay. I have been on the right track, so now I will continue to **look for work, build my family**, and speak to others about life. I am **valuable** to myself and I have to take care of myself and treat myself with love.

*Garden Pathways extends thanks to the County of Kern, Kern County Department of Human Services, mentors, donors, and other supporters for partnering to transform lives and to transform our community.*