



Prevention Approach to Gang Violence
Garden Pathways Comprehensive Mentoring

QUARTERLY REPORT: JUNE 2010
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

Lee *Written by his sister (began the program a year and half ago)*

Hi my name is Gina and I wanted to write this letter to thank everyone at Garden Pathways. I wanted to thank all of you because you have made such a tremendous change in my brother's life. My brother's name is Lee and he started attending the program in October of 2008. When Lee started your program he was a boy that didn't know what he wanted. He was **fascinated** by **gangs** and other things that were not good for him. Since he started the program I have seen him grow into a **responsible** intelligent young man. He now thinks about his **future** and wants to **make something of himself**; he now has a **career** in mind. My parents and I thought we were going to **lose him to a gang**, but thankfully we found your program just in time to **save** him. My parents and I cannot thank you enough for what your program is doing for us. Keep up the good work and may God bless all of you.

Update (June 2010)

This letter is to update the Garden Pathways team of my brother's **ongoing success**. My brother Lee is now a **high school graduate**. He graduated from West High School and I am proud to say he was a recipient of **two scholarships**. With a lot of hard work and perseverance he has now been **accepted to CSUB**, where he is currently attending the summer bridge program. Through all of this he has also managed to maintain a **part-time job** at a local restaurant. Did I mention he saved up for a car too? He purchased a car this month. As I am writing this letter, I realize all the **great accomplishments** he has made and how grateful I feel for your mentoring teams help. We would have never done this on our own.

I also want to give a big thank you to Bob (Lee's mentor). He has been a **big influence** in his life. He has gone above and beyond to help my brother. Bob is **always there** when Lee needs him. Once again thanks Bob!

What else can I say, except for thank you to Garden Pathways for all your great help. I hope some day my family and I can find a way to thank your awesome team.

Wesley Update (began program in 2008)

In March 2008, at the age of 16, Wesley was living in a group home and started attending the Garden Pathways Family to Family Mentoring program. He had a variety of issues including substance abuse, trouble at school, behavior problems, and was on juvenile probation. After completing the one week youth mentoring workshop, he was matched with a one-on-one mentor. Wesley's progress was up and down. He tested dirty (for drugs) and was placed in Camp Owens at the end of 2009. Wesley was in a difficult situation and was now facing more challenges because he did not have any family support and would turn 18 years old before his release date from Camp Owens. He would not be allowed to return to the group home and would be homeless upon release. At that point, his mentor became more and more important in his life.

His mentor was able to secure permission to visit him at Camp Owens and continued to encourage him and offer hope for the future. Because Wesley had someone in his life that cared for him and was willing to stay in his life during good times and bad, he was released from Camp Owens with support in a place to go forward in his life. Wesley has now been out of Camp Owens for two months and has remained clean from drugs. He has accomplished simple things in his life to help him go forward — **obtained his birth certificate, social security card, and California ID card** and has applied for and been **approved for the ACT program** (Adolescent Career Transition, a program that assists current and former foster youth with employment. It provides life skills training and paid work experience opportunities necessary to prepare for a successful future). Wesley now has **hope for the future** and is on the right track. **Mentoring has changed this young man's life.** Without it, he would probably be **on the streets** right now.

Daniel Written by his mentor (began program five months ago)

Daniel came to Garden Pathways looking for a hand with getting back on the right path of life. Coming from a **dysfunctional family** and having **been in trouble himself**, he was **ready to change**. To those who don't know Daniel, he seems like a quiet, shy, seventeen year old; out in the world like any other ordinary teenager.

In the past few months that he has spent here at Family to Family Mentoring, we have grown to learn that Daniel is not like any ordinary teenager in the real world. Give him your trust and friendship and you come to find out that he is a well mannered young man who has grown up in the wrong environment and around the wrong people. His parents

are divorced; he is living at home with his mom, older sister and younger brother. He has had a few altercations with “friends” of his sister. These altercations led to something bigger, forcing his mom to move to a different neighborhood to avoid future problems. Daniel is **attending high school** and continues to be faithful to the mentoring program here at Garden Pathways. He and his sister attend ongoing mentoring every Tuesday.

I became his mentor and am working with him to help him get back on track. He expressed to me “I’m tired of living like this and hurting my parents, that’s why I want to change.” Together we have **set goals for his future**. I have seen him **mature** and become **more responsible to pursue his goals**. He is committed to doing his school work so that he can graduate from high school this year. He is pursuing his driver’s license when he turns eighteen (in six months), and he is filling out the financial aid paperwork so that he can enroll in community college this fall. **He wants to be a good role model** for his fifteen year old brother. He sees that he is in danger of going down the wrong path (like he did). He is really **encouraging his brother** to get involved in the youth mentoring program so he can be **surrounded by encouraging people**.

Update by Daniel (June 2010)

Before I came to Garden Pathways my life was kind of crappy. I was messing up in school, and getting bad grades. I was getting in trouble because I was doing dumb stuff (drugs) and I got caught doing drugs and stealing, so they locked me up (juvenile hall). When I was released, I was placed on probation, had to pay fines to be able to get off probation, and had to attend community school (Blanton Academy). I was referred to the Garden Pathways Family to Family Mentoring program. I started the program and I learned how to keep my **self-esteem higher** and to have more **respect for myself and everyone else**. I keep going back for group mentoring life-skills sessions because it helps me a lot. It got me thinking about life. I found new friends, who wanted change for themselves as well. This helped keep me away from my old friends. I think the staff is cool because they **listen** to what I have to say and I like being around them. **My life has changed** a lot since I started the program. I was able to go back to Foothill High School, I got more involved, my **grades went up**, and I **graduated** in June this year. I learned how to put a resume together and I started looking for a job. My **goals** for the future are to get my driver’s license, save money to buy a car, and go to college or enlist in the Army. If I go to college I want to get a degree that would allow me to go into the field of **child psychiatry**.

Sam Golden Valley High School (Quarterly report – Dec 2009)

Sam (who had been adopted and then his adoptive parents went to prison for inappropriate behaviors; requiring that he be shuffled to another foster home) expressed that **everything had changed for him**. When he started the program he was in the opportunity class for skipping school and making wise cracks a lot. The mentors saw that

he had a soft heart and realized he needed to know that **adults really do care**. He didn't feel like he had a family. He didn't know who he could trust, or if his foster parents were really going to keep him, and if he would get moved again. During one mentoring session he came in downcast and one of the mentors asked him, "Do you need a hug?" "How long has it been since you had a hug?" The young man replied, "I can't remember." **The mentor reached out and gave him a huge bear hug and the youth's face filled with a smile. He didn't let go for a long time.** Over a period of time, he came to trust **that the mentors really cared about him**. He also **built a better relationship with his foster parents. He did better in school and was able to mainstream from opportunity class to regular classes.** He continues to attend weekly mentoring sessions. He is more mature, happier, and focused on building a positive future.

Update on Sam (started program in 2008)

I met Sam at Golden Valley High School in 2008. He was in the opportunity class. As we got to know Sam, he revealed that he was adopted when he was two-years old; during that time he was physically abused by his foster parents. He was placed in another foster home, where he has been doing good. When school started this year, his grades were up so he was put into **regular (mainstream) classes and did well**. In April 2010, Sam was very excited because he was told that he could go live with his biological uncle. Then the bad news came. He found out that his uncle's son was on probation, and he could not go and live with him. He was very upset about the situation; however, it was revealed to him that he had biological siblings that he had never met. He shared with our mentoring group that he got to meet his sister at the local park. They told him his natural mother was alive and that she lived in Bakersfield. He said he was speechless. All those years he had been told that his parents were dead. He said he was very afraid to meet his mother. He had many questions he wanted to ask, but was afraid that if he asked the wrong one, she might leave and he would never see her again. Sam's biological sisters revealed his "real" name to him. He was blown away. How crazy is it to find out that you have a family and a different name. He feels that his whole world is changing quickly. The great thing about this situation is that because Sam has had a **relationship** with the Garden Pathways mentoring staff and other students in the mentoring program, he **trusted** all of us enough to share about his life. He wanted to know our advice. He trusted us to **give support and encouragement** to him. We will continue to care for, guide, and encourage him in this process.

Crissy Update (started program in 2008)

Crissy entered Garden Pathways program while in junior high school in 2008. Crissy is being raised by her grandmother. Both of her parents struggle with substance abuse. After attending the ongoing group mentoring sessions, Crissy requested a mentor. Her mentors reported that they get along well and enjoy spending time together, but she was

unsure whether or not the advice she was giving her was impacting her life. Crissy appeared not to be focused on the future, but just a moment of happiness. This month that changed. Crissy called her mentor — she was very motivated and started asking about **college, grants**, and ways to become **self sufficient** in the future. Her mentor said, “I didn’t think Crissy was listening, but she was.” As Crissy enters into her sophomore year of high school, she is now more **focused** and **goal driven** with the **hope** of being the **first person in her family to go to college**.

ADULT

Lila *(began program in 2008)*

Prior to me starting the workshops with Family to Family Mentoring, I was searching for change. I **wanted more** out of life and I was tired of **feeling hopeless** in my situation. My life appeared to be "ok" from the outside looking in. My husband and I owned our own home, I was really involved in my children's lives, and we were doing okay financially. However, I was broken and torn on the inside, my marriage was in a bad condition, it was unhealthy and it no longer was just affecting me and my husband. My children's lives were being affected by the dysfunction of our home. Their grades were being affected at school they were becoming angry and disrespectful. I was **tired** of the **destructive cycle** and was **searching for change**.

One day while I was at a youth rally, I saw a booth that promoted “parenting classes.” At the time, my oldest son was in a youth program (Grizzly Youth Academy) and I thought it would be worth a try to look into this, since I knew that it needed to be a family effort if true change was going to take place. What I learned in the workshops was that **change was possible** but that I needed to start with myself. We focused on **career, parenting, education, anger management, and setting boundaries**. I felt very comfortable sharing with the staff at Family to Family, I felt **loved** and **accepted** by all the staff. They’re genuinely passionate about helping others.

I began to realize that I didn’t have to live that way and that I had a choice. I feel that I **empowered myself with truth** and that **motivated me to want to change my situation**. The staff at Family to Family planted a seed in me that was preparing me for the life God has called me to live. I felt as though **life was being spoken into me** and **hope was being birthed in me in a whole new way**.

After the completion of the workshops, I was **matched up with a mentor**. My mentor is an awesome woman who is not only my mentor but my friend. I have learned that we all need someone to **direct us** and **push us** and that everyone of us is called to mentor, push, direct, motivate and/or disciple someone. I was able to **move forward** by what was being instilled in me and by the motivation and inspiration of my mentor and Family to Family staff.

My children and I have come a long way. We may not be exactly where we want to be, but we are definitely not where we used to be. I'm currently **working full-time**, my two sons **graduated from high school** this year and one of them will be **starting classes at Cal State Bakersfield**. I have learned through the years that **change is a process** and that it takes time but you will see the fruit of your labor if you just push yourself and stay in the process.

Teri

I felt very blessed to start this group. It's been a long time since I've done anything for myself, and I believe that God has this time for me to gather some really **good tools** for me to be a better child in Christ, wife, mother and granny. For instance, on Tuesday, I went home, I prayed and then **addressed the toxic relationship** with my daughter and **set a boundary**. I was nervous but I made it through it. Thank you Annette, I am looking forward to attending next week's class as well. Thank you all so much.

Dena

When I first arrived I had low self esteem. This class has **helped me to recognize some good qualities in myself**. Also, I gained some **tools** to share with the people I am letting live in my home. I now realize that I am crazy (working through internal issues) but it's ok. I'm not the only one (everyone has issues).

Dan

I have learned how to recognize different behaviors in communication, **how to become a better friend or boyfriend**. By watching the role play (skit), I see what my family role is. I now recognize why they (my family) or me acted the way we did. Thank you

Robert

I have improved in my **communication** skills. I have hope to use the tools I learned to better my life. I used to not talk much, but now **I feel more confident** to talk about how I feel and my needs. I feel **better** about myself. I almost didn't show up the first day. I am glad I came.

Annie

Thank you for your efforts and resources to assist me in becoming a **healthier and emotionally rounded person**. I am often not the easiest person to get along with, but I felt you engaged me in the process and at times over looked my negativity. Your efforts

at educating me in what makes a **healthy person** which then expands to include our families and other individuals that may cross our path. You have inspired me to **become accountable for my actions** and **what those actions are bringing into my life**.

Carrie

Thank you so much for having these seminars and giving us your time. I have a **better feeling about myself** and in my **life's quality**. I have a reason to be excited in the morning. My peers are just beautiful people. I think we all were enriching to each others lives. I liked being around everyone, I felt **safe**. Annette, Tami and Holly were fantastic with us. I'm a very solitary person but I have **opened up a lot** and **it feels good**.

Sharon

First of all thank you for this class; I have learned to have **confidence in my self** for the first time in my life. The class showed me that no one in this world is better than me and it gave me tools I can use in my life. Lastly, the **tools have changed me**. My **children see that change** and they are so **proud of me** and nothing can change that feeling.

Janae

My experience here over the last week has helped me a lot in many different areas: **communication skills, understanding my family role, and understanding my toxic relationships** with my ex-boyfriend and how to **better myself** with relationships with boyfriends.

Linda Update (began program in May 2010)

Linda arrived at Garden Pathways homeless, stressed, and concerned about caring for her eight-year old daughter. After completing the workshop in May, she was matched with a mentor. Her mentor reports that in a very short period of time, Linda has made positive improvements in her life. She now has a **stable place to live** and has **enrolled in school**. Linda has **hope for the future**.

Maria Update (began program in 2008)

It's been eighteen months since Maria, mother of five children, transitioned from the homeless shelter into a home with her children. Due to previous substance abuse, her relationship with her children and extended family was damaged. During the past eighteen months, Maria has **grown as an individual and mother**. She has developed **new coping skills** (not returning to substance abuse) and **improved relationships** with family. She is now **employed** and working on her **GED**. Maria has **hope** for the future!

Shanae *Written by her mentor*

I have been mentoring Shanae since March 2010. My mentee and I have a friendship relationship which feeds me also. I like that we share the responsibilities and hurts, happy moments and growth realities without judgment taken or the interpretation of lording. I am pleased to have made this friend and I love her. We pray together and with her children. I pray for her independently. Since Shanae started the mentoring program, she has enrolled in the **GED night courses** at **Bakersfield Adult School**. She wants to complete the school's four-week course, and then she will begin searching for a job again. She lives with her grandparents and has support from her ex-husband.

I am going to show her how to apply at Vons, Albertsons, etc. We are visiting churches that she can access for herself and her children out of her neighborhood.

We generally meet on Saturdays, take a small lunch to the park, her children play and she and I talk and construct. She is sincere about her wishes to live differently than her family and **wants her children to have an educated and quality life**. She knows this is achieved only by her desire and ability.

I am certain my mentee has **grown** based upon her **steps, attitude, and level of happiness**. I am convinced, as is she, that Christ has a plan for her and she can overcome all her challenges. Thank you for this miraculous opportunity. We move slowly and quickly, but we never stop.