



Prevention Approach to Gang Violence
Garden Pathways Comprehensive Mentoring
QUARTERLY REPORT: SEPTEMBER 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

Information given by Andre's mentor to Family to Family Mentoring regarding his mentee

I was matched with Andre after he completed the mentoring workshop. I have been working with Andre for three months and find him a likeable and friendly young man. Unfortunately, he has had a difficult past that interferes with his present. **He can read not much more than third grade level.** He is limited by his lack of phonics training and gets embarrassed and frustrated with his inability to read complete sentences. Andre's family history has left some deep scars regarding authority. He acted out a great deal to compensate for his reading deficiencies. This got him in trouble often.

The two things I have been working on with him are reading and dealing with authority. There is a team of three people meeting with him weekly to help improve his reading level. **Andre has improved his reading just by doing more of it.** Andre seems excited about the help he is getting, as he truly wants to be able to read. We have met with his Probation officer to develop a plan to help Andre understand what he needs to do to get off probation. Andre now knows that he needs to stay away from drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and girls. Our relationship is continuing to develop. **He has confided in me, trusts me, and I believe that he listens to me.**

Recently Andre attended a group mentoring life skills session and his **whole demeanor had changed.** You could tell he was feeling really good about the changes in his life and **that his self-esteem has improved.**

Information given by David's mentor to Family to Family Mentoring regarding his mentee

David was in the opportunity class at Golden Valley High School. The opportunity class is where kids who are in trouble and on the verge of getting kicked out of school are sent. It is also

the same place where kids who were attending continuation schools are placed when they transition back to mainstream high schools. Garden Pathways hosts weekly group mentoring sessions on campus for some of these students. **David was very open with the group and expressed that he had been going down the wrong path in life and he knew if he didn't get his life together soon he would end up on drugs or in prison.** He was very behind in his credits to graduate high school. **The mentoring group shared often about the power of "choices" and that each of the students was made for greatness.** One day David shared that he wanted to change and that he knew he had to get out of his environment. The mentoring staff discussed this with Project 180 partners and encouraged David to enroll at the Grizzly Youth Academy (a 5 ½ month military structured program for delinquent youth located in San Luis Obispo County). He will earn fifty-five (55) credits towards high school graduation during this period. **David began the program in July and is doing great!!** He sent a letter to his mentor a week after starting the program (in his own words).

"Dear Calvin, I just want to say hi and to tell you how I am doing here at the academy. It has been alright this first two days and I just been trying to learn most of things that we have to learn and trust me it's a lot. Well I just want to say that I love it here and I believe that this school is going to help me a lot. Sorry that my letter is not so good and that righting is not so good but I going to get better [sic]. I can't wait to see you. Your mentee, David"

Update – September 2009

David's mentor went to visit him at Grizzly Academy last weekend. He is doing very well. The structured environment has really helped bring focus to his life and he now has a positive attitude towards his future.

Update on Robert (original excerpt from June 2008 Quarterly report)

Robert, a seventeen-year old youth, grew up in a hard-core, gang-infested area of Long Beach. He was placed in foster care in Bakersfield two years ago. Garden Pathways was told that Robert has severe ADD, reading disabilities, and other challenges, and that he might not do well in the group sessions; however, he "needed" the group due to his family ties.

Garden Pathways staff chose to focus on finding the "hidden gold" in Robert. Robert was a delight to have in the group mentoring sessions. He openly expressed how much he had begun to change. *"I want to have a future that is different from everyone else in my family."* Upon learning that his goal was to get into the Air Force and become a pilot, Garden Pathways matched Robert with a mentor who is a retired pilot. Robert's foster mother has conveyed her tremendous gratitude for the program and the powerful impact it has made on her son. His mentor indicates, *"Robert now understands the importance of improving his grades. He is very engaged in all of the information he has received about aviation and continues to work toward his goal of joining the Air Force."*

Update – September 2009

Robert graduated from West High School in June 2009. He was accepted at Long Beach City College, Aviation Mechanical program with potential to continue pilot training. His mentor writes” I believe that Garden Pathways (Family to Family Mentoring) can be proud of our mentee continuing his education and will become a **productive member of society. This has been a very rewarding experience for me!”**

ADULT

Letter written to Family to Family Mentoring regarding her mentee (Melissa)

Melissa and her family arrived in Bakersfield in April 2009, homeless, no money and in search of a new life. She had previously moved from Florida to Michigan with the promise of employment, but it didn’t work out. Melissa and her family settled in at the Bethany Homeless Center and began the process of rebuilding their lives. It was at this point she was referred to Garden Pathways.

Melissa arrived at Garden Pathways with a very quiet demeanor and a reserved, gentle smile. Her face showed the hard times her family had endured and she reminded me of someone that could have arrived at Sunset Camp during the Dust Bowl Days. She didn’t say much, but one could tell that she was willing to endure hardship and do whatever was needed. After she completed the workshop at Garden Pathways, she was placed with a mentor.

After the workshop, **Melissa quickly started school to get her GED and is scheduled to take her test very soon. After her GED, she plans to take the CNA test and begin employment.** Her mentor stated “I have found Melissa to be a very quiet and hard working little lady, with her goals constantly in sight.” The family has really pulled together. Her son is also working on his GED and will soon begin employment at the biggest hotel at Yosemite National Park. Her daughter enrolled at East High School and is doing well. She is very sweet and always considerate of everyone around her, deferring to the needs or wants of others.

Melissa’s smile has gone from reserved to very joyful. She is more outgoing and full of hope. She recently received a voucher for housing and will soon be transitioning into her own home. In five short months this family’s life has begun to completely change.

Her mentor writes “Because of their work ethic and determination, I have high hopes for this family to have their own home soon and for all of them to be very productive part of our community. I am blessed to know them.”

A letter written by Eva to Family to Family Mentoring after completing the workshop

When starting Family to Family Mentoring I was very nervous. **I was closed off from everyone and everything.** I wasn’t sure how I was supposed to act or react to things. Being here has been very intense. I have been on an emotional roller coaster. I see a lot more than I ever have. I have

a lot more emotions than I ever knew existed. **I have been given tools in self esteem and communication that are making me grow and helping me.** The tools help me recognize the problem and help me fix it. I see patterns now. I realize that it will take time to fix the problems but now I am on the right path to do it. Thank you to the mentoring program and to the instructors for helping me to **see how things could be different for me and my family.** To see how different my relationships could be.

A letter written by Chuck to Family to Family Mentoring after completing the workshop

Everything that I learned, I am going to apply to my life. I learned to open up and share how I feel. **I have decided to go back to school and learn to read and write.** I feel like people listen to me more. I feel more confident. I recommend this class to anyone.

A letter written by Jose to Family to Family Mentoring after completing the workshop

The past two weeks I learned how to control my anger. I can communicate a lot better. **I am a man who is choosing to accomplish my goals to stop using drugs and stop hanging out with (negative) friends. Stop being a bad person and I chose to go back to school to get my diploma and get a good job so that I am able to take care of my future wife Sandra.**

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.