



Prevention Approach to Gang Violence
Garden Pathways Comprehensive Mentoring
QUARTERLY REPORT: SEPTEMBER 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 participants initially attended a two-week group mentoring workshop 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

Daniel *(began the program 7 months ago)*

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 and I got caught doing drugs and stealing, so they locked me up.” After five months of mentoring Daniel wrote, “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 me 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 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.

Observations from South High School, Community Counselor, Ellis Porter

I have been hearing wonderful feedback from the students in the Garden Pathways mentoring program held on the South High School campus. The students indicate that they wish that all of their classes could be like the Garden Pathways mentoring group. They shared that they feel that the mentors (group facilitators) are different. They are more open and not judgmental. The students indicate they feel a level of comfort and trust and that is why they choose to open up about themselves, their issues, and the difficult situations they are in. I have had other students (not currently in your program) asking me how they can

get into the Garden Pathways mentoring group because they are hearing so many good things about it. Thank you for being on campus and for keeping the students engaged.

Lee (began the program in 2008) *Written by his sister*

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 (Quarterly Report: June 2010)

Lee has continued to show ongoing success since starting the program. He continued to meet faithfully with his mentor, and attend activities at Garden Pathways. He graduated from West High School, received two scholarships (one scholarship was from our Project 180 partner, Stop the Violence. Lee went through the summer bridge program at Cal State Bakersfield, purchased a car, and is now a full time student at CSUB.

Update written by Lee to Garden Pathways and Stop the Violence (September 2010)

There aren't many organizations like Stop the Violence or Garden Pathways to **help young teens stay out of gangs or straighten up their lives**. I am very thankful for being able to be a part of these programs. I thank you guys for the opportunity you gave me to go to college by awarding me with a \$500 scholarship. As I shared with you in my scholarship application, I want to major in criminal justice. I'm still staying strong with my major. I'm trying to get involved at the moment with the BPD (Bakersfield Police Department) explorer program. I want to start associating with everything that has to do with stopping crime. I want to learn the steps it takes to become an officer. One day, **I want to give back to the community that helped me through my teenage years**. I had to go through some tough times, but **I made it out of high school and became a new person because of my family support and great mentors**. I will never have the words to thank everyone at Garden Pathways for the guidance and skills they have given me. I really don't know where I would be without my family and local organizations like Garden Pathways.

I'm sorry I haven't been going to the ongoing life skills sessions on Tuesdays. College is not the same as high school. We have more responsibilities. I enjoy the college life except for finding parking. I have been meeting up with Bob [*his mentor*], we work with each others time schedule, so we can meet up. Life is great! I finally turned 18. I feel old now, especially when I visit the mentoring group at Garden Pathways. They all look so young

that I feel old. I put myself in their shoes when I started. I was young; you guys have seen me grow through my high school years. Hopefully; you will see the next four to five years in college. Just because I haven't been going to class doesn't mean I have forgotten about you guys. I will never forget you guys. You guys are my **second family**. You **helped me through hard times**. So in the future, I hope to mentor through an organization like Garden Pathways and I hope a young teen tells me the same thing. I hope to work with you guys if Garden Pathways is still available to the young teens in the future. Then I can do what you guys did for me. One day I will help a young teen like me, there is no doubt about that. A chapter just ended, and another chapter named "college life" just began. Thank you to everyone at Garden Pathways.

Observations from a recent youth enrichment activity

"I wish we could do more of this, and GOOD FOR OTHERS, rather than hearing all the bad," reflected 17-year old Devin on his experience at FLOOD BAKERSFIELD'S SHOE CELEBRATION. Devin joined Garden Pathways youth mentees who served as PERSONAL SHOPPERS for over 150 guests at Flood's pre-distribution of shoes. The teens discovered great joy in escorting Flood guests (those that are homeless, living in recovery homes, or are low-income families) to find "the perfect pair of shoes" among 3,300 pairs donated by our community.

ADULT

Peter

(Week 1)

I want to thank you for taking this time out to get to know me better. This week I found out how much I still have not got it together, and that is good. I need to be here. I need to know that help is still available. It is nice to know that these classes will give me **opportunity to continue to grow**. The class seemed out of place, but in reality I am in the right place. I am going to use this time and see what I can get out of this.

(Week 2)

I am so grateful for Family to Family Mentoring. It's been so beneficial in helping me get back on the **positive side** of being challenged in life. I'm not trying to be all spiritual yet, I am a firm believer that all things are possible with Christ, and I have him in my life. Every class had its effect on me, but the biggest class was "boundaries." This class gave me the **permission to step back in certain areas of my life**. I'm a doer, a servant, and so I know to treat all (people) equal. However, I need to recognize this need and purpose in my life. It's ok to separate myself (to spend time valuing myself) and know that this result is healthier than, the old belief and need that I had to serve everyone. One day, I left group, ran into an old friend **who asked me to get high** and I let him know that **I'm done with that** and can't walk like that. I thank the gift of God's grace to influence me to be a bold.

Molly

(Week 1)

Well, I really would like to say more but I'm not good at writing letters. Over the last week I learned a lot about **boundaries, toxic relationships, and healthy ones**. I'm going to set boundaries as far as toxic relationship and healthy one. It's been a mindset for me and I'm learning. I really like the communication class.

(Week 2)

I learned a lot, this program changed my life a lot. I always have been a person that was not that good with words, but this program **helped me to communicate** very well and just **put my fear to communicate to shame**. I learned a lot about anger and how to deal with it in a positive way. My dream is that my husband and I will do that (deal with anger) all the time and we will talk about it. With the Lord's helps we will put it into motion. I'm going to miss you guys. I thank God for all you.

Sally

(Week 1)

I've found this last week to be **very informative and enlightening**. I've also found I am **headed in to the correct direction** for what I'm looking for in my life. These people's interactions have been really great and I'm looking forward to next week.

(Week 2)

Thank you very much for these last two weeks. I learned and affirmed skills as far as dealing with myself and others. I learned how emotional "baggage" affects my actions and reactions, for me and others. I've learned how important it is to **set and keep boundaries**. I've enjoyed your entire staff and felt comfortable with everyone.

Dena

(Week1)

I thought I was going to be bored and would just go along with the program. My curiosity was peaked and I was scared of people knowing my stuff, all that has changed. I feel like this group is an **extended family of mine**. I've learned to set some boundaries and they have already been tested, but I held my ground and that felt good. I see how the negative talk has made an impact on my behavior, and my way of thinking. I try to stay away from the negative talk or turn it to positive. Building my self esteem and explaining myself a little more precisely has helped me with my daughter. I find that **I don't yell** like I used to and having a **positive outlook** and a way of thinking, this has reduced the control issue I have with my daughter. We are **getting along a lot better**.

(Week 2)

This experience has **changed my way of thinking**. I'm **more positive**, my **self esteem** is a **little higher**. I need to be around more positive people to stay on track. When I'm in a

challenge is when I find myself getting irritated. I talk myself out of it, find a way out of it, or try to. I've found myself walking away when before I would have tried to control it. Those two weeks have really opened my eyes and I wish we didn't have to end.

Cynthia

(Week 1)

My perception of what the program was going to be was different, but what I have found is that this was God's blessing for me. **I feel better already.** I would like to **go back to school to help in programs.**

(Week 2)

I was very **broken** emotionally and I feel that my instructors and the others in the workshop have helped me to be **grounded**. I feel that I can call and truly be part of the family God has just blessed me with. I thank God for FLOOD, for directing me here (to Garden Pathways). I needed the **"me" time**, to help me.

Sheila

I'd first like to say thank you for letting me return to finish this course [*she wasn't able to finish the 2nd week of classes*]. The group was smaller, the subject matter was excellent, the teachers are excellent of course, and the discussions and feedback were so helpful. Some of the subjects reminded me of what I've learned before and some were completely new. Thoughts and ideas have again **"nudged" me into action**. I was especially influenced by the class on **forgiveness** and I realize this is an **important issue for me to work on**. Thank you again and again for providing this **opportunity for growth and change**.

Shae

I have had a wonderful experience at Family to Family Mentoring center. It helped me to realize that sharing with others about my issues and struggles is valued. **I am challenged to change how I communicate with others in our community and family.** I have learned more on how to deal with my emotions, perceptions and noticed some habits that may hurt me. Thank you all for the love.

Lacy

My experience here at Garden Pathways has been helpful and informative this past week. It has helped me to hear about the **changes I need to continue making when communicating with others**. I realize I have not perfected my part in addressing how I feel when others do not understand me or hear what I have to say about how I'm feeling

emotionally. I remember thinking I could be possibly taking a spot in class away from someone in more dyer need than I (because I thought the tools being taught in this workshop are the same or similar courses to what I have learned previously). That was my thought at the beginning of the week, and now I'm certain this spot is for me because we as individuals are **never done growing or learning positive communication skills in life**. I am grateful to be blessed by the staff and co students at Garden Pathways. Thank you all for your efforts and support for both myself and my daughter.

Bebe

My experience in this class showed me that **I can do what ever I want in life**. There's nothing that can stop me from **setting goals** and **being the best I can be**. Take time to listen, think and process.

Jody

Thank you for sharing your knowledge with our class. When I arrived to class on Monday, I wasn't sure whether or not this program was right for me. I'm glad Annette took a minute of her time to talk with me about the program. I'm definitely glad I stayed, and am excited to continue next week. Thank you for your **encouragement and support**. I have learned several **important, effective tools** that I can **incorporate into my daily life**, and also my **interaction with others**.

Jesus

It's been an eye opener to **better habits and emotions when talking with others in my family**. I learned to always pay attention to what perceptions others might have. It is always good to look at our self from a different perceptive.

Moses

The day I came into your class I was down, busted and somewhat confused about myself and my future. This last week has helped me see there is **hope for a better relationship** with all people and all walks of life and that I can **communicate** with them to become a better person.