



“MAKING THINGS RIGHT”

June 2008

Jon Singer, Executive Director
Ken Nissley, Case Manager
Carol Steffy, Administrative Asst.

PEOPLE

*

POSSIBILITIES

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PEACE

LAVORP UNVEILS NEWEST RESTORATIVE JUSTICE PROGRAM

“You Can Be A Winner”

It’s early on a Saturday afternoon, and a group of students and their parents are participating in the closing Learning Circle of LAVORP’s “You Can Be A Winner” (YCBAW) program.

“I’m going to work on counting to ten when I feel myself losing it,” Tiffany says quietly, “so I don’t mouth off to you.” She glances at her mother briefly, before passing the Talking Piece to her.

Tiffany’s mother turns the Talking Piece over in her hands for a few moments, then looks at Tiffany. “I promise to start pointing out things you do right,” she tells her daughter, “instead of always telling you the things you do wrong.” She passes the Talking Piece to the next person in the circle, then gives her daughter’s hand a quick squeeze.

YCBAW is a five hour anger management and conflict-resolution training class for youth who struggle with appropriate responses to anger and conflict. Typically, the youth who participate in the program have had their first brush with the juvenile justice system as a result of poor choices they’ve made in response to a conflict situation. Youth are referred by Magisterial District Judges and Youth Aid Panels. LAVORP also encourages and accepts referrals from schools, parents, police, agencies, or anyone that has an interest in having youth learn conflict resolution skills. Recently, one school counselor obtained a grant to send ten students to the YCBAW program.

The program helps young people examine their perceptions, feelings, choices, and consequences, as well as their own anger triggers and warning signs they experience when they’re about to “lose it” emotionally. They learn about conflict-management styles and appropriate situations in which to apply different approaches to conflict. They learn cool-down strategies, I-messages, and active listening skills, and they have opportunities through role plays and interactive exercises to practice these skills. And, they create a personal action plan, based on what they’ve learned in the program, to address their own specific conflict and anger issues.

A separate ninety-minute session for parents is led by two facilitators during the last two hours of the youth program. In that session, parents discuss the challenges they experience in parenting their children, their own conflict and anger management styles, and effective strategies for working through conflict situations with their children.

The parents and youth are brought together during the last thirty minutes for a Learning Circle, where they discuss what they’ve learned. Each child commits to a specific goal, and their parents commit to a specific way in which they will support their child. Tears often flow during the Learning Circle, as parents and kids take tentative steps toward a better relationship.

LAVORP assumed responsibility for the YCBAW program in 2007, when the Lancaster Mediation Center decided that the youth-oriented program was no longer suited for its broad-based community mediation program.

Seven LAVORP volunteers act as facilitators for the YCBAW program. Terry Baker facilitates the parent sessions, while Barb Fisher, Carolyn Wakefield, Connie Jackson, Ken Schildt, and Melanie G. Snyder co-facilitate the student sessions in pairs. Melanie also provides facilitator training, and general management and quality control for the program. Ken Nissley, Carol Steffy and Jon Singer provide extensive logistical support, processing referrals, contacting participants, assigning them to classes, and arranging for facilities, snacks, and class materials for each session. They also process all of the pre- and post-training evaluations for the program. YCBAW is offered six to eight times per year, with four to eight students attending each class. Facilitators are paired up and each team co-facilitates two or three classes per year.

Continued on Page 2

While the parent program isn't mandatory, parents are strongly encouraged to attend. "I feel deeply that parents need tools to deal with their situations with the kids, and just teaching the kids alone won't help," Terry Baker observes. "It's important for parents to feel that they are not alone and not to be embarrassed about their child getting in trouble." She adds, "The more I see and experience with these families, the more empathy I feel, and the more convinced I am that so many parents out there need help and don't know where to turn."

Carolyn Wakefield highlights the ripple effect of the YCBAW program. "Everyone benefits when youth learn appropriate behavior early on. It can have a positive effect on the whole community."

In fact, the skills youth learn in YCBAW connect directly to the youth competency development priorities of Pennsylvania's Juvenile Justice system, as highlighted by keynote speaker James E. Anderson, Executive Director of the Pennsylvania Juvenile Court Judges Commission at the 2008 LAVORP Annual Dinner. As Anderson explained, one of the core purposes of *Pennsylvania's Juvenile Act* is as follows:

".....to provide, for children committing delinquent acts, supervision, care and rehabilitation which give balanced attention to the protection of the community, the imposition of accountability for offenses committed and **the development of competencies to enable youth to become responsible and productive members of the community.**"

While LAVORP victim-offender mediations provide for youth accountability for the offenses they've committed, the YCBAW program offers an opportunity for youth to develop skills that will help them in future situations. Ultimately, the goal of both LAVORP mediations and YCBAW classes is to empower youth to make better choices and prevent them from becoming involved in an

ongoing cycle of contacts with the juvenile justice or other systems.

The YCBAW program is consistent with LAVORP's focus on Restorative Justice. As youth learn new skills, they can grasp how their old behavior impacted those they offended and learn accountability. New, positive behavior will tend to keep youth from re-offending, thus reducing the number of victims and helping to make communities safer.

"Based on what I have seen, I know the need for YCBAW is there," Carolyn Wakefield observes.

To meet that need, LAVORP is looking for additional YCBAW facilitators. If you have a heart for youth, if you believe it's important to help young people "become responsible and productive members of the community" and to help their parents support them in that effort, and if you are willing to offer up just a couple of Saturday mornings per year, please contact the LAVORP office at 717-397-2404 or via email at lavorp@lavorp.org. We'll provide you with all the training, tips and techniques you need to make a powerful difference in the lives of Lancaster County families.

To make referrals of youth to the YCBAW program, contact LAVORP at the phone number or email address noted above.

Youth Aid Panels & LAVORP

Most referrals to LAVORP come from Juvenile Court. Another source is the County/City Youth Aid Panels (YAPs), a diversion program for first time youth offenders that keeps them out of Juvenile Court.

Members of YAPs are adult volunteers from the community who determine what the consequences should be for the incident. Upon successful completion of the requirements set down by the Panel, the youths' records are expunged.

Individuals from Lancaster City who may be interested in being part of a City Youth Aid Panel should contact Cheryl Ludwig at 626-6432 or yapoflc@aol.com

2008 FALL TRAINING DATES

If you've been putting off taking LAVORP's Volunteer Facilitator Training, now is the time to mark your calendar. Dates for the Fall Class are as follows:

October 14th - 6:30 P.M. – 8:30 P.M.
October 24/25 - 8:30 A.M. - 4:30 P.M.
October 26 - 1:00 P.M.– 5:00 P.M.
November 1 - 8:30 A.M. – 4:30 P.M.
November 2 - 1:00 P.M. – 5:00 P.M.

To learn more about LAVORP's Restorative Justice Program and the benefits of becoming a volunteer, visit us at www.lavorp.org and then click on the Volunteer Opportunity link.

New Class of Volunteers



Elwood Martin (Coach), Nate Hosler, David Lindhiem, Annie Moffatt, Debbie O'Neal, Sam Johnson, Beckie Meyer, Phil Atkins, Jon Singer (Ex. Dir./Trainer), Miriam Paolilli, Jim Kalish, Ken Nissley (Case Manager/Trainer), Art Matz

On May 4th, LAVORP graduated eleven Volunteer Facilitators. The trainees went through an intensive thirty-onehours of classroom instruction covering restorative justice, tradi-tional justice, cultural diversity, Juvenile Justice System, and Victim and Offender awareness. Graduates left class with their first case and are well on there way to promoting peace in Lancaster County. Welcome graduates!

Once he's gained experience, Art Matz of Lebanon, hopes to get the court system there interested in Restorative Justice and rejuvenate the VORP program started by Jubilee Ministries a number of years back.

Nate Hosler hopes to use his skills when he travels to Sudan next Spring.

LAVORP 1-2-5 Society”

(Faith Partners)

Faith partners are those businesses, individuals and congregations who have accepted our invitation to help provide a secure funding base (while we carry out our mission) by investing a minimum of \$200 per year, for five years.

We are pursuing a goal of having 100 businesses, 100 congregations and 100 individuals sign on as faith partners. We'd love to have you join the group. Please see envelope included herein.

Contributors

LAVORP is grateful for the support of the following individuals, congregations, businesses, foundations and organizations who have made contributions during the period May 6th through August 13th. Any omissions are unintentional. Please let us know and you will be included in our next newsletter.

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Continued on Page 4



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