

Juvenile Court Diversion Program Gives Kids a Second Chance



Youth Worker Alison Guenther takes a moment to chat with a young man participating in the Juvenile Court Diversion Program.

A young person who gets picked-up by Glenview police and sent to Youth Services to complete his or her mandated 24-hours of community service can expect to perform lots of housekeeping chores – with a side of conversation. According to Youth Worker Alison Guenther, “The boys and girls that are sent to us are guilty of minor offenses. They’re not put into the court system but rather sent to us so that we can help address what’s going on with them and help change some behaviors.”

The mandated hours consist of cleaning projects, organizing shelves, helping with mailings, and other odd jobs three hours a week. In addition, all participants are required to attend a six-week class addressing “Adolescent Issues” such as: decision making, anger management, and peer pressure. When the commitment is complete, the rate of recidivism is low. “I’ve only had about two or three relapses in almost six years,” says Alison.

Along the way, if the young person is open, the Juvenile Court Diversion Program can offer a lifeline the client can grab on to with both hands. That’s what happened recently for a local 16-year-old who got into trouble with the Glenview police for stealing. “He’s really a good kid,” says Alison. “He’s polite and punctual when he comes here. But he’s got a lot of trouble at home and is struggling in school.”

“*Before long they start holding their heads up and then they start to see what’s possible.*”

Alison Guenther
 Youth Worker

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Thank You!

Initially, the teen just came to fulfill his service hours and mandated classroom training, but he discovered so much more at Youth Services that he asked to stay on as a client of Alison’s in the Therapeutic Mentoring Program. “At first, he would do his chores and we would talk while he worked,” says Alison, “then we started to build trust between us and he discovered that he liked to come here and that we had something to offer him.” Today, the young man meets regularly with Alison; sometimes they play games or do other activities—but always, they talk.

“I’m working with him to build confidence and help him to see that he can be somebody. He doesn’t have to be limited by his family’s situation,” states Alison. “Most of the kids that first come into our mentoring program come in with their heads hanging down. They feel so bad about themselves; they have no vision of their futures. But before long they start holding their heads up and then they start to see what’s possible. That’s what I want for all of them.”



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From the Executive Director

My Dear Friends.

There is an ancient Chinese saying: “May you live in interesting times,” which certainly applies today. Some people claim this axiom is a blessing while others say it’s a curse. This got me thinking about how I personally view our “interesting times,” and I must admit that I’m torn.



On the one hand, social service agencies like ours are seeing a drop in donations and loss of funding from both public and private sources. To add to that, some of our individual supporters have lost jobs themselves and are unable to contribute to Youth Services right now. That’s the curse.

On the other hand, every time our agency puts out a special request to the community asking for help for a specific child or family in need the responses are immediate and generous. That’s the blessing.

Why the disparity between these appeals? I think it is because when we put out a special request, that appeal has a face and a compelling story that is very hard to ignore. It’s much easier to say no to an organization, no matter how worthy it may be, than to refuse the child who rings your doorbell selling cookies, or asking for help to fund his school team. Seeing the face asking for help makes all the difference. So I thought I’d take a minute to introduce you to two of the many faces of Youth Services, and while I can’t name them directly because of confidentiality, I can tell you a little about them.

“Joey” is 11 years old; he’s a bit withdrawn and is sometimes unresponsive to those around him. “Mandy,” 9, is the complete opposite; she’s chatty and appears to relate well to adults; but like Joey, Mandy has no idea how to talk to children her own age. Somehow these youngsters have never figured out the mechanics of making and keeping friends. That is why each of them is enrolled in one of our Socialization Groups (we have five with three dedicated to special needs children). As participants in a socialization group, Joey and Mandy get together bi-weekly with other children struggling with similar issues. Sometimes they go on supervised outings where they learn valuable social skills that will enable them to navigate their adolescent years better – and hopefully show them how to find and be a friend.

I remember just how important having a good friend was at that age, don’t you? Can you imagine how hard life must be for a child without one?

I see the faces of Joey and Mandy every single day and I see the hope in those young faces as they look to Youth Services to help guide them along their way. They are beautiful faces and in each of them all I see is a blessing. I hope you see this, too.

Wishing you the best in interesting times

Nancy Bloom

If you are able to help support a child in our Socialization Group you can do so by mail, telephone, or on our website: www.youthservices-gn.org. The cost of a full-year sponsorship for a child is \$280. Special needs children (Aspergers, non-verbal learning disorder, etc.) sponsorship is \$1,200 a year. Any size gift is gratefully accepted.



2009 Events

Mark Your Calendar

Benefit 2009

April 17th at the Chateau Ritz, 9100 N. Milwaukee Ave., Niles, IL

The Auction opens at 7:00 p.m. We will have a special guest host for the evening. Come enjoy a fantastic dinner, music, interactive sports games, and bid on exciting unique treasures and pleasures during our live and silent auctions. Seating is open or you can reserve a whole table. Tickets for Dinner/Auction are \$75 per person.

Meet and Greet from 6:30-7:30 p.m.

Join former Bears great Gary Fencik at the Benefit pre-party. You will have your picture taken with Gary and be entered in a drawing for an autographed football. Tickets are an additional \$50 per person for the Meet and Greet. (\$125 per person total for Auction/Meet and Greet package.)

For more information or to view auction items please go to the website at www.youthservices-gn.org. Call Monica Garvey at Youth Services (847) 724-2620 to reserve your spot.

YOUth Make a Difference 5K Run/Walk June 21st, 8:00 a.m., Gallery Park

Anyone interested in sponsoring and having your family or company name on over 700 shirts worn around Glenview and surrounding communities, please contact Monica Garvey at (847) 724-2620. You can sign up now to participate in the 5K at www.signmeup.com. It's a great event for the entire family!

Friends of Youth Services Events:

Sweet Tomatoes Fundraiser: Thursday, March 19th, 5-8pm.

Bring in a coupon and 15% of your total meal and beverage purchase will benefit Youth Services. To obtain a coupon, email ddwittenstein@yahoo.com or drop by the office of Youth Services.

Shop and Share

Proceeds benefit Youth Services at any Jewel Food Store on the following dates: April 6-8th, June 29th - July 1st, Nov. 16-18th with coupon. To get a Shop and Share coupon please email: ddwittenstein@yahoo.com.

Wine Tasting and Wine Auction

Café Lucci in Glenview on the evening of June 4th. For information email: Ldecook@yahoo.com.

Capturing the Best for Youth Services

Last spring Debbie Sundblad was an independent consultant working with the staff of Youth Services on an occasional basis while finishing up a 30-year career as a police social worker (first in Evanston and then 13 years with the Glenview Police Department). She was set to retire from the force in June and then, as a licensed clinical social worker with a master's degree in social work, Debbie planned on devoting more time to her successful private clinical practice. But she got along so well with the staff at Youth Services that Executive Director Nancy Bloom just couldn't let her go.

"She was relentless," Debbie recalls with a chuckle when describing how the Executive Director was determined to recruit her. Obviously, Nancy Bloom knew what a good fit Debbie would be at Youth Services having worked collaboratively on many cases with her since 1995. "Nancy was the first professional relationship I developed when I came to Glenview," says Debbie. "The schools, the police, and the social service agencies all depend on one another and there is often collaboration in the cases we handle. It was not unusual when I was with the Glenview police to work with Youth Services, especially when I was dealing with children and families who were victims of domestic violence or other cases that needed social service intervention."

Today Debbie spends between 20-24 hours a week as Youth Services Clinical Director where she assists the staff and interns in developing the best possible approaches for intervening with and supporting the children and families served by the organization. "I meet regularly with staff both individually and in groups. Sometimes it helps for them to have an outside perspective on a case and I provide that," she says.

For Debbie, one of the joys of working with a young staff is the energy and enthusiasm they bring to the job. "They are so dedicated and excited it is infectious," she says. "There is this sense that we are all in this together; we feel like a family here. I think the kids we serve feel it, too."

Having been involved with Youth Services from the outside as well as the inside, Debbie feels qualified to offer this observation: "Youth Services programs are unique and they are ingrained in the community. Believe me; every other social service organization is stronger because we have Youth Services in our midst."

Debbie and her husband Glenn Cannon live in the northern suburbs. She has two step-children as well as two step-grandchildren. In addition, she continues an active private clinical practice.





3100 West Lake Avenue
Glenview, IL 60026

Phone: 847-724-2620
Fax: 847-724-3499
www.youthservices-gn.org
info@youthservices-gn.org

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Why “People Care”?

When we were looking for a name for this newsletter, we asked the people who are the motivation behind it—the kids we serve. They came up with “People Care,” and we can’t think of a more fitting title.



eScrip for Youth Services

eScrip may just be the easiest way yet to give back to your community. Each time you shop at Dominick’s using your Fresh Values card, a portion of your purchase will automatically be donated to Youth Services of Glenview Northbrook. Enrollment couldn’t be easier. Just email your card number and address to our eScrip coordinator, Peg Macaluso, and she’ll take care of the rest. Thank you so much for your participation in this successful program!

Please email pegmacaluso@comcast.net the following:

Your Name

Your address (required)

Your Dominick’s Fresh Values number (located on the back of your card)

Do it today!

Raise a Star

You can help us complete our dream of a new home by contributing to our Raise a Star campaign. Various size stars honoring donors or someone they care about will decorate the walls of the new McLennan Center for Youth when completed. Contribution range: \$1,000, \$500, and \$250. For more information or to donate please contact Nancy Bloom, Executive Director, at (847) 724-2620 or go to our secure website at www.youthservices-gn.org.

