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youth matters

a newsletter of alternatives for youth

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volume 2: issue 8

august 2009

Dear Alexa,

August is a busy time of year for so many of us - last minute vacations, school supply shopping, transitioning kids (and ourselves) to new schedules, and soaking up the last few days of summer vacation. At AFY, we are doing many of those same things. Our Summer Program's last day was August 6, capped off with a trip to Water World. Our program directors and staff are now preparing for the school year programs and activities, cleaning classrooms, purchasing supplies, getting classrooms and curriculum ready, training new staff, and scheduling student and parent meetings. 25 volunteers from Nordstrom's with the United Way Day of Caring also provided lots of assistance on August 14 in getting our building ready - painting, cleaning, spreading mulch and assembling our new brochures. We are really looking forward to welcoming back our students!

As we welcome back our students, we are also welcoming three new members to our Board of Directors, Tom Chinault, Lupe Cortez and Kathy Sanner, each of whom brings diverse knowledge and experiences to inform AFY's work with youth.

We hope this month finds you enjoying the last days of summer vacation and also looking forward to the new school year.

quick links

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spotlight: jenny hecht



Position at AFY:
Program Director,
Clearview Educational
Center

Background:
Jenny grew up on Long Island and has a strong background in music and theater, having grown up in a musical and theatrical family and done some acting herself. She earned a bachelors in English from Colgate University, where she also worked for two years in development after graduation. After completing a masters in social work at the University of Michigan, Jenny moved to Colorado for her husband to study music at CU Boulder. Jenny's career in social work has included working at Jefferson County Social Services with sexually abused teens, at a treatment center for adolescent sex offenders, and outpatient treatment for adult sex offenders.

looking forward to the year ahead

AFY Programs Continue and Expand

With the school year beginning this week, Alternatives for Youth is excited to continue and expand our four core programs to help youth succeed. **Celebrando la Familia** will continue five Homework Clubs, Latino Parent Involvement in Education meetings, SASSIE's college fair, the Folklorico Dance Group, and supporting and directing community events.

The **Community Advocate** program, which was successful in its first year in improving student attendance of truant students (see the [July 2009 edition of Youth Matters](#)), will receive additional funding from the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) to hire three more Community Advocates. We plan to hire the new Community Advocates for Longs Peak Middle School and Longmont and Silver Creek High School in partnership with the St. Vrain Valley School District by mid-September. We are so excited to receive CDE's support for this program and to be able to expand it!

The **NorthStar** program will expand to an additional school this year, continuing classes at Heritage Middle School and providing new classes at Erie High School. NorthStar is helping us to continue growing our engagement with St. Vrain Valley School District students. NorthStar will also hold six sessions of evening NorthStar classes at AFY in the fall 2009 semester. You can find the NorthStar evening class dates on AFY's [Calendar of Events](#).

Clearview Educational Center, under the new leadership of Jenny Hecht, will continue the full day program begun in January 2009 and will expand activities. This fall, students will have the opportunity to participate in team work activities with Open Space in Mountain Parks; to be exposed to more art through CU's Arts Bridge, in which a graduate art student will work with one of Clearview's core teachers to bring more art into the classroom; to be exposed to more music through Colorado Symphony's Play it Forward Program, in which a small chamber orchestra plays at the school, and going to open rehearsals; and going to the YMCA for physical education one to two times a week and potentially participating in the Frequent Flyers program, a low-flying trapeze program. Additionally, Clearview's teachers will be able to use two new SMART boards and a new projector, both of which they will receive training on.

Finally, AFY will continue to implement the expansion of our **public**



Following her passion for working with youth, Jenny became an interventionist at Old Columbine and then worked for five years at Longs Peak and Westview Middle Schools.

History with AFY: We are so excited to have Jenny join our staff this summer, bringing her talent and excitement for youth and alternative education.

Why AFY? Jenny first learned about AFY's work as the interventionist at Longs Peak Middle School. She is excited to join our efforts in helping youth, especially in Clearview's alternative setting and in program management.

Plans for Clearview: As the new Program Director for Clearview, Jenny plans to develop Clearview into a well known program for expelled and, hopefully, pre-expelled students who need a temporary alternative placement. She sees Clearview as developing into a more holistic education experience for the students and incorporating more art, music and service learning in the program. Jenny has already established new program components with Open Space in Mountain Parks, CU Arts Bridge, the Colorado Symphony, and the Longmont YMCA.

Please join us in welcoming Jenny to AFY!

thank you!

Thank you to everyone who donated to our Third Annual Rummage Sale and received a massage at the Everybody Deserves a Massage event.

Your support of AFY programs is priceless!

save the date!

Upcoming AFY Events

September 12 -

relations program through distribution of our new brochure, new giveaways and participation in community events. We will also continue to work with the **Longmont ASSET Coalition**, a coalition of local agencies, non-profits and community members to bring a treatment program for adolescents struggling with drugs and alcohol to Longmont.

As we look forward to growing our services to youth in our community, we also look forward to updating you about our progress and involving new people in our work!

from the executive director

Deb Roberts - Favorite Part of My Job!

As we said goodbye to our Summer Program students this month and get read to welcome back all of our students, I got to thinking about the favorite part of my job at AFY. Connecting with the kids! To walk out to our parking lot in the summer and have 82 kids yell, "Good morning, Ms. Deb!" is such a great way to start my day. To go to Heritage Middle School, lead a life skills class of seventh and eight grade boys, and see the boys mature is uplifting. When I join the Clearview students and staff at Joder Arabian Ranch and help them to do community service by cleaning out horse stalls, I get to see the students bond with horses and each other. It doesn't get much better than that!

The greatest joy of all is to see AFY programs really help the youth. I see school as a child's "job." School is what a child does every day. How horrible it is when school, a child's job, is just grueling and terrible. Can you imagine being in such a job for 13 years? How well children do in school often determines their world as successful or as a failure. Our programs - Homework Clubs, Summer Program, Clearview, Community Advocates, NorthStar - help children to bond with school, to improve academically, and to improve important relationships with teachers, school administrators, friends and parents.

I am so proud of AFY's strong and continuing history of providing quality programming and helping our community's youth. I look forward to connecting to our students this fall and watching them grow through the work of our dedicated staff.

afy:fyi



Program Updates

We are excited about the year ahead for AFY's school year programs. Following are highlights from our four programs:

Celebrando la Familia's Summer Program's last day was August 6. The over 60 elementary school students and 21 teen assistants enjoyed a final trip to Water World. Over the previous 8 weeks, the teen assistants and program staff provided students with educational activities in math, reading and science on Mondays and Wednesdays. Everyone also participated in a Fun Run and Adopt-a-Park, swimming, a visit to the Longmont Museum, and crafts on Tuesdays and Thursdays. The longest walk this year for the group was from AFY to the Longmont Recreation Center by way of the Greenway!

The teen assistants bravely participated in AFY's hearing for the City of Longmont's Human Service Agency funding. The students answered questions about what they liked about the program and AFY, sharing that the Summer Program helped them keep on track during the summer, helped them stay focused and out of trouble, and that they loved working with the younger kids.

In August, Celebrando staff will prepare for and begin Homework Clubs at five schools, Folklorico Dance Group practices, and Latino Parent Involvement in Education meetings.

NorthStar classes begin with the start of school and will be held at Heritage Middle School and Erie High School. The Program Director, Emanuel, is excited to be using [The Council for Boys and Men](#), a strengths-based group approach to promote boys' and young men's safe, strong and healthy passage through pre-teen and adolescent years. Emanuel will also begin teaching NorthStar evening classes in September, offering a total of six sessions in the fall semester. Dates of the evening classes can be found on our [Calendar of Events](#).

Community Advocates will begin their work with truant students at Heritage Middle School and Frederick and Skyline High Schools with the beginning of the school year. New Community Advocates will be hired in mid-September to work at Longs Peak Middle Schools and Longmont and Silver Creek High Schools.

Dieciseis de Septiembre
(September Sixteenth)
Celebration

September 18 - AFY and Jazzgoods will host a booth at [Longmont ArtLink](#), a free evening of art exhibitions, music, live theatre, dance and children's activities on Longmont's historic Main Street.

October 3 - "Parenting through Transitions" conference at the Longmont Radisson. Parents will learn about effective strategies for parenting through a variety of transitions that children experience through keynote speaker, Scoot Crandall, Executive Director of Team Fort Collins, and through break out sessions. More details to follow.

All check out our [Calendar of Events](#) online for more information.

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Connie Syferd

Clearview Educational Center begins the school year with student registration on August 19 and students returning on August 22. As was begun in January 2009, middle and high school students will attend a full day program, taking classes in math and science, English, social studies and electives as well as attending group and individual counseling. We are pleased to welcome our new program director, Jeni Hecht (see Spotlight for more about Jeni), and new English teacher, Rhea Maze. Rhea worked most recently with Traveling School, an alternative school for girls that includes travel, academics and outdoor activities. She traveled with the program to South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Guatemala, Mexico, El Salvador and Honduras. Clearview will begin the school year with 18 expelled students, and our Transition Advocate will be providing services to 12 students who graduated from Clearview and returned to their home school.

no "kid" ding...

Did You Know?

With the beginning of school this week in the St. Vrain Valley School District (SVVSD), approximately 4,000 SVVSD students will make the transition to middle or high school. All students have to adjust with the return to school, but middle and high school students face an additional transition to a new stage of education. These new stages are exciting and challenging! Did you know:



- Middle and high school schedules, school campus, school work, and teachers are usually very new.

- Many of the middle and high schools in the SVVSD draw students from several elementary and middle schools, presenting students with new and a greater diversity of friends and fellow students.

- With peer pressure and academic demands, the new stage can be overwhelming. Indeed, in the 2005 ["Voices and Views: Middle School Students Speak Out,"](#) SVVSD middle school students had the following top concerns: stress, expectation of maturity, depression; family relationships, pressure from parents; drugs, alcohol, huffing; cliques, peer pressure, rumors; bullying, harassment and fights.

- Middle school students experience a number of physical, emotional and mental changes. Your child will experience fluctuating emotions and motivation levels.

- Middle and high school students need more space and independence to discover new interests and build skills and knowledge.

- Compared to middle school, high school students often experience a larger, more impersonal, more competitive and grade-oriented environment.

- Middle and high school students experience anxiety and nervousness about starting at a new school. Top concerns include older students teasing them, getting lost, and making bad grades.

- In the transition, middle and high school may find that the school work is more challenging and may experience a drop in grades.

- High school students also are at risk of attending school less regularly, developing a more negative view of themselves, and feeling an increased need for their friends.

- Parents may be tempted to decrease their involvement in their child's school related activities as their child transitions to high school, but it's critical for parents to stay involved! When parents are involved in their child's high school experience, students achieve more, are better adjusted and are less likely to drop out of school.

- Parental involvement in the transition to middle and high school can also help ease some of the fears, worries and challenges.

- Parents can, depending on the maturity of their children:

- Be actively involved in the decisions their high school student makes about classes and in understanding the longer-term effects of course decisions.
- Attend an open house.
- Meet with their child's school guidance counselor.
- Help their child explore their interests, including encouraging their children to join a club or sport or to [volunteer](#), and talking about future plans.
- Help their children know when to get up, when to be ready for

Board Member
Assistant
Superintendent for
Student Achievement, St.
Vrain Valley School
District

- school and when to do homework.
- Maintain and communicate expectations about their children doing their best in school.
 - Help their children get organized, especially as course work becomes more difficult. Middle and high school students can benefit from learning good study and organizational habits.
 - Maintain communication with their child about school and friends.
 - Grow in their understanding of adolescent development. Check out the [American Academy of Adolescent and Child Psychiatry](#)
 - Get involved in the school through PTAs, PTOs or other parent groups.
 - Stay connected with the school. Find out the best means of communication with your child's teachers and school, whether that's by phone or e-mail.
 - Parents of high schoolers can take advantage of the [St. Vrain Valley High School Counseling website](#). The website was developed "to provide additional guidance and counseling services to students and their families. The counselors have aimed to create a centralized website where visitors can discover the answers to their questions, and/or links to those resources."

You can find more information about the transition to middle and high school and tips for students and parents at the following websites:

[Transition from Middle into High School](#)
[Middle to High School Transition](#)
[Is Your Child Ready for Middle School?](#)
[Preparing for Middle School](#)
[Ready for Middle School?](#)
[St. Vrain Valley High School Counseling](#)

Note: The above is provided as information and does not indicate an endorsement by Alternatives for Youth of the listed websites. You can find past No "Kid"ding . . . Did You Know? articles on our website by clicking here.

Alternatives for Youth, Inc.'s mission is to promote academic persistence and success of youth by instilling values that lead to positive choices and positive community impact and by encouraging social, cultural, and self development. Since 1978, Alternatives for Youth has been providing services to youth and their families in the Longmont community. Last year, over 800 youth and their families received services through Alternatives for Youth, including after-school homework clubs, parenting education, an alternative school for expelled youth, positive recreational activities, youth leadership opportunities, academic enrichment activities, and service learning activities.

Thank you for your support!

Alexa Van Dalsem
Resource Development Director
Alternatives for Youth

get involved!

Yes! I/We want to help young people succeed! I/We wish to support Alternatives for Youth's work in helping youth succeed by:

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