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youth matters

a newsletter of alternatives for youth

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spotlight: roy taboada and megan jedrzejewski



Grade: Roy will be a sophomore at Skyline High School and Megan will be a sophomore at Silver Creek High School in fall 2009.

AFY Program:

Roy has been a part of the Summer Program for 5 years, starting as a younger participant and then becoming a teen assistant. Megan first volunteered with Homework Clubs and is a teen assistant as well this summer.

Dreams: Both Roy and Megan plan to go to college. Roy wants to study to become a surgeon and Megan to be a P.E. teacher.

Why AFY?

Roy and Megan agree that the best thing about being a teen assistant is "having fun with the kids and playing games."

What Keeps Them Busy:

volume 2: issue 7

July 2009

Dear Alexa,

We at AFY are enjoying the sounds and activities of the Summer Program and a quieter month for administrative staff to work on organizational activities - marketing (the brochure and giveaways are almost done!), budgeting, grants and grant reports, program plans for the fall and working on bringing substance abuse treatment for adolescents to Longmont.

July is a great time to support AFY by donating to or shopping at our **Rummage Sale** on July 24. We are also excited to include with our Rummage Sale an **EveryBody Deserves a Massage event**, a day when local, licensed massage therapists will provide discounted massages at AFY and donate the proceeds to AFY. So come by AFY at 24 Ninth Avenue, Friday, July 24, 8:00-4:00 to shop and get a massage!

We hope you are enjoying your July and had fun celebrating Independence Day earlier this month.

advocates make a difference in the first year

Results of Our Newest Program

In fall 2008, Alternatives for Youth (AFY) began a new program in partnership with the St. Vrain Valley School District, Community Advocates, and new component to our ongoing Clearview Educational Center program, Transition Advocate. Results from the first year of all of our Advocates work show what a difference the Advocates make to the youth they work with.



The Community Advocate program works with targeted truant students at two middle and two high schools, provided services to 115 students over the fall 2008 semester. The three Community Advocates - Paula Fredman, Mary Vigil, Heidi Weekley - provided:

- Assistance to two families with truancy court mediations
- 41 home visits
- 129 parents with support to help their child improve attendance
- Over 500 meetings with students and over 180 meetings with parents
- Ongoing contact with parents through e-mail and phone, making contact over 10,500 times with parents.

This work resulted in the majority of the students improving their attendance and staying in school and an overall 3.3% improvement in attendance at the target schools with a 4.2% increase for Hispanic and Latino students. A principal at one of the schools shared, "I just wanted to say how excellent and beneficial it is to have a Community Advocate working at our school. Her work is making a huge impact on our students being in school, arriving to class on time ready to work, and consequently helping their academic achievement. She has been a great addition to our staff."

In addition to the Community Advocates work, Clearview's Transition Advocate, Gretchen Florescue, worked with 7 students who returned to school in spring or fall of 2008. Meeting regularly with each of the students, Gretchen helped each student navigate their return to school, including finding needed resources, connecting them to counselors and people on campus they could get help from, easing their return to a full-time program, and providing ongoing counseling if needed. All 7 students completed the school year! Gretchen shared that "one of the students is now an A/B student and is involved in extra curricular activities. She had an incident with a substitute teacher, and she immediately went to the counseling office and requested they call me to assist in a mediation. She handled herself in a mature way and was able to move on from the incident."

The Community and Transition Advocates will all continue their work in the fall, and we would like to expand the Community Advocate

Outside of school and volunteering for AFY, Roy and Megan like playing soccer at their high schools and outside of school. Roy plays defense and midfield, and Megan plays goalie. Roy also enjoys recreational games of football.

the third annual drop and shop rummage sale and massage event

**Friday, July 24
8:00 - 4:00
at AFY
24 Ninth Avenue
in Longmont**

**Clean out your
garage, storage units
and closets . . . find
new goodies.**

**Everyone is invited to
drop donated items
before the sale until
Friday, July 24 before
the sale and to shop
on Friday!**

**Licensed massage
therapists will also be
on site to provide
discounted chair and
table massages.**

**Proceeds from the
Rummage Sale and
massages will benefit
Alternatives for
Youth programs. For
more information or
to arrange an earlier
drop off of donations,
contact Alexa at
303-776-8184.
Donations are tax
deductible.**

save the date!

Upcoming AFY Events

September 12 -
Dieciseis de Septiembre
(September Sixteenth)
Celebration

**July 17 and
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.

program with the school district to several other schools.

from the executive director

Deb Roberts - Passionate about Youth!

June 23rd marked my three year anniversary as the Executive Director of Alternatives for Youth! I have been in the non-profit arena my entire career and this is *truly* the best job I have ever had. I work with an incredible staff, my Board of Directors is exemplary, and the Longmont community is absolutely wonderful on so many levels . . . but most of all, I am extremely passionate about our mission of helping youth!

Alexa, our Resource Development Directors, came to me and suggested we start an Executive Director's column for the newsletter and asked if I'd be willing to write a monthly column. I certainly said yes, thinking it was a great idea. And then it sank in. Oh, my gosh. I would actually have to write something once a month for others to read. I am not the writer that Alexa is, although she *did* agree to support my efforts and help me in any way she could.

I started thinking about what I should write about. I could share facts about our programs with you, but the newsletter already does that. I could research facts about youth that everyone should know, but the newsletter already does that, too. What can I add?

Here's what I've decided to try and do. Share with you my feelings, my observations, my thoughts around why our efforts - all of our efforts - are absolutely critical. We must - absolutely must - do all that we can to help guide and encourage our youth to be the best they can be, no matter what their personal circumstances are or story is.

It would be so great to hear your stories and efforts, too. Share them with AFY, and we'll share them with others.

Wish me luck on this column, and if you see me at an event or about town, tell me I'm doing great . . . even if I'm not quite as good as our regular newsletter writer. I'm excited about giving this a try!

afy: fyi



Program Updates

While our school year programs are on break for the summer, July provides for lots of fun activities for youth through our Summer Program. Following are highlights from our four programs:

Celebrando la Familia's Summer Program continues to provide over 60 elementary school students and 21 teen assistants with all kinds of fun activities. On Mondays and Wednesdays, the teen assistants and program staff provide students with educational activities in math, reading and science. This past week, the kids played with cornstarch and water (pictured) and learned about the strange and changing consistency of this combination (is it a liquid? is it a solid?). Over the last month, the Summer Program participants have played kick ball, gone swimming, visited IMAX and the Denver Museum of Nature and Science, swam in Boulder Reservoir, and visited the Denver Zoo. More trips are planned for the next three weeks, including our first Fun Run on July 22.

The teen assistants have continued to chaperon, mentor and tutor the younger students and participate in leadership training, learning about options for college and career, and developing employment skills.

Our **NorthStar, Community Advocate** and **Clearview Educational Center** programs will resume in August. Program staff are taking the summer to rest, travel to Hawaii, Chicago, California, New York, Boston, and Australia, and gear up for the 2009-2010 school year.

no "kid"ding...

Did You Know?

You may believe that youth under the age of 21 should not drink. You may know about some of the risks of underage drinking - health risks, traffic fatalities, violence, unsafe sex, suicide, educational failure, increased risk of using illicit drugs - but did you know the full, long term extent of the



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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risks? A 2002 AMA report on alcohol's adverse effects on the brains of children, adolescents and college students found:



- Nationally, the average age of a child's first drink is now 12. In the St. Vrain Valley School District (SVVSD), according to the 2005 Youth Risk Behavior Survey of high school students, the rate for use of alcohol before the age of 13 was 28.5%.

- The earlier teens start drinking, the greater the danger.

- Nationally, nearly 20 percent of 12 to 20 year-olds are considered binge drinkers. In the SVVSD, 37.9% of high school seniors reported they had engaged in binge drinking with a 29.9% prevalence rate of binge drinking for all high school students.

- Adolescents who binge once a week or increase their drinking from age 18 to 24 may have problems attaining the goals of young adulthood—marriage, educational attainment, employment, and financial independence.

- Early drinking is so damaging because the brain goes through dynamic change during adolescence, and alcohol can cause serious long-term and irreversible damage to long- and short-term growth processes.

- Underage drinking is not an inevitable "rite of passage" that adolescents can easily recover from. Rather than "outgrowing" alcohol use, young abusers are significantly at risk for long-term problems and are more likely to have drinking problems as adults.

- Short-term or moderate drinking impairs learning and memory far more in youth than adults. Adolescents need only drink half as much to suffer the same negative effects.

- Adolescent drinkers perform worse in school, are more likely to fall behind, have an increased risk of social problems, depression, suicidal thoughts and violence, and are at increased risk of stroke.

- Alcohol affects the sleep cycle, resulting in impaired learning and memory as well as disrupted release of hormones necessary for growth and maturation

- Teen alcohol users are most susceptible to damaging two key brain areas that are undergoing dramatic changes in adolescence:

- The hippocampus handles many types of memory and learning and suffers from the worst alcohol-related brain damage in teens. Those who had been drinking more and for longer had significantly smaller hippocampi (10 percent).
- The prefrontal area (behind the forehead) undergoes the most change during adolescence. Researchers found that adolescent drinking could cause severe changes in this area and others, which play an important role in forming adult personality and behavior and is often called the CEO of the brain.

- Long term, compared to students who drink moderately or not at all, frequent drinkers may never be able to catch up in adulthood, since alcohol inhibits systems crucial for storing new information as long-term memories and makes it difficult to immediately remember what was just learned.

- More than 1,400 deaths, 70,000 sexual assaults and 600,000 assaults from alcohol related abuse happen on college campuses every year

The good news is that parents and community members can help reduce underage drinking. Did you know:

- Parents have more influence on your child's values and decisions about drinking before he or she begins to use alcohol.

- Parents can have a major impact on their children's drinking, especially during the preteen and early teen years.

- You can help by reducing access to alcohol for children and youth. Do not allow drinking parties in your home, buy beer for teenagers waiting outside a liquor store or, if you're a business owner who sells alcohol, don't sell to minors.

- You can [send an e-mail or a fax](#) to the TV networks and cable TV about your concerns about advertising alcohol to youth. A major source of the normalization of alcohol use by children and youth continues to be alcohol advertising.

- Parents can encourage their children to not use alcohol by:

- Spending time with their children regularly.
- Listening and talking with their children. Try to understand the pressures placed on them and don't criticize their beliefs.
- Keeping track of where their children are, what they are doing, and who their friends are.
- Helping their children find positive, fun, and exciting activities that don't involve alcohol, such as after-school activities, creative arts, community events, sports and outdoor activities, attending sports events, and visiting local attractions. Studies show that after school is the peak time for teens to commit crime, be a victim of crime, be in or cause a car crash and smoke, drink or use drugs, including alcohol. Studies also show that teens who often are bored may be at a higher risk of using alcohol, tobacco, or illegal drugs.
- Praise or reward children often - as much as when they were toddlers and preschoolers. If they feel good about themselves, they will be more confident and better able to resist peer pressure.
- Be a positive role model for their children. Don't abuse alcohol or drugs. Be open about talking about drinking and that drinking is not for all people, such as children, adolescents, pregnant women, people who plan to drive or do other activities that require attention or skill.
- If parents are not comfortable talking about alcohol and drinking with their child, there are many resources to help with the conversation. Parents: The Anti-Drugs has excellent resources, including "[Talk to Your Child about Alcohol.](#)"

You can find more information about the risks of alcohol use by teens, resources for parents and positive activities at the following websites:

[AlcoholPolicyMD.com](#)
[Alternatives for Youth](#)

American Medical Association's report, "[Harmful Consequences of Alcohol Use on the Brains of Children, Adolescents, and College Students](#)"

[City of Longmont for local events and activities](#)

[Fight Crime: Invest in Kids](#)

Institute of Medicine's report on [Reducing Underage Drinking: A Collective Responsibility](#)

[Longmont YMCA](#)

[Parents: The Anti-Drug](#)

[Summer \(and year round\) Activities](#)

For after-school activities, also check with your child's school to see what is offered. Most programs are free.

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:

Volunteering

Making a gift donation of: \$

Name:

Address:

Phone:

City, State, Zip:

E-mail:

You can make a secure credit card donation to Alternatives for Youth using GivingFirst or Google Checkout at www.alternativesforyouth.org/contribute.html. To make a donation by check or cash or to volunteer please return this form to Alternatives for Youth, 24 Ninth Avenue, Longmont, CO 80501 or call 303.776.8184.

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