



PARTNERS IN CRIME PREVENTION

MARCH/APRIL 2012

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

COMMENTARY - 1
EVERY CHILD
NEEDS A GUIDE

JUVENILE CRIME - 2
ARE JUVENILES
HELD
ACCOUNTABLE?

JUVENILE
INTERVENTIONS 2

COCOON HOUSE - 3
A RESOURCE
FOR TROUBLED
YOUTH & THEIR
FAMILIES

COCOON HOUSE - 3
GETTING HELP

COMMENTARY - 4
CONTINUED

COMMENTARY—EVERY CHILD NEEDS A GUIDE

By John Lovick
Sheriff, Snohomish County

Anyone who has visited my office has seen my "wall of inspiration." That's what it says on the wall above seven photos of people who've had the most impact on my life.

They include my wife, retired Everett Police Chief Jim Scharf, my beloved grandmother who raised me in rural Louisiana, and Will Bachofner, former chief of the Washington State Patrol and the man who hired me there.

And then there's one of a wizened man with a kind smile on his face. No one who tries to guess who he is ever gets it quite right. I don't expect them to, and neither would he.

Mr. Leroy Wafer was my basketball coach at Allen High School in the late 1960s, as well as the school custodian, bus driver, and a tutor. He was the one who taught the students that personal appearance and preparedness mattered, not to let the spirit-crushing setbacks discourage us, how to prepare for job interviews, and to stay away from drugs and alcohol.

And he was the one who told me flat out one day that I would never be a college or professional basketball star so I had better stay in school and get the best education I possibly could. At first I couldn't believe what he was saying. But he was right. It didn't take me long to realize that Mr. Wafer's shot of reality was based upon truly wanting me to succeed in life.

You see, Mr. Wafer was my mentor. I never knew my father, and my grandfather died when I was a young boy. I honestly do

not know where I'd be today were it not for Mr. Wafer and the valuable time he invested in my life and the lives of many of my friends.

I still keep in touch with my high school classmates. But these days my focus is on my adopted home, Snohomish County. And I can't help but wonder sometimes: Do we have enough Leroy Wafers?

Every child in Snohomish County needs a mentor, from the at-risk teen to the stand-out student. Many people in our county do reach out to children and teens in so many ways every day, and I applaud them. But we cannot keep drawing from the same well when it comes to nurturing our children. It takes our entire community — people from all corners of the county: parents, educators, our churches, neighbors, coaches, and so many more — to make sure it's done right.

Mentoring means different things to people, but I think most of us can agree that it is based on a safe and healthy relationship and involves a level of commitment in a person's life. It is so much more than merely being a role model and it is not always easy.

When I think of mentoring done well, I think of Big Brothers Big Sisters. I've been involved with this organization locally and know others who are "Bigs" right now. The statistics prove the international organization's program works. Sixty-seven percent of former "Littles" say their "Big" influenced their decisions to go to college. And more than 80 percent of "Littles" say their "Big" taught them the importance of helping others.

Continued on page 4



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JUVENILE INTERVENTIONS

Functional Family Therapy (FFT) is an empirically-grounded, family-based intervention program for acting-out youth. A major goal of Functional Family Therapy is to improve family communication and supportiveness while decreasing the intense negativity so often characteristic of these families. Performed by a qualified therapist, FFT has been utilized by juvenile courts and Washington State's Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration Parole division.

Aggression Replacement Training® (ART®) is a cognitive behavioral intervention program to help children and adolescents improve social skill competence and moral reasoning, better manage anger, and reduce aggressive behavior. The program specifically targets chronically aggressive children and adolescents. ART is taught in a classroom setting by qualified professionals in the field of juvenile justice.

JUVENILE CRIME– ARE JUVENILES HELD ACCOUNTABLE?

Juvenile crime in Snohomish County is declining. The rate of incarceration of juvenile offenders is decreasing. This results in safer neighborhoods and a decreased cost for the taxpayers. How is this being accomplished? Through evidence-based practices and early intervention, including diversion programs, Snohomish County is on the forefront in the area of juvenile crime reduction.

Why then is there a perception in the community that juveniles are not held accountable for their crimes? Many citizens believe that the juvenile system has become “soft” and has begun to return youthful offenders to the community without being held accountable.

Diversion programs and early intervention programs offer the juvenile offender and his or her family the opportunity to deal with legal matters without lengthy incarceration. These evidence-based practices have demonstrated more effectiveness in reducing recidivism than lengthy incarceration.

While the nature of some crimes demands that youthful offenders enter the deep end of the juvenile justice system to receive intensive residential treatment in a controlled environment, a large percentage of juvenile offenders are not demonstrating the need for this level of supervision and treatment. Petty crimes and misdemeanors which once resulted in youth being placed in an institution are now dealt with by families, with the help of professionals utilizing evidence-based programs such as Functional Family Therapy and

Aggression Replacement Training.

The result of this proactive and front-loaded service model has been profound in Snohomish County. In 2011 there were 2,275 diversion referrals to the Snohomish County Juvenile Court. Of these, 602 either refused diversion or they were refused services by the court for various reasons, which lead them to longer incarceration and juvenile institutions. 1,420 youth completed their diversion programs successfully, making the success rate 85%.

The early intervention and diversion programs have kept youthful offenders in school and out of institutions, which has saved taxpayers the significant cost associated with stays in juvenile institutions. Juvenile institutional commitments have decreased 40% since Snohomish County adopted evidence-based diversion programs.

While it is understandable why citizens might have the perception that juveniles are not held accountable, it is only that the accountability has taken a different and more effective form within our communities. The mission of the professionals within the juvenile system has not changed. The goal of safer communities and effective interventions which reduce the repetition of contact with the legal system is being more effectively accomplished now than ever.

*Nick A. Clovsky
Department of Social and Health Services
Juvenile Rehabilitation Administration*

COCOON HOUSE- A RESOURCE FOR TROUBLED YOUTH & THEIR FAMILIES

Local experts say there are roughly 300 homeless youth on the streets of Snohomish County, every night. These youth are at risk of victimization by drug dealers, gangs, and prostitution rings. They are more likely to commit crimes of desperation due to lack of food, shelter, and other necessities.

Cocoon House is Snohomish County's leading resource for at-risk and homeless youth ages 13 to 17.

Cocoon House's WayOUT interactive seminars bring parents and teens together to learn healthy life skills. They build communication and decision-making skills, and strengthen the bonds between parents and teens. Likewise, their Project SAFE program strengthens family management skills of parents with teens at high risk. Cocoon House offers phone consultations for parents and in-home family counseling with a therapist. The goal is to keep families intact, and to keep youth off the streets and out of harm's way.

For youth on the streets, Cocoon House conducts outreach to provide critical survival supplies and referrals for needed assistance such as counseling or medical assistance. Their drop-in center helps to build relationships between street youth and Cocoon House staff, in order to prevent homelessness or help youth leave the streets.

Cocoon House offers short-term emergency shelter for teens as well as long-

term transitional housing for 15 to 17-year-olds who have no other place to go. Their transitional living program is a place to set and work on goals. It's about having a place to live and food to eat, feeling safe, going to school and receiving help with schoolwork, and learning to become more independent.

Cocoon Advocates work with teens to understand their needs and to set goals for their time together. An Advocate can help with a wide range of services and basic needs, including housing and shelter, food, clothing, transportation, school, jobs, and providing emergency provisions such as hygiene items. They can also assist youth with accessing community resources such as drug and alcohol or mental health counseling. When appropriate, Advocates also work with the teens' families and other support persons and service providers.

To learn more about Cocoon House services and success stories, visit their website at www.cocoonhouse.org or call 425-259-5802.



COCOON HOUSE - GETTING HELP

- Youths who are between 13 and 21 and need a place to stay overnight can call (800) 259-6042 or email

shelter@cocoonhouse.org

- Parents/caretakers of teens in search of information on how to resolve the conflict and turmoil in their teen's life can contact Cocoon House at:

Cocoon House Project
SAFE
2929 Pine Street
Everett, WA 98201
(425) 317-9898
project.safe@cocoonhouse.org

COMMENTARY- CONTINUED

At the Sheriff's Office we work on impacting youth through the partnerships we build with various community organizations. I'm thinking specifically of the Gang Community Response Team (G-CRT) partnership established a few years ago with the goal of eliminating gang activity in our county through prevention, intervention and suppression efforts.

I've already mentioned one of our partners: Big Brother Big Sisters of Snohomish County. They provide the most effective evidence-based "best practice" mentoring program for matching kids with a caring adult. Not all of their "Littles" are high-risk kids, but all of them need some extra support to help them thrive and grow into strong, healthy adults.

Cocoon House is another partner. This nonprofit supports youth in so many ways, including shelter for homeless youth, a drop-in center in north Everett, case management to help arrange services such as mental health and substance abuse treatment, and family support for parents who need advice and assistance with their teens.

Familias Unidas is another G-CRT member with whom we're proud to partner. They provide a wide array of services to strengthen youth and families in a family support center, including parenting classes, information and referral, play groups for small children and youth groups for older ones, and even a financial workshop for young people age 12 to 20.

These are just a few of the organizations at work locally and regionally. Alone, they do amazing things to help youth and families. Together, they pro-

vide not only a safety net for our community, but a thriving culture centered on healthy relationships.

Mentoring is not new. It's not the catchphrase of the day. It does not belong to a political party or ideology. It is not a crime prevention strategy. (Although it does make a difference!) It does not absolve parents of their responsibility to raise their children.

It is common sense and genuine caring. It is a sign of a strong, vibrant community. It is an opportunity that cannot afford to be left to "someone else" to fulfill.

You will never regret a decision to mentor a child. You may or may not see the results of your investment, but you can be sure you will have made a tangible difference in that child's life. I've listed a few organizations, but I'll bet you've thought of so many more while reading this. I don't even need to know which ones you're thinking about to say they desperately need donations and volunteers.

We can never have enough Leroy Wafers in our community. After all, one day soon today's children will be all grown up and maybe a few of them will have their own "wall of inspiration." Will you be on it?

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Published in The Herald on February 19, 2012

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SHERIFF'S OFFICE CRIME PREVENTION WEB PAGE:

http://sheriff.snoco.org/Sheriff_Services/Crime_Prevention.htm

NEWSLETTER INFO

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If you have questions regarding this newsletter or any articles that appear in it, please contact the editor at neighborhoodwatch@snoco.org

"PARTNERS IN CRIME PREVENTION NEWSLETTER" ARCHIVES:

http://sheriff.snoco.org/Sheriff_Services/CrimePrevention/CommunityPolicingNewsletter.htm

TIP LINES



Snohomish County Sheriff's Office: 425-388-3845

<http://www.snoco.org/app/ssh/anonymoustips/>

Crime Stoppers of Puget Sound: 1-800-222-8477