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involved. It was obvious that the parents of the juvenile inmates were powerless to have any influence. This is a glaring contrast to it only taking five complaints describing much less egregious conduct than complaints against the boot camp to have an impact on the private program.

I think that many parents, and many professionals who work with at-risk teens, usually understand and agree with the above comparison, that too many public programs are underfunded, dangerous and ineffective. As a consequence, an increasing percentage of parents with children making poor decisions are willing to do anything they can to find a better alternative for their child. This leads more and more parents to consider private placement, even if it places the parents in debt for years.

This makes me optimistic for our network of private parent-choice schools and programs in the coming year. Even though the private parent-choice option is more difficult financially for parents, it is balanced out by an increasing percentage of parents wanting to bypass relying on professionals to take care of the problem for them. We empower parents to take action and responsibility on their own.

Should anyone want to discuss this issue further with me, you are welcome to visit my blog at <http://woodburyreports.blogspot.com/>.

BUDDY BASEBALL AT DISCOVERY ACADEMY

By Jennifer C. Jones

Summer is only a memory now but for children with disabilities in Mapleton, UT, it was the summer they played baseball in a league of their own.

Discovery Ranch, working in cooperation with Mapleton City recreation, formed a Buddy Baseball league that benefits both groups of children.

Ranch students who were level appropriate were allowed off campus to mentor young children with disabilities. Students helped their young buddies bat, field, and run the bases in a T-ball game where everyone won.

"This was a wonderful opportunity for our students to learn more about themselves, to reach out and serve and help others," says Craig Smith, Clinical Director at Discovery. He says students will also participate this fall in a buddy soccer program

Community parent volunteers say this kind of mentoring benefits both groups of children. Keri is a parent who helped organize the baseball league. "Most of these kids don't get that opportunity to participate in sports because of their special needs, so this is a way to allow them to do that," she explains. She says area families were excited about the program. "We started with about ten kids, enough for two teams. And now we have about 61 kids playing and eight teams," she says.

Discovery Ranch students fill a much needed role of helping children with disabilities enjoy the sport and the companionship. "They're a lifesaver," says Robert, another parent. "My son can't play regular baseball so this is the next best thing. It's a lot of fun for the kids and the community."

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Josh, a Discovery Ranch student, says for him, it's a life lesson in communication. "These kids aren't the easiest to communicate with. It gives us an opportunity to put what we've learned into action."

Some of the children have little or no speaking ability. Others struggle with physical disabilities that leave them barely able to walk. Camryn, another Discovery student, has chosen a buddy with both of those disabilities. Speaking about her buddy, Cory, Camryn says she can tell when Cory is having fun. "He kind of waves his arms around when he's excited and he smiles and laughs, so that's how I tell."

She half carried, half pulled Cory around the bases. Both of them took a seat on the grass near second base. Neither seemed to mind the summer heat. When they finally made it back to home plate, both were ready for refreshments.

"I think the Ranch does this just to give us a good experience," Camryn says. "I like helping other people and making others happy." She flashes a broad smile at Cory. "It's worth it to me just to see him be happy and for him to be able to play."

Across the field a grandmother recalls the Ranch buddy her grandson had. "She and Shiloh just connected," the elderly woman explains. She says the relationship didn't end when the student graduated. "She sent him a Christmas card and Christmas present. He sent her one. She still communicates with him." The grandmother added, "Discovery Ranch is really a blessing to these kids."

Christian, took a break from batting to offer his own analysis. "I think there should be more shade, especially for

the base four kids," he observed with a serious tone. He nodded his head decidedly. "It's pretty good," he said thoughtfully. Then, brightening with a smile he added, "Especially the cupcakes and drinks!"

Camryn and Cory sat side by side, finishing their treats. He squealed and she smiled at him. "I feel really good," she said. "I feel like I accomplished something really good."

For video highlights of Buddy Baseball, please visit www.discoveryranch.net/videos.

About the Author: Jennifer C. Jones is a Communications Specialist for Discovery Academy. www.discoveryacademy.com She can be contacted by phone at 801-682-2315 or e-mail Jenniferj@redcliffascent.com.

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~ M.L. Boren

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