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fields. It is especially critical to schools and programs in the residential parent-choice network. A large part of our work is to help our students learn how to make positive relationships, and to do that adequately we need to be able to emphasize those relationships in our own professional lives.

To a large degree, the success of a private residential parent-choice school or program depends on how well the staff develops a type of "bedside manners" with the parents who are considering them or have enrolled their children there. It simply is bad for business when prospective parents feel the admissions person is trying to "sell" them on their school or program. It is also bad for business when the parents feel the staff is just going through the motions and that staff members don't really know or care about their child.

Our network of private residential parent-choice schools and programs was started by visionaries who understood that developing individual relationships with students was the foundation of success in working with these struggling teens. To these visionaries, thinking in terms of "one-size-fits-all" was out, and the basis of their success was helping one child at a time, which included that same thinking toward the parents.

In the last few years, some school and program administrators have come to consider the admissions department as primarily a sales department. This mentality tends to undermine the success of those schools and programs because it lacks "bedside manners." A staff mentality of treating all children and families the same will also undermine success, both with the children and financially. This too is poor "bedside manners."

In these tough economic times, it might be that those who are good at relationships with parents have the competitive edge.

> Dreaming is a kind of insanity, a rush of visions, largely unconnected to reality, emotion-charged and symbol-drenched, arbitrary in content and potentially infinite in variety. Dreaming is very likely a side effect of the reorganization and editing of information in the memory banks of the brain.
>
> ~ Edward O. Wilson

COACH'S CORNER...

The Coach's Corner is a section of the newsletter devoted to family coaching, and the use of coaching skills in working with parents of struggling teens and young adults in their homes, or while they have a child in program. Coaching in this case can be either an alternative to residential placement when appropriate, a resource for program staff or as an aid in supporting families of young people transitioning home from wilderness or residential programs. The COACH'S CORNER welcomes submissions regarding Coaching (such as essays, research, articles, news, etc.) from anyone.

The Coach's Corner was started by Woodbury Reports, Bill Valentine, Founder of Next Step For Success, and the accredited coaches of Next Step Coach Training, with "real life" condensed snapshots of what Coaching is about.

GOING THE EXTRA MILE

By Bill Valentine PsyD, CC

"We never give up on a child." "Failure is not an option." "Providing second chances." "Going the extra mile."

Over the years many parent-choice residential schools and programs have used a number of catch phrases to assure anxious parents that special needs children at their program will not be lost in a homogenizing, "mainstream" culture. The memorable slogans are interpreted by emotionally and financially stressed parents as meaning that while their child may have been summarily expelled from previous schools, this school or program is especially skilled at working with difficult children and will not easily quit on a tough kid. And indeed, a lot of obstinate, oppositional teens and young adults have met their match in the skilled, patient adults who make up the line staff in many schools and programs.

However, there are those young people who can't, or won't, even minimally comply with the behavioral requirements of a non-locked facility. Usually, these kids have been given multiple consequences and equal chances to make more positive choices. Then, the call that every parent dreads comes: "We're afraid you are going to have to come and pick Junior up. He has become too difficult to control and a major distraction to the rest of the kids in the program. We are really sorry, Mrs. Jones, but we have to think about what's best for the program." For the parent who has been desperately hoping and trusting that this time the magic would work, that call leaves her feeling like a drowning person watching the rescue craft steaming away into the distance.

The unfortunate reality, especially for positive peer-based cultures, is that the greater good must take precedence over any individual child or family. However, the school or program truly committed to providing every opportunity for eventual success to its students and their families can still maximize those opportunities while, not incidentally, doing all they can to leave behind a degree of customer good will.

As it becomes clearer that they are dealing with a particularly difficult young person, the school or program must be proactive in sharing this information with the parent. Too often programs are hesitant to disappoint or appear to be reneging on enrollment promises, and therefore keep the "bad news" from parents until the decision to expel is imminent.

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