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MCYS PARTNERS WITH ARK

MCYS is excited to announce a new collaboration with The ARK Group (formerly the Children's Center for Self-Esteem, Inc.) resulting in the coordination of the ARK program, which stands for "Adults Relating to Kids." MCYS staff and volunteers will facilitate parenting/teen groups at various locations this fall using this research based program.

The ARK Group, in cooperation with the University of Texas School of Public Health, conducted research that shows a connection between a child's sense of self-esteem and his receiving unconditional love from his primary caregivers. ARK's goals are to:

1.) help parents become more adept at the most important job in the world, **2.)** teach and model unconditional love and respect, **3.)** help prevent child abuse and neglect, **4.)** build better families and classrooms through better communication and interpersonal skills, **5.)** reduce juvenile and adult violence by improving self-esteem, and **6.)** make ARK parenting the norm for the twenty-first century family.

ARK classes will be presented in English and Spanish and are ten weeks in length. Pre- and post-surveys will be administered to each participant. Some of the adolescent topics discussed include: **Being Yourself, How to Deal with Stress, Change for a Healthier You, Bully-Proofing Yourself, Handling Tough Emotions, Grief and Loss, Sex, Putting Up with Parents, Rebellious, and Trust and Freedom.**

To reserve your spot, call (281) 292-6471 or (936) 756-8682.

Camp Watsitumi Gets a "Thumbs Up"

A Review of Camp Watsitumi from 15-year-old Taylor, who Volunteered as a Peer Facilitator at Camp:

MCYS held a camp for youth on the week of June 9th through June 12th. The camp was held at the Conroe High School Challenge Course. Groups did *Low Elements* for a day and a half, *High Elements* for a day and a half and after those three days, they went on a field trip. During these four days, the youth were asked to test their limits and conquer their personal fears.

Low Elements made the youth think together rather than just by themselves. The challenges they faced on this course were different from *High Elements* because in this, they had to work together to conquer the challenge. They listened to everyone in their group for input and faced the challenge together as a whole. After finishing each challenge, the group would talk about what they learned while they were trying to solve it. Almost every time, similar things were said like, "work together," "don't leave anyone out" and "consider other people's opinion."

High Elements was more of a one-person challenge. It was all about conquering your fears. For some, it came very easy, but for others, it did not. Though it never fails, there were always helpful words being said to the climber.

No matter how far they got on the challenge, when they returned to the ground there was always a pat on the back waiting for them. There were encouraging words being said constantly. Even if it was just to help them take one more step, it was a step farther than they were.



The field trip day came, and the kids were ecstatic. The challenges were over and now they could just go have fun with their newfound friends. Some groups went to Splashtown, while the others went to "Pump it Up" and The Aerodrome. Then at the end, we returned to the MCYS building and signed shirts, collected awards and said our final goodbyes.

Seeing the children, on the first day of camp, not even wanting to talk to each other, and then watching on the last day is a dramatic change. Going from not talking to one another, to stepping up on the wire and grabbing their hand for support and trusting that they would never let you fall, is just mind-blowing. The transition of trust between the youth is a great sight and it's something that we could all learn from.



Camp Watsitumi is a therapeutic adventure-based summer day camp, open to current and past clients, and their siblings. The camp offers a variety of physical activities designed around a challenge course. Activities are geared towards enhancing problem solving, communication, and teamwork skills.

Camp Watsitumi is structured to give youth, ages 7 to 17 the opportunity to interact with peers in a fun learning environment, while addressing each individual's physical, emotional, and social safety.

Montgomery County Youth Services focuses on strengthening families, keeping youth in school and employable through crisis counseling, shelter programs and prevention services. MCYS is a not for profit agency.



A LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Friends:

It is hard to believe that summer 2008 has passed and school is once again in session. With the beginning of school there is a lot of excitement and anticipation, but many times a great deal of stress on the family. Although I am not directly involved in counseling anymore (there are days I miss this part of my career), as a Licensed Professional Counselor I have seen the challenges families face as kids head back to school. Here are a few things to keep in mind as you deal with the hustle bustle of returning to school:

John Bracken, MA, LPC
Executive Director

- Think back to when you were starting a new school year. What feelings were you having? What were you thinking? You may have been scared, but didn't want to admit it to your parents.
- Ask open ended questions to your child such as: What do you think 7th grade will be like? How can you get along with your math teacher? What was the best part of your first day? What was the worst?
- Make plans to eat at least one meal together as a family each week (running through a drive through or watching TV doesn't count).
- Get to know your child's teachers and school counselors. They have a tough job and will appreciate your interest. If things do go wrong, you'll have developed a relationship that will help you work through the challenging times.

We at Montgomery County Youth Services stand ready to assist you if you are having difficulties and don't know where to turn. Don't be embarrassed if you need to reach out for help; it doesn't mean you are a "bad" parent. You'll be relieved to know that most parents feel the way you do at one time or another. Best wishes for a great school year!

COUNSELING INFORMATION

MCYS knows that parents and family are the first and most important influence in every child's life, providing a foundation of love and support. We offer a variety of free counseling services to all youth, up to the age of 18, in an individual and family setting that addresses many types of issues related to a youth's family conflict including:

- Child behavior problems
- Communication
- Coping with divorce or other loss
- Parent and child relationships
- Peer and school problems
- Roles and expectations
- Runaway behaviors
- Truancy

MCYS Counseling offers a safe place to explore and resolve feelings, thoughts, and behaviors. The counselor will meet with parents and guardians to ensure family awareness, cooperation, and to share the results of general counseling progress.

Please contact one of our offices to make your free counseling appointment today:

The Woodlands - (281) 292-6471
Conroe - (936) 756-8682
Magnolia - (281) 259-0440
Huntsville - (936) 293-1003

New Caney - (281) 354-4873
Splendora - (281) 689-5104
BridgeWay Youth Shelter - (936) 890-1132
Fairway Home - (936) 856-8015

Shelter Needs

The shelter is in need of the items below. Please call (936) 890-1132 if you would like to make a donation.

- Toilet paper
- Paper towels
- Kleenex
- Snack items that the kids can use for lunches (chips, pretzels, etc.)
- Any non-aerosol cleaning supplies
- AA and AAA batteries
- Heavy duty brooms and mops
- Large binders

MCYS Welcomes Ten Interns

Please join us in welcoming ten new interns to MCYS this fall! Six of our interns will be providing direct counseling services to youth and families at our offices throughout the county. The additional four interns will be trained to facilitate ARK groups (Adults Relating to Kids) this fall two nights per week in Conroe.

We would like to give special thanks to Connie Hoagland (new Intern for Splendora from Sam Houston State University), and Laura Henderson (new Intern for Huntsville, also from SHSU) for restructuring our play room at Lewis Street thus updating it and making it more play therapy appropriate. We truly appreciate their enthusiasm and initiative in getting involved with the agency.

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Ladies Night Out

Many guys were left behind for the night while over 500 women celebrated the 10th annual "Ladies Night Out," held to benefit Montgomery County Youth Services. The evening raised an estimated net total of \$54,000 as the girls danced, shopped, enjoyed massages, played musical chairs, and indulged in the banana split bar.

This year's event theme was "Once Upon a Time" and pajamas and storybook characters abounded! With an enormous amount of support and participation from our community, Ladies Night Out was a huge success. Women look forward to our event and they know it's for a great charity.



*You mark your calendar and I will mark mine.
Have fun with your girlfriends in 2009!!*

Date: May 7, 2009

Location: The Woodlands Waterway Marriott

The Guardian Angel Campaign

Thank You to our Guardian Angel Chairs Nancy & Casey Kosh!

MCYS is excited to announce the first annual "Guardian Angel" annual giving campaign. Although we have conducted direct-mail annual giving campaigns in the past, this year's "Guardian Angel" campaign takes a grass-roots approach to promoting the agency and seeking support for our efforts.

The "Guardian Angels" committee of local community and business members is committed to the mission of MCYS and understands that the youth we serve are in need of a guardian angel. The campaign will consist of committee members hosting specific individual events from mid-November through mid-December, in conjunction with our letter-writing campaign. The goal is to educate our community about how MCYS serves the youth in Montgomery County, and to seek financial support for our counseling, outreach and shelter services.

Funds raised from "The Guardian Angel" campaign will help to support efforts to maintain and expand the programs and services offered at MCYS including:

- Property improvements, maintenance and repairs at the shelters
- Summer activity and recreational programs for shelter residents
- Clothes, luggage and school supplies for shelter residents
- Curriculum materials, therapeutic toys and tools used by counselors at counseling sites
- Additional counseling services as needed to handle case load so no one is turned away
- Supplies for Street Outreach and Healthy Supports programs

If you are interested in becoming a "Guardian Angel" or in attending any of the campaign events, please contact Susan Summers at (281) 292-6471 or susan.summers@youthmc.org.

HOLIDAY PROJECT

The Holiday Project is in full gear! Last year's Holiday Project helped approximately 250 children have a wonderful Christmas, and we are excited to take this opportunity to provide even more children the chance to have a wonderful Christmas!

Children's names are being provided via communication with our counselors and staff.

We are actively seeking sponsors to fulfill their wish lists, which typically amount to \$100 per child.

It takes the teamwork of many people to successfully coordinate this project, and we are extremely grateful to our MCYS staff and our sponsors for making it all happen!

If you have questions or comments, or if you wish to sponsor a child, please contact Amy Valadez at 281-259-0440 or amy.valadez@youthmc.org.



TEE OFF FOR CHARITY

**At the 20th Annual
The Woodlands
Celebrity Golf Classic
November 6-9, 2008**

**Benefiting
Montgomery County Youth Services**

Join former Houston Astros pitcher Doug Drabek & PGA golfer Jeff Maggert, along with other sports celebrities and television and film actors.

★
Thursday, November 6 at 7:00 p.m.
Sponsor/Celebrity Party

★
Friday, November 7 at 9:30 a.m.
Skins Game
Sponsor/Celebrity Stroke Play Tournament
The Woodlands Country Club -
East Course

★
Friday, November 7 at 6:00 p.m.
"Shooting Star" Gala
The Woodlands Waterway
Marriott Hotel & Convention Center

★
Saturday, November 8 at 10:00 a.m.
Celebrity/Amateur Tournament
Woodforest Golf Club

★
Sunday, November 9 at 9:00 a.m.
Brunch at Ristorante Tuscany
The Woodlands Waterway
Marriott Hotel & Convention Center

Be a part of this great weekend that benefits MCYS! For more information contact Theresa Woodson at 281-419-4826 or theresa.woodson@youthmc.org.

Residential Services Programs Providing More than Shelter!

There have been many improvements, successes, and milestones in our residential program:

We are proud to announce that four Fairway residents graduated high school this past May. One resident received Montgomery County's Outstanding Drama Award as well as several other merits and awards from high school. This same resident just acquired his driver's license.

Fairway has now attained full capacity and has begun a waiting list! Capacity at Bridgeway has fluctuated over the last few months, but maintains an average of eight residents.

Bridgeway's kitchen has been overhauled! Our Lord of Life volunteers have done a spectacular job in transforming it into a great work of art! Bridgeway has also received new living room furniture and a multitude of dressers. Fairway received improved furniture as well.

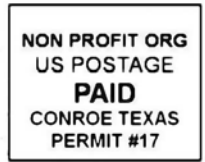
Our generous donors will be fully recognized in our Annual Report, due out in early 2009.

The memorial bench for Joan Swoap Godfrey is located on the property next to the Maggert Campus sign. It is a great tribute to her memory and everything she contributed to MCYS through her many years of service.

We are happy to welcome Katrina Llaneza to MCYS, our new Fairway Case Manager!

All of the residents went on an overnight trip to San Antonio with six brave staff members. They went to the caves, natural wildlife preserve, the Alamo, and if that wasn't enough, they ended at Fiesta Texas!

For more information on our residential services, contact BridgeWay Youth Shelter at (936) 890-1132 or Fairway Home at (936) 856-8015.



P.O. Box 1316, Conroe, TX 77305

MCYS updates and newsletters will soon be sent electronically. Please send your email address to: susan.summers@youthmc.org. Your contact information will remain confidential and will not be shared with any other organizations or agencies.

"A child's bridge from challenges today to achievements tomorrow."

STREET OUTREACH SERVICES TARGETS HOMELESS YOUTH

Street Outreach Services (S.O.S.) provided by MYCS helps youth between the ages of 10 and 21 who are homeless. This summer S.O.S. implemented a Food Drive at Wal-Mart to "Feed the Teens" and also offered a weekly Summer Life Skills training at the Conroe main library. Guest speakers from the Work Force and a hygienist from Conroe Dental provided valuable information on employment and oral hygiene. Lily Dorsey from the Agricultural Extension was on hand to provide information on nutrition and food. And on August 11th, S.O.S. clients enjoyed an end-of-summer ice cream party where they received school supplies.

Future endeavors for fall include the development of a MySpace page for Street Outreach,

a partnership program with Willis High School to mentor at-risk teens, and a "Walk for Homeless" to increase public awareness of this prevalent issue in Montgomery County.

S.O.S. offers homeless and at-risk teens shelter, food, clothing, hygiene supplies, transportation, crisis counseling, assistance with obtaining personal ID's and job search to promote positive choices, self esteem and success in life. Referrals come from schools, county offices, non-profit agencies, juvenile, libraries, parents, and teens themselves.

Street Outreach has a 24 hour helpline available through the Bridgeway Youth Shelter where you can contact Margie Taylor or Rita Hamilton at (866) 892-1132.

What defines a homeless youth? Youth between the ages of 10 and 21 who are in any of the following situations:

- Living with a friend
- Sleeping on a couch (other than at a custodial parent's home)
- Living in a hotel or motel
- Living in a car or tent
- Living on the street or in a park
- Living in a shelter
- Living with another family due to economic hardship