



## Prevention Approach to Gang Violence Garden Pathways Comprehensive Mentoring

### QUARTERLY REPORT: MARCH 2009 Success Stories

*These letters and stories were written by participants who were referred to Garden Pathways for mentoring services through community partners. Adult participants attended a **Family to Family Mentoring** group mentoring workshop for one week (4 days; 4 hours/day) and then voluntarily returned for an additional week of group mentoring (4 days; 4 hours/day). Youth participants attended a **Family to Family Mentoring** group mentoring workshop for one week (5 days; 2 hours/day) and then voluntarily returned for additional group mentoring or individual mentoring. The names of participants have been changed.*

#### YOUTH

##### A letter written by a mentor to Family to Family regarding his mentee “Ray”

Ray lives with his mother in a very rough area of Oildale. His father had been in jail most of his life, so he hasn't had a lot of good role modeling. Ray was referred to the youth mentoring program. It was obvious that he had a lot of behavioral issues, and did not know how to act appropriately in social situations. Ray finished the workshop and was matched with me as his mentor. It's only been a few months and I have seen some great changes in his life. **His self-esteem has greatly improved, his character has really developed and now his behavior is changing.** He is more calm and respectful in group situations. He is maturing. **He is more conscious of others people's needs (not just his own) and has expressed an interest in helping others.** He is attending school regularly and is **on track to graduate from junior high school in May 2009.**

##### A letter written by a mentor to Family to Family regarding her mentee “Monique”

Monique was referred to the youth mentoring program by the Probation department. **She was on Probation for truancy, getting in trouble at school, and hanging out with the wrong people.** She lives with her grandmother, who stated that, “she could not deal with what Monique was doing in her life right now; she will not listen, she is staying out all night at other people's houses that she does not know.” Her grandmother just wanted her to graduate and leave her house. Monique started the mentoring program in June 2008. Staff commented that Monique was such a physically beautiful young lady. However, they noticed right away that she had very low self esteem and she had no goals in her life. At times she appeared to be angry about her life (not having her parents). She shared that she has no contact with her mom or dad. She had never known her mother and her father had several children by different

mothers. She lived with him when she was younger, but he married a woman who did not want her around. At a young age, her father sent her to live with her grandmother. During the workshop, she started to feel accepted and cared for. Afterwards, I was matched with her as her mentor. I began sitting down and talking with her. **She set some short terms goals for her life.** That really helped her. **She finished high school and is enrolling in Bakersfield College.** She is still living with her grandmother and is now helping with the day care her grandmother has in her home. **She completed all the community service hours and is no longer on Probation.** She is continuing to attend on-going life skills sessions at Family to Family Mentoring and continues to meet with me. **I have seen a change in her attitude; she appears to listen, wants to help others, and she is really working hard on her short term goals.** Her attitude about life seems to be changing; in her words, “Nothing in life is free. You have to work for what you want.”

**A letter written by Dana’s mentor (to Family to Family Mentoring)**

Dana’s background is very rough. She is a foster child and has been moved from home to home. She eventually wound up in a group home. In her natural family, she had experienced a neglect and abuse. Dana was referred to the youth mentoring program by her group home. She had a lot of behavior problems. One of her issues was having unhealthy sexual relationships (this is how she felt loved) with older men. She started the youth workshop and **the staff observed how low her self esteem was. She appeared to be crying out for “attention.”** They showed her love and acceptance and encouraged her to see how “valuable” she was. She really wanted a mentor. They matched us together. It appears that having a consistent relationship in her life was influence her in a positive way. She started to realize that she had value and started wanting to help other hurting youth. There was an opportunity for some of the youth in our program to help three hundred (300) homeless people through a non-profit program called “Flood” that feeds and clothes hundreds of people each week. It was very cold the night our group volunteered. She recognized many of the people there. They were from her old neighborhood. It really saddened her and her heart was filled with compassion to help. She handed out food, gave encouraging words to people, and expressed to folks that there is “hope”. **A few months ago, Dana would have only been concerned with herself. Now that she has learned to value herself, she is concerned for and values others.**

**ADULT**

**Mary Wayner**

Please see [attached article](#) that was published in *The Bakersfield Californian* on the power of Mentoring and how it changed Mary’s life and the life of her daughter.

**A letter written by Ellen’s mentor (to Family to Family Mentoring)**

Ellen was referred by the Probation department to Garden Pathways in June of 2008. She was having truancy problems with her two sons. **She had been having relationship problems with her fiancé (who was a drug addict) and with her parents (who were very controlling).** She has three children. They are seventeen, twelve, and ten years old. She had custody of her two oldest children, while living and being supported by her parents. Her youngest was living full time with her father.

Ellen went through the adult mentoring workshop. She received a lot of acceptance, encouragement, and tools to overcome her past. She learned how to **break patterns in her life and set healthy boundaries.** Currently, Ellen has purchased a newer car to be able to work and take her children to school. She is **working full time** (and some extra hours) each week. She has **custody of all her children.** Her eldest is getting **good grades in school** and her other son is doing better as well. She has gotten her **own place to live with her kids.** She has **mended the wounded relationship with her parents** and they are moving forward in a positive manner. She has **broken all past unhealthy relationships with males** and now **knows what to look for in a future healthy relationship.**

**A letter written by “Sonia” to Family to Family Mentoring at the end of two weeks of group mentoring**

When I called this phone number (Garden Pathways) in the yellow pages I really didn’t know what I was getting into. **I was lost...my ground was shaking.** I wanted answers. Coming to this program and learning from our mentors and the people who were here with us for two weeks (the workshops), helped me to understand that life goes on no matter what the circumstances are. All of our problems are different but at the same time very similar. We all wanted “light.” **I found peace and I feel better about myself...I was so focused on being the perfect mother, the perfect wife that I forgot about myself. I almost lost everything. I know now that I lost what I had to lose (a dysfunctional relationship with her ex-husband) to keep the best thing, my children.** I want to be a better person for myself, for my children, but most of all for God. I can never thank you enough for all the help I got during this program. I can’t wait to see you all again. Thank you for your prayers and for your warm smiles. Thank you for being there for us. God Bless you all!

***Update on Sonia***

*Sonia is doing very well. She has a full time job at a grocery store. Her two sons enrolled in our youth mentoring program. They are both doing well in school and are playing sports. The family is communicating much better, and the boys are showing more respect to their mother.*

*Garden Pathways extends heartfelt thanks to Kern County, mentors, donors, and other supporters for partnering to transform lives and to transform our community.*



## Prevention Approach to Gang Violence Garden Pathways Comprehensive Mentoring

### QUARTERLY REPORT: JUNE 2009 Success Stories

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#### YOUTH

##### Synopsis of reports provided by Rico's mentor

Rico was referred by his high school to Garden Pathways because he was continually truant and had criminal problems. At the Garden Pathways workshop, Rico revealed that he was currently **in a gang**. He was very angry towards his father because he had no relationship with him. Rico lived with his mother in an apartment complex that was filled with gang members. He was often around them, found acceptance, and joined the gang when he was **eight years old**.

During the mentoring workshop, Rico learned that there were **choices in life** and that **he could choose a different path** other than his current path. He chose to continue with group mentoring sessions that provided encouragement and support and fostered essential life skills. Rico's mentor built a relationship with him that enabled Rico to trust him and look up to him as a father figure. His mentor talked to him about the pros and cons of the gang lifestyle.

At one of the group mentoring sessions, Rico had visible bruises on his body. He revealed that he had decided to leave the gang. Rico had gone through his first beating to be "jumped out." He subsequently endured a second beating to be "jumped out" and he is **now free from the gang lifestyle**.

Rico's natural father began contacting him — desiring to build a relationship. At first, Rico was very angry and wanted nothing to do with his father. His mentor encouraged him to give his father a chance. He did, and they now talk on a regular basis. Rico has moved to a new school. His **attendance and grades have improved**.

Excerpt of a report provided by Cooper's mentor

Cooper was referred to the Garden Pathways program because he was “messing up” at school. The Garden Pathways staff discovered that Cooper had deep anger toward his father and mother who are divorced. Cooper lives with his father and step-mother; however, he really wanted to live with his mother because she is more lenient and allows him to have his own way. Cooper's father, who recognizes his son's impulsive behavior, told him, “Your anger gets you in trouble, which is why I don't let you go out and hang out in the neighborhood.” Cooper was **getting in trouble at school** and had a **rebellious attitude toward authority figures**.

I became Cooper's mentor and started working with him on positive ways to deal with his anger, how to respect others, and how to focus at school. Over the last year and a half, I have seen wonderful changes in his life. His **attitude has improved**. He is **no longer getting in trouble at school**, his **grades have improved**, and he is using school to help him **achieve his goals in life**. Cooper is learning to show more respect toward his step-mother. His father and step-mother have seen great improvements in their son and they are very happy that he is in the mentoring program.

Letter written by Beth's mentor

I have been Beth's mentor for over six months. During that time I have seen a great deal of improvement from her. All of her family has battled drug and alcohol problems at one point in their lives. Some still suffer a great deal due to drug use. Beth's **father passed away from an overdose** when she was just a kid and her **mother continues to battle alcoholism** in her own everyday life. Beth currently lives with her sister despite all of the talk about her moving out to live with her boyfriend's family as soon as she turns 18.

When I first met Beth she was very naive and thought she knew everything. She was **at risk of not graduating high school** because she was struggling with several classes as a result of **lack of discipline and belief in herself**. All of her personal problems at the time made it even harder for her to believe that she could actually accomplish something great in life. Beth didn't know how to do much on her own and always needed the help of someone else to get things done (mainly her boyfriend and sister, who baby her all the time).

It was very difficult trying to get close to Beth because she didn't trust people, and she thought she had everything under control without the help of outsiders. After meeting with her for several months, and offering her my friendship (not my advice or guidance), she slowly started coming around and confessing things to me that she had denied in the past. She once said that she felt like she didn't know much of anything and needed the help of someone at all times to get things done. Beth's **biggest fear** in life was to grow up to be **just like her mother – unemployed, alcoholic, poor, uneducated, dependent** on others, and **miserable**.

Beth has recently opened up to me significantly and comes to me for advice for almost

everything. Through this program, I have seen Beth change from a young girl to a **strong woman that knows what she wants in life** and has **great aspirations**. She has **graduated from high school** and has obtained her driver's license. For the first time she is **actively looking for a job**. She is **starting Bakersfield College** in the fall.

I foresee great things for Beth in the future and I am a true believer in the mentoring program at Garden Pathways. I have personally grown and learned so much from it and have gained life experiences to use in the future for myself and in my own career. Without the program, Beth and I would not be where we are now. Thank you, Garden Pathways.

## ADULT

### Letter written by LaKeisha's mentor

Stay Focused referred LaKeisha to the Garden Pathways' Family to Family Mentoring program in November of 2008. She came with a negative attitude and had **no hope** of moving forward in life in a positive manner. LaKeisha had a history of **dysfunctional romantic relationships**. Her four children, ages 16, 14, 10, and 6, have three different fathers, one of whom is serving time in prison for gang-related activities in Kern County. LaKeisha was living in a two-bedroom house with her grandmother, her children and cousins, in an area known for gang activity. Her **son** was being **influenced to join the local gang**.

LaKeisha attended the group mentoring workshop and received **hope** and tools to move forward. She realized that she had a lot of negativity and was holding a great deal of **anger** towards her mother. She had **unmet expectations** of her father which led her to become involved in dysfunctional relationships. LaKeisha gained knowledge of how to work through her anger and begin to **forgive** those that had so deeply wounded her. I began to meet with her after she completed the initial workshop.

Now (eight months later) LaKeisha has moved into her own three-bedroom apartment in an area that is safe for her family. She has been blessed with furnishings and beds for her children. She is **positive about moving forward** and wanting a better life for herself and her children. LaKeisha's next **goal** is to be a **better mom** and a **good role model for her children**. She continues to attend group mentoring sessions and she is faithful to meet with me on a regular basis. She is currently working on her **reading and math skills** to prepare her to attend the Bakersfield Adult School to obtain her **GED**.

LaKeisha's **son** (whose father is in prison) has joined the Garden Pathways youth mentoring program. He is positive and **motivated to reach his goals**. He has been **getting good grades**. He is trying out for the school football team and is also speaking positively into a best friend's life that came from their old neighborhood.

**Letter written by Marta to herself after completing the initial workshop**

I have learned many different abilities to help better my future. This class has been an emotional roller coaster for me. I have been dealing with emotions that I had struggled with for ten years. I was able to release those frustrations by crying and letting them go.

I learned to know that I am on the right path. I learned that it is okay to talk to people about my problems. I learned that the past is the past and I can **move on with my life**. I don't have to feel like everything is my fault. I can be happy and have a normal enjoyable life. I learned a little more about who I am and how much **strength and beauty** I have. I can be a princess just like my father said I was. Rethinking the way you think is okay. I have been on the right track, so now I will continue to **look for work, build my family**, and speak to others about life. I am **valuable** to myself and I have to take care of myself and treat myself with love.

*Garden Pathways extends thanks to the County of Kern, Kern County Department of Human Services, mentors, donors, and other supporters for partnering to transform lives and to transform our community.*



**Prevention Approach to Gang Violence**  
**Garden Pathways Comprehensive Mentoring**  
**QUARTERLY REPORT: SEPTEMBER 2009**  
**Success Stories**

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**YOUTH**

**Information given by Andre's mentor to Family to Family Mentoring regarding his mentee**

I was matched with Andre after he completed the mentoring workshop. I have been working with Andre for three months and find him a likeable and friendly young man. Unfortunately, he has had a difficult past that interferes with his present. **He can read not much more than third grade level.** He is limited by his lack of phonics training and gets embarrassed and frustrated with his inability to read complete sentences. Andre's family history has left some deep scars regarding authority. He acted out a great deal to compensate for his reading deficiencies. This got him in trouble often.

**The two things I have been working on with him are reading and dealing with authority.** There is a team of three people meeting with him weekly to help improve his reading level. **Andre has improved his reading just by doing more of it.** Andre seems excited about the help he is getting, as he truly wants to be able to read. We have met with his Probation officer to develop a plan to help Andre understand what he needs to do to get off probation. Andre now knows that he needs to stay away from drugs, alcohol, cigarettes and girls. Our relationship is continuing to develop. **He has confided in me, trusts me, and I believe that he listens to me.**

Recently Andre attended a group mentoring life skills session and his **whole demeanor had changed.** You could tell he was feeling really good about the changes in his life and **that his self-esteem has improved.**

**Information given by David's mentor to Family to Family Mentoring regarding his mentee**

David was in the opportunity class at Golden Valley High School. The opportunity class is where kids who are in trouble and on the verge of getting kicked out of school are sent. It is also

the same place where kids who were attending continuation schools are placed when they transition back to mainstream high schools. Garden Pathways hosts weekly group mentoring sessions on campus for some of these students. **David was very open with the group and expressed that he had been going down the wrong path in life and he knew if he didn't get his life together soon he would end up on drugs or in prison.** He was very behind in his credits to graduate high school. **The mentoring group shared often about the power of "choices" and that each of the students was made for greatness.** One day David shared that he wanted to change and that he knew he had to get out of his environment. The mentoring staff discussed this with Project 180 partners and encouraged David to enroll at the Grizzly Youth Academy (a 5 ½ month military structured program for delinquent youth located in San Luis Obispo County). He will earn fifty-five (55) credits towards high school graduation during this period. **David began the program in July and is doing great!!** He sent a letter to his mentor a week after starting the program (in his own words).

*"Dear Calvin, I just want to say hi and to tell you how I am doing here at the academy. It has been alright this first two days and I just been trying to learn most of things that we have to learn and trust me it's a lot. Well I just want to say that I love it here and I believe that this school is going to help me a lot. Sorry that my letter is not so good and that righting is not so good but I going to get better [sic]. I can't wait to see you. Your mentee, David"*

#### **Update – September 2009**

David's mentor went to visit him at Grizzly Academy last weekend. He is doing very well. The structured environment has really helped bring focus to his life and he now has a positive attitude towards his future.

#### **Update on Robert (original excerpt from June 2008 Quarterly report)**

Robert, a seventeen-year old youth, grew up in a hard-core, gang-infested area of Long Beach. He was placed in foster care in Bakersfield two years ago. Garden Pathways was told that Robert has severe ADD, reading disabilities, and other challenges, and that he might not do well in the group sessions; however, he "needed" the group due to his family ties.

Garden Pathways staff chose to focus on finding the "hidden gold" in Robert. Robert was a delight to have in the group mentoring sessions. He openly expressed how much he had begun to change. *"I want to have a future that is different from everyone else in my family."* Upon learning that his goal was to get into the Air Force and become a pilot, Garden Pathways matched Robert with a mentor who is a retired pilot. Robert's foster mother has conveyed her tremendous gratitude for the program and the powerful impact it has made on her son. His mentor indicates, *"Robert now understands the importance of improving his grades. He is very engaged in all of the information he has received about aviation and continues to work toward his goal of joining the Air Force."*

**Update – September 2009**

**Robert graduated from West High School in June 2009. He was accepted at Long Beach City College, Aviation Mechanical program with potential to continue pilot training. His mentor writes” I believe that Garden Pathways (Family to Family Mentoring) can be proud of our mentee continuing his education and will become a **productive member of society**. This has been a very rewarding experience for me!”**

**ADULT**

**Letter written to Family to Family Mentoring regarding her mentee (Melissa)**

Melissa and her family arrived in Bakersfield in April 2009, homeless, no money and in search of a new life. She had previously moved from Florida to Michigan with the promise of employment, but it didn’t work out. Melissa and her family settled in at the Bethany Homeless Center and began the process of rebuilding their lives. It was at this point she was referred to Garden Pathways.

Melissa arrived at Garden Pathways with a very quiet demeanor and a reserved, gentle smile. Her face showed the hard times her family had endured and she reminded me of someone that could have arrived at Sunset Camp during the Dust Bowl Days. She didn’t say much, but one could tell that she was willing to endure hardship and do whatever was needed. After she completed the workshop at Garden Pathways, she was placed with a mentor.

After the workshop, **Melissa quickly started school to get her GED and is scheduled to take her test very soon. After her GED, she plans to take the CNA test and begin employment.** Her mentor stated “I have found Melissa to be a very quiet and hard working little lady, with her goals constantly in sight.” The family has really pulled together. Her son is also working on his GED and will soon begin employment at the biggest hotel at Yosemite National Park. Her daughter enrolled at East High School and is doing well. She is very sweet and always considerate of everyone around her, deferring to the needs or wants of others.

**Melissa’s smile has gone from reserved to very joyful. She is more outgoing and full of hope. She recently received a voucher for housing and will soon be transitioning into her own home. In five short months this family’s life has begun to completely change.**

Her mentor writes “Because of their work ethic and determination, I have high hopes for this family to have their own home soon and for all of them to be very productive part of our community. I am blessed to know them.”

**A letter written by Eva to Family to Family Mentoring after completing the workshop**

When starting Family to Family Mentoring I was very nervous. **I was closed off from everyone and everything.** I wasn’t sure how I was supposed to act or react to things. Being here has been very intense. I have been on an emotional roller coaster. I see a lot more than I ever have. I have

a lot more emotions than I ever knew existed. **I have been given tools in self esteem and communication that are making me grow and helping me.** The tools help me recognize the problem and help me fix it. I see patterns now. I realize that it will take time to fix the problems but now I am on the right path to do it. Thank you to the mentoring program and to the instructors for helping me to **see how things could be different for me and my family.** To see how different my relationships could be.

**A letter written by Chuck to Family to Family Mentoring after completing the workshop**

**Everything that I learned, I am going to apply to my life.** I learned to open up and share how I feel. **I have decided to go back to school and learn to read and write.** I feel like people listen to me more. I feel more confident. I recommend this class to anyone.

**A letter written by Jose to Family to Family Mentoring after completing the workshop**

The past two weeks I learned how to control my anger. I can communicate a lot better. **I am a man who is choosing to accomplish my goals to stop using drugs and stop hanging out with (negative) friends. Stop being a bad person and I chose to go back to school to get my diploma and get a good job so that I am able to take care of my future wife Sandra.**

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**Prevention Approach to Gang Violence**  
**Garden Pathways Comprehensive Mentoring**  
**QUARTERLY REPORT: DECEMBER 2009**  
**Success Stories**

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**YOUTH**

**Letter written to Family to Family Mentoring regarding his son Cooper (he has been in the youth program for two years)**

To whom it may concern: My son Cooper has made **incredible improvements** this last year. He is more talkative and expresses his opinion. I have seen Cooper **change so much for the good**. When I first got custody of Cooper he used to hoard food and he would stay to himself. Elijah (his mentor) plays a major role in Cooper's life. Cooper's **grades improved** a lot just in the last two semesters. He went from below 2.0 GPA to above a 2.3 GPA. Elijah took Cooper under his wing like he would his own grandson. He works with Cooper through a gang prevention program at Family to Family Mentoring. Through this program, my son has gotten to see software designers working in their fields of study. Cooper has decided to **pursue a future studying law and becoming a lawyer**. A year ago that was the furthest thing from his mind. I would like to thank everyone in the program that is helping my son out. I especially need to give great appreciation to his mentor **for helping my son out, no matter what the situation is**.

Sincerely: Jason

**Information provided by youth in mentoring program at Golden Valley High School**

When asked, "How the mentoring program has affected the youth participants' lives," several of the youth expressed, "**The mentoring program has changed our lives.**" One girl explained that she used to "do bad things (drinking /drugs)" and ditch school to hang out with the wrong crowd. Now her **attitude has changed. She is more positive. She is communicating more with her mother; she has stopped hanging out with the wrong crowd, and is attending school on a regular basis. She is focused on improving her grades, so she can mainstream**

**back into regular classes** (she understands this is necessary to pursue her goals and dreams). School administration indicates that she has shown such an improvement that she will mainstream in spring 2010.

Another young man (who had been adopted and then his adoptive parents went to prison for inappropriate behaviors; requiring that he be shuffled to another foster home) expressed that **everything had changed for him**. When he started the program he was in the opportunity class for skipping school and making wise cracks a lot. The mentors saw that he had a soft heart and realized he needed to know that **adults really do care**. He didn't feel like he had a family. He didn't know who he could trust, or if his foster parents were really going to keep him, and if he would get moved again. During one mentoring session he came in downcast and one of the mentors asked him, "Do you need a hug?" "How long has it been since you had a hug?" The young man replied, "I can't remember." **The mentor reached out and gave him a huge bear hug and the youth's face filled with a smile. He didn't let go for a long time.** Over a period of time, he came to trust **that the mentors really cared about him**. He also **built a better relationship with his foster parents. He did better in school and was able to mainstream from opportunity class to regular classes.** He continues to attend weekly mentoring sessions. He is more mature, happier, and focused on building a positive future.

Kathy shared that she is learning about respect and that you don't want to mess up your life because when you mess up and do drugs it gets you no where in life. **The program has helped change my life in a good way. I realize that I should stay on the right track, stay in school, graduate, go to college and get a good job.** I continue coming back to the program because I like talking about my feelings and problems. I get the opportunity to speak for myself. No one puts me down or anything. They listen.

*Youth responses (Surveys are periodically given to youth in the program to determine how mentoring is influencing their lives)*

- Our mentors teach us life lessons. They help us figure out our life plan. They helped us to learn how to look for jobs and give us great advice for our future.
- I have learned to love and respect myself.
- I feel super about myself.
- It seems like life is getting better.
- I feel cared for.
- I have learned to think positively.
- I can express myself without being judged.
- I have someone to talk to.
- I learned how to talk with and help my mom.
- I have career goals.
- I can control my anger.
- I have learned to handle difficult situations in a positive way.
- My attitude towards school has improved.
- I am getting along with my teachers and staying out of trouble.

**Information given by David's mentor to Family to Family Mentoring regarding his mentee**  
**(Original excerpt from September 2009 quarterly report)**

David was in the opportunity class at Golden Valley High School. The opportunity class is where kids who are in trouble and on the verge of getting kicked out of school are sent. It is also the same place where kids who were attending continuation schools are placed when they transition back to mainstream high schools. Garden Pathways hosts weekly group mentoring sessions on campus for some of these students. **David was very open with the group and expressed that he had been going down the wrong path in life and he knew if he didn't get his life together soon he would end up on drugs or in prison.** He was very behind in his credits to graduate high school. **The mentoring group shared often about the power of "choices" and that each of the students was made for greatness.** One day David shared that he wanted to change and that he knew he had to get out of his environment. The mentoring staff discussed this with Project 180 partners and encouraged David to enroll at the Grizzly Youth Academy (a 5 ½ month military structured program for delinquent youth, located in San Luis Obispo County). He will earn fifty-five (55) credits towards high school graduation during this period. **David began the program in July and is doing great!!** He sent a letter to his mentor a week after starting the program (in his own words).

*"Dear Calvin, I just want to say hi and to tell you how I am doing here at the academy. It has been alright this first two days and I just been trying to learn most of things that we have to learn and trust me it's a lot. Well I just want to say that I love it here and I believe that this school is going to help me a lot. Sorry that my letter is not so good and that righting is not so good but I am going to get better. [sic] I can't wait to see you. Your mentee, David"*

David's mentor went to visit him at Grizzly Academy. He is doing very well. The structured environment has really helped bring focus to his life and he now has a positive attitude towards his future.

***Update on David***

David completed the Grizzly Youth Academy (5 ½ month military structured school for at-risk youth) in December. **He is a changed young man. He improved in his academics. He earned 55 school credits. His attitude is more positive. He is now planning for future goals and dreams.** His dad is very happy about the changes in his son's attitude. David's mentor attended his graduation ceremony at Grizzly Youth Academy. David was so thankful to his mentor for caring enough to encourage him to get out of his environment (wrong people, wrong place, and wrong time) and attend the Grizzly Youth Academy. The structure and discipline within the program helped David to see what it is to be a "man" and **to focus on what kind of future he wants.** He is grateful for the love and support he has received. He is mainstreaming back into high school for his senior year. **He is continuing on with individual and group mentoring, so he has a positive influence in his life to hold him accountable to pursue high school graduation.**

## ADULT

### Letter written by Jim to Family to Family Mentoring after completing the workshop

I took this really cool class that I had heard about from Flood Ministries called Family to Family Mentoring. I talked it over with my mentor and I realized this would benefit me in the future. **The best thing that I have learned is what a healthy relationship and a toxic relationship are, and how to avoid toxic people. I also learned a lot about communication which will help me build a better relationship with my daughter.** I also know that **communication is the key to having a healthy relationship.** I've also learned that it's better to **let go of your anger, and forgive yourself and others, so your anger doesn't build up inside you.** Finally, I can start **building boundaries** in my life, and not let bad things take control of me or the people that mean the most to me. I feel that after taking this class **I have let go a lot of issues that had me down.** Thanks for all the good advice.

#### *Update on Jim*

Jim continues to meet with his mentor and is doing very well. He recently graduated from his parenting classes and is strengthening his relationship with his daughter.

### Letter written by group mentoring facilitator regarding Candis

Candis first attended Family to Family Mentoring sessions in September 2009. She **struggled with family issues such as parenting, boundary setting with immediate and extended family and communication of her feelings/needs.** She disclosed in recent ongoing group mentoring sessions a specific incident where **she was able to use "I language" and communicate her feelings.** She talked about what she needed and what she didn't like about a situation and communicates this with another family member. **She disclosed that she has been able to communicate things that have bothered her for years, things about the past, about her family and set boundaries about what is okay and not okay in her house.** She has participated in ongoing group, provided support to other members and been an active listener. She is now beginning to share her journey, failures, fears and successes recently with all members.

### A letter written by Rita to Family to Family Mentoring after completing the workshop

Thank you for the opportunity to attend the classes. The staff was kind understanding and very helpful. **It's giving me some new tools to apply in my life.** I was able to talk to them and they listened and gave me different ideas. They made me feel like **I mattered.** Everyone was always kind and courteous.

#### *Update on Rita*

Rita has been matched with a wonderful mentor. They meet on a weekly basis. Rita's life is beginning to turn around. She has expressed that she now feels like that she has hope for the

future. Her mentor is actively engaged in helping her incorporate new life skills: planning, budgeting, and transitioning into a healthy housing environment.

**A letter written by Ana to Family to Family Mentoring after completing the workshop**

I made a commitment to myself to give Family to Family Mentoring a chance to see what it could do for me, because **I was in a situation in my life that was very unhealthy**. I was arrested with my boyfriend last year. Seeing him this year made me feel a lot of feelings, **but I chose to stick to my commitment**. Family to Family Mentoring helped me by providing a safe place when I was confronted with my past. **The tools I got in communication and forgiveness helped me not to be a victim anymore**. I feel important to myself now. Life to me is not so scary to live in. I left the past because that was good for me to do. I know it's (life) not always going to be a bowl of cherries, **but I have something (tools and support) that Family to Family has given me to (make it through)**. I believe I will continue to make good choices.

***Update on Ana***

Ana is doing very well. **She has remained free from drug use**. She regularly attends group mentoring sessions and has gained wonderful tools. **She was able to forgive her biological family for various family dysfunctions**. She was recently matched with a mentor and the relationship is going very well. She has surrounded herself with stable, healthy relationships. **She enrolled in Bakersfield college and will begin in January 2010**.

**A letter written by Candy to Family to Family Mentoring after completing the workshop**

Dear Family to Family, I learned a lot about myself during this class. I came in skeptical and left so blessed! I also felt compassion for those around me who shared openly about their hurts, dreams and desires. **I feel a lot freer. Changes are going to be ongoing**, but through this class, **I was given a lot of tools. I also am able to see myself helping others the way I have been helped**. Everything was done in a safe, loving, non-threatening environment. I am so thankful for the new relationships I found and the bonding that was done in my heart. I feel like I've been with family and I'm a little saddened for all this to come to an end! Thank you so much! Your program is a blessing!

**A letter written by Melvin to Family to Family Mentoring after completing the workshop**

To Family to Family, as I attended this program, there was fear of sharing about my past, confronting my past, and sharing issues of my problems. But as the days went on and class resumed **I began to open up and reveal everything about me and what was buried deep inside of me. As I opened up, I began to empty this stuff that was clogging my life up**. I told people things that I never ever told my wife. Now that this program is over, **I do not only feel better but want to continue on being counseled to stay clean and empty of fears-pain-hurt**. I love this program and I highly recommend this to everyone who have or had problems

before. I thank God for you and this program for helping me and cleansing me of the things I struggled with. Love you all.

**A letter written by Mary to Family to Family Mentoring after completing the workshop**

I know a lot about myself that **I can change** and **what I can do to have a better relationship with my spouse and family**. I know I can have **boundaries** and I can be a better person. I see how **important I am** to a lot of people and I am happy to have been here to learn what I can do for my life.

**A letter written by anonymous to Family to Family Mentoring after completing the workshop**

My experience in class has taught me how to **set better boundaries**. I never set boundaries before. I also learned how to **control my anger**. These last two weeks have taught me how to **feel better about myself**.

**A letter written by Tanisha to Family to Family Mentoring after completing the workshop**

Dear Family to Family, Thank you for the opportunity to participate in this program and class. It was a good experience to have. **I learned a lot, things that I can take home to my family. We all learned together to overcome communication issues, exercises for and healthy relationships, to not give up and to say no to the toxic things.** It's a really helpful class. I would like to come back and would really like a mentor.

*Garden Pathways extends thanks to the County of Kern, Kern County Department of Human Services, mentors, donors, and other supporters for partnering to transform lives and to transform our community.*