

Into the wilderness

Outdoors programs help at-risk youth

Giving kids positive attention for 24 hours a day is intended to have an everlasting impact, but it can be a difficult task to achieve. Wilderness programs created for so-called at-risk youth accomplish this goal seven days a week.

Being in the wilderness teaches people how to fend for themselves by learning how to utilize patience, demonstrate respect and live in a community. In this environment, at-risk youth learn appropriate and positive methods of dealing with their issues.

Patterns exist in everyone's lives. They are only considered bad when used for negative attention. At-risk youth are in need of behavior modifications. Guidance counselors with Wilderness First Response

events. The Victim always places blame on others, relinquishing themselves from any responsibility for their actions, while the Perfectionist will not settle for any situation that is less than flawless. Lastly, the Aloof plays everything off as not mattering or having any effect upon their being.

Wilderness programs are designed to assign daily roles to children who may suffer from symptoms typically

By Vicki Isacowitz

ON THE CHALKBOARD



where they are watched from a distance. Their shoes are taken away to prevent them from running away. Students are allowed to spend the time any way they

choose. Some spend the 72 hours sleeping, while others are creative and build sculptures and devices out of the surrounding nature. They set up their campsite however they want, which usually winds up being a reflection of their room at home. Some are messy, while others are organized.

guardians.

They seek the wilderness experience as a chance to try an alternative treatment to remedy a difficult situation. State funded programs take youth who are caught within the prison systems. Judges often rule that a troubled offender participate in a wilderness program before assimilating back into public society. Unfortunately, these beneficial programs are dissolving as a result of cuts in state funding.

— Vicki Isacowitz is a secondary English teacher who has been educating students since 1996. She is co-founder of *Clever Minds Educational Services*, providing tutoring for students in grades K-12. Call 582-1707 or e-mail vicki@cleverminds.org.

One of the most unique elements of the wilderness program is a Vision Quest. Students are blindfolded to a site marked with boundaries to complete a three-day solo where they are watched from a distance. Their shoes are taken away to prevent them from running away. Students are allowed to spend the time any way they choose.

training identify and address patterns by pushing the student toward it, making them aware of their actions and taking responsibility for the consequences.

At-risk youth come in all types of characters — The Pleaser, Class Clown, Info Freak, Victim, Perfectionist and Aloof. The Pleaser wants to make everyone happy to avoid conflict and be well-liked. In an effort to get attention by making others laugh, the Class Clown acts inappropriately to invoke reaction. The Info Freak needs to know a minute-by-minute schedule of

defined as at-risk. Rotated responsibilities include fire master, builder of the bathroom and nightly meeting facilitator. In addition, students are required to cook for each other and "bust a fire" bow drill style (using friction without the use of any matches or lighting devices). Each night, lessons in science, reading and writing are taught to instill and maintain educational skills.

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The guidance counselors work with a continuous flow of kids coming in and out of the program. Living in small groups, usually of the same sex, allows for opportunities to share, learn and grow. Once an at-risk youth exits the program, they are not allowed to maintain contact with their counselors. In order for an effective transformation to occur, the desire to change needs to exist.

Wilderness programs for at-risk youths are both privately and state funded. Most of the students who are enrolled in private programs are usually troublesome to their parents or

BRIEFLY

Ice cream social for the arts

Arts For the Schools invites you to an "Ice Cream Social For the Arts" fundraiser at Baskin-Robbins 31 Flavors in Tahoe City on Wednesday, Jan. 26. Bring your family and friends to 31 Flavors (near McDonald's) anytime between 11 a.m. and 10 p.m. on Jan. 26. Tell the cashier you are supporting Arts For the Schools and 31 Flavors will donate 20 percent of all sales that day back to Arts For the Schools to help fund arts programs in our local schools. A special drawing will be held to win gift certificates for pounds of coffee at Coffee Connexion in Tahoe City. Write your name, address and phone on a flyer and drop it in 31's jar to win. Special thanks to Steve at Baskin-Robbins and Robin Dworkin of Coffee Connexion for their generous support of Arts For the Schools.

Open mic night at the Club

NTHS Student Action Committee hosts the Club on Sunday, Jan. 16. Open Mic Night at Sawtooth Ridge Cafe from 7-10 p.m. Admission is Free. (Reminder: There is no School on Monday, Jan. 17 for the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday.)

There will be karaoke, but feel free to bring, poetry, skits, music, stories, songs, etc.

Parent Volunteers or donations are always appreciated. For more information contact teacher advisor Mr. Dean Nordby at North Tahoe High School at (530) 581-7070 ext. 4125.

Tahoe Mother's Club speaker series

On Wednesday, Jan. 19 at 6 p.m. at PlumpJack Conference Center in Squaw Valley, The Tahoe Mothers' Club continues its speaker series with special guest Amy Schluensen, OTR/L and Julie Fontecchio, speech therapist. Members are free — \$5 suggested donation for all others, guest encouraged. For more information, contact (530) 470-1074 or go to www.tahomothersclub.org.

What is early intervention? What specific skills are expected in children prior to three years of age? How do I determine if my child is developing on schedule? What role can occupational therapy play to help promote your child's development?

Learn what specific skills are expected from your child prior to three years of age. Areas of focus include reflexes, stationary skills, locomotion skills, object manipulation skills, grasping, visual motor integration and sensory processing.

Review techniques and activities to stimulate your child's development. Hear about suggested resources available. Learn what toys/equipment are available that will promote your child's development. How can you determine if your child has normal speech and language development? What is typical speech and language development for children under six years old. Learn how to use language facilitation techniques to stimulate development.

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