

HIGHER GROUND
 A TIYOSPAYE INC.
 PROGRAM
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Higher Places

“Helping People Choose to Change”

VOLUME II, ISSUE III

FALL 2007

Promoting Healthy Families

Substance Abuse Prevention / Intervention

Bilingual Spanish Services

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Benefit Breakfast Raises \$55,000

On October 2nd, Higher Ground conducted its second Annual Benefit Breakfast. The event was a great success, resulting in over \$55,000 in gifts and pledges.

“The Board of Directors and the other captains did a wonderful job,” Says Shirley Toy, Assistant Director. “They allowed us to deliver our message to the perfect audience.”

About a hundred guests attended the event, along with Higher



Mary San Martin, Higher Ground Director, addresses the 2007 Breakfast.

Ground staff and Board. After a Mexican Buffet breakfast they watched a short video and heard the Higher Ground story.

Steve Shaad did an outstanding job as Master of ceremonies and Jim Hattan was excellent during the plea. Mary San Martin, Michael Hunter, Donna and Jessica all gave heartfelt talks which touched the audience.

After the breakfast guests enjoyed touring the beautiful grounds of Botanica Gardens.

HG Recognizes Board Members

Higher Ground has been blessed with one of its best boards ever, raising over \$100,000 this year.

Several of the members are new:

Helen Bullock (East Wichita News), La Nita Roark (Plaza Real Estate) and Steve Shaad (BG Products) joined in January.

Marta Curry (Waddell & Reed) joined in March



Delia Jackson, Board Chair

and Jim Hattan (Don Hattan Chevrolet) and John Salem (Enterprise Advertising) joined us in June.

Other board members include Delia Jackson (IBM), Emy Abay (Abay Orthodontics), Dan Hawkins (The Hawkins Group), Yolanda Camarena (Pizza Hut), and Celia Chin (Rico's Hair Salon).

Higher Ground's Mission: Empowering culturally diverse youth and adults to recover their lives and hope by providing innovative and effective prevention, treatment and counseling for drugs, alcohol abuse and related life challenges.



“Words cannot express what this experience has done for my life and for my family.”

- Carrl



Gabriela Prieto

Profiles: Carrl's Story

The first time I ever drank alcohol I was 7 years old. My freshman year in high school I started drinking regularly and smoking marijuana multiple times daily. I decided to drop out of school and start working. Eventually I was shooting up meth about 3-4 times a day. I met a girl and started a family, but I was still using everyday. We had two children together but were unable to pay our bills and moved around constantly. We soon split up and the children had to go live with her parents. I was court ordered to go to treatment.

I came to Higher Ground angry and thinking it was just going to be a bunch of people telling me what to do and telling me I was a bad person for doing drugs. I ended up finding a family, an entire family

of people that understood and related to my problems. I was provided a safe place to come to and talk about my frustrations, anxieties and feelings. I was taught coping skills and how to handle my anger.

My most exciting experience at Higher Ground was the Ropes Course. It taught me how to trust myself and others. When you're 30 feet in the air and your peers are holding your life line and the only thing keeping you from falling is trust in your self and your group it makes you realize it is all right to trust again.

After this experience, and many more like it, I was able to work on getting my life back together and getting clean. At first it was very hard to open up and get honest with the group, counselors and especially

myself. I had a few set backs but with the help of God, group and my new support system I was able to remain sober and find a life with out drugs and alcohol.

I am now clean and sober for 6 months. I am working on my high school diploma, I have a steady job, a great home and I am getting my children back.

The people make Higher Ground unique, from the counselors to the peers. You are encouraged to share your experience, from addiction to everyday problems, so others can learn from them and help give you support. I love Higher Ground and words cannot express what this experience has done for my life and for my family.

HG Staff Update: Gabriela Prieto

Higher Ground is pleased to welcome a new Counselor Aide: Gabriela Prieto, who is working part time while she finishes her Bachelor of Social Work degree at WSU. A former practicum student at our agency, and a fluent Spanish speaker Gabriela, is now assisting regularly with the Pueblo Path Program's adult treatment ser-

vices.

“She is a fast learner, easy to work with and our clients are very comfortable with her,” says Martha Arana, Pueblo Counselor.

Gabriela has been helping with youth services by translating for Spanish-speaking families.

“I knew I wanted to enter a field where I could serve others,”

Gabriela says.

Gabriela intends to pursue her Masters in Social Work when she finishes her schooling in the Spring.

“She brings with her an understanding of the culture and a quiet strength,” Says Carol Gallegos, LMSW.

“Welcome Gabriela!”

Faces of HG: Challenge by Choice Program



One of the most successful programs at Higher Ground is The Challenge by Choice (CBC) program, implemented five years ago for schools in Wichita and surrounding areas. Groups of students meet once a week for six weeks to learn new life-skills that empower them to successfully deal with the problems of adolescence.

Through experiential activities, students are encouraged to explore the way they react to various problems and to build a base of skills that will allow them to deal with those challenges more effectively. The program serves both Middle schools and High Schools, and counselors find the different age groups each rewarding in their own ways.

Middle-schoolers respond best in more “active” learning sessions: building structures from pvc pipes, trying to lifting a tent pole in unison, deciphering illusion cards, etc.

“The challenge is to keep them engaged,” says Chenoa Simmons, a CBC counselor. “There is even a big difference between the sixth graders and the 8th-graders: the younger kids are much more direct and inquisitive, whereas the older kids - once you get through their walls - are quicker to see the analogies between the activities

and their own lives.

High School students engage in activities that are more personal, building communication skills that help them with peers, parents, boy friends and girl friends.

“Students at this age are able to articulate their problems,” Chenoa says. “We can give them exercises like ‘Write your own epitaph - what would people remember about you if you were gone?’ and they get it right away.”



“When you reach them, you know you have really had an impact on a life.”

- Chenoa Simmons-Daniels,

CBC Counselor

Among the High School students there is an additional dichotomy between Leadership Groups and “troubled teens,” Chenoa says.

“The leadership kids are very enthusiastic and energized - even to the point of sparking the counselors. “We know that they are not only going to use these skills in their own lives, they are going to go out and share them with their peers.”

On the other hand, troubled teens may be harder for counselors to engage, but when they do, it can be very rewarding. “These are the kids who are desperate for help. When you reach them, you know you have really had an impact on a life. Often it is the rowdy one, or the one who never said a word during the activity, who comes up to you later and tells you what a difference you made.”

The program is also a challenge for the counselors, who do three or four groups a day, back to back. “It’s like going on stage to do improv,” Chenoa says. “I get so pumped up and excited and I really enjoy it. But afterward I’m exhausted.”

Requests from the school district for CBC continually increase, exceeding Higher Ground’s capacity to provide counselors. The City will hopefully increase funding for this crucial program next year.

In Appreciation: Tex Abay

Higher Ground is sorry to announce that Dr. Estaquio "Tex" Abay is stepping down from the board.

Tex was instrumental in making our fundraising program a success and his expertise in the health field and fundraising experience made him an incredible asset to the board.

His deep commitment to the Higher Ground Mission was reflected in his leadership as Chairperson of the Endowment Committee. His tireless efforts and personal generosity helped establish our endowment fund with the Wichita Community Foundation.

In addition to his experience and wisdom, Tex brought stability, wit and heart to our board meetings, always ready with a funny story or unique insight. He will be greatly missed.

For all you have done for us -

Thank you & best wishes Dr. Abay!



Fast Facts: "Skittles"

1 in 10 teens have tried it.

The latest fad in teen drug abuse is the consumption of over-the-counter products containing the opioid dextromethorphan, or DXM. Teens call the drug "C-C-C," "Robo" and "Skittles." The drug has been around since 1958, and is found in more than 200 different brands.

One in 10 teens reports abusing cough medicine to get high. Its effects - usually a prolonged feeling of euphoria - can last up to six hours. The effective dose is a few thousand milligrams, which can translate into 20 to 30 or more tablets. Teens as young as age 11 are taking the drug for recreational use - often obtained from their parents' or grandparents' medicine cabinets.

DXM is part of the new trend of abusing prescription and over-the-counter drugs at "pharm parties," where kids get together, deposit prescription drugs in a large bowl, then grab a handful of pills and swallow them - often with alcohol. This heightens the risk for drug interactions and makes it difficult for hospital officials to properly diagnose due to a lack of information about what drugs were taken.

Get Involved!

There are many ways you can become involved at Higher Ground.

- Volunteering
- Financial Donations
- In-kind Donations
- Friend and Family Referrals

Please contact Shirley Toy at (316) 262-2060 for more information on how you can make a difference in our community!

Higher Ground Community Relations Department

Higher Ground, a Tiyospaye, Inc. Program is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. "Higher Places" is published via e-mail to Higher Ground supporters and corporate community members. If you have any questions, comments or would like to be removed from our contact list, please contact, Shirley Toy, Assistant Director, via e-mail at shirley@higherg.org or call (316) 262-2060.

2007 Breakfast Program

Welcome-Steve Shaad, Board Member

Opening- Michael Hunter, Experiential Coordinator

Higher Grounds' Vision-Mary San Martin, Founder

Video Presentation

Honored Graduate (parent) - Donna

Honored Graduate (youth) - Jessica

"How You Can Help" - Jim Hattan, Board Member

Conclusion—Steve Shaad, Board Member

A Grateful Thank You to Our Donors:

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