



## Newsletter, December 2009

The mindset of Youth Strategies is really simple. It's all about helping provide young people with a real chance to be successful in life.

"We work with at-risk youth," says Mike Fohner of Youth Strategies, which is a nonprofit organization that operates out of a facility in the Jones Family Resource Center. "We do job training and placement with a values-based curriculum. We also have a character-based program. And, we work very closely with the Alternative Learning Environment in Springdale."

Fohner believes that the **Youth Strategies mission statement of "Empowering the Potential in Young People" best describes what this organization is ultimately striving to accomplish.**

As for some of the more specific details with how Youth Strategies operates, Fohner covered a number of key elements during a Greater Graduation Project Summit presentation this past fall as outlined below.

Youth Strategies youth receive regular dialogue on its core values, including:

- Integrity
- Discipline
- Compassion
- Humility
- Faith
- Confidence
- Initiative

There is also a comprehensive **Personality Inventory** to help set up mentoring conversations in the future as well as appropriate job/task assignments through the following:

- Daily mentoring
- 5-year goal discussions
- Point-of-contact experience
- Computer applications including Microsoft Office
- Client assistance in the building
- Data entry
- Filing
- Answering phones

- Newsletter preparation
- Communication skills
- Mailings
- Team tasks and environment
- Scanning documents
- Community service awareness
- Internet research
- A team of supervisors committed to their success

These youth provided much-needed service and assistance to a number of different organizations such as:

- Family Network
- Child Care Resource and Referral Center
- Single Parent Scholarship Fund
- Crisis Center
- Arkansas Support Network
- Jones Center Backpack Program
- Jones Trust
- Rebuild Together
- EOA
- Community Clinic
- Tobacco Free Coalition
- Prevention Resource Center
- Big Brothers Big Sisters
- Youth Strategies
- Center for Effective Parenting
- Child Care Resource Center

As part of his summit presentation speech Fohner noted that, “One of the reasons we believe we were successful (in helping these youth turn things around) is because we were able to identify and address issues and barriers these young people were facing that interfered with their success.”

Overall, Fohner noted that some of the most important things that Youth Strategies has recognized are:

- Mentoring leads to great outcomes
- No gaps in time between school to jobs and back to school again
- Learning to serve and receiving services
- Life perspective ... with a 5-year plan ... and understanding the relationship between a task and their future
- Collaboration is imperative
- Every young person had some sort of transportation issues

---Year-round preparation in job skills, behavior, and goal-setting is critical

Thanks to a Winthrop Rockefeller Foundation grant in the amount of \$100,000 over the next three years, Fohner hopes to utilize these funds in support of workshops, building even stronger business partnerships, growing the Arkansas Youth Development Collaborative and supporting the faculty at the Alternative Learning Environment in their efforts.

“Our overall success has not been the result of our own agency’s efforts, but rather the result of several agencies, the city (of Springdale), and a dedicated administration and faculty being open and committed to working together in a collaborative way on behalf of at-risk kids,” Fohner assured. “I give sincere thanks and deep appreciation to Tim Weiss and his staff (at the Alternative Learning Environment) who do a tremendous job in walking alongside of these young people and giving them hope and a shot at a successful future.”

It’s obviously an overall strategy that Youth Strategies is thrilled to be helping make a success as well.