



RITE OF PASSAGE

SIERRA RIDGE ACADEMY Newsletter

Spring / Summer 2011

Improving the Lives of Youth

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*Houston Rocket's Starting Center
Chuck Hayes gives keynote address
at Sierra Ridge Academy
Graduation Ceremony*

Building Sustainable Partnerships Promotes a Positive Organizational Culture

Before Sierra Ridge Academy began the much needed remodel of its dining hall, the team responsible for its completion met to consider what successes should be accomplished through the \$2 million dollar effort.

First and foremost it had to be aligned with the mission and vision of Rite of Passage ATCS Sierra Ridge Academy. This included creating and sustaining a Positive Organizational Culture. For staff working in the Human Services field a construction project seemed foreign to this goal.

With some ingenuity and determination however, the staff agreed that from project start to finish, Sierra Ridge Academy would create opportunities to build its Positive Organizational Culture along with its new dining hall. This began with the project team reviewing candidates to provide the construction services of the extensive remodel that needed to be

communities.



Assemblywoman Kristen Olsen (center) with Marlon Morrow Sierra Ridge Academy Program Director (left), and Rite of Passage ATCS Executive Director Lawrence Howell (right) praised the efforts of creating new opportunities for youth and local businesses at the new President Grover Cleveland Dining Hall Opening Ceremony.



Business and community partners share in the success of Sierra Ridge Academy's new state of the art dining hall

This evidence-based practice was born out when local Assemblywoman Kristen Olsen attended as a keynote speaker encouraging the students to never give up. Also present were the contractor, subcontractors and several local businesses who provided goods and services to the remodel project. Sierra Ridge Academy staff and students were very proud to show off their state of the art dining hall.

completed. Rite of Passage ATCS Sierra Ridge Academy wanted to award the contract to a local contractor and stipulated in their negotiations that the contractor must use local construction and trade businesses to complete the project.

By doing so, Rite of Passage staff were able to model the Positive Organizational Culture principles to the students who would benefit from the new eatery.

Mentoring and Role-modeling are core components of the Positive Organizational Culture that Sierra Ridge Academy instills in the students who reside there. This provided the students an opportunity to see how important it is for people to invest in and help sustain their local

The remodel project was aptly named the "President Grover Cleveland Dining Hall" for the U. S. President responsible for deeding the land that Sierra Ridge now sits on to the original owners in 1885 under the auspices of the Homestead Act of 1862.

The Rite of Passage ATCS Board of Directors came to celebrate the success of the collaborative project and stated emphatically to all present, that the collaborators had accomplished their goal. Local neighbors sat and spoke with staff and students and even agreed to participate in Sierra Ridge Academy's Community Advisory Board. Existing partnerships were strengthened and new partnerships were formed.

Program News

From the Desk of... Marlon Morrow

Program Director, Sierra Ridge Academy



Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) is an important aspect of the programming at Sierra Ridge Academy. This system-based quality program approach has been integrated into the Human Service field using evidence-based approaches to improve outcomes for at-risk youth.

Sierra Ridge Academy piloted the initial CQI system for Rite of Passage ATCS to ensure that best practices at the site level are implemented in every portion of the program.

From treatment to transportation, every aspect of the program is reviewed. Then, as the name suggests, ways to improve each area of the program are evaluated.

This year, Sierra Ridge Academy is excited about what this approach will mean to the quality of the services each student will receive. Sierra Ridge Academy has created five unique staff teams:

- HR
- Operations
- Education
- Case Management
- Treatment

Made up of subject matter experts these teams will evaluate current systems.

The teams meet monthly to evaluate each area of a given subject to find ways to improve processes and elevate success for the at-risk youth we serve.

From Evidence Based Practices (treatment) to Operations (transportation services), Sierra Ridge Academy is committed to providing the right service at the right time for the right youth to reduce each individual youth's risk of recidivating.

Community Involvement brings Intergenerational Understanding

Sierra Ridge Academy works with students to create a positive enriching approach to working within their communities as they transition home.

Most students experiences have led them to defend a small block or street as a territory". Their own experience with community pride exists in gang signs.

One way Sierra Ridge Academy works to change these engrained behaviors is to create positive opportunities that provide students with a glimpse at the past that can help change their future.

A current example are the RAMS at Sierra Ridge Academy taking weekly trips to the San Andreas Senior Center to make sure that BINGO is not missed.

RAMS, who have exhibited leadership and a positive approach to completing their programs, have an opportunity to see that a positive approach brings its own reward.

Seniors love to have the students there.



Sierra Ridge RAMS provide an important service to the Seniors in the community, and learning community involvement creates positive response.

They will come not just to play but to have an opportunity to interact with the young men who are giving their time. This intergenerational interaction helps strengthen positive response to positive behaviors, and gives the students an opportunity to experience the seniors wisdom and appreciation.

Annual RRSS Provides opportunities for Positive Youth Development

The Run, Ride, Swim, Survive Event for Rite of Passage's Western Region Students is an annual event that each program looks forward to with anticipation each year.

Students from diverse backgrounds learn to work together in several different events to create moments of success.

This year the students at Sierra Ridge Academy, in the true spirit of dedication and teamwork, were rewarded for their diligence.

The two teams representing Sierra Ridge won 1st place (gold) and 2nd place (silver) in the overall event. This is a difficult feat, but Sierra Ridge Academy students accomplished it with the spirit and team work that are key components of Positive Youth Development.

In order to win the top two placings, students

had to complete a 3 mile cadence run, swimming relays, a 5/20 exercise presentation and an ultimate frisbee tournament. Their overall scores led them to victory. Students took away not



Students start the Run Ride Swim Survive with a 3 mile Cadence Run

just a prize, but a sense of accomplishment found only through completing a goal as a team.

Community & Customer News

Probation Officer Strengthens Student's Chance for Success

When asked how long he's been working with youth, Parole Officer Bernard Wolf's immediate response is "Always". Mr. Wolf in fact, has worked with youth for over thirty years in some capacity. He started his professional career working in Tehama County, California as a Detention Officer. From the beginning he believed with his gift for athletics, and determination to help juvenile offenders make better choices, that he could become an effective advocate for students.

His creed is "Listen". Through his own training and observation he has learned that mentoring youth using active listening helps him figure out what their needs are and what will motivate them to make better choices. He also knows that staying involved is as



Bernard Wolf (left) Spends time with the youth he's placed at Sierra Ridge Academy. "Listen", he says to the students, try to figure out what they are saying so you can help them make better choices, and create a plan for their future".

important. Mr. Wolf practices what he preaches. He works in his community in Shasta County as a sports coach and a Sunday School teacher for youth.

When asked why he likes working with Sierra Ridge Academy, he stated, "their Pro-social sports programs and progressive academic approach." He continued, "I have never seen another program like Sierra Ridge Academy in California, only when I've travelled outside the state". The energy from the staff is tremendous."

When asked about his future goals, Mr. Wolf stated "Advancement would disconnect me from what I love to do, work with youth".

Keynote Speaker at Graduation has students "Rocketing" Toward Success

Rite of Passage Sierra Ridge Academy students Matthew M., Ruiz M., and Demaricia D. knew moving forward was their goal. Matthew had achieved Validation of the Rite of Passage program while Ruiz and Demaricia validated the program and received their high school diplomas. None of them were aware however of the surprise in store by their guest speaker.



Graduating students from Sierra Ridge Academy look on in excitement as Houston Rocket Chuck Hays encourages them to "never look back".



RAM students pose with Guest Speaker Houston Rocket's Center Chuck Hays after a moving graduation ceremony.

Role-modeling / Mentoring is such a large part of the programming at Sierra Ridge Academy so having an NBA Star such as Houston Rocket's Starting Center Chuck Hays speak during such an important moment in the students lives can make the difference in their future choices.

Chuck provided these words of wisdom to the students as they take their education, goals, and aspirations back to their communities:

"Always have a plan, have a plan A and plan B. You can put plan B in your back pocket. The thing about plan B being in your back pocket is that you have to reach back. Always move forward, stick with plan A, never reach back."

Always move forward, stick with Plan A, never reach back! - Chuck Hays Houston Rocket's starting Center



Ram-Page

Run Ride Swim Survive 2010
Sierra Ridge Academy brings home
Silver & Gold



*SRA Triathlon Team Biking
to Victory!*



*Sierra Ridge and Q-
House students show
off their medals*



*Regulators ready to
Rock & Roll*



*Sierra Ridge Regulators and
Squad cheer on their
Teammates in the swim
competition (Blue and Sage)*



**Helping others
through community Partnerships -
RAMS volunteer at the local foodbank**



**Taking a break from the
Summer Sun**



**SRA Students
prepare to
volunteer at the
Annual
Calaveras
County Frog
Jumping Contest**



**Board Member Montoya Graham is
Master of Ceremonies for the ribbon
cutting to official open the President
Grover Cleveland Dining Hall.**



**SRA students learn life skills including
the dangers of Shaken Baby Syndrome**

Evidence-Based Practice (EBP) is only effective when it is well-designed and implemented in a way that maintains program integrity (Lowenkamp 2004). In fact, research indicates that poorly implemented EBP may not only be ineffective in reducing recidivism, it may actually increase recidivism rates (Latessa & Lowenkamp 2006; Washington State Institute for Public Policy 2004).

To enhance its implementation efforts, Rite of Passage started a new company-wide initiative called "Focus on Fidelity." The goal of this initiative is to implement EBP and systems that effectively deliver programs with fidelity to research-based guidelines and continuous quality improvement (CQI).

This is accomplished using the APIC model - Assess, Plan, Identify, and Coordinate. At Rite of Passage this model is used from the time the youth arrives until they are transitioned back into their community.

To begin with, staff use motivational interviewing (MI), an evidence-based technique for effective intervention, during the assessment process. This assists in reducing student anxiety and helps students overcome negative emotions regarding behavior changes. The assessment also follows research guidelines by measuring for static and dynamic risk factors and criminogenic needs, and by being validated on juvenile populations similar to those at Rite of Passage.

Next, staff identify the top three risk factors from the assessment process, and develop a Measured Achievement Plan (MAP) for each individual youth which is

linked to the youth's criminogenic risk factors, education, and career technical education needs.

This allows students to focus on reducing their risk factors which in turn is proven to lower recidivism. It also allows students to focus on protective factors during their stay which in turn provides students with new skills for dealing with difficult situations once they return home.

Last, staff and students begin building a transition plan 90-120 days prior to returning home so that the youth at Rite of Passage have a plan when they leave. Staff provide resources, continued positive skill development classes, and higher education opportunities.

Current studies conducted by the University of Cincinnati show continued reductions in recidivism when at-risk youth in placement receive effective transition services. Research on the Dual Role Relationships Inventory-Revised has suggested that relationship quality in mandated treatment involves caring and fairness, trust, and an authoritative (not authoritarian) style (Skeem, Eno Loudon, Polaschek, and Camp, 2007).

To assure that the programs implemented at Rite of Passage have the greatest effect, a CQI component is in the implementation process for 2011.

Continuous Quality Improvement is more than a quality assurance program. CQI provides an on-going analysis of program implementation and determines where a program is strong, and where there are areas for improvement.

The definition of CQI is: A system that seeks to improve the provision of services with an emphasis on future

results. Like total quality management, CQI uses a set of statistical tools to understand subsystems and uncover problems, but its emphasis is on maintaining quality in the future, not just controlling a process. Once a process that needs improvement is identified, a team of knowledgeable individuals is gathered to research and document each step of that process. Once specific expectations and the means to measure them have been established, implementation aims at preventing future failures and involves the setting of goals, education, and the measurement of results. If necessary, the plan may be revised on the basis of the results, so that the improvement is ongoing (Mosby's Medical Dictionary,



2009). So, through implementation of evidence-based practices, training for key staff to assure fidelity of the practices being implemented, and continuous quality improvement systems in place, Rite of Passage will provide a program which is dedicated to improving the lives of at-risk youth by lowering their rate of recidivism, and providing positive skills that will assist them in achieving their goals.

Works Cited

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- Latessa, E.J., & Lowenkamp, C.T. (2006). What Works in Reducing Recidivism? University of St. Thomas Law Journal. 3 (3), pp. 521-535.
- Mosby's Medical Dictionary, 8th edition. © 2009, Elsevier
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Staff Spotlight

Jamie Flatland- Sierra Ridge Academy Administrative Assistant

Jamie Flatland came to Sierra Ridge on 12/15/10 as a temporary administrative assistant. Jamie is now a regular employee in the administrative assistant position! Jamie came to Rite of Passage with years of customers relations experience. Jamie has also been successful as a residential counselor working with mentally ill adults. Jamie was hired as an administrative assistant however has taken on many more functions at Sierra Ridge Academy such as control desk, HR support, Horticulture assistant and assists with many projects in admin. Jamie is a true nature enthusiast and has recently returned from an internship



visiting Australia “Living Green” for 30 days. Jamie has taken on additional responsibilities which includes becoming our Horticulture assistant implementing the curriculum as well as developing many interesting projects for the students. Jamie has excellent organization skills and has brought forth a very structured environment to the administrative assistant position. She has refined processes and developed new systems in her position allowing for increased productivity and better time management. Jamie is a true team player and a great addition to Sierra Ridge Academy.

EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH

January- Belinda Contreras/Coach Counselor
came to SRA on 12/10/10 as a Coach Counselor with many years of experience working with youth in various capacities. Ms Contreras has a diverse education which includes general education, police science, shooting sports director and criminal justice. Ms. Contreras is trained and certified through the California Teachers Association/Teen Cert-Train The Trainer as well as The California Cadet Corps. Ms. Contreras is an awesome addition to SRA.



April - Richard Baker/Transportation Officer
Richard Baker has been at SRA for 4 years. Mr. Baker is a Commercial Driver and is responsible for transporting students locally as well as across California daily. His dedication to staff/student involvement is remarkable. During his transports with students Mr. Baker counsels students and reinforces the positive aspects of the students’ abilities and accomplishments.



Jason Davis has been with SRA for 3 years. Mr. Davis is currently a Coach Counselor in the Lassen Dorm Mr. Davis has an outgoing personality and is always able to find the positive side of a situation to encourage staff and students. Mr. Davis has expanded his knowledge of working with at-risk youth at ROP since his arrival and continues his growth day after day. Mr. Davis has been an asset to SRA and we are excited to him as an employee.



May - Ryan Norris/CC
Ryan Norris has been with SRA for 1 year . Mr. Norris is currently a Coach Counselor. Most recently he has successfully completed his EMT certification. Mr. Norris is very well rounded with staff and students and brings forth the true meaning of Integrity. He does the right thing for the right reason and holds each student to the same level of accountability, upholding program elements.



March - Shawn Holt /Group Leader
Shawn Holt has been with SRA for 2 years. Mr. Holt is currently a Group Leader in Yosemite Dorm and the SRA Track Coach. Mr. Holt currently possesses a BA in Business Administration with an emphasis on Real Estate of Land Use Affairs. Mr. Holt is very interactive with students and staff not only during shift but dedicates most of his time off shift to support all aspects of ROP onsite and throughout the community.



June - Heather Jones/Coach Counselor
Heather Jones has been at SRA for 1 year and is currently a Coach Counselor. She arrived at ROP with many years of experience working with at risk youth. Ms. Jones has her BA in Sociology with an emphasis in Criminal Justice . She has been a successful Group Supervisor in a juvenile corrections position. Ms. Jones is very dedicated to Rite of Passage and the students she serves.





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CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE

Assembly

CERTIFICATE OF RECOGNITION

WHEREAS the State of California has a long tradition of protecting the rights and lives of at-risk youth entrusted to their care;

WHEREAS Rite of Passage Athletic Training Centers and Schools, Inc., is a non-profit provider of Evidence Based Practices in a residential setting for at-risk youth;

WHEREAS Rite of Passage works in collaboration with the State of California to provide services that will have an impact and affect positive change to the students served at Sierra Ridge Academy;

WHEREAS President Grover Cleveland under the Homestead Act of 1862, deeded the land to private ownership

WHEREAS that land is now fully deeded to Rite of Passage Athletic Training and Schools, Inc.;

WHEREAS Rite of Passage Athletic Training Centers and Schools, Inc. is committed to creating a rich living environment and as such has invested over \$2,000,000 in the program and the local economy to refurbish the Dining Hall for the use of the students of Sierra Ridge Academy;

WHEREAS the State of California and Rite of Passage Athletic Training Centers and Schools would like to recognize the momentous history that exists at Sierra Ridge Academy;

NOW THEREFORE, I

KRISTIN OLSEN

Assemblywoman for District 25 of the Great State of California,
do hereby dedicate this Dining Hall the President Grover Cleveland Dining Hall

This 8th day of April, 2011
San Andreas, California