



ENDING VIOLENCE EVERYWHERE

We believe all people are entitled to live extraordinary lives. We are committed to making a difference in people's lives through programs designed to inspire healing, responsibility, and empowerment.

Summer 2009

Volume I Issue 1

The EVE Foundation is pleased to introduce you to the first edition of our quarterly newsletter. In each newsletter, you will have the opportunity to meet some incredible individuals, stay updated on EVE's programs, understand our challenges and celebrate our progress and success stories. We hope that you will take a few minutes and become a member of the EVE Foundation, and while donations are always welcomed, membership is free. (<http://www.evefoundation.org>) While the EVE Foundation was established four years ago, in the summer of 2008 we began developing the *Teens Inspiring Excellence (TIE)* program. This first issue of our newsletter is focused on information about the TIE program and, through Dr. Ammon's interview, provide you with some insight on how the program will benefit our youth and provide a unique tool to professionals working with youth programs.



photo courtesy Jim Woodfill © 2009



A note from the Executive Director –

This being our first newsletter ever, this is a big deal! The EVE Foundation was born just over four years ago. It is the result of my desire to make a difference in the world. EVE is the vehicle to carry my commitment and need to stop violence being perpetrated on children.

The first two years I spoke to domestic violence groups and schools in Montana, Washington, Wyoming and Idaho. During the second year I was invited to speak at a Montana boys youth correction facility. While speaking to 80 young men, I discovered this was the audience that lit me up like nothing I had experienced. Over the next year I returned to speak there twice more.

Almost two years ago I joined the local Exchange Club. I chose them because their primary focus is on Child Abuse Prevention. A few months later I attended the ACE Awards, an Exchange program that recognizes high school seniors who have turned their life around in high school. I listened to six students share their stories of struggle and triumph. I had never been touch so deeply by anything as I was by the stories of those six teenagers. I can still feel the mix of emotions I felt that day. This was the birth of Teens Inspiring Excellence. With little money and the help of two friends, we made a video of the winner of the ACE Award, Shayna. In the past year we have made two

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The EVE Foundation gratefully acknowledges the generous funding from:

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All proceeds from Raised on Fear support the EVE Foundation.

What Readers Say:

"I was so worried that my daughter would go back... This was the third time she had left him. ...I read your book and immediately ordered a copy for her. A few days later I got the call, she said "Mom, I am not going back, ever." I cried all afternoon, my daughter and grand children are finally safe. Thank you."

– Betty Ann

"I read your book, very disturbing. I see my future if I don't get some help." – Daniel - Age16

"I read your book...I now notice how many ways I am exactly like you. It feels good to know I am not alone and that I don't have to continue being this way."

– Henry - Age28

"I just ordered four copies, one for each of my children. Maybe we can finally talk about what happened while they were growing up." – Alice



So . . . Are Teens Inspired?

Two high school focus groups scrutinize Shayna's Story

by Marge Hulburt

The first three Teens Inspiring Excellence videos were in the bag. Our project team was resting on its laurels. Suddenly it occurred to one of us, "So . . . will the teens who watch these videos actually be inspired?"

With the support of the Missoula County Public School System, we were able to put our work in front of two teen focus groups in the local high schools. Here's the scoop on Shayna's Story.

The Program

The Teens Inspiring Excellence video program has three goals:

- To teach teens, through peer modeling, that they can make active choices to improve their lives.
- To help teens understand that problem-solving is a process of getting unstuck and moving forward in a more productive, hopeful, and compassionate way.
- To increase teens' awareness of community resources available to them when they are stuck.

The first video, Shayna's Story, is about a girl who, at age 16, left an alcoholic mother and abusive grandfather. She supported herself but had no plans for her future until she approached a high school guidance counselor. With the counselor's help, she is now attending college and looking forward to a professional career.

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The Value of Teens Inspiring Excellence Interview with Dr. Bruce Ammons

Dr. Bruce Ammons holds undergraduate degrees in math and psychology from the University of Montana where he also completed all coursework toward a BA in physics. He holds PhDs in experimental psychology (Duke University) and clinical psychology (University of Montana). Dr. Ammons has 29 years of experience in the field of psychology, working with college students of all ages at UM Counseling and Psychological Services and serving as a longtime co-publisher and editor of the two psychology journals, Psychological Reports and Perceptual and Motor Skills, before opening his current private practice as a clinical psychologist in Missoula, MT. (He also loves to play a little Bach, Piedmont blues, ragtime, or jazz on his guitars when time is available.)

In your opinion, what need does the TIE program fulfill that other programs in schools and youth programs do not?

Ammons: "The TIE program videos each focus in on a particular kids' story. Because the kids that are chosen have stories that are similar to those of a lot of other kids, they provide a lot of 'hooks' for other kids to recognize. The videos and discussions don't push things in their faces, rather, [the TIE program] puts the story in front of them and lets them think about it. It is designed with a solution focus or direction. The kids are encouraged to look at what has really worked and not worked for the person in the video. Through the facilitators, the program provides reminders of the opportunities in the world. I think most class materials go by too fast, are too general, are too full of rules, and they usually have a lot of 'rote' material that kids are supposed to understand. The TIE program isn't those things at all."

How does the TIE program benefit the education of youth?

Ammons: "Well, we're hoping that the kind of skills, opportunities, and ways of thinking that these videos illustrate to kids are things that they can take away and think about in all the other situations they are facing. We want them to think that "no matter what I am doing, I'm making a choice" because we are all making choices *all* the time and being an active choice-maker is the route to a better life. Often their language would indicate that kids do not really think they have choices available, when in fact they are making choices all the time – they are just *unaware* that they are making choices. For example, kids may not recognize that being passive and doing nothing is a actually a very powerful choice. They may not think they are choosing anything; they may think they can hide from a hostile world. We hope that the TIE program will promote mindfulness and active choice. We are hoping that those kinds of things will come through in a simple, coherent way that really makes sense to the participants."

The program is engaging for counselors and teachers as well, but from an educator's standpoint, in your perspective, how do you view the program?

Ammons: "It's a program that has been carefully thought out for them. We wanted to provide an effective program that doesn't require a whole lot of preparation on the part of the facilitator, with any given video and facilitator's guide relatively complete in themselves and malleable to

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We presented the video and group discussion to a total of 18 students and asked for their feedback. In general, 14 students were positive, 2 were negative, and 2 were neutral.

Student Comments

Beyond the general numbers, the student's comments were telling. They identified with Shayna and the story she had to tell. One student remarked, "Her dad left her. I can relate. . ." and when asked what she would remember a week from now, she said, "that she could change her life."

Another student said, "I related it to someone I know, and I realized his life is pretty chill." He later remarked, "People don't fail as bad as I thought they did." And a third student was struck that "you can always change what your future will be like, no matter what."

As far as taking action goes, Shayna's decision to go to a school counselor made an overwhelming impression on the group. One student summed it up well when he said, "That was cool that the counselor was into helping her." Another one said, "I will remember the whole thing – applying to college, the counselor helping her, that she thought it was impossible her junior year." And another said she would remember "the counselor support, the resources Shayna tried."

When asked what community resources they can draw on in their own lives, one student seemed to speak for them all when he said, "I don't know much about that." This gave their teacher the opportunity to remind them of a list of local resources posted on the classroom wall. The video had an immediate value by opening this discussion and bringing the awareness of available help into the students' own lives.

Suggestions

As suspected, the teens had suggestions on how the video could be improved. The music and narration were too calm. We were told to "spice it up." To "make it raw – that's what will get people's attention," and "there's no need to sugar-coat it." They wanted more action, more variety, re-enactments, less time with "talking heads." And yet we also heard that the story was interesting and it kept their attention. "It wasn't too long; I didn't tune out." And they all had plenty to say about the topic afterward.

Change

A week later, Shayna was still a topic of conversation. And one student wanted us to know he had rethought his earlier pessimistic views. The evidence is that we are changing thought patterns. One student commented, "It was nice to see somebody who cared about her life and did set goals," as if this were outside of his usual experience. Whether it's a different relationship to failure, as we heard, or a reminder that we can change a life that includes losing a dad, just a few minutes of focus on a new perspective can make all the difference in the world. One student verbalized for herself and the group that, "one day of going to a counselor's office changed Shayna's life." Whether you are 15 years old or 55, these are words of inspiration.

Marge Hulburt is a freelance writer and consultant to the EVE Foundation and can be reached at mhulburt@evefoundation.org.

Please join us!

While donations are greatly appreciated and allow us to distribute our programs free of charge, membership to the EVE Foundation is **free**.

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A Note from the Director, (cont'd. from page 1)

more videos and created a facilitator's guide for each video. We are starting the distribution of the first three videos to schools, youth correction facilities, and youth organizations this fall. They will be available free of charge as a download on our web site and we will ship hard copies for a minimum shipping and handling fee to anyone wishing to put the program to use to assist kids in their area.

Teens Inspiring Excellence is designed to inspire hope, courage, and action in teens. These videos are designed to show by example how simple steps, such as asking for help, changing an attitude, or taking a risk, can empower students to move forward in their lives regardless of the circumstances life has given them. The videos provide a stimulus for conversation, resources, and modeling of successful pathways to growth and happiness for youth. The stories influence all teens, whether they are on the honor role or struggling to survive, the stories provide powerful insights into their lives.

We are also developing an innovative approach to teaching teens about anger management. *VSI: Montana* is unique in that it is presented as "Violence Scene Investigations" where each student gets to investigate a real-life violence situation through reading or audio stories, profile the participants, assess their motives and behaviors, and learn about the cultural, psychological, neuro-chemical, and physical aspects of violent behavior. They will develop tools to recognize and manage violent behavior in themselves and others.

To say the least, I had no idea of what I was getting into when I started following my dream of making a difference in the world. What I did know was that I would not give up. I would do whatever it took me to be able to contribute to a future for all children in a significant way.

May you be as blessed as I.

Lee

Please email Lee with any inquiries or stories you would like to share: lee@evefoundation.org

Dr. Bruce Ammons, continued from page 2

their situation. A facilitator can show a single video and discuss it or they can show more than one, comparing and contrasting if they want to. We hope that even a single video presentation may have a positive impact. Being able to show the whole series can make a big difference. I think it's nice, when you are a teacher, to have a tool that makes sense to you and doesn't require a huge amount of work on your part to be effective and promote positive change."

In looking at talking with the kids that we have interviewed so far, how does it differ being a kid now than in the past? It seems that there is a vast difference from being 14 now and being 14 twenty years ago or even ten years ago.

Ammons: "Oh, I think so. I think the general trend is that kids are pushed to become adults at a much earlier age. They are facing issues as young teens that people did not face until they were much older in decades past. Technology has made information so ubiquitous and in-your-face all the time now, and so necessary for functioning in society, that kids are just inundated with information all the time. In the focus groups we've done, it seems that kids are very willing to talk about this stuff, and I think being able to direct their attention to things like making choices and understanding the nature of anger when it shows up in another person or themselves, and learning better ways to communicate with others, are such crucial skills. I believe that this program will help teens come to grips with these concepts."

Our interview with Dr. Bruce Ammons continues in November.

A Special THANK YOU! to our newest partner in the Teens Inspiring Excellence program:

Rick Bice, Jamie Baughman, Joey Arbour and the staff at:



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