

The Owens Interlink

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Wishing For Spring!

WHERE WILL IT ALL END

By Diana Owens

Our Community has been plagued with youth crimes and more importantly youth violence at an ever increasing rate. Trying to place blame only hinders the cause and effect of the problem. In our community, we are more concerned with every issue other than taking care of the day-to-day business of helping our troubled youth. As a community, we appear to turn our backs on those that need us most and at a time they need us most.

Programs that have helped and could help again are no longer funded and considered to be too expensive. It would appear that the “lock em up” mentality has set in and thereby it is no ones problem to find solutions to the ever increasing rate of juvenile crime. Certainly, youth who commit and are arrested for serious crimes must be held immediately accountable for their offenses.

However, only about one-third of the juveniles locked up have committed a violent crime. Many of the crimes committed by youth are relatively minor infractions that use to be handled by families, schools and their community. The deeper a child gets into the justice system, the harder it will be for them to get out – some never do.

Our children cannot escape many of the issues that have been brought on them by others - no fathers around, drug/alcohol abuse, living in violent neighborhoods, lack of interaction by positive role models, failure in school,

etc. This is not excusing any violent or other criminal activity by the youth – it is merely a matter of fact.

It is something that needs to be addressed by our entire community – not just north Omaha. For every child headed in the wrong direction, our community can change the direction by assuring there is adequate financial assistance to organizations that want and can make a difference.

By financially assuring programming that changes behaviors, challenges youth to succeed, gives them opportunities to feel good about them self, supervision during high crime hours, while providing positive adult role models, our children’s future will not be bleak and violence will surely lessen.

As stated in an article published in Focus Magazine in December 06, “Doing right for children is also doing right for taxpayers. We will save over \$1.5 million for every child we divert from the criminal justice system. It is time to choose prevention over punishment.”

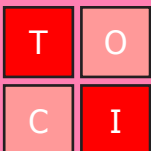
We can change the future of our community and its youth filled with violence by investing in proven programs that work. We can and do offer such programs. Please feel free to contact us at 455-5067 or visit our website to learn more about Owens Educational Services: www.theowenscompanies.com.



Diana L. Owens
President & CEO

The Owens Companies
7415 N. 30 St.,
Omaha, NE 68112
Tel: 402 455 1118
Fax: 402 455 4506

5800 Cornhusker Hwy.,
Lincoln, NE 68507
Tel: 402 464 0784
Fax: 402 464 0786



The Interlink
7415 N. 30 St.,
Omaha, NE 68112
Tel: 402 455 1118
Fax: 402 455 4506
joemowens@gmail.com

Did You Know?

Edited by Joe Owens

The research from the Children's Defense Fund study found:

1. Low academic achievement and academic failure increase the risk for later violent behaviors;
2. Students who are suspended or expelled are more likely to drop out of school altogether;
3. Higher suspension rates are associated with higher rates of juvenile incarceration;
4. Children who are in foster care are less likely to graduate from high school;
5. Approximately 7 out of 10 public school fourth graders cannot read or do math at grade level;
6. One in fourteen teens ages 16-19 are school dropouts. (Dropping out increases the risk of unemployment, arrest and incarceration.);
7. In 2003, Nebraska spent \$8,074.00 to educate a youth, while spending \$19,035 to incarcerate a youth;
8. Truancy is the number one predictor of delinquency;
9. Those who are routinely disciplined or struggle with schoolwork mentally drop out by the third grade and actually leave school in the ninth grade;
10. High school dropouts are 3 times as likely to be incarcerated as those who graduate from high school;
11. Reliance on punishment and incarceration is too often a first resort vs. last for our youth;
12. Juveniles arrested are 2-6 times as likely to be arrested as an adult;
13. In 2004, nationally, 2,825 children and teens died from firearms (more than the number of American combat deaths in Iraq and Afghanistan through the end of 2006);
14. In 2004, nearly 8 children daily were killed by firearms (one every three hours);
15. Community and family-based programs are more effective in changing a juvenile's behavior than incarceration;
16. Racial disparity runs through every major system impacting children being sent to juvenile detention centers (black youth are 4 times as likely as white to be incarcerated);
17. Black males (15-19) are eight times as likely to be gun homicide victims as white their age;
18. Boys adjudicated delinquent for a violent offense between the ages of 10 and 16 are more than 6 times as likely to be convicted of a violent crime by age twenty-four;
19. Those who experience violence/abuse as a child are 4 times more likely to become violent in later life;
20. To date, boys are the predominant sex in youth facilities – but girls are quickly growing in numbers of incarcerated youth;
21. In the past three decades, society is becoming increasingly reliant on incarceration of youth as an answer to other social problems.



Drop In Center Staff Revised

Edited by Joe Owens

Where one person use to work with the kids for an entire day (which can be very taxing to say the least), we now have a group of individuals who will be using their expertise and talents for an average of 2 hour blocks throughout the day.

Fred Ross is still the primary facilitator, but now has an opportunity to use the skills of others to assist him in meeting the needs of our youth. We feel that this will benefit the kids with a variety of personali-

ties and expertise throughout the day as well as relieve one person from doing it all.

Hours of operation are still the same as well as transportation to and from the program – along with their noon meal. Short or long term referrals are now being accepted. The Center is an alternative to incarceration and is a solution to many of the issues listed above. To enroll a youth in the Center, call David Allen at 455-5067.



Revamping Space Taking Place

Edited by Joe Owens

Some of the staff say “here we go again” – but the truth is that based on growth in the Drug Testing Program, different utilization of space was needed. This group, supervised by Anthony Erwin, now have an area all their own.

What was a large hallway to the Educational Center is now home

of the Drug Testing Dept. There they have bathrooms for testing, room for clients to wait and space for staff to work along with an office for Anthony. The youth are still able to use this entrance to their classroom, but what was just “dead” space is now fully utilized all day.



River Boat Fundraiser Date Now Set

Edited by Joe Owens

Mark your calendars for August 19th. This is the date for the second annual River Boat Fundraiser for OES. The co-chairs of the event this year promise for it to be even bigger than last year.

Raffle ticket sales will be coming along in May it is projected. Along with the raffle, a silent auction will happen again this year. The proceeds from this event will be entirely – 100% directed to OES

programs and needs.

If you were there – you know the fun we had – if you were unable to attend, plan now. Please save this date, and let others know so they too can plan.



Owens Supervisors Attend Training

Edited by Joe Owens



Recently, all the Owens Companies' supervisors attended a day of training in

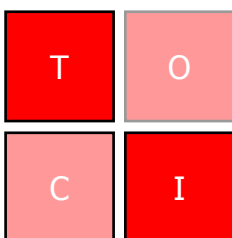
Lincoln for what is to be a newer approach to working with youth and families.

The State of Nebraska, Department of Social Services is undertaking a new change which will affect all areas of operation within our organizations. The Safety Intervention System is designed to be more comprehensive, to be applied throughout a child's or family's involvement with HHS

and to try to keep more children in their home without removal.

It is a model that has been used in many other states with positive results. A comprehensive assessment along with a safety plan will now be established to better understand and serve a child or family.

It will provide clarity of purpose for working with a child/family and for providing on-going work with the child/family. Our supervisors are excited about the change and are in the process of training their individual staffs on the processes. ■



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