

HOPE ReNEWS

In Every Journey There is Hope From End to End

The Newsletter Published by Hope Renewals, Inc.

Summer 2005

Foundation Update

Six months ago Hope Renewals, Inc. was launched and we have made great strides to becoming fully operational. The main goal of the foundation is to raise funds to provide grants to families who need help for their child to complete residential treatment. To that end, we established a 501 (C) (3) tax exempt corporation and

“The kindness of our early donors has been gratifying and their generosity has permitted us to approve our first grant to a Vista family!”

started seeking financial support. The kindness of our early donors has been gratifying and their generosity has permitted us to approve our first grant to a Vista family!

As many of you know, the therapeutic approach and family environment at Vista are as powerful as any chemotherapy for saving lives. But it is also true that teens in trouble are not popular with the giving public. That is why we who have struggled with these issues feel so committed to spearheading this effort.

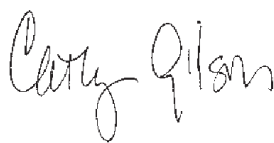
We have expanded the initial core of

Hope Renewals volunteers to include those with skills in marketing, editing, fundraising and the law. Their efforts have been invaluable though we certainly are eager for more participants.

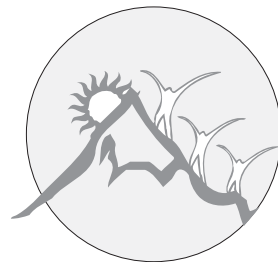
Hope Renewals is intent on providing a community for families going through the profound challenge of having their child in treatment. Many of us felt isolated through the process, but our experiences are not unique. We who have been there can help others. If this newsletter can serve as a clearinghouse for therapeutic information, leads to financial resources and insights into the experiences of parents and kids alike then we will have been successful.

On the agenda for the coming year is continued outreach to families whom we might help or who might lend us a hand, financially or otherwise. We also want to expand the administrative structure of the foundation to enable it to thrive in the future.

Please consider joining us in this exciting new venture.



Cathy Gilson
President



Hope Renewals, Inc.

is a non-profit organization established to:

- ▲ Provide partial scholarships for families committed to the therapeutic process who face financial challenges.
- ▲ Serve as a source of support and information for families with children in residential treatment.

For further information call:

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Contributions are fully tax deductible.

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Parent's Point of View

Paul Michael Glaser

A number of thoughts strike me when I recall my journey to Vista.

There was my denial that my son had a problem that I couldn't cope with. There was my fear of loss of control. There was my fear of helplessness. Finally, there was the guilt elicited by those fears and having to confront myself, that I could have done more, said more, learned more sooner.

I suspect that all parents go through different versions of this when they are confronted with a child who is spinning out of control, lost and incommunicative. We remember that event, or series of events, that led to this painful situation, and how we thought it someone else's deficiency. Later comes a realization that your child's problem is the family's problem, is your problem. And at last we become aware that utilizing a place such as Vista is for everybody in the family an opportunity to learn, grow, and find the tools that may provide a future of empowerment for your child.

"...this decision to act is the best way to love our child..."

"Why couldn't I? Why can't I? Why can't he,...or she?" That is our common response until the situation becomes too painful, too threatening to your child or to others. Then we find ourselves in desperate straits, reactive, judgmental, wanting someone to take over the burden, to parent us, to take our child off our hands. We become angry and resentful of our child and how his or her acting out has made us feel guilty for wanting to wash our hands of a situation that makes us feel like such failures.

Then there's our love for our child. Our need to love them as we want to love ourselves. Where has it gone? Why has everything turned so dark, so confused? Is there any way out? We find ourselves avoiding our pain, their pain, our fears, their fears. We strain to look the other way while all the time doing the "things" that are easiest to convey our concern, our need to love. We buy them

things. We get busy. We get lost in our own selfish needs because confronting our fear of failure is too painful. We try to "do" anything and everything to keep from having to sit with our fear.

I think it is important when viewing a place like Vista to be able to acknowledge what brought us here, brought our child here. That this decision to act is the best way to love our child, to help them learn to love themselves by helping them be accountable for themselves and their actions. We start by being accountable to ourselves as parents. That singular action, that commitment to send our child to Vista, starts the ball rolling. Then it becomes a partnership where all of us learn.

That's been my experience. I could say that Vista was a lifesaver for my son and for us. It has been that and more. It provided the emotional and actual vocabulary that has allowed my son and myself, his adopted mother and sister, to grow and find a real relationship built on respect and kindness. It has allowed me to understand my job as a parent, and when and how to set boundaries. And when necessary, the difficult tasks of "tough love", which has become understood, accepted, even welcomed by my son. The folks and the programs at Vista have given my son another chance at what had been up to that time a very chancy life. Their compassion, their commitment to my son, to themselves, their passion for their work and their belief in what they are doing have all translated into a gift that is rare in our world today.

Finally, I would remind all of us that we are perfect in our imperfection. No one is the perfect parent. Whether it be a confluence of events, or our own needs and actions that have brought our child to this place, it is only useful and valuable if we can acknowledge to ourselves that we must not judge ourselves or our child, no matter how much the pain, anger and guilt would have us do so. That is the first act of love, the first act of forgiveness. That is the greatest lesson, the greatest gift we can give our child in his or her greatest time of need.

"I would remind all of us that we are perfect in our imperfection. No one is the perfect parent."

—Paul Michael Glaser

NOTE:

Paul's son is a graduate of Vista and the Transition Program and is currently working in Washington D.C. for the Pediatric Aids Foundation.

Conversation With A Therapist

Lori Neeleman, Ph.D.

The Six Core Issues

In Adolescent Therapeutic Development

Every adolescent who comes to Vista arrives with a different combination of interpersonal issues. A therapeutic approach that would be effective for one would not necessarily address the needs of another. We do see repeated patterns and core issues that, in order to affect life change, become the base of our approach.

1. HONESTY

The kids' real inability to be honest with themselves and with other people is often the most primary issue we face. The kids will often come into Vista with an extensive history of manipulating others through deception and fabrication. Not only have they been relating with others in a dishonest manner but they have also been dishonest with themselves, leading to internal conflict and erosion of integrity and positive interaction with family and friends.

2. FEAR

Seldom expressed as fear and often hidden behind a stubborn or defiant persona, fear and lack of honesty, impedes the trust relationship required for a therapeutic environment to flourish. The kids we see are generally afraid to be vulnerable, they're afraid of what other people think, they're afraid of the world in general and yet they try to hide it in maladaptive ways.

3. LACK OF EMPATHY

Lack of empathy or egocentrism is a tough one because part of adolescence is about being egocentric and having the world be all about you. The kids we see often take it to an extreme and have real difficulty taking another's perspective or caring about what oth-

ers are experiencing. Sometimes they can be very good about identifying it, but rather than using it to form good relationships, they use it to take advantage, manipulate or to exploit.

4. ESCAPE FROM REALITY

The next two issues go hand-in-hand, escape from reality and immediate gratification. When we look at drug issues and substance abuse, it really is a vehicle for escape. You see that over and over again. Some kids are doing drugs because it feels great, but most of the kids are coming in needing to escape what's going on for them in their lives.

5. IMMEDIATE GRATIFICATION

We live in a culture where we expect everything to be immediate and to be good. That is the message we're surrounded with and often buy into. When you experience being high at a young age, why bother developing any other skills to deal with life stress? It's like, "this feels good and I can do it in a flash" with a total intolerance for delay. This is typical of just about every kid that we see and it is a pattern of relating to life that remains after treatment is completed and that the kids will need to continue to work with as they adjust to life outside of a treatment atmosphere.

6. LACK OF HOPE

The final issue and maybe the most important for all of us is the lack of hope or awareness that things can be different or that different might be better.

A lot of kids that come in will have a world view that this is the only way that I can possibly be accepted or this is how the world is and I have to fit into

it. They don't see that they can live with integrity and honesty, and be empathic – they don't see that that's even a possibility. So there is this hopeless idea, that this is really the only way to be and maybe I don't feel very good but what else is there?

We spend a lot of time creating hope for them and saying, "look it can be different and different can work really well for you if you allow it to."

That's a big challenge. The kids have such a powerful impact on each other. For an adult to tell them that things can be different, they kind of listen, but mostly they don't. If they see their peers play that out and especially for the kids at Vista who see the transition kids living and having fun in a sober environment while being themselves; it creates a lot of hope.

One of the major contributors to creating hope is the positive peer culture. As the kids see one another make positive changes, it creates an atmosphere where change is not only possible, but desirable and worth working for.

Lori Neeleman, Ph.D.



Dr. Neeleman completed her Doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology at Brigham Young University and her post doctoral work at St. Mary's Children and Family Services in Syosset, NY.

As a Primary Therapist at Vista, Dr. Neeleman helps create a treatment atmosphere conducive to real and powerful change in the lives of adolescents and their families.

Life In The Real World

Interviews with recent Grads at various levels of Transition Program living*

STUDENT PROFILE

Ilana is 18, a sophomore at the University of Utah and is in Phase Three of the Transition Program.

The change from the structure of Vista to the Transition House is big. What do you remember about making that move?

Ilana: Well, it is gradual. I was at Vista for about six months and then I went to day treatment and lived with Matt and Mem Dixon. That was just great. Day treatment is a nice stepping stone. You're a little bit in the middle between the intense structure and very little structure. I went to Vista during the day and at night was with the family.

It was also an important experience because I got to live with a big and very functional family. For kids coming into Vista, a lot of us have issues with our families one way or another but I got to see how this family does it. I got to participate with them and go to ballgames and even share night time prayers at their household.

Coming into the Transition house is still a bit of a shock. I think I'm a pretty socially savvy person but I can remember a few nights laying in bed and thinking, "Where am I? What have I gotten myself into? Who are all these people?"

You knew the kids from Vista so why do you think it felt so shocking?

Ilana: Well, you do know the kids from Vista but you kinda know them from afar or from hearing stories about them. You don't really know who they are.

And I remember feeling a lot of pressure to succeed. I think you see a lot of kids when they get out of Vista, they go either one way or the other. They're either going to be pretty successful or they're going to struggle. And I really wanted this.

That's really an important point that you've made. That this is where the rubber hits the road – this is the real testing ground.

Ilana: Definitely. There are potentials to make mistakes at Vista but it's all very limited and very protected – so if you make a mistake you get a level drop vs. outside of Vista you make a mistake and maybe you leave your car unlocked and it gets stolen or you end up even relapsing or something a lot more serious.

“There's no problem too big, there's no mistake that's too heinous to be overcome as long as you're willing to talk about it and be open with it...”

What would happen when you got stressed – what would you do?

Ilana: My first month, I was in daily communication with one of maybe five people – my mom, my dad, Matt Checketts, who's my therapist, Larry, who's my CD counselor, and then, Memory – I was in daily contact with I'd say two out of those five. I definitely turned to those people who had been stable and objective supporters. It's hard if you're having a problem with your roommate – it's hard to talk to one of your friends cause they're also roommates and it turns into gossiping. I definitely knew I had a lot of external support from Vista – more of the adults in the Vista community and from my family back home.

These people that you trust – that really provided you a safety net.

Ilana: Yes, exactly, and I think the biggest thing I've learned – if I could put everything I've learned into one phrase – it would be that there's no problem too big, there's no mistake

that's too heinous to be overcome or to be worked through as long as you're willing to talk about it and be open with it and really ask for the help and then receive that help in a meaningful way. So I've never kept a secret from my therapist, I've never kept secrets from my CD counselor, Larry, because I know as long as I'm being really open and honest and persevering through it, there's nothing that's too big to work through.

Isn't that huge to know at your age?

Ilana: Yeah, and I think the second thing I've learned would be gratitude. I can't even believe when I look back two years ago from today, if I were to walk up to myself and tell me where I'd be – I would have just laughed. It would have seemed unreal.

And I hope on a daily basis you tap yourself and say, “Look at me, look at what I'm doing, look how I'm handling this.”

Ilana: I think more what I get into is, “Oh my gosh, thank you - thank you, mom and thank you, dad and thank you, god – thank you, Matt and Mem...”

So take me to the next step – now you're living in the House – you've started college – tell me how that went. Did you venture out and make new contacts fairly quickly?

Ilana: Yes. My first priority was to develop the core relationships within the house. I wanted to make sure I had that really solid. I knew that those were the people that knew me best and were, for the most part, trustworthy people. So I definitely did that first.

ILANA continues on page 6

*The Transition Program, started in 2003, provides residential living for Vista graduates 18 years and older. Program participants are expected to pursue college classes, get a job and contribute service to the community while they continue with the therapy begun at Vista.

How You Can Help

The Problem: Helping a family through the ordeal of residential treatment is a costly venture – both emotionally and financially. The staff of Vista have seen families sell their homes, take on additional jobs, and appeal to friends and family on top of the stress of their teen in crisis! They need your help!

Adolescents with mental illness, behavioral problems and addictions do not evoke the sympathy that other kids with more obvious diseases do. Because of this, raising funds from the general public can be difficult and we need the help of the Vista family!

Our Goal: It is the goal of our foundation to raise money for grants to families facing financial challenges. We believe a lack of personal wealth should not be a barrier to this life changing help. We have developed procedures for making grants to current students who are making good progress, but whose families have run out of resources before their children graduate.

How You Can Help: The success of Hope Renews, Inc. relies on the support of the families we serve. Please be generous so together we can support as many families in crisis as possible!

Yes, we will help!

Enclosed is our 2005 contribution to Hope Renews, Inc.

HOPE RENEWS, INC.
11611 San Vicente Blvd., #710
Los Angeles, CA 90049
(310) 476-0258
Hoperenews@adelphia.net

\$100 \$250 \$500 \$1,000 \$2,500 \$5,000 Other \$ _____

Check enclosed **Made Payable to Hope Renews, Inc.** OR Charge my Visa MC

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I would like my donation to be in the name of: _____

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ILANA

Continued from page 4

But now it's a shared focus between the Vista community that I have and the ones outside. It's become really important to make those friends and those meaningful and healthy relationships outside of Vista because I need to know when I do leave Utah, that I can sustain the level of healthy connections outside of the ones that are just given to me through Vista.

Let's talk about these new relationships because you guys are so differently equipped than most teenagers – you have a very specific language, you've had very different experiences, you've gone through amazing things with your family. So what are your expectations of these new people you're meeting?

Ilana: They're very high expectations. And they're not expectations like they used to be – which would be looks or how much fun they were but expectations about someone's moral code – their values and belief system. I don't need someone to have the exact same morals and beliefs that I do – I don't need someone to be completely

sober – that's something I needed for a while just to feel safe – that's not what I need anymore. What I do need is someone who is very respectful, someone who has a view of the bigger picture.

So when you meet someone new – in terms of introducing who you are to new people - do you feel you need to bring your background forward?

Ilana: Well, everyone deals with that really differently. Once I find someone trustworthy and if I want them in my life more – I tell them at least a little bit about where I've come from because they're going to walk into a house full of twelve girls with really nice furniture – they're going to be confused.

Once somebody has earned that trust, I'll tell them a little bit. I've never yet told anyone all the details – I don't think I ever would until maybe a husband or something – because there's a lot of really intimate stuff in there. But I'll tell them the basic details – I had a hard couple years as a teenager and fell into some things that weren't good for me and have worked my way out of them and this is what

I've learned – that kinda thing.

So while we're talking about relationships and how they've changed, what's happening with your parents now that you're in college?

Ilana: I think something that's been really good is learning that the relationship has time to grow now and expand. My parents are divorced so I end up repeating myself a lot between the two of them – there's not just one phone call. But whenever anything major is happening, they're included. That never used to happen. So if I'm excited about something or scared or sad or whatever – they're “go to” people for me – I'm able to pick up the phone and call them for help or just for friendly talks – I just never could have imagined that happening. I feel really lucky to have a family that is so supportive.

Could you have guessed that this is where it could go?

Ilana: Not only could I not have guessed that it would happen, but I would never have guessed that I would want it to happen. It's more that part that's really amazing.

Tools For Parents

SUGGESTED READING

What It Takes To Pull Me Through: Why Teenagers Get in Trouble and How Four of Them Got Out

David L. Marcus. Houghton Mifflin, 2005

Raising Cain: Protecting the Emotional Life of Boys

Dan Kindlon, Ph.D. and Michael Thompson, Ph.D. Ballantine Publishing Group, 2000

Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls

Mary Pipher, Ph.D. Random House, 1994

Angry All The Time; An Emergency Guide to Anger Control

Ron Potter-Efron, MSW. New Harbinger, 1994.

Helping Your Chemically Dependent Teenager Recover; A Guide for Parents and Other Concerned Adults

Peter R. Cohen, MD. Hazelden Foundation, 1991.

Parents, Teens and Boundaries

Jane Bluestein, Ph.D. Health Communications, Inc., 1993.

“As I've said before, I believe that when all is said and done, all you can do is to show up for someone in crisis, which seems so inadequate. But then when you do, it can radically change everything. Your there-ness, your stepping into a scared parent's line of vision, can be life giving, because often everyone else is in hiding.”

Anne Lamott, “Traveling Mercies”

A special thanks to The Irwin-Hodson Company in Portland, Oregon for their donation of printing services for this issue of our newsletter.