

Title of Session: Alt/Correctional Ed Forum - Create Now!

Moderator: BJ Berquist

Guest Speaker: Jill Gurr

Title of File: 20060622altedcreatenow

Date: June 22, 2006

Room: Alternative/Correctional Ed Group

JasonMM: How do I enter the corrective ed. forum??

BjB: you're there, Jason

BjB: hold on a few minutes till we see if anyone else will be joining the discussion

JasonMM: Good deal...thank you! I thought I was in the wrong place

BjB: nope...ya done good

JasonMM: (sigh of relief)

BjB: something you might want to do while we wait is click on the Actions menu in the top right of the chat window and then click on DETACH

JasonMM: awwh! Much better...thank you

BjB: I must warn you that we're under a severe T-storm warning so if I disappear, I apologize in advance

WendyNA joined the room.

BjB waves hi to Wendy

BjB: we have a crowd! Ready to rock and roll?

JasonMM: Living in Louisiana I can completely understand that.

BjB nods solemnly to Jason

BjB: Welcome to today's Alt/Correctional Ed Forum

BjB: the topic tonight is CreateNow!

BjB: we usually start all the events in Tapped in with introductions

BjB: please tell me where you are located and what interested you in this topic?

BjB: I'm an art teacher in a male juvenile correctional institution in Pennsylvania.

WendyNA: Hello everyone! I'm a New Yorker and I'm just trying out the site.

BjB: are you a teacher, Wendy?

WendyNA: I teach computer animation in a public HS

JasonMM: My name is Jason and I wanted to participate in this discussion because as a Juvenile Probation Case Manager for a Drug Court Program I believe I will find this chat forum very beneficial.

BjB smiles. Very cool, both of you!

JasonMM: ...and I live in Louisiana

BjB: ok...as I mentioned to Jason, we're racing against a severe storm headed my way with 60 mph winds...

BjB: so I'll try to get everything covered as quickly as I can

JasonMM: sounds good

BjB: Wendy, you might want to go to the Actions menu in the top right of the chat window and click on DETACH

WendyNA: thanks...I already discovered that.

BjB: I'm going to show you a url. When I do, hold down your ctrl key on your keyboard when you click or turn off your pop up blocker

BjB: www.createnow.org

BjB: did you get the webpage?

JasonMM: I'm there

WendyNA: me too.

BjB: I 'met' Jill Gurr, the founder of CreateNow several years ago.

BjB: when she first started, the site was national. She and her volunteers worked with some of my kids to write plays

BjB: she found that there was too much involved in a national format and scaled back to just California

BjB: but her site is a wonderful model for anyone who chooses to follow her ideas

BjB: every large city has artists and performers who could be recruited to work with young people

BjB: any comments? questions?

WendyNA: I'm busy reading the success stories

BjB nods. They're pretty inspiring

JasonMM: I hope I'm not interrupting, but not too long ago we had a group called the "Fly Dancers" that visited our Juvenile Detention Center and put on a show for the kids...many of them had backgrounds similar to what's on Create Now.

BjB nods to Jason.

WendyNA: I just had a lightening flash! Power bleep!

BjB: whoops. You ok?

BjB . o O (east coast is getting pounded.)

WendyNA: I'm think I am going to play it safe and turn off my computer

JasonMM: Sorry to hear that...We're still recovering from Hurricane Rita down here...I completely understand

WendyNA: sorry to abandon you guys

BjB nods to Wendy. Join us again

WendyNA: bye

BjB waves bye

WendyNA left the room (signed off).

BjB: Jason, while I'm still here, let's get you joined to the group

JasonMM: sounds good

BjB: so you can post to the discussion board and get reminders of the meetings

JasonMM: okay

BjB: do you see the welcome note on the window you detached from?

BjB . o O (you may need to attach your chat)

JasonMM: no...I don't see it

BjB: ok...click on the X in the top right of the chat window

BjB: that will automatically attach it

JasonMM: ok

BjB: now do you see the welcome note?

BjB: above this chat window

BjB . o O (you can go to Actions and click on larger text)

BjB: if you don't see the welcome screen please tell me what you see

JasonMM: I still don't see it

BjB: at the top of your screen do you see ROOM VIEW/

BjB . o O (?)

JasonMM: I see the virtual campus above on the top of the screen and then right above the chat screen I see my location

JasonMM: yes I sure do

BjB nods...click on Room View

BjB: now you should see the welcome note

JasonMM: awhhh...now I see the welcome

JillGu joined the room.

BjB: scroll down on the welcome note to THIS IS THE GROUP ROOM FOR ALT/CORRECTIONAL ED

BjB: and click on the green i next to the group name

JillGu: Hello - I'm SOOOOO Sorry to be late!

BjB: Hi, Jill!!!!

BjB hugs warmly

BjB: I'm glad you found us

BjB: hold on a sec...we're getting Jason joined to the group

JillGu: I've been arranging for 200 homeless youth to attend the Hollywood Bowl Opening Night tomorrow thru Yahoo! and I'm out of my mind.

BjB: yikes!

BjB: Jason, you should see the group ID page

BjB: at the top of the page is JOIN THIS GROUP

BjB: click on join this group

JasonMM: Ok done...sorry about the confusion

BjB: once you've joined the group the group name is added to your favorite places menu in the top right

JasonMM: ok

BjB: whew....Jill, we have a severe storm with 60 mph winds and hail headed our way

BjB: so if I disappear...Jason is all yours

BjB: I showed him the CreateNow homepage

JillGu: Wow! I thought I had problems...

JillGu: Hi Jason. Where are you located?

BjB: and tried to communicate the idea that every large city has the resources that you do

JillGu: Even rural areas have resources if they know where to look

JasonMM: I'm located in a post Hurricane Rita south western Louisiana

JillGu: What do you do?

JasonMM: By day I'm a Juvenile Probation Officer/ case manager for a Juvenile Drug Court Treatment Program...by night I'm a masters student

JillGu: What are you doing your Masters in?

JasonMM: It was Applied Criminology, but then Rita came and that program was cut due to state deficits. I'm now pursuing a masters degree in Instructional Technology

JillGu: And how does using the arts interest you, or does it at all?

JasonMM: So far it has proven beneficial for producing powerpoints for orientations for kids coming into our program

JillGu: Are you interested in setting up a mentoring program or an arts program at your facility?

BjB: sounds like Jason needs to get hooked up with a multimedia person!

JasonMM: I was telling Bj that not too long ago a group called the "Fly Dancers" visited our detention facility and put on a performance for the kids...many of the performers themselves had prior juvenile background..our kids really benefited from listening to their testimonies

JillGu: Kids need the media to pay attention. They're usually bored with traditional teaching methods in my humble opinion.

BjB: . o O (and my opinion also...and I'm hardly humble at all!)

JasonMM: I couldn't agree more...especially in this technological age...we all want our information now.

JillGu: That's what we do - we bring kids that are rappers who were in detention before to perform for the kids and the results are phenomenal.

JasonMM: this is very similar to what we experienced. The group then brought several of the kids to the front and showed them some of their "moves."

BjB: do you have any problem with permission to have the artists enter a facility?

JasonMM: Many of our kids expressed interest in learning what they saw. In my opinion I think that we need programs like this that can be used as positive outlets for our kids

JillGu: We invite those in the audience to come up to the mic to "freestyle" rap which has fantastic results too.

JasonMM: nope...no problems...our directors encourage positive groups to participate

BjB nods

JillGu: We don't usually require special permission since we work with the Director of the camps or Activities Directors. We sometimes have to leave our names at the guard gate. For mentoring programs, our artists have to go through security clearance, run by VISTO for Dept. of Probation.

JasonMM: ...our organization does something similar

BjB: I'd like more information on the security clearance

JillGu: VISTO is run at three juvenile halls and they rotate so it's every couple of weeks. Volunteers are fingerprinted and have to bring an ID and a photo. After they're cleared, they're given a badge and permission to meet regularly with the kids. VISTO includes a 2-3 hour orientation as well.

BjB: Thanks, Jill. I'm going to have to run...it's getting really black out. (and loud)

BjB: Thanks so much for joining ...I'm sure Jason has lots more questions

JasonMM: ...so VISTO works with the kids on a weekly or monthly schedule?

JillGu: They teach the volunteers about not bringing things like paper clips. One boy was stabbed in the eye and blinded recently at Barry J. Nidorff Juvenile Hall which houses 1000 kids waiting for their trials. Two of their inmates were killed recently so they're under investigation. We did a program there a few weeks ago and we're going back soon to reach the kids being tried as adults (where all the gang/racial warfare is breaking out).

JillGu: Sorry you have all that turmoil with the weather but it must be exciting. I miss thunderstorms.

JasonMM: lol...I see them down here all the time

BjB sends a lightning bolt in Jill's direction

JillGu: VISTO is the government clearing house for all employees and volunteers working with kids on probation or in the JJ system

JillGu: We have A LOT of racial tension in our city now - in the schools and especially in the detention facilities due to gangs

JasonMM: I see...we're (our organization) is at the county level...we clear all of our groups/volunteers in house...however I can see the potential problem at a state level

JasonMM: I'm originally from Riverside, Calif...born and raised...I went to High School in a situation with racial turmoil much like you describe

JillGu: The State of California requires security clearance (and TB tests) for anyone working with youth since a janitor at a public school raped a girl a number of years ago and he had a long track record of sexual abuse.

BjB . o O (hanging on till the last sec. Please send a copy of your script to bjb@tappedin.org so I can put in the archives.)

JasonMM: very understandable.

BjB hugs

BjB left the room (signed off).

[Ed. Note: Thanks to Jill Gurr for sending the rest of the transcript!]

JillGu: How many kids do you have there?

JillGu: Are they mostly African-American??

JasonMM: Well...our detention center houses only 38...so we're small time...I would say its half and half between Caucasian and African American...however it should be noted that this is probably disproportionate when comparing to the population in our county/parish which is primarily Caucasian.

JasonMM: I work probation...fighting tooth and nail to keep them out of detention

JasonMM: have you heard of, or are you familiar with the Drug Court programs??

JillGu: At least you don't have to deal with the Latino racial stuff. 60-70% of the kids we serve that are in our system are Latinos.

JillGu: Don't know about Drug Court programs. Can you explain?

JasonMM: Sure...basically it's a diversionary program that lasts approx. 12-15 months. It consists of three phases...I, II, III. The beginning phases are three drug screen and three group counseling sessions a week.. and then they go to 2 &2 and 1&1 as they progress through the program....

JasonMM: ...the target demographic are kids that are looking at being committed to the Dept of corrections...at which point they could go to a Juv. Pen.

JasonMM: This program offers them (if completed) an opportunity to have their charges expunged

JillGu: What drugs do they mostly do?

JasonMM: ..and get off probation early

JasonMM: Here in LA it's mostly Mari & Cocaine. We're seeing a rise in meth as well as Benzos

JillGu: We have it all here, but Meth is the most dangerous. Not as bad as Hawaii or other cities but it's the worst drug of all.

JasonMM: ...additionally the kids go to court weekly in front of a team comprised of the Judge, DA, PO, counselors, Mental Hlth coun., school rep,...

JasonMM: and the Public defender...we make recommendations collaboratively to come up with a plan of action....and this is every week

JillGu: 38 kids is a small group though. I imagine with all that attention they get help

JasonMM: ...hence...Drug court

JillGu: Is there any info that I can help you with from my end?

JasonMM: actually it's Drug Free Court....but its known nationwide as "Drug Court" we didn't like the stigma of "Drug Court" so we added the "Free" in there

JasonMM: what can I do ...or where do I start for looking/gathering info on arts related activities???

JasonMM: ...the kids respond very well (even out here in LA) to things of the rap/gang subcultures

JillGu: What I do is find local artistic people that want to reach out and help and then match them with the kids. We're unique in that with such a large city geographically and in other ways, we have lots of artistic folks but I'm sure they're in your community too.

JasonMM: absolutely...we're close to Houston, TX, so that might be something to look into.

JillGu: Do you have any local musicians that are rapping already. Perhaps some guy who works as a security guard at night might have a dream of a career in rap and would be interested in volunteering to work with the kids. You might find a local engineer at the radio station or TV that has a laptop with recording software that he could bring by to work with the kids.

JasonMM: We're a county/parish of 150,000 ppl, I shouldn't have trouble finding somebody at the radio stations...unfortunately I don't see too many positive rappers in our community...most of them are way too negative to allow near our kids

JillGu: I would put the word out through the Chamber of Commerce, local library, any community gathering place -- an ad in the newspaper - that you need volunteers to help these kids. Let them know that if they don't do something in their own community, then these kids will become career criminals. They're usually kids that haven't had the guidance and support they need. All mentoring requires is an hour a week - not a lot to ask for - and stress how THEY'll get more from it than the kids as they get to know them and their culture and to see how their advice and supports helps the kids.

JasonMM: that's exactly what we need! Sad to say that our Big Bros/sisters have a waiting list ...not enough help...sad to say

JillGu: I would focus on the means to get them to perform or record. Have someone (you or a volunteer) organize a talent show where the rappers get to perform for each other and have local judges - perhaps a local DJ - to award prizes. You can probably get trophies donated or just give them candy and treats as rewards. ALL participants should get something and winners get more.

JasonMM: I'm definitely going to have to look more into that with our directors...do you have any resource listings---URLs etc that I might benefit from while undertaking this endeavor???

JillGu: It depends on what direction you'd like to go. For instance, I've learned that they may not read a book but they love to read screenplays of their favorite movies (you can try to get PG 13). There's a website where you can download free scripts (I'll get it in a second) and then you can have them read it together as a group taking turns. When the script is finished being read, you have all share a DVD of the movie so they can see how it changed or came alive. Then you can have a discussion about how the media affects them and invite them to write their own stories as screenplays. I've had illiterate kids learn to read and write this way.

JillGu: <http://www.simplyscripts.com/> and also <http://www.script-orama.com/table.shtml>

JasonMM: I like those ideas...especially with the scripts...our counselors are always looking for creative ways to reach the kids...

JasonMM: they always have plenty of time in detention...we might as well make the best of it for them.

JillGu: Let them see their lives as a movie and take it to how they want it to end. You can get a lot of interesting discussions. You can also work on a group screenplay that everyone contributes to.

JasonMM: we did something similar with a role playing program (software),--but it's too impersonal...the kids don't seem to benefit from it

JillGu: They all relate to TV and movies so go into what THEY like. Sometimes they can express themselves better through fictitious characters that they relate to or invent.

JasonMM: it sounds like you've given me a great start

JillGu: Here's my email address: info@createnow.org. Please feel free to contact me any time if you have additional questions.

JasonMM: I'll have to go through your web site thoroughly

JasonMM: thank you so much Jill...I do appreciate it. I'm going to have to share this with our directors and counselors

JillGu: It's my pleasure. Let's stay in touch. Bye

JasonMM: sounds good...thank you for your time...I greatly appreciate it. Take Care...

JillGu: I've copied and pasted it to an email which I'll send to BJ. Gotta go for real. Bye.

JasonMM: bye