

THRESHOLDS AT THE JUVENILE DETENTION CENTER

We started teaching Thresholds at the Delaware County Juvenile Detention Center in 2002. Since then, 560 young people have taken the program, and all but 32 graduated (94% isn't bad). More than thirty-five volunteers have taught, among them Chrissy Annechino, Maggie Arbuckle, Mary Lu Bartorillo, Bill Murphy, Bob Rieck, the late great Terry Reed, and I have all taught at least 25 weekends. We have good reason to believe that our program has made a difference in the lives of the young people we teach.

For example, a study of the youths who took Thresholds in 2012 showed their recidivism rate to be only 23% compared to the national average of 66% for juveniles.

Mark Murry, the Center's Director has said, *"The Thresholds curriculum has had a positive impact on the daily lives of those juveniles who complete the program"*.

The obstacles that many kids face, and often overcome, are exemplified in this "timeline" of life events of one girl who attended: *"I was born in 1997. Mother doing drugs. She left. Moved with Dad. Unhappy. Dad died in 2007. Became ward of state. Arrested in 2010. On probation three times. In 8 different facilities. Cut wrists. Doctor says I'm chronically depressed. Arrested in October. Currently awaiting trial. Want to go to college."*

On Sunday afternoons the boys and girls share their impressions of the weekend. Some of their actual comments:

"I can really work at my pace on my things."

"You help a lot of people and you helped me."

"You don't tell us what to do, but let us decide for ourselves."

"You are caring, and explain what hope is."

"Now I believe I can turn my life around."

Those of us who return to teach each month feel we are privileged to know, if only briefly, some amazing young people. After all, isn't the opportunity to touch the lives of others what Thresholds is all about?

Jerry Nowell