

TEEN CENTER TIMES

A PLACE WHERE YOUTH ARE EMBRACED BY COMMUNITY

Fall 2008

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MONO LAKE CAMPING ADVENTURE

CHEYENNE ADELE ROSE

Our weekend trip was one of the most fun I've had in a LONG time! Our goal was to meet and help Mr. Amato's son and his class at Mono Lake, tour Yosemite with it's amazing natural beauties, and experience the past in the rustic mining town of Bodie.

"Camping" was to take on totally new meaning as the trip unfolded. We had our sleeping bags, tents, and the things that any normal human would bring camping. (However, normal camping was not what Mr. Amato had in mind.) Mr. Pacini drove the van with a TV, DVD player, "twenty -million" boxes, 18 chairs although there were only 8 people, tables, and a million other "ridiculous" things that no one would bring CAMPING. I looked around at the other kids and said, "Okay, is it just me, or does someone else think that we might have over packed a little." With that said all the kids started busting out in laughter!

Our first night of "camping" was in a hotel in Lake Tahoe - soft bed and giggling into the night. More great fun! There was one major draw back. I don't know about you, but for the average girl, I do not like being waken up at five in the morning! As we ventured out into the cold morning air, it wasn't so bad as we drank hot chocolate and ate strawberry pancakes with whip cream at the Red Hut.

Our trip from Lake Tahoe to Mono Lake was uneventful, but things picked up as we toured Mono Lake with Mr. Amato Jr. and his school group - brine shrimp, tufa towers, wildlife, and kids eating alkali fly larvae.

One of the major defaults about camping



is knowing that there will be a fire where everyone huddles together for warmth in the cold night air and smores become the order of the evening. To our disappointment there were no campfires allowed because of fire danger. Mr. Herman came to the rescue with smores over the campstove. Thanks, Mr. Herman!

The next day found us in Yosemite sliding down granite rocks, enjoying the beautiful sights such as Half Dome, lakes, and waterfalls, and eating a gourmet meal as Mr. Herman cooked up burgers.

That night we looked at stars through Mr. Pacini's telescope, sat around, laughed, told stories, and tried to keep warm. Now that's camping!

Most people don't like car rides, and I have to say I usually don't either, but this one was SO much fun. On our way home we enjoyed the mining town of Bodie, laughed a lot, and ate at the Spaghetti Factory.

The trip was totally awesome. We had a

great time meeting different kids, seeing the great sights, and just hanging out. It was so much fun to get away for the weekend with four kids that I really do love, which made it all the better. Thank you Mr. Pacini, Mr. Herman, and Mr. Amato.

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Recent Events

Bodega Dunes with PUCE	Sept 5
Relay for Life	Sept 13
Mono Lake Outdoor Ed Trip	Sept 26-28
SHH CIA Cooking Presentation	Oct 1
Drama Classes begin—Gillot	Oct 6
Shed building project—Herman	Oct 14
Mobile Art Center -Azteca Market	Oct 16
Nimbus Arts Open House	Oct 16
If Given a Chance-Chance	
Encounter Presentation	Oct 19
Bonsai at the Center—Pacini	Oct 22
Mobile Art Center at Teen Center	Oct 30
Teaching Construction Wall Amato	Oct 30
PUCE Presentation - Choices	Oct 31
Auction Napa Valley Presentation	Nov 6
Mobile Art Center -Stonebridge	Nov 12

Upcoming Events

Hometown Holiday	Dec 6
Homeless Christmas	Dec 13
Teen Center Christmas Party	Dec 18
Larry Tobin - Author	
<u>What Do You Do With A</u>	
<u>Child Like This</u>	Jan 2009

THE ART OF BONSAI

Our efforts to diversify and explore many various art forms and tap into the expertise and talents of those within the Teen Center Staff, has brought my personal passion of bonsai to the Teen Center! Excitement ran high as 5 of our young people recently got their hands dirty in creating their own "tree in a tray". With some guidance, they did all the work... pruning much of the roots and branches, and using wire to carefully shape their tree into the "visualized" finished product. The best part is that all of this happens without cell phones, text messaging, video screens, or I-pods... just good ol' face to face talk and hands-on creativity.



Each child was provided the plant material, proper tools, soil mix, and even a bonsai pot. After searching for just the right moss to place on the soil surface, they each end up with a good-looking plant to care for, display, and to claim as their own. With care, the plant then changes from good to great as it ages and grows to be a mature specimen in years to come.

With some basic training, most anyone can create their own bonsai, but of course there is a discipline involved in caring for any living thing. How exciting it would be for me if in 30 years, even one of our kids would be able to show me their "Teen Center bonsai", taking us



both back to a special day in 2008 when the tree first began its training. Even more exciting would be to see them with a collection of trees, knowing that the love of bonsai first took root (pun intended) at the Teen Center.

I fell in love with bonsai the first time I saw it and began creating my own some 35 years ago. This hobby has caused me to view the world differently as I am always looking for real trees that I want to imitate on a smaller scale. My collection contains around 50 trees, many of which are well over 20 years old. When seeing one of my pine trees that is maybe a foot tall and yet over 35 years old, Lilly T. asked "why would anyone want to have a dwarf tree?" ... and yet others at the center say "wow... I want to make one". So, as with most art forms, you either appreciate it or you don't. For those that do appreciate it, the opportunity to make your own tree is alive and happening at the Teen Center. We will find other things to interest Lilly, but will continue on with many more days of bonsai creations.

As the kids learn more about it in the bonsai days to come, we plan to expand this to the Mobile Art Center where our Teen Center kids can assist and help share it with the larger commu-

MARK PACINI

nity. We are even discussing the possibility of a commercial venture where kids could create and sell bonsai. After all, who doesn't like bonsai? Well... besides Lilly that is.

RELAY FOR LIFE

DANI FORSEY

This was my very first time attending Cancer Society Relay for Life. Several supervisors along with some very special teens from the Teen Center were able to come together for 24 hours. Thank you Cheyenne, Tyler, Maya, Devin, Alex, Lily, Cassidy, Abby, Jerry, Mark, and Tom.



This event brings people much closer in a very special way. I could tell Mr. Amato had been to Relay for Life before as I watched him set up a generator, tables, blender and microwave within minutes. Before I knew it the teens and supervisors were out selling popcorn, smoothies, and watches contributing to the grand total of \$67,000 raised by the Teams.

The Mobile Art Center was a huge hit among the walkers. Many kids came and designed their own T-Shirts while others designed luminaries either in honor of survivors or in memory of for those who lost loved ones. I saw many people writing the names of friends, family, co-workers and community members on too many sacks.

The Howell Mountain Pathfinders then took the luminaries, filled them with sand and candles and then placed them completely around the track. Unfortunately I have lost many people in my life to cancer. The luminary with my mother's name on it was "randomly" placed directly in front of where I was sitting. It has been over ten years since my mom passed away from Leukemia and I truly felt that what we were doing there was a true honor to her memory. I know that she would want more than anything for us to find a way to help others around us who are suffering.

With the help of our many supporters, the Angwin Teen Center was able to not only raise funds for Relay for Life but also help build stronger relationships with each other and our Community. As night fell, we had a fire to keep us warm while others stayed warm walking the track lit by the memory of a multitude of luminaries.

I would like to thank everyone who sponsored, partnered, and walked with us. Together we truly made a difference. Final total \$1,742.00. Thank you Linda Schulz for all of your hard work!!!! You are appreciated greatly.



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TOM AMATO RECEIVES CHANCE ENCOUNTER AWARD

Beau Van Deren

Each of us knows how much expertise, energy and passion that Tom Amato brings to us all- parenting, teaching, advocating, and embracing youth. While he is entirely too quick to praise others rather than accept it, it is particularly enjoyable that his influence is spreading so wide and how he is appropriately recognized. At the same time, we need to continue to reflect upon how to best provide Tom and the dedicated staff with support in continuing and fulfilling this vital youth and family outreach.



The If Given A Chance Foundation, in a ceremony held October 19 at the Copia in Napa, honored Tom, along with Leslie Medine with On the Move and CHOICES in Napa. They were celebrated as both being "our children's heroes." Presentations were made by representatives for Congressman Mike Thompson, Assembly Member Noreen Evans and Senator Patricia Wiggin as well as Board mem-

bers and youth intricately involved in the development and sustainability of their work.

In a series of presentations that go far beyond this text, Tom was recognized for his dedicated and unique ability to break down fear in young people by building trust, advocating for them and mentoring them. His ability to inspire not just youth but adults was acknowledged. Going far beyond the confines of the Teen Center, he is even considered a visionary with the ability to connect people together for youth not only on a local but regional

basis. Most importantly, along with understanding how even overachievers can be at risk and need help, Tom sees the potential in all youth regardless of hair color, tattoos, piercing and language. His ability to embrace without judgment is without question.

In an incredibly gracious acceptance speech praising so many others, Tom deferred to family and people in the community who support him. By doing his work, he seeks to recognize those who believed in him when he was "unbelievable," and who loved him when he was "unlovable." He also will continue to convince all adults that they are each uniquely able to make a difference in the lives of young people every day.

As new programs and initiatives are developed through the Teen Center and Tom's work with the St. Helena Hospital Center for Behavioral Health, we need to realize how far reaching our support is going. With such great momentum, our job is to maximize what an incredible resource for youth each of us can play day in and day out.

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TOM AMATO

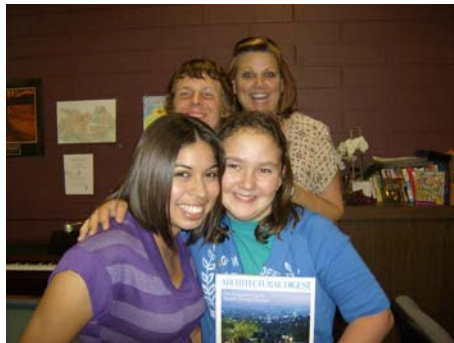
As our year comes to an end and we celebrate Thanksgiving, Christmas, and welcome in the New Year, our thoughts from the Teen Center reach out to each of you. You have touched our lives through your gifts, personal participation, good will, mentorship, and prayers.

We especially want to highlight the Napa Valley Vintners, Community Foundation of Napa Valley, Cantus Foundation, Gasser Foundation, Richard Jones Family Foundation, Howell Mountain School, Napa County Superintendent of Schools, Pacific Union College Church Community Services, St. Helena Chamber of Commerce, St. Helena Star, Napa Valley Heritage Fund, Napa Valley Coffee Roasting Company, and If Given A Chance for giving us the opportunity to extend far beyond the walls of the Teen Center.

I also want to thank the tireless efforts of our Board of Directors both past and present for their passion, dedication,. They work to create a most powerful influence in the lives of our children; as do our supervisors and volunteers who interface with our kids each day.

Every individual connected with the Teen Center in any way is making a difference: some vicariously, and others face to face. One might say, "How do you know?" "Give me concrete evidence in the lives of kids." The answer is found in "contrasts" that

might be most interesting to some - a "thank you" out of no where, picking up trash or cleaning up without being asked, volunteering for a service project, hard work when given a task, sharing, being where they said they would be at a given time, vacuuming when they see a need, tutoring a friend in need, thinking before they speak or act, connecting an adult with a friend who needs a helping hand, self control, consideration . . . You may say, "Where is the contrast?" Many have come from thinking totally of themselves only to grow into caring for others. Some have come with disrespect and transformed into caring for others. **If we keep our eyes open for growth, we will see glorious contrasts.**



Which brings us to the final thank you. We as a Community want to thank each child who brings their gifted personalities and character to the Teen Center. Thank you for allowing us to be a part of your life. We have learned so much from you. You have helped us to know your joys and sorrows, your heartaches and frustrations, as well as your hopes and dreams.

We are committed to all of you and we love each of you. We know that together we can create a more beautiful world.

From each of us as a Teen Center Family to each of you as our Extended Family, may you have the most blessed Holiday Season of All.