

Board of County Commissioners

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News Release

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For Immediate Release

Carroll earns national recognition for adventure program

June 16, 2009 – When the Department of Juvenile Services referred a local teen to Carroll County’s Adventure Diversion Program as a condition of his probation, the boy refused to participate. Repeated attempts by his mother, probation officer and the program’s coordinator all failed to convince him. That’s when two graduates of the program stepped in. The youth shared their experiences – kayaking, rock climbing, cleaning up local streams – and talked about how they learned leadership and team-building skills. With their encouragement, the once reluctant teen gave the program a try. He now flourishes under the guidance of this unique program. He found new ways to solve problems. He takes responsibility by asking for help when he needs it. Despite battling homelessness and drug abuse in his family, the youth is becoming a dedicated, integral member of the group.

Program Director Joyce Agatone holds up the teen as evidence that Adventure Diversion works. Numbers back her up. Eighty-four percent of participants keep out of trouble during the 90-day program. Agatone describes the highly structured hands-on environment as a place where “consequence meets opportunity.” The youth, all between 14 and 17, are on probation for various offenses. They spend anywhere from 12 to 20 hours a week in the alternative intervention program, under the supervision of the program coordinator and probation officers. Without Adventure Diversion, the boys and girls are at risk of being removed from their homes. Participants learn conflict resolution, social skills development and team building through their own Boy Scouts’ Venturing Crew. Just as importantly, they gain a peer support network and find new ways to spend their time.

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CARROLL COUNTY

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Adventure Diversion Program

The program itself is an example of teamwork. A collaboration of the Youth Services Bureau, the local office of the Maryland Department of Juvenile Services, and the Carroll County Local Management Board, the Adventure Diversion Program saves approximately \$456,000 a year. It does so by reducing the number of teens placed in expensive out-of-home programs. Last week, the National Association of Counties recognized the Adventure Diversion Program with a 2009 Achievement Award. The award goes to programs that promote quality and efficiency.

To earn a NACo Achievement Award, a program must be innovative, produce measurable results, and promote government accountability. Adventure Diversion does all these things. Financially, the results are substantial. Out-of-home placement costs \$206 a day per youth, while ADP costs \$37 a day. With 30 youth in the program, annual savings equal \$456,200. Teens demonstrate they can incorporate the lessons they learn beyond the program. More than two-thirds of them have stayed in their homes for the six months following participation. After a year, more than 60 percent are still in their homes.

For more information about Carroll County's Adventure Diversion Program, contact Mary Scholz, administrator of the Local Management Board. Summaries of this and other award-winning programs are available at <http://www.naco.org>.

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