

inside&out

Accountability is the only answer.

On December 19th, Jonathan Cermak was heading home after working his shift at the K-PEP Men's Facility in Kalamazoo. On the way home Jonathan was hit head-on by a drunk driver who crossed the center line. It was not this person's first time driving under the influence. The driver of the other vehicle suffered only a broken rib. Jonathan, however, remains in the hospital undergoing rehabilitation for a broken leg, a broken pelvis and numerous internal injuries.

Jonathan is young, strong and has an extremely good attitude, all of which will aid in his recovery. Our thoughts and prayers go out to Jonathan and his family as they go through this process. We miss Jonathan and look forward to his return in the near future.

This accident hits close to home for us at K-PEP. We have been working with drunk driving offenders in both our outpatient and residential programs for many years now. We have seen the havoc these individuals can cause. It takes on even greater significance when the victim is a friend and co-worker. We have seen a disturbing reduction in sanctions in recent years for felony drunk drivers. There are several reasons for this, not the least of which is an overcrowded jail.

What can be done? Lowering the legal limit from .10 to .08 is probably not going to solve the problem. These aren't the people involved in most serious accidents. Holding these individuals accountable for their behavior is the only answer. We have worked hard for many years to provide quality and cost-effective programs to respond to the threat drunk drivers pose to the community; from alcohol testing to Early Recovery to Weekend Intervention to the Residential Work Release Program. These programs have proven to provide a significant impact in the lives of many individuals.

We remain more committed than ever to these programs and hope to see them used even more to intervene before another tragedy occurs.

William A. Johnson



INSIDE: ■ Making Good Even Better in Berrien
 ■ Conversation with a K-PEP resident

“10% of life is what happens to you and 90% is what you do about it”

A conversation with K-PEP resident Jeff Riddle

Q: What do you think about K-PEP?

A: I have an outlook on this place as another chance in life. I'd rather be here than in jail. No ifs, ands or buts about it because you still get to work, you get to see your kids. There's a lot more freedom than jail, and to me it's like another chance in life. This is a learning atmosphere because you deal with such a broad array of people of different attitudes, races and religions and you can learn something here from each individual. There's a saying that they had posted here and I've taken it to heart. It said 10% of life is what happens to you and 90% is what you do about it. You know, that's really true in my eyes because you're the only one that can do anything with your life.

Q: How has K-PEP helped you?

A: The first time I came to K-PEP I was really young, I was 17 years old and I didn't care. I was really rebellious and I thought rules and regulations didn't apply to me. What I took from here then was that everybody has rules to follow no matter where you go. And the drug rehabilitation has helped so much. I was a pot smoker and I thought there was nothing wrong with it. In all actuality, it is a drug and it's addictive. If it weren't for this place, I wouldn't be where I'm at now. I did have a choice to either come here or jail and I chose



here because it gives you freedom, it sets you up to be more successful in life, but only if you're willing to accept it. I'm very thankful.

I let a lot of my past hold me back. I was adopted when I was younger. I was in foster homes and I try to blame that on the way I am now, but I know that's a cop out. And you know, I think I still hold a little bit of that weight on my shoulders. I think there's nothing promised to us in life, not even time. I live every day for the moment. I learned that through AA.

Q: Were you able to finish high school

through the GED program?

A: Yes, I think it took about two weeks. I was really motivated. I knew I didn't graduate and I knew it was one of the requirements to leave here and the teachers are really good people.

Q: How will it be going back to your life outside of K-PEP?

A: I try to keep my distance from my family and old friends because I don't want to fall back into the old patterns. I will go out to say "Hi, Bye, Love you, you are my family" but as far as staying out there, no. Because I know what would happen. I'd be back into the same lifestyle and I don't want it. If you've been in trouble, you don't want your children to go through that. And I want them to know who I am and be totally different than what my father was for me and that alone is a motivation.

Q: What kind of goals do you have for yourself?

A: I plan on having a vehicle before I leave here in the spring and enrolling in college. After that, I will hopefully own my own business. I like to draw. I like to do music. I like kids. I'd like to have a regular, normal life. "Don't let all of the negative things hold you back", that's my philosophy.



Learning to be better parents through reading

Susan Warner of the Kalamazoo Public Library discusses reading to children with K-PEP residents, as part of the Library's "Ready to Read" program. About 10 residents attended the evening program and learned how reading affects educational performance in children. Ms. Warner brought a variety of children's books, donated by the Library, for the men to keep and share with their families.



Berrien County Makes Changes

“When we sent people to K-PEP . . .all kinds of positive things were being done.”



Too often, Bill Bliss has observed, inmates learn little in jail “except how to act worse than they did when they came in.” This pattern is only one of the of the many Bliss has seen in his 26 years working in corrections. He got his start in 1976 at the county jail in Kansas City, Missouri. By 1980, he had begun working for the state in probation and parole, leaving after eight years to work in a halfway house. When his wife’s longtime employer, The Upjohn Company, closed down its Kansas City distribution center in 1990, the pair relocated to Kalamazoo. Bliss was soon working at the Kent County District Court as Chief Probation Officer, which entailed a round-trip commute of more than 120 miles each day. Before long, Bliss says, “it was wearing me and my car out.” He left the job briefly for one closer to home, only to be wooed back the following year by the Kent County District Court Judge. After five more years in Kent County and a brief career experiment in real estate—“not the worst mistake I’ve ever made, but right up there,”—he started working as a case worker for the new Drug Court program in Kalamazoo.

Four years later, when Bliss learned about K-PEP’s opening for a Program Manager in Benton Harbor, it was just the kind of news he had been hoping for. For K-PEP, in turn, Bliss was just the kind of Program Manager they had been hoping to put in charge of the Berrien County Program. They knew that beside his many talents, he would bring with him a broad range of experience in the field and a true understanding of K-PEP’s goals. In his work at the Drug Court, he had learned about K-PEP firsthand, and it became clear that the program provided something better than the usual, passive incarceration. “When we sent people to K-PEP, they were being told they had to go out and work. If they didn’t have a job, they had to go through job classes. They were getting substance abuse treatment while they were here—all kinds of positive things were being done.”

Bliss has plans for making good even better at K-PEP. As a supplement to Berrien’s programs, for example, he and the K-PEP administrators are looking at ways of implementing a probation supervision program for misdemeanants similar to the one in Kalamazoo. At the moment, his main priority is to get the facility fully staffed and its population increased. He is also excited about continuing the other K-PEP programs, like Successful Thinking classes and GED courses, which he sees as a real opportunity for people to choose different paths for themselves. “If people are shown there are other choices they can make, then if they choose to go that next step, they can usually get themselves out of this mess. And they turn their lives around.”

KPEP provides volunteer assistance

to local non-profit agencies, senior citizens and handicapped persons.

In Kalamazoo County:

Jason McCune at 269-383-0444
or Cynthia Tall at 269-383-1386

In Berrien County:

Charles Adams at 269-926-1284

In Calhoun County:

Carl Crawford at 269-963-2085

In Muskegon County:

Tyrone Perry at 231-726-2733



K-PEP Staff On the Move

October 1, 2002 - December 31, 2002

Hired:

John Shyne	Program Manager
Linda Sheets	Resident Coord. Super.
Jill Dahl	Resident Case Manager
Tyrone Perry	Resident Case Manager
Jack Burden	Maintenance
Linda Carter	Resident Coordinator
Anthony Simmons	Resident Coordinator
Nata Murdaugh	Resident Coordinator
Okeelah McBride	Resident Coordinator
Leon Howard	Resident Coordinator
Betty Carter	Resident Coordinator
William Mallory	Resident Coordinator
Dannette Williams	Resident Coordinator
Edward Simonie	Resident Coordinator
Cynthia Marble	Resident Coordinator
James White	Resident Coordinator
Filibito Herrera	Food Service
Robert Ruekert	Group Facilitator
Janet Alatalo	Resident Coordinator
William Bliss	Program Manager
Timothy Thomas	Resident Coordinator
Julius Poole	Resident Coordinator
John Roseboom	Resident Coordinator
Jacob Scott	Resident Coordinator
Andrew Fitzpatrick	Resident Coordinator
Barry Stephens	Resident Coordinator
Sam Zomer	Resident Coordinator
Daniel Veihl	Resident Coordinator
Douglas Murch	Resident Coordinator

1st quarter results:

Average Daily Count	188.9
Referrals	348
Admissions	301
Successful Graduates	160
Jobs Obtained	116
GED Tests	75
GED Certificates	7
Substance abuse graduates	
Residents	122
Weekend Intervention	8
Resident Income	\$303,782.91
Rent paid	\$103,591.45
Court Costs Paid	\$19,944.30

Promoted:

Crystal Cooper	Full-Time Resident Coordinator
Bruce Lindsay	Full-Time Resident Coordinator



RRSRT STD
US POSTAGE PAID
KALAMAZOO, MI
PERMIT NO. 307

Kalamazoo Probation Enhancement Program, Inc.
519 South Park St. • Kalamazoo, MI 49007



K-PEP is a private, non-profit probation residential center for adult offenders. Our mission is to provide a cost-effective and community-based productive alternative to incarceration. Our program provides the opportunity and structure for men and women to take personal responsibility in all areas of their lives.