Are We There Yet?

—Dennis Cox

Are we there yet? will be asked repeatedly by thousands of frustrated young travelers from the back seats of family vehicles this summer. It is at once an indicator of impatience and of curiosity about how to mark progress toward a destination. How will they know when they are there?

If such a journey is difficult for young travelers with a well-defined destination, imagine how frustrating it must be when their destination is unknown. Such is the case for our society’s young boys as they wait for notice of their arrival as men. How will they know when they are there?

The journey to manhood begins with boyhood, transitions through adolescence, and is completed at some point in adulthood. There are several popular developmental theories which address the physical, psychological, emotional, cognitive and social development of the male, and the tasks that must be accomplished to develop a healthy sense of self. None seem to give a time and date of arrival into manhood.

Basically, all follow a path that begins with childhood as a time of preoccupation with self, a time of learning through play. Adolescence is the period of transition from boyhood to manhood. During adolescence, males go through puberty, which is marked by growth of genitals, pubic hair, physical growth spurts, voice change, and cognitive development that increases problem-solving skills and moves focus from self to others.

The development of the social self of the male is complicated by emotional highs and lows that come with hormone production, sexual identity issues, social pressures to behave like a man, challenges to parental authority, and the demands of developing and maintaining social relationships. At some point in later adolescence, all this culminates with the expectation he is ready to face the world independently. For males, the unspoken expectation (handed down from the time of clan life) is that they be providers.

For the male, adulthood arrives when he has a fully developed physical body, but this does not equate with manhood. Traditionally, manhood has been defined socially. For most of known history, the arrival of adolescents into manhood has been marked by a rite of passage, usually a ceremony that marks and celebrates the transition that the man knows he is a man and afterward is socially recognized as such. In our industrialized society, we seem to be leaving rites of passage further and further behind. Besides a few religious rituals such as the bar mitzvah and confirmation, we have few ceremonies that survive in our popular culture.

We seem to be leaving it up to our young males to figure out for themselves when they cross the elusive threshold into manhood. Hunting privileges, driver’s licenses, high school and/or college graduations, weddings, and fatherhood provide a line of progression of accomplishments that accompany the journey to adulthood, yet we have men in their mid-thirties who remain confused and at a loss for defining if and when they entered manhood. We need to be more intentional if we are to help our young males recognize when and how they become men. They need to be guided and prepared for taking on the responsibilities, as well as the activities of manhood.

—Dennis Cox is the Adolescent Health and Youth Suicide Prevention Coordinator for the Family and Community Health Bureau. He can be reached at 406-444-6928.
The Vicki Column

—Our culture sets up boys to equate self-worth with wealth-worth, and teaches them that love is dependent upon performance.

Our children are the keepers of our dreams. I am the mother of two sons, both of whom have emerged from babyhood into personhood. Andy, at nine, is not a morning person, but he is a hybrid, smooth-running machine, a thinker who watches from a distance until he has things figured out. Justin, at five, is high octane, a thinker too, but someone who jumps right in. At this phase of his life, he could find his calling as the box-store greeter any time of the day or night.

I watch my sons and hope that I can raise them to be kind, polite, considerate, independent thinkers, willing to take some risks and yet be self-directed, confident, respectful and civically engaged human beings. More importantly, I want them prepared to be good partners and parents themselves on some faraway day. It’s a tall order. I hope for the wisdom to teach them to keep their heads connected to their hearts.

Not a day goes by that we don’t discuss drugs, smoking and how to make healthy choices, counter to the constant media influence in their lives. My husband and I work on teaching our sons how to deal with conflict, sibling squabbles and bullies. Our five-year-old is already worried about entering Kindergarten this fall. He asks what to do if a bully approaches him on the playground. His big brother, Andy, has been coaching him on strategies and giving him tips on navigating at school.

I know that the playgrounds of today—and tomorrow—will define how my sons approach masculinity, how they develop their capacity to compete athleteically and academically and manage relationships. It will help shape their values as they enter into middle school/high school (and hopefully college). The reality is that I cannot monitor all of their playgrounds. My sons will grow toward manhood on avenues I can’t begin to fathom.

This issue parallels the Women and Girls issue published in 2004. Some research says that boys have begun lagging behind, while other research indicates that boys are doing as well as they ever have, but that girls are, finally, catching up. I hope this last is true. One way or the other, our boys and men are face expectations and challenges specific to their gender. We cast a broad net on the subject of boys and men, and we hope this issue sheds some light and insight on the tests to boys’ courage and effective strategies for dealing with the demands our society places on boys in their journey toward becoming men.

Vicki

Get the Prevention Connection electronically, sign up for the Prevention Resource Center (PRC) Hot News, or look into the PRC VISTA Program: www.prevention.mt.gov
I am the mother of two grown sons, and raising them was the adventure of my life. Though I love them both dearly, this is a story about my older son.

At 27, my son is strong, kind, smart . . . and if I had to sum him up in one word, it would be *sweet*, though he has an underlying toughness that surfaces when needed. He thinks the best of people and has been known to give his coat away to keep someone else warm. He is a hard worker and a conscientious man. I feel privileged to call him my friend. Unfortunately, last summer, this wonderful son of mine hit a brick wall, which came in the guise of a DUI offense. As it turns out, the underlying problem was clinical depression, though we didn’t fully understand that at the time.

As is the case with many men, my son’s depression wasn’t easy to recognize. It looked like risk taking and excessive drinking. It came out as anger, isolation and verbal aggression. Under the weight of this disease, my son slept too much, ate too little, let go of friends and activities that he’s always enjoyed. It happened so gradually that I didn’t see the glacier moving until one day I realized that it had been months since I’d heard him laugh.

With the benefit of hindsight, I have come to realize that his depression probably started in high school. Old photos show a young boy with sparkling eyes and a shy smile. Then, halfway through high school, the dark eyes went flat, and the smile became a twist of pain. Back then, I chalked it up to teenage angst, to adolescent hormones. Now I know it was the beginning of a long slide.

In the one picture I have of my Granny’s brother, John, he is wearing a battered leather jacket and a Jimmy Dean smile. I never knew him—he was gone by the time I came along. The truth is, I didn’t even know of him until shortly before Granny died, when I came across his picture during a visit. Pressed, Granny told me the bare bones of his story: John was a laborer in Estes Park, Colorado. He lived alone, and one day failed to show up for work. After a couple of days, some coworkers went looking for him. They found him in his bed, one end of a string tied to his toe and the other to the trigger of a rifle. Empty whiskey bottles littered the floor.

Mental health and chemical dependency professionals will tell you that co-occurring disorders are the expectation, not the exception. I will say from experience that it is very difficult to know what you’re looking at, and where one leaves off and the other begins.

We’ll never know what demons Granny’s brother struggled with, all those years ago. My guess is, they are the same ones my son battled. Thankfully, there are more options now than there were back in the 1940s, and so far my son’s story has a happy ending. He started using an antidepressant that has worked well for him. It was rough sledding for a while, but after several weeks, he popped back to the surface of his life, without the depression and without a need to seek relief from alcohol. I am blessed: I still have my son. And I thank God every single day that his brick wall wasn’t the last thing he saw and that he didn’t drown or get swept away before he could get help.

---

**Facts About Male Depression**

— Every year, depression affects more that 19 million Americans, but men account for only about one in 10 diagnosed cases.

— Untreated male depression can be life-threatening: depressed men are four times as likely as depressed women to commit suicide.

— Substance abuse can mask depression, making it harder to recognize depression as a separate illness that needs treatment.

— American men tend to deny having emotional problems. As a result, depressed men are more likely to talk about the physical symptoms of depression, such as feeling tired, rather than those related to emotions.


— See the Footprints of Male Depression on page 23 of this issue.
Men and Boys: Healthy Relationships
—David Young, Ph.D.

Life is about relationships and a sense of community. Healthy relationships matter. Healthy relationships between men and boys matter. Research studies show that children who grow up without healthy relationships with a father are more likely to suffer emotional problems, perform poorly in school, engage in criminal activity, and abuse drugs and alcohol. Consider the following facts.

— In the U.S., from 1960-1996, the number of children living in homes without a father or stepfather increased nearly three-fold from seven million to nearly 20 million.

— Currently, one-third of all children in America are living in fatherless homes and the average child will spend a significant portion of childhood living apart from a father. Increasing rates of divorce, unwed child bearing and male incarceration have contributed significantly to the expanding number of fatherless families.


— For the first time in our nation’s history, out of wedlock births exceeds divorce as the primary cause of fatherless families.

Montana ranked 2nd in the nation in the percentage increase in adult incarcerated population, leaving many children in less than ideal living conditions. Children of incarcerated parents experience high levels of stress, emotional trauma, stigmatization and separation anxiety. They have more trouble developing the values and social skills necessary for successful, healthy relationships. In addition, children of incarcerated parents exhibit a broad range of behavioral, emotional, mental, educational and physical health problems. Compared to other children, they are seven times more likely to follow in their parents footsteps and become involved with juvenile and adult criminal justice systems. The US Department of Justice estimates that over 7.3 million children under the age of 18 have a parent who is in prison, jail, on probation, or on parole.

Paralleling the increase in adult incarceration rate is a corresponding increase in the number grandparents raising grandchildren. The number of grandparents raising grandchildren has steadily increased over the past decade and has doubled in the last five years, placing Montana in the top ten states nationally. Currently, 11,000 displaced at-risk children are being raised by 6,000 to 7,000 Montana grandparents. It is estimated that Montana grandparents are saving the state over $116,000 a day in costs for foster care. As of July 2006, three bills are being drafted by the Montana Children, Families, Health and Human Services Interim Committee, all of which are geared to helping grandparents raising grandchildren.

Many studies reveal that abused boys frequently grow up to be abusers as adults. Prisons are home to fathers and sons and

Healthy relationships and healthy families are closely linked to community health. Community health is influenced by collective beliefs, attitudes and behavior. Thus, issues of health status and health outcomes are personal and communal. Healthy youth, parents and families are essential for healthy Montana communities.

Men and Boys: Healthy Relationships
—David Young, Ph.D.
Men and Boys

Continued from Page 4

even grandsons, many of whom are products of an unbroken intergenerational cycle of abuse and criminal activity. Studies show that about 70 percent of incarcerated rapists were sexually abused as boys. Many of the most sadistic killers in recent history were severely abused as young boys. For example, Richard Kuklinski, who died on March 5, 2006 in Trenton State Prison, grew up in a household with a severely abusive father, actually witnessing his brother’s death from the abuse. Richard killed his first victim at age 14 and claimed to have killed over 200 individuals as a hit man for the Mafia. (The Ice Man: Confessions of a Mafia Contract Killer by Philip Carlo, 2006, St. Martin’s Press.)

Many Montana boys are being raised today without positive male role models. Research shows that boys who grow up outside of intact marriages are, on average, more than twice as likely as other boys to end up in jail. The jury is still out on whether their problems are solely related to not having a father in the home, but in any case there is an urgent need to rescue high-risk boys from a plethora of pressures, distractions and adverse factors that derail them from realizing their full potential. These factors come in two general categories—

voluntary and involuntary. Involuntary factors are unhealthy situations beyond a boy’s immediate control, e.g., poverty, a dysfunctional or abusive family, single parent family, violent environment and out-of-home placement. Voluntary factors are those in which a boy has a choice. These are frequently influenced by peer and/or social pressures to engage in activities that have unhealthy and adverse consequences, including truancy, substance abuse, pornography, gang involvement, premarital sex, Internet exposure to child predators, vandalism, and other criminal activity.

As adults we are products of our childhood relationships and experiences. Children who grow up in healthy, stable homes witnessing warm, enduring relationships between their parents and siblings are less likely to suffer from emotional or behavioral problems, be victims of abuse or neglect, or have difficulties academically. Fatherlessness costs states money.

If we want healthier, safer communities and to ensure the best outcomes for its greatest renewable (and most vulnerable) resource, we need to invest in boys and the men they will become.

—David Young, Ph.D. is the Rural Health Resource Specialist, Extension Service, Montana State University.

MSU Extension Service: Making a Difference

The Montana Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Project was initiated in 2001. The project is designed to assist and support Montana grandparents faced with the unique challenge of parenting a second time around. The project provides resources, information and materials through various avenues including seminars, conferences, therapeutic support groups, resource guides, list serves, bimonthly newsletters and a website www.montana.edu/wwwhd/grg/grg/index.htm

A Rural Healthy Communities Initiative designed to assist rural underserved, vulnerable and special needs populations in taking advantage of opportunities to improve their quality of life and strengthen the well-being of families and communities is under development.

The Rural Healthy Communities Initiative is being designed to provide technical assistance, resources, information and support to Extension Agents, local governments, and community-based organizations in addressing unmet health and social needs essential to healthy communities. A major objective will be to assist needy communities in seeking outside sources of funding to address unmet health and social service needs. Studies have shown that well-planned community-based programs yield positive results. The principles of social capital—collaboration, partnerships, alliances, coalitions—are cornerstones for healthy community promotion strategies.


The Fatherhood Initiative

Children with involved, loving fathers are significantly more likely to do well in school, have healthy self-esteem, exhibit empathy and pro-social behavior, and avoid high-risk behaviors such as drug use, truancy, and criminal activity compared to children who have uninvolved fathers.

The increasing numbers of high-risk children have captured the attention of federal, state and local governments and special interest groups. The Reauthorization of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Program (TANF) in the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 contains a renewed focus on work, program integrity and strengthening families through healthy marriage promotion and responsible fatherhood. The National Fatherhood Initiative (NFI) established a social movement in 1994 to significantly increase the number of children growing up with an involved, responsible and committed father. The NFI works with communities to assess the impact of absent fathers and to develop strategies that promote responsible fatherhood.

For more information, visit: www.fatherhood.org
Using the Developmental Assets
—Marc Mannes, Director of Applied Research, Search Institute, Minneapolis

Cities and towns throughout America are confronting many of the same issues and concerns set forth by David Young in his article (pages 4-5), and many are determining that Search Institute’s Developmental Assets are a purposeful and powerful approach for raising healthy boys and girls, and for promoting healthy families and healthy communities.

In survey-based profiles of several thousand suburban, rural, and urban communities across the country over the past dozen years, Search Institute has discovered that basic developmental support mechanisms for young people in many schools and neighborhoods are fragile. Search Institute has also learned that core developmental factors such as empowerment, belonging, affirmation, appropriate structure, meaningful engagement, and connectedness are relatively uncommon in nearly all communities. While some young people are indeed faring better than others in terms of the nurturing quality of their overall environments, low levels of access to developmental opportunities and resources is typical across gender, grade, parental education, and race/ethnicity.

In response, Search Institute has produced three versions of the Developmental Assets to enhance the developmental experiences for children and youth and strengthen the developmental infrastructure in American communities large and small: one for adolescents (covering the middle school and high school years); one for middle childhood, (covering the (the upper elementary grades 4-6); and, an early childhood version (covering the preschool years). The three versions of the Developmental Assets can be downloaded from the Search Institute website, www.search-institute.org.

Communities throughout the country have made the decision to use the Developmental Assets and become developmentally attentive places for young people. A developmentally attentive community marshals and activates the strength-building capacity of its residents and sectors. Such a community also takes action on behalf of more indirect influences that support and sustain these more direct resident and sector influences. These include policy, financial resources, and social norms that promote adult engagement with the young. The Developmental Assets provide communities with a useful blueprint and guidelines for building optimal developmental configurations of investments, experiences, and relationships across many community settings.

Search Institute has established five action strategies for transforming family and community life: creating a world where all young people are valued and thrive. The strategies involve:

a) engaging adults from all walks of life;
b) mobilizing young people to use their power;
c) activating sectors such as families, schools, congregations, youth organizations, businesses, human service and health-care agencies to create an asset-building culture and to contribute fully to young people’s healthy development;
d) invigorating programs to be asset rich and to be available to and accessed by all children and youth; and
e) influencing civic decisions by influencing decision makers and opinion leaders to leverage financial, media, and policy resources in support of positive transformation of communities and society.

Communities from border to border and coast to coast are using the Developmental Assets as the foundation for community-based initiatives that foster the developmental health and well-being of young people, their parents, and neighborhoods.

Asset-builders from around the world (yes, asset-building is occurring in other countries) will gather in Minneapolis, Minnesota on October 26-28, 2006 for the 10th Annual Search Institute Healthy Communities Healthy Youth Conference. This year’s conference title is Asset Building Comes of Age: Transforming Society with Youth. Information on the conference can be downloaded from the Search Institute website, www.search-institute.org.
A quarter of a century ago, officials in South Africa’s Kruger National Park thinned the elephant herd by sending some of the young elephants to another national preserve. Normally, young male elephants have older, stronger bulls around. Since they can’t beat the older bulls, they learn how to deescalate rather than fight. These young bulls didn’t have this opportunity. Ten years passed, and the relocated male elephants, now teenagers, started killing rhinos. Their normal hormonal cycles had been disrupted and they were experiencing heightened levels of testosterone, resulting in extreme aggression.

Elephants and rhinos often come together, typically around water holes. They’ll posture and signal the intent to fight, but actual physical interactions are rare. Most of the time, the situation is diffused when one or the other moves away, and that’s what the rhinos were doing. Unfortunately, the young bull elephants, not knowing how to deescalate, started chasing the rhinos down at a run and attacking them with their tusks. The situation was finally resolved when officials brought in some older bulls. After six months, the population settled into a more normal population structure and assumed stable social behavior. The young bulls’ testosterone levels dropped and the rhino killings ended.

Now that I have your attention . . .

The 2000 Census revealed that there were 32,016 “female householders, no husband present”—23,380 children under the age of 18 lived in those households. Males and females each comprise about half of Montana’s population, which translates into almost 12,000 boys and young men growing up in those female-headed households. It is likely that many are missing the significant, steady, consistent influence of older males. Many single mothers in Montana are living in poverty, working one or two jobs just to make ends meet. Top that off with a constant power struggle with a growing son, and the results can be explosive.

Media throws another curve into the situation. Without realistic masculine role models, teens often try to emulate the media’s portrayal of masculinity, without realizing a high-energy, testosterone-driven personality is an unsustainable, unhealthy myth. There are many ways to help boys gain a balanced perspective on life, but the first and best involves good role models.

Most young men flirt with risk behaviors and disaster in one way or another. Many, if not most, go through stages where they’re adversarial or aggressive, when they challenge authority, and take unhealthy risks. This not only puts them in immediate danger, it makes them vulnerable to all kinds of real-world consequences, from drop-out and addiction to engagement with justice systems. Unfortunately, once a youth reaches the point of being in detention, the likelihood of becoming entrenched in the system increases exponentially. Once young men and boys start engaging in risk behaviors, it’s also likely that they’ll find alternative masculine role models, often negative ones. Not to put too fine a point on it, we need to make sure that we don’t see young males escalating to the point that they are “killing rhinos”—whatever that might mean in their individual environments.

In 1990, Minnesota writer and poet Robert Bly published Iron John: A Book About Men. Using the fairy tale, Iron John, as a metaphor, Bly examined the nature of modern man and the male psyche. Among the arguments posed in the book is that without the benefit of male mentors, boys grow into men unable to relinquish the “golden ball” of childhood to assume the responsibilities of manhood.

There are some interesting parallels between the young male elephants and Bly’s premise. Both clearly highlight the need for strong male role models who can help restrain boys from going to extremes in trying to reach some distorted ideal of “macho.” There is no question that mentoring is one of the best tools in our prevention toolbox. At the same time, we must recognize that young males—particularly those who are already engaging in risk behaviors—may neither be emotionally available to a male mentor, nor recognize the need for pro-social involvement. Even with mentoring, one size does not fit all.

Perhaps the question isn’t how do we attract more male mentors? But how can we reach and engage young men who don’t want to be reached? Here are a few tips.

Engaging hard-to-reach youth

1. Provide a safe, welcoming and responsive environment
2. Listen, listen, listen. Provide a chance for them to tell you who they are, and connect with what they tell you by recognizing the validity of their experience.
3. Establish clarity about your role and theirs, particularly in coaching, mentoring or therapeutic environments. Ask what their expectations from the relationship are, and share yours.
4. Be aware of the powers of transference and counter-transference. Rebel- lious and at-risk teens will often manipulate relationships to mirror what they’ve known. This can start a dance in which they not only have the lead, but which can underscore negative assumptions about authority figures.
5. Rebellious teens tend to think conforming to an adult’s expectations is bad. Turn the tables: provide opportunities for empowerment. Ask what they want, how they would like to proceed and what matters to them.
6. Be flexible and appreciate diversity.
7. Communicate clearly and don’t feel bad about saying no if necessary.
8. Be conscious of how you use the word “should.”
9. Acknowledge good behavior.
10. Recognize change.

None of this is easy, but engaging youth and acting as worthy role models is one of the greatest gifts we—as men—can offer the boys in our communities and our lives.

—Roland M. Mena is the Executive Director of the Montana Board of Crime Control. Prior to that, he served as the Chemical Dependency Bureau Chief under the Department of Public Health and Human Services. He can be reached at rmena@mt.gov or 406-444-3615.
I recently hosted my 9-year old nephew for the weekend. I planned numerous exciting activities at the lake and the movie theater... bought his favorite junk food and a gift (a metal detector) for our visit. I also have the Cartoon Network, which he doesn’t have at home.

Planning and implementing our special weekend was exhausting, and after a day and a half of swimming, eating and hours of cartoons viewing, I suggested we have Sunday morning breakfast together sans the tube and instead, well... have a conversation. I thought he would resist. I was concerned that he might object to future visits if I denied him cartoons. I was wrong. He talked and talked and it ultimately took some effort to get him to finish his breakfast because he was so engaged in telling me stories about his school, friends, and a recent trip he took with his father. He asked me a thousand questions about myself, my cat, my hobbies and even my childhood.

I was reminded that what kids really want from us is us... our time, our ear... our attention... and little else. They want us to get off the phone, turn off the radio, get out of the car, look them in the eye and listen.

— Some of the best phone calls that I have ever received have been from my Little. He called me when he had his first girlfriend and when he shot his first deer. The excitement of a 12-year old is amazing. Best of all is the joy I get being part of that. —Big Brother Rick, matched with Jake since 2003

— When I first started the program, I was thinking more about how good it is for the Littles, but I have come to realize how much being a Big Brother has meant to me. The main benefit is being able to participate in the life of an exceptional young man. —Big Brother Bryan, matched with Loran since 1996

— My experience as a Big Brother has been beneficial in numerous ways, but mostly it has been fun. I enjoy the times together, whether we’re hiking, playing basketball, giving golf a try, going to a baseball game, attending a BBBS get-together or playing at the park. The companionship and friendship make it clear that the mentoring program is a two-way street and that the Big Brother benefits from it as well. —Big Brother John matched with Trey since October, 2005

— Spending time with kids isn’t about action-packed good times. It’s about sharing your life, sharing your stories, sharing your experience. It’s about being a friend. Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring works through simple, ordinary friendship. Little brothers and sisters can begin to visualize, and then to realize, a better future. Being a friend says you matter, which means that your choices matter.

— I have always enjoyed passing on information. Whether it was my son or one of his friends, it was a joy to see them learn or accomplish something new. When my son was out of the house, I missed that. It took about six months for me to decide to become a Big Brother. I have enjoyed every minute of it. —Big Brother Mike, matched with Christian since 2000

— When I first started the program, I was thinking more about how good it is for the Littles, but I have come to realize how much being a Big Brother has meant to me. The main benefit is being able to participate in the life of an exceptional young man. —Big Brother Bryan, matched with Loran since 1996

— My experience as a Big Brother has been beneficial in numerous ways, but mostly it has been fun. I enjoy the times together, whether we’re hiking, playing basketball, giving golf a try, going to a baseball game, attending a BBBS get-together or playing at the park. The companionship and friendship make it clear that the mentoring program is a two-way street and that the Big Brother benefits from it as well. —Big Brother John matched with Trey since October, 2005

— Spending time with kids isn’t about action-packed good times. It’s about sharing your life, sharing your stories, sharing your experience. It’s about being a friend. Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring works through simple, ordinary friendship. Little brothers and sisters can begin to visualize, and then to realize, a better future. Being a friend says you matter, which means that your choices matter.
for over 3 years and it keeps getting easier. —Big Brother Rick matched with Jake since 2003

Take a moment to think about the people who influenced who you are today. For some, this person was a teacher, a coach, a neighbor, a friend. These were our mentors. They may not have given us answers to all life’s questions, but they gave us tools to discover our own answers. Just by being a friend and sharing their time, they helped shape who we became.

— Growing up, I had a friend who had a Big Brother. Without that influence, he probably would have never made it. I came from a stable home, but my friend had a tough time of it with no dad. His mom was working all the time and he had an abusive biological big brother. We are still in touch and he still comments about how much that relationship meant to him. He now has a beautiful family and lives in Billings. I just wanted to pass on that legacy to another boy.

Christian is my second Little Brother and has been for about six years. As far as I am concerned, I will stay his Big Brother until he doesn’t need me anymore, and after that we can remain good friends. I had another Little Brother (Brian) while I was going to school at the University of Montana in Missoula. Last I heard he was doing well in the U.S. Navy.

—Big Brother Mike, matched with Christian since 2000

Most adults who enroll in BBBS do so because they think they can make a difference in the life of a child, and in so doing, improve their community. And they do.

— I was interested in volunteering some time to a good cause and intrigued with the BBBS concept of one-on-one mentoring. I consider myself fortunate to have grown up with a father and a brother, realizing then—and now—that many kids grow up under different, and more difficult, circumstances. I saw being a Big Brother as a way to make a positive contribution, to help with what I view as an important social concern. —Big Brother John matched with Trey since October, 2005

— Part of what these boys need to understand is that as a man, you finish what you start. Many of these boys have had the men in their lives ditch them. Quitting is a bad habit. BBBS is a great program. As I see it, we should spend time, effort and money on kids now—otherwise we can build more beds at the prison in Deer Lodge. —Big Brother Mike, matched with Christian since 2000

There are boys enrolled in the Big Brothers Big Sisters Program across the state who are waiting and hoping for a Big Brother to come along. The time commitment is roughly two hours per week at a mutually agreeable time. Big Brothers Big Sisters agencies employ case managers to provide professionally managed matches, orientation, training, and ongoing support for the mentor and the match. To find out more, contact your local Big Brothers Big Sisters Program.

— One morning I walked into my office and there was an application from BBBS sitting on the front desk. When I picked it up, I knew that this is what I was supposed to be doing. I have been involved now for about ten years and have never regretted it. The relationship I have with my Little extends way beyond the program. We have shared experiences and great memories that will last a lifetime. Working as a Big, I’ve been able to see and experience first hand how important the program is to the lives of young people. —Big Brother Bryan matched with Loran since 1996

—Teresa Geremia-Chart is the Executive Director of the Big Brothers Big Sisters Program of Helena. She can be reached at 406.442.7479 or tgc@bbbs-helena.org.

A Silver Bullet?

The increase in fatherless homes is far from the only issue for American youth. Increased social isolation could be part of the problem. In a July 3, 2006 article in TIME Magazine, Harvard University professor and author of Bowling Alone (2000), Robert Putman, states that national surveys in 1985 and 2004 showed a one-third drop in the number of people with whom the average American can discuss “important matters.” In his article, Putman notes that social isolation has many well-documented side effects - kids fail to thrive, crime increases, politics coarsen, generosity shrivels, and death comes sooner. He goes on to offer an easy solution to the problem: getting more involved in our communities and spending more time with family and friends. Could Putman’s solution be a ‘silver bullet’ therapeutic modality for ailing communities?
The Path from Preschool to Prison

—Moe Wosepka

Randy speaks fondly of his son. He talks about his new job, more responsibility and a better place to live. He talks about how close he and his son have become in the five years they’ve lived in the same complex. Then he laments that he doesn’t see his son as often as he used to, now that his son is in the work dorm.

Randy and his son are prison inmates, and although some liberty was taken to change the names and a few details, their story is true. It is fairly common to meet men in the prisons who are there at the same time as other family members. In fact, fathers and sons are in prison together more often than I would have believed. Brothers, brothers-in-law, cousins and uncles find their way to a life behind prison walls.

In some families, it almost appears to be a generational expectation for younger generations to follow the lead and be the next group sent to our prisons, as if there is there some as-yet-to-be-discovered genetic flaw that predisposes families to prison living.

I am part of a prison ministry referred to as the Ultreya/Discovery Team that visits inmates at least once each month at Montana State Prison (MSP) in Deer Lodge and the Corrections Corporation of America (CCA) Prison in Shelby. Team members come from Billings, Bozeman, Belgrade, Conrad, Great Falls, Helena, Livingston, Missoula, Thompson Falls and a few other places in between. In addition to the visits in the prison, team members, men and women, work with inmates as they make their transition out of the prison and back into our communities. Team members work with individual inmates and with their families to help with challenges in their day-to-day living.

Over and over again, I’ve asked why and how intergenerational incarceration can happen. What I’ve learned through this work is that there are no simple answers or easy solutions. Because no two people ever have exactly the same life experience, the precipitating factors and circumstances are never exactly the same. Even so, there are some common threads. In my experience, the one that runs through most of the cases I know is low income.

Most people in prison are coming from backgrounds that include poverty.

Typically, families living on low incomes have less opportunity—less opportunity for education, less opportunity for jobs, less opportunity for support in times of trouble, and less opportunity to recover from the mistakes we all make.

Small children enter the school years full of excitement and awe. Some are more ready for the challenges than others, and soon those who struggle begin to fall behind. Schools can’t do it all, but low-income families are typically less educated and less equipped to help with school assignments at home, especially once their children begin advanced classes. Children who don’t have anyone at home to help them with their schoolwork are much more likely to fall behind, become discouraged, and drop out.

There are many reasons why people end up in prison, but it distresses me that so many come from the same families. When children emulate their parents by following them to prison, we need to consider the effect on all of society. A twelve year stay for one person in the prison system comes at a cost of over $200,000. Educating a child for twelve years has a cost of less than half that amount.

An alarming finding by the Department of Corrections is that children who cannot read by grade six are highly likely to be in prison when they become adults. If it is true that children who can’t read are more likely to go to prison, we need to make an even greater effort to educate them before they drift away. Perhaps that greater effort involves spending a couple hours a week helping a struggling student with his homework. Nothing we can do has greater value than sharing our time with someone who needs us.

The well-worn path from preschool to prison can be altered. We are blessed with excellent schools, terrific teachers, motivated social workers and a myriad of social programs. The challenge for all of us is to utilize current resources to break the cycle, and to break the cycle without blame, because the ultimate responsibility is ours.
Breaking the Cycle of Incarceration

—Larry Gaalswyk

Imprisonment and recidivism are social issues that impact all of us. Bureau of Justice Statistics data indicates that one in every 32 adults is now on probation, parole or is incarcerated. According to Montana Department of Corrections data, approximately 12,000 offenders are under supervision (www.cor.mt.gov). The recidivism rate is 41 percent for males and 33 percent for females, with more than 75 percent of those who recidivate returning during the first two years after release. The average daily cost of supporting an inmate in a Montana prison ranges from $56 to $82 per day.

Prisoners’ children are among the highest risk youth in America for making destructive lifestyle decisions and are exponentially more likely to end up in prison themselves compared to children whose parents are not in prison. This fact was underlined for me by my first involvement with a prisoner’s family. The family was doing harder time than the incarcerated parent—at least the dad had a place to live and food to eat.

For the sake of anonymity, all names are changed, but I wish to share the following true story with you. I received a brief visit from an exoffender, Sean, about six months after he left Montana State Prison. I had first met Sean while a volunteer in 1995. Sean acknowledged that he was not doing well in his parole. He was in violation, and afraid of going back to prison. He did not appreciate my advice, which was to go directly to his parole officer, admit his actions and work his way through the consequences.

I did not hear from Sean for a few weeks. Then I received a desperate letter from him. It seems he did not go to his parole officer, but that the officer had discovered his violations and rearrested him. He was now in the Yellowstone County Detention Facility facing further charges, including an habitual offender charge for his poor decisions. His letter was a cry for help for his family. They had lost the home they were renting—his wife was critically ill and had just learned that she was pregnant. She could no longer work due to her health and had found herself and her two children homeless, living out of a car, sometimes staying for a few nights on the couches of family or friends.

When I made contact with Sean’s wife, she had 25 cents to her name and was very ill. A couple of days later, as I was seeking assistance for this family, I received a frantic call from Sean’s wife from the jail. Decisions that she had been involved with had resulted in her arrest as well, and her youngest child Jessie, an 8-year-old boy, had nowhere to stay. She asked if I would pick him up and care for him until she could bond out.

My life was forever changed when I picked up this little guy. He was sleeping on a porch swing with his blanket. At his feet were two grocery sacks stuffed with all that he owned in this world. By the time two weeks had passed, I was very fond of this boy who was suffering the consequences of the bad choices and decisions his parents had made.

At that point, I knew that T.E.A.M. Mentoring had to get involved in the desperate plight of these children. Today, four years later, T.E.A.M. has helped nearly 40 children in similar plights through our Mentoring of Children of Incarcerated Parents Program. There are many stories of lives being changed because someone cared enough to be a friend to a child.

In closing, I must state that Jessie’s father has been out of prison for one year now and is practicing a healthy lifestyle. T.E.A.M. is involved in reconciling Sean and his son Jessie, as well as the son who was born while he was in prison.

—Larry Gaalswyk is the Executive Director of T.E.A.M. Mentoring in Billings, Montana. For more information, visit http://teammentoring.org/ or call Larry Gaalswyk at 406.656.8326.

TEAM Mentoring

In 2000, T.E.A.M. (Teach, Encourage, Assist, and Model) Mentoring, Inc. was founded in Montana to address the rising rates of imprisonment and recidivism. T.E.A.M. is a nonprofit, statewide, faith-based reentry program designed to train volunteers from the faith community to mentor exoffenders and their families.

The overarching goal of T.E.A.M. Mentoring is to reduce recidivism by assisting exoffenders, primarily through healthy and supportive relationships, as well as with housing, employment, and transportation. These supports empower exoffenders to become contributing members of society. We believe that lifestyle changes are most often made in an emotional bond with someone who is “doing it right,” followed by practice, practice, practice. Mentoring and acceptance are the most effective ways to empower change.

T.E.A.M.’s adult exoffender program has proven effective. Of the program participants who graduate our reentry class before leaving prison and go on to complete one year of mentoring upon release, less than 10 percent return to prison.

For more information, visit http://teammentoring.org/ or call Larry Gaalswyk at 406.656.8326.
Messages on Manhood
—Dorothy Bradshaw

Increasingly, boys and men are being identified as a “special population” in public health terms. Boys are more at risk for suicide, sexually transmitted disease and substance abuse. While the stories below are largely fictional, the scenarios are far too common.

— Josh is 19. He went to a party, drank a lot of beer, met a young woman and ended up “getting lucky” —a great night in the Chronicles of Joshdom. A few months later, a public health nurse from the health department called. He had been named as a partner and needed to be checked for Chlamydia, a common sexually transmitted disease that can lead to sterility in women and men. Josh had to report his sexual partners to the nurse, so that they could be contacted. Josh had been “lucky” a lot lately, so there was quite a list. Unfortunately the list also included his girlfriend of two years.

— Stephen is 52. He just had his first heart attack. When he was young, Stephen was one of those tall, skinny guys who could eat mayonnaise straight from the jar and not gain an ounce. His mother would tell him, “You can eat anything. You are so lucky that you don’t have to worry!” Stephen never worried, even when he started putting on weight. He ate what he wanted—burgers, bacon, eggs and sausage . . . those really good cinnamon rolls from the bakery. The heart attack changed his attitude. Now he wants to know if mayonnaise is bad for him.

— Darryl was 16. He’d had a bad month and was feeling really down and angry. His dad had moved out and Darryl missed making varsity for the wrestling team. His teachers said they were tired of his mouthing off and had been coming down hard on him. He started using spit tobacco and drinking when he was 12. Now he grabbed a bottle of whiskey from his parents’ liquor cabinet and headed out to the woods to shoot something . . .

Anything. The more he drank, the more it seemed a good idea to not feel at all. He figured he was tough enough to pull the trigger. He was right.

Sexually transmitted disease, obesity, heart disease, cancer, substance abuse, depression, suicide. These are all preventable or treatable health issues that boys, and the men they become, encounter.

While schools and other agencies have learned to reach out to girls on reproductive health, nutrition and depression, there is still a culture of silence on talking to boys about these issues outside the prerequisite health class presentations. We can see the results.

“Far more women seek treatment for sexually transmitted diseases,” says Kay Robertson, public health nurse at Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department. “Women are taught from puberty the importance of getting an annual pelvic exam, and each exam is an opportunity for education on reproductive health and related health issues—as well as screenings for STDs. Men in general, and younger men specifically, are not likely to seek out health care. We end up seeing the same people again and again—with the same contacts named. There is a real lack of ongoing health education for boys.”

We need to increase education and prevention efforts to support the healthy development of boys. We need to create the conditions that encourage boys and men to seek healthcare when they need it and to make healthy choices. One of the biggest obstacles we face is a male socialization process that discourages admission of weakness or need. Fighting media influences is also an uphill battle.

Media Literacy

Go to the movies, watch a show on television, examine advertising or look around at the supermarket. What are our boys being told about what it means to be a man? The following tongue-in-cheek rules were culled from recent film screenings and television shows.

Continued on Page 13
Rules on Being a Guy, according to the media:

— Men get sex. It’s good to sleep with girls, lots of girls, and passion happens fast. Condoms, STDs, unwanted pregnancy—these are issues that get in the way of passion, and thus are rarely mentioned in mainstream media. So go for it. Sex, not the relationship, is the major rite of passage.

— Men are tough—whether you are a Coast Guard rescue crewman, a NYC fireman, a sensitive but super-powered alien teen, or any other kind of hero you can name. Toughness is physical. It’s about strength and the ability to take whatever abuse is thrown at you. No whining, no complaining, no treating that inch-deep gash. Pain—mental or physical—is something real men grit their teeth and get through. Or fix with a few beers.

— Men eat—lots—and still look like underwear models. Real men don’t have to count calories, or worry about pesky internal organs like hearts and livers (which, amazingly, can dodge bullets with startling regularity). Late night snack? Have a triple burger. Thirsty? Have a six-pack of beer . . . and if you choose the right label, it helps get girls too.

— Men take risks. Men drink, smoke and drive cars really fast, in crowded places like Tokyo or straight up mountains. Men take risks without worrying about consequences because rules are for wimps.

With this kind of subliminal guidance, no wonder health messages aren’t getting through. These—and other—“norms,” as modeled by the media, are not only questionable, but lack real world consequences. And while study after study shows a correlation between media and behavior, three out of four teens don’t think media messages impact their own choices.

There is a silver lining. Increasingly, media literacy is emerging as a best practice for public health and prevention education. Effective media that targets youth with accurate health messages has an impact. In tobacco prevention, states that invested heavily in The Truth Campaign reported a 50 percent decrease in youth initiation rates for tobacco use (March 2005, The American Journal of Public Health).

While youth today may no longer “hear” the traditional health messages, they live in a media-saturated world. Boys who might not respond to direct prevention messages tend to respond enthusiastically to a look at how media portrays what it means to be male in our society. This opens the way to question common assumptions about behavior.

Talking about media representations of men and boys is a great way to begin a conversation that can lead to cultural changes that support healthy behaviors, especially when the behaviors shown in the media are contrasted with real facts. Even so, positive media and media literacy aren’t the only answers. Boys need healthy rites of passage. They need safe places to talk about their emotional lives and role models—real men who are comfortable addressing these issues. And we need to recognize that many of them want to talk about this stuff. Health—mental and physical—is not a girl thing, it’s a human thing.

The Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department—like its counterparts statewide—offers a variety of services, from immunizations, disease tracking, water quality monitoring and prevention programs to direct healthcare services. Our overall purpose is to create conditions for health for everyone in a community. As a public health system, our goal is to educate the community about overall health, and to increase the understanding of individuals about how their behaviors contribute to that health. If we increase our efforts to educate boys now, chances are we will have healthier men and communities in the future.

—Dorothy Bradshaw is a Tobacco Prevention Specialist at Lewis and Clark City-County Health Department. She works with local prevention agencies and the Helena School District to integrate media literacy and health issues into core school curriculum.

Health Stats

— In the last year, there were 156 reported cases of chlamydia or gonorrhea in Lewis and Clark County. Only 36 were men. The average age of reported cases was 22 years for men, 21 years for women. Chlamydia, genital warts, gonorrhea, syphilis, and HIV/AIDS are all sexually transmitted diseases that can result in illness, sterility, and death.

— The prevalence of being overweight in the US is higher for men (67%) than women (62%), and from 1989 to 2000, the prevalence of overweight males aged 18-25 increased from 48% to 58%. Montana has some of the lowest obesity rates in the nation, with males at 21% and females at 16%.

Obesity increases the risk of illness for about 30 serious medical conditions. (CDC, 2003.)

Childhood obesity is on the rise, impacted by the facts that the average child spends over eight hours a day with media, and has increased intake of juice and soda. Boys show higher rates of obesity than girls.

— Suicide is the second leading cause of death among young people ages 15 to 24 in Montana, and Montana is ranked 3rd in the nation for suicide rates. In 2003, Montana had 179 suicides, 146 of whom were male. Sixty suicides (2003) were among people between the ages of 10 and 34, 48 of whom were male. Firearms were used as the primary means of suicide in young men 10-34

Fathering for Prevention
—Jenna Caplette

Only one in five fathers initiate conversations with their children on issues like sex, alcohol, drugs, and violence. Those numbers were reported in a 1998 study conducted by Kaiser Family Foundation and Children Now. If that figure remains true, it denotes huge missed opportunity. Parents have tremendous influence on their children—there’s a reason that the federal government have backed the slogan, Parents—the Anti-Drug. Fathers play a particularly important role.

Alli Gidley, Prevention Specialist for Alcohol and Drug Services of Gallatin County teaches classes to parents of Minor in Possession offenders. “It’s so important to dissolve the stereotypes we have around men and fathering. In this day and age, she says, “most children grow up in a family where both parents work and share parenting roles. That means it’s important for fathers to also be caring and nurturing and involved.”

From talking with parents, Gidley has learned how important it is for both parents to have consistent rules and to enforce consequences consistently, whether or not they are still living together. “It seems that one parent—and that’s often the father—is not around that much so they want to have positive interactions with their kids. They tend not to want to enforce consequences.”

It’s simple to find “rules” for effective parenting. Here are some from the antidrug.com:

— Be more involved;
— Be prepared;
— Make your position clear;
— Make clear rules;
— Address peer pressure;
— Limit media access;
— Praise positive behavior;
— Be honest; and
— Show love.

Be a good role model. Think about your own behavior, your own lifestyle choices. Gidley says, “It’s important for fathers to reflect on what role their father played in their upbringing, what they liked or disliked, and how it is easy to fall into the same patterns and cycles that have occurred in the past. But, if those weren’t positive experiences it is important to break those cycles.”

As children get older, a father’s active involvement is often strongest with sons. According to Kevin Kervick in his article Raising Drug-Free Sons, also available at theantidrug.com, the first step in prevention is: know who your kids are. What motivates them? What personal strengths do they have that might motivate them to stay free of tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs?

In any conversation about drug and alcohol use or abuse, start with a neutral tone, at a neutral time, like when taking a walk, going on a drive together, or while sharing a snack. Take it easy—you are in charge of the tone of these conversations, and you’ll want to have more than one.

Be ready to listen to and accept a range of emotions from your children, so that they are encouraged to talk with you. There are great calming techniques youth can use when emotions run high—breathing, exercise, positive self-talk, or shifting attention to something else. If someone gets angry during a conversation, let it go. Don’t push for closure when emotions run high.

In any conversation, make your position clear when it comes to substances like alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs. Gidley says that she frequently hears youth say that their parents have never clearly stated what their position is on alcohol and other drugs. Parents need to have clear rules and to remind youth what those are. According to research, when a child makes a decision related to these substances a crucial consideration is, “What will my parents think?”

—Jenna Caplette is the prevention writer for Alcohol and Drug Services of Gallatin County. She can be reached at jennac@imt.net.
Boys Will be Boys? a book review
—Kirk A. Astroth

While a number of recent books have highlighted the plight of girls in American society, few people have focused more effectively on the situation for boys than Geoffrey Canada. In his first book, Fist, Stick, Knife, Gun, Canada related his own experiences growing up as a black male in the South Bronx. In his most recent book, Reaching Up for Manhood: Transforming the Lives of Boys in America, Canada takes on the way our culture raises boys, but uses his own experiences as illustration of his main points as he talks about risk, self-worth, drugs, sex, fatherhood, work, faith and appropriate mentors. His message should cause us all alarm.

We’re raising our boys, Canada argues, for jail, for death, for drugs, for violence. And this is an American problem, not a problem of ghettos, of ethnic groups, or of cities. We have a culture that glorifies death and destruction. As a society, Canada points out, we spend $11 billion a year on Halloween costumes—most of which are about death. While none of us would be surprised that a young person who had never had piano lessons would come into adolescence unable to play to piano, we all seem shocked by children who are never taught empathy, kindness or problem-solving skills who emerge into adolescence as violent, uncaring youth.

The statistics about the directions our society is heading are staggering:

— One in every 3 homes being built today is behind bars.
— There are nearly as many people in prison (5 million) as there are pursuing a college education (6 million) in the U.S. Within 5 years, the prison population is expected to exceed the number of people in college.
— 1 in 20 babies born today is expected to live some part of their adult lives behind bars.
— Over 1.3 million—mostly boys—are sent through the juvenile justice system annually.

If we were sending this many young people to say, war, every year, there would be a huge uproar in this country. Yet, hardly an objection is heard when we send 1.3 million youth into the prison system.

Canada argues that we can’t save children without saving families. We have to work with and involve all kinds of families, no matter how hopeless their situations may seem. Solutions cannot be found in simply removing kids from bad families. At the same time, we have to start with ourselves if we’re going to change what’s happening in America.

We often support double standards that give mixed messages to boys. For example, we still think it’s unacceptable for a girl to receive phone calls at home from six boys, yet we wink and nod if a boy gets six phone calls at home from girls. We cheer the boy who hits home runs or makes tackles, but hold suspect the boy who likes to spend time playing with children. What’s missing from Canada’s book is a discussion of guns, even though he covers many other topics, including drugs and sex.

Taken as a whole, Canada’s book is a personal analysis of how we are raising our boys. Unfortunately, it will be no easy task to advance policy in this area, regardless of how compelling the evidence. Yet changes are needed at both the personal and at the political levels. By not responding to the evidence that Canada presents, our society and families will continue to pay the price in terms of vulnerability to negative outcomes, violence, broken families and the many negative consequences of antisocial and criminal behavior nurtured and exhibited by our boys.

We know so much more about what can be done and what we should be doing than what we’re acting on. Canada argues that we need to become more intentional and more strategic in our efforts. Canada’s book is a powerful statement about the male experience in America, and he reissues a wakeup call that he began with his first book. Unfortunately, few seem to be listening.

—Kirk A. Astroth, Ph.D., is the Director of the 4-H Center for Youth Development at MSU Bozeman. He can be reached at 406-994-569, or visit the Montana 4-H website at www.montana4h.org

Editor’s note: This book was originally published in 1998, and is still in print. Unfortunately, it remains timely today.
Bullying

— Linda McCulloch, State Superintendent, Office of Public Instruction

The past decade brought increased attention to bullying in schools. School shootings, lawsuits, and other high profile events put the discussion of bullying on the forefront of parents, students, administrators, teachers, policymakers, and the general public across the nation.

Montanans tend to believe that events like Columbine don’t happen here. However, we, too, have a history of violence in the schools. On April 12, 1994, 11-year-old Jeremy Bullock was killed on a school playground by another young student attempting to shoot a student who was bullying him. This was a horrific event and one that we cannot forget. According to a U.S. Secret Service Report in May 2002, harassment and bullying have been linked to 75 percent of school-shooting incidents.

Statistics on bullying were limited prior to the last decade, but we are beginning to learn the extent of bullying in our schools. According to a recent study, almost 30 percent of American youth are estimated to be involved in bullying either as a bully, a target, or both. This type of activity in our schools is unacceptable.

While we cannot ignore the alarming rate at which girls are involved with ongoing harassment and intimidation, the trend still continues that boys are more likely to be involved with the physical aspects of bullying. Male youth are more likely to hit, slap, push, and to become involved with school-shooting incidents. They typically target both boys and girls.

However, girls most often bully other girls, using more passive-aggressive techniques such as social ostracism and rumor spreading. According to the Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey of 2005, males are more than five times as likely to carry a weapon on school property than females, almost twice as likely to be threatened or injured with a weapon on school property, and slightly more likely to have property stolen or damaged on school grounds.

Fortunately, schools, parents, and community members in Montana are taking action. We can no longer say that “boys will be boys” and “these things happen.” Harassment, intimidation, and the threat of physical violence cannot be tolerated. We are required to give all students an equal education. When students are worried about being shoved into a locker in the hallway or being followed home from school, they cannot concentrate on their education. Their schoolwork suffers, and they deserve better.

Statistics show that simply punishing individual bullies is not effective at reducing occurrences in school; however a schoolwide commitment to stop harassment in the schools can reduce rates by up to 50 percent. In March of this year, the Montana Board of Public Education adopted a policy to deal with this issue. They now require local school boards to develop a policy designed to address bullying, intimidation, and harassment of students and school personnel. Schools are putting these policies into action.

The Missoula School District has adopted the Olweus Program. This is a research-based program that integrates school climate and mutual respect into several aspects of the school day, including professional staff training for all education and support staff.

Numerous other school districts have purchased research-based curriculums or developed their own model that addresses their local needs: Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS), Second Step, and Get Real About Violence, among others.

I believe that we can create a culture in our schools where bullying, harassment, and intimidation are not tolerated. We need to teach our students ways besides physical violence to express their emotions, and we need to teach school employees to be more aware of the culture at their school and address early behaviors before they escalate.

All schools should be a safe place where kids can come and be respected and empowered to do their best.

To find out more about how to make your school a safer place for all kids, visit www opi mt gov SafeSchools Index html or contact your school and local board of trustees.
The rise of gangs in any community is opportunistic and youth involvement is not a new phenomenon. A great deal of research on youth violence indicates that gang involvement is the product of both coercive and attractive factors. We also know that communities are not powerless in the face of a rising gang culture.

We all think that we know a gang when we see one. It may be hard to believe, but there is not consensus on the definition of a gang. Law enforcement generally defines a gang as a group of three or more people who regularly associate and claim common names or identifiers, adhere to an organizational structure and engage in antisocial or unlawful activity for economic or social gain. Gangs can be distinguished in type, ethnicity and region. For example, types include prison gangs, street gangs, drug gangs, motorcycle gangs and organized crime. Gang intelligence distinguishes between California style, Midwest and East Coast gangs, as well as national versus localized gangs.

In this country, “gang” generally evokes the image of the street gang. The gangsta or gang banger is usually represented as an urban youth of color between the ages of 14 and 24, proudly displaying the uniform, symbols and behaviors of the group they claim. The truth is, the average gang member is 17 and only stays in a gang for one year. Half of all gang members are 18 years and older.

When you talk to kids in gangs, they will almost always tell you that they had to join a gang and/or carry a weapon for protection. They joined because friends or family joined and the excitement, identity, respect and sense of power were appealing. The nature of being a gang member requires portraying this as a choice made proudly, and claiming the strength to accept the consequences of the decision. A common refrain in gang culture is “if it’s your time to go, it’s your time to go,” all delivered in a mildly rueful deadpan.

As adults, we should find something striking about gang-involved youth who are considered oppositional, defiant and disruptive who are drawn to an organization that imposes structure, conformity and violent discipline.

To join or create a gang, a community must allow the genesis. Gangs tend to take root in the void where kids are alienated from socializing agents like healthy families and schools. They have an excess of poorly or unsupervised free time and lack activities critical to positive adolescent development. The gang must have a location to congregate, inhabit and eventually claim as their own. These neighborhoods are rife with liquor stores, drugs, guns, and unhealthy food choices. Positive activities tend to take place behind the walls of the Boys and Girls Club or on field trips. Once the community has handed a piece of itself over, it requires a fight to reclaim it.

Once the scene is set, not all individuals will take the stage. Early involvement with delinquency, aggressive and violent peers, alcohol and drug use are highly predictive of future gang involvement. Kids with these risk factors often suffered early childhood school failure and negative labeling, poor family management, abuse and neglect.

Trends identified in the 2005 National Gang Threat Assessment include the fact that reservations are being targeted for drug trafficking, that California style gangs are migrating and that street gangs remain the primary distributors of drugs throughout the country. In light of these trends, a community might assume that it had been targeted and its youth recruited by an emerging gang. However, we are just as likely to be caught unaware of a home grown problem and therefore, more likely to deny it. Successful responses to gang balance prevention, intervention and suppression. Communities should remain watchful without seeing things in the shadows and create a world with no use for a gang.

Lily Yamamoto is a criminal justice planner for the Montana Board of Crime Control. She spent 14 years with the Gang Resource Intervention Team in Portland, Oregon, which provided a continuum of gang intervention services from prevention and community policing/prosecution, through community corrections and institutions. Lily received her BS from the University of Colorado, Boulder and her JD from Northwestern School of Law in Portland, Oregon.
What is Cyberbullying?

Cyberbullying is sending or posting harmful material using the Internet or a cell phone. Lasting harm can come from emotional distress, and the fact that damaging text and images can be widely disseminated and impossible to fully remove. Cyberbullying may occur via personal web sites, blogs, e-mail, discussion groups, message boards, chat rooms or instant messaging.

Types of Cyberbullying

— Flaming: angry, rude arguments.
— Harassment: repeatedly sending offensive messages.
— Denigration: spreading rumors or posting false information.
— Outing and trickery: disseminating intimate private information or tricking someone into disclosing private information, which is then disseminated.
— Impersonation: pretending to be someone else and posting material to damage that person’s reputation.
— Exclusion: intentional exclusion from an online group.
— Cyberstalking: creating fear by sending offensive messages and other harmful online activities.

For more information, visit www.cyberbully.org.

Online Safety

— Ernie Chang

It’s hard to read the news these days without seeing a story about young people using websites like MySpace, Facebook, Friendster, and all the other social networking sites out there, and then regretting something they posted or did online. We read about adolescents being sexually assaulted, harassment and bullying, schools suspending students, profiles affecting college admissions, adults whose professional lives are threatened by postings . . . and even murder.

We also see lots of youth agencies reacting and responding. Summer camps are banning digital cameras, afraid that pictures of campers might end up in undesirable places, schools often filter access to websites, and there are organizations writing policies that dictate what’s acceptable for their online personas, for both students and faculty.

Digging through all this news, there appear to be two main, underlying issues. The first is a matter of privacy, while the second is online predators.

Online privacy, especially with regard to social networking sites, is a bit of a oxymoron. Often, youth are lured into a false sense of security because they can mark their profiles as private, friends only, or other such measures. None of these measures are truly fool-safe. Take the case of a candidate interviewing for a job that was shocked when the interviewer started asking questions about his Facebook profile, which the applicant had thought was private. Apparently while screening him, the company had used the Patriot Act to obtain the profile. While this may be atypical, it serves as a powerful warning to those posting profiles online.

The rules of privacy on the Internet are no different from what most of us heard growing up—don’t give out your full name, address, phone number, or other identifying information, including your e-mail address. Yet, something about the Internet often causes youth to let down their guard.

Internet privacy is a mixed blessing. Even as we caution our youth not to give out personal information, there’s nothing preventing others from giving false information, or from creating false personas. Because of this, it’s easy for people to pretend to be someone they’re not. The 14-year-old, soccer player that your son is chatting to online could just as easily be a 45-year-old factory worker.

While we may impart lessons of privacy and protection upon our youth, this often isn’t enough. While most 13 and 14-year-olds probably wouldn’t talk to strangers, 69 percent talk to people they don’t know while online.

The only real solution is for parents to be more involved in what their children are doing online. Take the example of Catherine Saillant, a writer for the LA Times, who recently used a MySpace profile as a learning experience with her 12-year-old daughter. Saillant, like many parents, didn’t even realize that her daughter, Taylor, had a profile. At first, Saillant required the deletion of the profile, but later relented and allowed for another profile to be created with the condition that she would monitor Taylor’s profile. Taylor again offended her mother, who had her delete the profile. As Saillant describes it, a friend left a comment to Taylor (using the net-speak of the Internet generation) : “U know u can just make another one but have a different name. That’s what I did.”

— Ernie Chang is the Program Specialist for the Prevention Resource Center, and a former VISTA Leader. He can be reached at 406-444-9654 or EChang@mt.gov.

The opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Prevention Resource Center and the Addictive and Mental Disorders Division of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services.

The Prevention Resource Center and the Addictive and Mental Disorders Division of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services attempt to provide reasonable accommodations for any known disability that may interfere with a person participating in this service. Alternative accessible formats of this document will be provided upon request. For more information, call AMDD at (406) 444-3964 or the Prevention Resource Center at (406) 444-3484.
At a time when high school dropout rates headline the news at both state and national levels, the Department of Labor and Industry’s Jobs for Montana’s Graduates (JMG) program has been forging unprecedented pathways of success. Most recently JMG was recognized by the National Jobs for America’s Graduates (JAG) for achieving “5 for 5” status in performance outcomes. JMG has a 96 percent graduation rate and an 83 percent positive outcome rate among students accessing post-secondary education or employment. JMG’s staff, specialists and students continue to succeed.

JMG focuses its efforts on students facing multiple barriers to graduation, including economic disadvantages, low academic performance, excessive absences and lack of marketable occupational skills. According to Give Yourself the Gift of a Degree, Doland, E. (2001), high school dropouts, on average, earn $9,200 less per year than high school graduates, and nearly $1 million less over a lifetime than college graduates.

Students in JMG gain knowledge and skill in six core areas:
- Career development,
- Job attainment,
- Job survival,
- Basic math & writing,
- Leadership & development; and
- Personal skills.

Students are exposed to topics like identifying value systems and decision making. This is accomplished through classroom work, job shadowing, career and interest assessments, mock interviews, and participation in the Montana Career Association (MCA). Through the MCA, students who may not regularly engage in extracurricular activities are given the opportunity to hold offices and participate in leadership activities.

One of the key elements to the program is that JMG Specialists develop strong ties to their students. They are the teachers who devote the extra time and attention it takes to assist kids with overcoming barriers. It’s a tough job, but the relationships that are built between student and teacher are sometimes the deciding factor in the choice between completing school and dropping out.

The JMG program may be one of Montana’s best-kept secrets, having supported Montana’s youth in successful graduation and career planning for more than 16 years. The students it serves offer glowing reports, such as the one that follows.

—I think that this year (in the JMG class) I learned more about myself than anything else. I learned how to budget. I learned how to do teamwork. I learned how to make a resume, look for a job, and how to dress for interviews. I also learned how to talk to people nicely.

Children who reside in poverty and on federal and state assistance have little knowledge of how to budget finances or search for job opportunities. According to a high school junior, “I learned a lot about money management. We also registered on the state job service. So, I guess you can say I have learned a lot in taking JMG and I can’t wait to take it next year and learn more.”

Resources for Fathering
- National Center for Fathering— www.fathers.com
- National Center on Fathers and Families— www.ncoff.gse.upenn.edu/
- National Fatherhood Initiative— www.fatherhood.org
- National Child Support Enforcement Association— www.ncsea.org/
- National Practitioners Network for Fathers and Families, Inc.— www.npnff.org/
- Boot Camp for New Dads— www.newdads.com
- Dads Make a Difference— www.dadsmakeadifference.org
- The Fathers Network— www.fathersnetwork.org
- Father Facts— www.fatherhood.org/fatherfacts.asp
- Top Ten Father Facts— www.fatherhood.org/fatherfacts_t10.asp
It is estimated that the chances of sustaining a brain injury are twice for males what they are for females, although females are catching up in terms of frequency every year. This article will focus on sports, one of the most common sources of brain injury. Concussions, or brain injuries, should be treated conservatively and with utmost caution.

A concussion is a temporary loss of awareness or consciousness caused by a blow to the head. Severe blows may result in bleeding within the head or permanent damage to nerves. Once someone has sustained a concussion, the chances of sustaining another go up exponentially. Multiple concussions have a cumulative effect, and are more likely to cause permanent deficits, including loss of memory, slower thinking, loss of balance and vision and ability to concentrate. This is known as “second impact syndrome.” According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, repeated mild brain injuries occurring over an extended period of time (months or years) can result in cumulative neurological and cognitive deficits, but repeated mild brain injuries occurring within a short period (hours, days or weeks) can be catastrophic or fatal.

The symptoms of a concussion can be mild to severe, depending on the severity of the injury. After a concussion, many people lose consciousness for a short time or cannot recall what happened immediately before the injury. Other symptoms include confusion, neck pain, grogginess, dizziness, vertigo, lightheadedness, blurred or double vision, ringing in the ears, or even mood changes. Some of these symptoms may appear right away, others may not show up for weeks or even months.

Proper headgear, concussion management and other precautions are necessary in order to prevent a concussion. It is important in contact sports that you wear proper protective head gear that fits well. In soccer, heading the ball is not recommended for youth under age 14. In sports such as bicycling, skateboarding and rollerblading, wear a helmet. When a concussion is sustained, exercise proper precaution before returning to play to prevent reinjury and second impact syndrome.

The following provides the grades of concussion (level of severity) and recommendations for return to play.

**Grade 1 Symptoms:** Confusion (in-attention, inability to maintain a coherent stream of thought and carry out goal-directed movements); no loss of consciousness; and concussion symptoms last less than 15 minutes.

**Return to play:** 15 minutes or less for first concussion; minimum of one week for players who have sustained multiple Grade 1 concussions.

**Grade 2 Symptoms:** Confusion (in-attention, inability to maintain a coherent stream of thought and carry out goal-directed movements); no loss of consciousness; and concussion symptoms (including amnesia) last more than 15 minutes.

**Return to play:** Minimum of one week; minimum of two weeks for players who have sustained multiple Grade 2 concussions.

**Grade 3 Symptoms:** Any loss of consciousness.

**Return to play:** Minimum of one week for players who experience brief loss of consciousness, and a minimum of two weeks for players who have sustained multiple brief concussions. Minimum of two weeks for players who experience a prolonged loss of consciousness, and a minimum of a month for players who have sustained multiple concussions.

**It is strongly advised to obtain a physician’s clearance before returning to play after a Grade 3 concussion, or after sustaining multiple concussions.**

Thank you to the Brain Injury Association of Minnesota for information on Sports and Concussions.

—Stacy Rye is the Director of the Brain Injury Association of Montana, in Missoula. She can be reached at (406) 541-6442 (locally), 800-241-6442 (long distance) or online at www.biamt.org. Stacy says, “We welcome all calls and all questions!”
Recognizing the Little Shell Chippewa Tribe
—James Parker Shield, Vice Chairman

The Little Shell Band of the Chippewa Tribe has been wandering since 1892, when Chief Little Shell refused to sell more land to the United States government for white homesteaders. Little Shell and his followers were excluded from the Turtle Mountain reservation as a result and ultimately migrated to Montana where they had historically hunted buffalo. Chief Little Shell and the 112 families who followed him from their Turtle Mountain (North Dakota) homeland became nomads, eventually coming to be known as the “landless Indians.” Many of them came to north-central Montana and the Rocky Mountain Front Range, where they have been fighting to regain their federally recognized status ever since.

The Tribe has known more than its share of obstacles and many ups and downs over the course of the last century. Starting in the early 1900s, Indian “shanty towns” were established by Little Shell Tribal members on the outskirts of Great Falls, Havre, Helena, Lewistown, Butte and other urban centers. Summers, whole clans would live in tents and work on ranches stacking hay, building fences or picking rock. In 1934, the Indian Reorganization Act was passed, and the Tribe was offered land for a reservation. Unfortunately, President Franklin Roosevelt vetoed the offer, citing as his reason the tribes’ lack of federal status.

By 1941, many tribal members were living in horrific poverty, making do in abandoned cars and shanty houses around Great Falls, in an area that came to be known as Hill 57. In 1950, a citizens’ group in Great Falls donated 40 acres of Hill 57 land to the Bureau of Indian Affairs to serve as a base for the Tribe. Once again, they hit a roadblock: the Bureau rejected the offer because federal policy at that time favored dismantling rather than adding reservations.

In 1994, the Little Shell Chippewa Tribe filed a Federal Recognition Petition with the Department of Interior. Six years later, in 2000, the Department issued a ruling granting preliminary recognition status. The required six-month public comment period that followed has now stretched into nearly six years. The Montana State Legislature took an important step in 2001, with passage of Joint Resolution 11. This resolution urged the Department of Interior to grant final recognition to the Little Shell Tribe of the Chippewa Indians of Montana. Seeking another route, the tribe pursued a Congressional Restoration Bill, which Congressman Denny Rehberg introduced in July 2006.

The Little Shell Chippewa has 4,500 members. Without federal recognition, they do not have access to the infrastructure and support systems automatically available to recognized tribes. Federal recognition means more than honoring the Tribe’s status. Recognition would bring access to federal benefits and services that include healthcare, education and housing services. The Tribe would have the authority to manage its own tribal court system, to apply for federal contracts and to engage in a formal government-to-government relationship with Washington D.C.

Recognition would also come with concrete resources: the federal government is holding $3.5 million in tribal trust funds stemming from a land claims lawsuit victory against the U.S. government until recognition is achieved. This money could be used to buy 200 acres of farmland in Cascade County, where many tribal members live. This land could be used for a headquarters, a clinic and much-needed housing.

At this point, the Tribe is collaborating with a local housing program on a housing development on Hill 57. It won’t come a moment too soon. With the growing population of Montana, Hill 57 is being encroached upon. The area has great value to the tribe. On the hill are two operating sweat lodges and a prayer tree that holds a great deal of spiritual significance. Much of the Tribe’s history is tied to this land. If lost, the entire statewide community loses.

—James Parker Shield is the Vice Chairman of the Little Shell Chippewa Tribe. He is also a former State Coordinator of Indian Affairs and former staff member for Congressman Dennis Rehberg. Shield is a Traditional Native Dancer, as are his children.

James Parker Shield with his daughter, Cree, and his son, Parker.

Too often people have a hard time getting past the mind set that a tribe must have a reservation to be considered a tribe. Many tribes in other states do not have reservations. Some have Tribal Capitals just as we do. —James Parker Shield

Culture as a Protective Factor

Culture, in a broad sense, equates with prevention. Children and youth—who know and understand their roots, who have the continuity of place and family, are less likely to abuse alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. The loss of a language, of institutional memory, customs and traditions is unconscionable. Culture and history together build strong community. Losing a culture is a huge loss, not only for those who carry it into the future, but for every one of us.

The Little Shell Tobacco Prevention program utilizes traditional culture and culture based activities such as Traditional Indian games (shinny, lacrosse, double-ball, etc) Pow-wows, ceremonies and peer-counseling. As key aspects of their prevention efforts, members of our Culture Committee, particularly our Tribal Spiritual Leader, Henry Anderson, have been highly visible in the activities mentioned.
Homeless Men in Montana

—Hank Hudson

Homelessness in Montana wears many guises, and though many of us see homeless people on our streets every day, this is likely the tip of the iceberg.

An annual point-in-time survey of Montana’s homeless population is administered statewide on dates consistent with those established nationally by the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Volunteers in Montana’s eight largest population centers reach as many of Montana’s homeless people as possible. The survey was last administered the night of January 31, 2006. Volunteers identified 2,311 unduplicated homeless persons; 1,135 were men and boys. These men are not strangers to our communities: 56 percent (640) had been in the community for at least two years. Almost half (49 percent) had been homeless for 6 months or more.

While each story is different, the common thread includes unique combinations of the most complex problems of our times. Homeless people struggle with multiple, interrelated issues with deep roots, including family histories of homelessness, abuse, trauma, deep poverty, illness, and lack of connection to the broader community. Together these factors create a personal environment that includes poor educational achievement, unstable work histories and the lack of skills needed to earn a living wage. In fact, of all the homeless men and boys identified during the 2006 survey, 78 percent had a high school education or less. Achievement, unstable work histories, and the lack of skills needed to earn a living wage often prevent people from exiting homelessness.

The facts of daily life for homeless persons include exposure to violence and to the elements, poor nutrition, inadequate hygiene, increased contact with communicable diseases, and extreme fatigue. Cumulatively, these factors equate to ill health, which often prevents people from exiting homelessness.

Health problems can be categorized in three intimately linked domains: physical illness, mental illness and substance abuse disorders. Health problems that exist quietly at other income levels, including alcoholism, mental illnesses, diabetes, hypertension, physical disabilities, become critical among those living without shelter, the means for basic personal hygiene and access to nutritious, balanced diets. Homeless men, especially those with mental illnesses and/or co-occurring substance use disorders, are at higher risk of contact with the criminal justice system as offenders and as victims. According to a study by the federal Bureau of Justice Statistics, 12 percent of state prisoners were homeless at the time of their arrest.

A landmark study on homelessness by Dennis Culhane, Ph.D. (1994) revealed that 80 percent of the homeless are in and out of homelessness quickly, often within a day. About 10 percent are episodic users, in periodic need of services for a few days or weeks at a time. The final 10 percent are chronically homeless. According to Culhane’s study, this last group costs the health-care and social-services systems far more than the other groups, primarily through the provision of high-end, high-cost services that including shelter care, emergency room services, treatment services, health care, and jail time. The cost/benefit ratio of solving homelessness is dramatic—in terms of quality of life for some of our most vulnerable citizens, the health of our communities and in basic dollars and cents. Montana is currently working hard to solve homelessness. The Montana Council on Homelessness (MTCoH) is finalizing and implementing a state-level plan to end homelessness within 10 years. A Billings Council on Homelessness was recently appointed by the mayor to begin crafting local solutions to the problem there. Local Homeless Stand Down events have been scheduled in three cities (Billings, Libby and Helena) for September and October.

It’s a start. Homelessness is not a condition we should be prepared to tolerate, not in the wealthiest country in the world, and certainly not in Montana.

—Hank Hudson is the Administrator of the Human and Community Services Division of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, and the Chairman of the Montana Council on Homelessness. He can be reached at 406-444-5901 or Hhudson@mt.gov.
On Strengthening Montana
—Governor Brian Schweitzer

Montana has to compete in the world economy, which means taking a seamless approach to education. In order to be responsive to the needs of an ever-changing job market—particularly in the technology sector—Montana can no longer draw lines between K-12, four-year campuses and colleges of technology when it comes to funding education.

We should be aware—and concerned—that boys drop out of school at a slightly higher rate than girls do . . . and that American Indian boys are dropping out at higher rates than their yet. But it isn’t just these groups that we need to consider. We must honor diversity throughout Montana’s communities and for all children. That means providing equal access to early childhood education. Students must be better prepared for school and schools must be better prepared to help students succeed. Education is a lifelong experience, and full-day kindergarten is the first step on the ladder to success, for all children.

Studies show that children coming from upper-income families are better prepared for first grade than children coming from low-income families. Those early years are important, because students who struggle academically in the early grades are more likely to drop out of high school. All-day kindergarten would help even the playing field for all students.

Our shared goal is to make sure that all kids in Montana can succeed in school and grow up to be healthy, competent citizens. Education matters, especially for our youngest Montanans. Education is the great equalizer. A front-end investment in early childhood makes good economic sense, as does ensuring that all Montana kids can achieve the dream of a college education through better access and affordability.

The Footprints of Male Depression

Research and clinical findings reveal that while both genders can develop the standard symptoms of depression, men may experience depression differently and use different coping mechanisms. Terrance Real, senior faculty member of the Harvard-affiliated Family Institute of Cambridge, states that with male or covert depression, the footprints appear in three domains: self-medication, isolation and lashing out. Since many forms of self medication are tolerated (and even encouraged) by our culture, it can be difficult to recognize them as attempts to stabilize depression.

Typical symptoms of depression:
— Persistently sad or anxious
— Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism, guilt, worthlessness, helplessness or emptiness
— Loss of interest or pleasure in work, hobbies and sex
— Decreased energy or fatigue

Additional symptoms of male depression:
— Difficulty concentrating, remembering or making decisions
— Trouble sleeping, early-morning awakening, or oversleeping
— Appetite and/or weight changes
— Thoughts of death or suicide, or suicide attempts
— Restlessness, irritability
— Persistent physical symptoms that do not respond to routine treatment

For more information:
http://menanddepression.nimh.nih.gov/ or www.webmd.com/content/article/45/1663_51232.htm

LiveHelp

Have a client with a legal problem? Can’t find the information you need on MontanaLawHelp.org? You’re in luck. LiveHelp allows MontanaLawHelp.org visitors to ask for help finding online legal information and resources. Just click the “LiveHelp” button on the right side of any MontanaLawHelp.org page to begin. Type your question in the box and click Send. Your question is sent immediately to a MontanaLawHelp.org website specialist, who will send the location of the answer to your question.

More information about LiveHelp is available at www.montanalawhelp.org/link.cfm?1477.
The Last Word
—Joan Cassidy, Montana Chemical Dependency Bureau Chief

Cultural competency means far more than looking at race and culture—it means considering issues and solutions through a variety of lenses, including gender, age, literacy, ethnicity, language, disability and others. Considering gender as a factor is often overlooked in preventing substance abuse and other health problems. It’s a dangerous mistake: men have higher death rates for all 15 leading causes of death, are less likely to see themselves as ill, and are typically reluctant to seek appropriate medical care when needed. At the same time, about 60 percent of those treated in the publicly funded chemical dependency system are male, and suicide completion rates are far higher for males than females.

This issue of the Prevention Connection focuses on some of the issues of gender and science-based practices, specifically as they relate to boys and men.

Gender is important in terms of its implications for prevention. A growing body of research indicates that the motivations for substance use initiation are different for boys than they are for girls. Boys initiate use to increase social bonding with other substance-using males, to enhance their sense of self, for sensation seeking and for relief of boredom. Not surprisingly, tailoring prevention strategies to boys requires different techniques as well.

Research funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) at Arizona State University in Phoenix found that boys were at higher risk for being offered drugs, and at younger ages. According to the same study, social settings and how drugs are offered differ by gender, with boys more likely to receive offers in public settings. When drugs are offered to boys, the benefits are often emphasized. And while with boys and girls, the most common strategy for rejecting drugs is a simple refusal, boys are more likely than girls to explain. (www.drugabuse.gov)

As reported in Making Prevention Effective for Adolescent Boys and Girls: Gender Differences in Substance Use and Prevention (Monograph Series No. 4; Center for Substance Abuse Prevention), high-risk boys reported lower levels of family connectedness and supervision than their female counterparts.

Participation in prevention programs tended to produce relatively large reductions in rates of substance use among boys, and interactive methods involving youth in peer group activities were particularly important components.

The data tells us that boys in Montana are at particularly prone to substance abuse and other risk behaviors, and that they grow into men who are in danger in a number of ways. Science-based prevention works, and it is far more effective than intervention at some later point in the continuum.