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# THE SPOTLIGHT

PUBLISHED BY THE RESEARCH & TRAINING CENTER OF WIL LOU GRAY OPPORTUNITY SCHOOL - FALL 1993

## Allowing Student Leadership To Emerge

*Leadership is a quality valued in every arena. How often do we make efforts to promote leadership training for students? Student government, club offices, team captains are selected. Usually though, those posts are filled after the achievement and popularity sorting has already taken place. Is it possible that we sometimes miss leadership in students by not providing training and opportunities for it to emerge?*

*Two activities at Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School have been developed to support and help students who have exhibited high risk behavior. A side benefit has been the emergence of leadership in unexpected places. That prompted experimentation with the activities used at Camp Buckhorn and Challenge by Choice as leadership training for groups not exhibiting at risk behavior.*

*Can we be missing something important by failing to set up circumstance for student leadership skills to develop or by failing to train professional staff to use these kinds of activities? As you read about Camp Buckhorn and Challenge by Choice, consider the applications for developing student leaders.*



*Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School students participate in many challenging and fun activities offered through Camp Buckhorn and Challenge By Choice.*

### Camp Buckhorn

Who would think that a number of "street-wise" adolescents would find camping and nature walks fun? That is exactly what has happened at the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School! One of the most frequently asked questions by students is "When is it my turn to go to Camp Buckhorn"?

In the Fall, 1992 the Student Affairs Outdoor Education program at the school created a program targeting the students at highest risk for school failure. These students had nearly exhausted their chances to stay enrolled at the school. Their next disciplinary infraction would send them home or to another placement. How could this be prevented? Camp Buckhorn, that's how!

About forty students and staff load up and depart campus for each three day retreat at the Camp which is located in Paris Mountain State Park near Greenville, South Carolina. With no distractions or city hubbub, students settle into their cabins which are spread throughout the graceful pines and towering hardwoods. A spacious lodge and picturesque pond are surrounded by gently rolling hills. For the next few days all participants get to know one another through various activities directed toward dropping barriers, bonding, sharing experiences and having fun. They depart with several goals in mind as fresh outlooks take them back to where being a part of the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School family feels more real and much better than the first few days at school.

## Camp Buckhorn continues -

These groups began in October of 1991 and continue to the present. After two years of Buckhorn retreats, only 3 out of 107 participants have been asked to leave the school because of disciplinary reasons. All others completed the school year, graduated or were withdrawn by their parents to return to public schools.

A major partner in the program is the South Carolina Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Services which helps fund the camp and its activities.

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## Challenge By Choice

Would you agree that we all could benefit from learning more about problem solving, communication and teambuilding? Do you feel that our efforts to enhance these living skills are necessary and should be a daily part of our lives?

The Outdoor Education program of Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School promotes this philosophy not only within their own system but also with other schools, agencies and businesses across the state. The program is called Challenge by Choice which is derived from Project Adventure's Adventure Based Counseling programs. In this program the means are designed to be fun, yet challenging. The ends are positive learning experiences. We walk away feeling a sense of accomplishment.

The activities require low to medium physical ability. You are never too old or decrepit to participate and learn here. Adventure based programs such as these are pressure free and always as positive as possible.

Wil Lou Gray's mission with Challenge by Choice, offers it's knowledge of Adventure Based Counseling activities to various organizations. In August of this year, the Outdoor Education staff traveled to Goose Creek's West View Middle School to introduce and teach the program to sixty faculty, staff and parents. West View has plans to implement Challenge by Choice in it's classrooms to increase staff/student rapport as well as the skills previously mentioned.

Challenge by Choice has been successful for Wil Lou Gray in promoting personal and professional growth. The activity has served as a valuable, positive tool in helping the agency achieve and maintain successful staff and student relationships.

## National Conferences To Focus On Needs Of At-Risk Youth

Two national conferences focusing on issues relevant to the needs of at-risk youth will be held within the next few months. Two members of the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School Research & Training Center Advisory Committee figure prominently in each. Pam Brogdon, Coordinator for At-Risk Programs, Marion School District I, is the Conference Chairman for the Sixth Annual America's At-Risk Youth National Conference. This conference will be held at the Mills House Hotel in Charleston, South Carolina on January 30 - February 2, 1994. Pam and her colleagues have been hard at work for a year planning the agenda.

Because of its high quality and professionalism, "America's At-Risk Youth National Conference" has been selected to serve as an "instructional conference" by the Lt. Governor's office of South Carolina, National Dropout Prevention Center-Clemson University, South Carolina Department of Education and Francis Marion University. This year's format will include not only successful programs from throughout the nation that will share their strategies and theories, but there will also be morning and afternoon workshops led by nationally known experts. These workshops will focus on prevention and intervention strategies used in working with at-risk youth and their families. Three hours of graduate credit and CEU's from The Citadel are available to conference participants.

Linda Shirley, another Advisory Committee member, will be a featured speaker at the 6th Annual National Dropout Prevention Conference to be held March 6-9, 1994 in San Jose, California. Linda is the Special Projects Coordinator at the National Dropout Prevention Center at Clemson University. Linda and her co-presenter, Patricia Duttweiler, will share their experiences with authentic instruction for active learners. Since 1989, the National Dropout Prevention Network has convened annual conferences to provide the latest information about dropout prevention to a wide audience of educators, policymakers, community and business groups, parents, and other concerned persons.

Best wishes to our esteemed committee members in their respective projects. For more information about either conference contact the Research and Training Center at 822-5480 ext. 56.

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### *Need More Information?*

*Home visits, school presentations or tours of Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School campus may be arranged by calling George Smith at (803) 822-5480, extension 21. Printed material and video tapes are also available.*



**Danielle Harris**

**Wendell Chisolm**

### Parents/Pageant Day 1993

November 28 was a very special day on the Wil Lou Gray campus. Two major programs were combined for the first time into one activity. The annual Mr. and Miss Wil Lou Gray Pageant was moved to coincide with a newly created Fall Parent's Day.

The entire day was festive and full of fun. After the welcome by Dr. Mary Catherine Norwood, the Superintendent, parents, students, staff and friends enjoyed dinner prepared by the cafeteria staff. The dining hall was well appointed with teal tablecloths and pink candles, courtesy of the Student Affairs Department. A tour of the campus dorms, offices and classrooms followed. Then the night of glamor began.

Fifteen students competed in four categories of competition in the Mr. and Miss Wil Lou Gray Pageant. The theme for the night was "Wishing On A Star." At the end of the evening, a new king and queen for the year were crowned.

Mr. Wendell Chisolm won the competition for Mr. Wil Lou Gray while Miss Danielle Harris was crowned Miss Wil Lou Gray. Tavares Clarke, Phillip Ellis, Lakesia Quinn and Jamesa Butler were named as runners-up, respectively. Special awards were presented to Tavares Clarke and Danielle Harris for Academic Achievement, to Phillip Ellis and Tracy Moore for Contestant Achievement and to Tavares Clarke and Faith Deveaux for Directors Achievement.

This is the fourth year for the annual pageant. It has become the premier event of the school year. Combining it with Parent's Day created a convenient setting for everyone. The overall turnout was tremendous, the contestants were fabulous and Parent's/Pageant Day looks like a perennial winner.

### Young Women's Teleconference A Success

Over 150 participants were involved in the 3rd annual South Carolina Young Women At-Risk Conference held November 1, 1993. The format again this year was a morning teleconference followed by afternoon sessions at each of the six participating sites. Audiences from Spartanburg to Beaufort and in-between heard from expert panelists about the welfare of South Carolina's young women. Issues addressed included health and safety topics and the unique and diverse needs of disabled women. Career options, with an emphasis on nontraditional fields, drew much interest.

The afternoon sessions focused on the topics and resources relevant to each site. A special feature this year was taped segments of interviews held with young women in which they expressed their views on a range of concerns. The annual conference is planned, directed and implemented by individuals representing state agencies, school districts, community-based organizations, as well as other concerned persons.

### The Second Auction/Roast Attracted Over 400 People

The Wil Lou Gray Benefit Auction/Roast held on November 12, 1993 was a huge success. Approximately 425 people attended this year compared to approximately 150 who attended last year. Individuals and businesses were very generous in donating items to sell in the auction and to use as door prizes. Nearly two-hundred items were offered in the live and silent auctions and approximately one-hundred door prizes given away.

The roast/auction raised over \$12,000.00 to provide additional scholarships for students needing to attend Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School. Excellent publicity and a larger mailing contributed greatly to the success. Those attending enjoyed an evening of fun, fellowship, entertainment and great food as well as terrific buys on quality merchandise.

The Wil Lou Gray Foundation is already seeking a larger location to host next year's event. If you are interested in being added to the mailing list for next year's event please return the coupon on the back page with your name and address. For additional information about the auction or the Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School please call George Smith at 822-5480, ext. 21.

*THE SPOTLIGHT is a quarterly publication of WLGO Research & Training Center. Inquires about Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School may be directed to Ms. Brenda S. Rawl, Associate Editor, Wil Lou Gray Opportunity School, West Campus Road, West Columbia, South Carolina 29170, (803) 822-5480.*

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