

Youth Transformation Center
BOOMERANG FOLLOW-UP SURVEY WITH YOUTH GRADUATES
Division of Youth Corrections, Spring Creek Youth Services Center ~ Colorado Springs, CO
August 2011

In June 2011 fifteen youth participated in a three-day *Boomerang* workshop intensive with one youth having to leave before the final day. The survey was administered two months later in August 2011. Several of the youth had left the facility to return to community or were moved to another DYC facility leaving 11 youth to complete the survey. The pod of girls wrote letters while the remaining boys answered the survey questions directly.



LETTERS

Student 1:

When my peers and staff started running *Boomerang* groups on our Pod, at first I thought, "Great, more groups and less free time to write letters". But by the end of the first group I was very interested in what the "[Amazing] Maze of Life" had to say. What was most helpful about the group for me was that it helped me not only figure out what I want to do for the rest of my life but also what I need to do to get there. Most of the treatment groups I have been in have given me skills for when things go wrong but this was the first group I have been in that gave me back-up skills for when the other ones don't work. It was also realistic about roadblocks in the fact that they do exist but that the best way isn't always around or over the roadblock. Sometimes you have to back track to the fork in the road and take another path that doesn't lead to the obstacle in the first place.

Student 2:

Before *Boomerang* I didn't have a whole lot of motivation for things like college. Now I feel as though college is attainable. My "Big Dream" is to get a degree in education and, as of right now, the steps I am taking towards that is getting back into school and enrolling in harder classes so I can prepare myself. I am very excited about getting out and becoming an active participant in society. Pay It Forward in *Boomerang* is similar because by me bringing the experiences and knowledge I acquired in *Boomerang* back to my Pod I am teaching those girls something valuable and if they internalize that knowledge then in turn they can teach someone and so and so forth. I feel like I have contributed to a more positive atmosphere at Spring Creek, an atmosphere that is more friendly and welcoming. I feel like *Boomerang* is perfect the way it is. Thank you. I can't imagine any improvements to a curriculum that is already perfect in so many ways. I think the 1st lesson about how to become a millionaire \$\$ ha, ha was actually kind of inspiring. When I hear millionaire I think of Bill Gates and people like that. It was really crazy for me to think that I could actually have a million dollars eventually. In my family we often hold grudges even when we have said "I am sorry", and "I have forgiven you". I know skills now that can help with that. I am very interested in sitting in as a community member for Restorative Justice. I think that would be a great experience. Thank you guys so much. I will definitely be in contact.

Student 3:

I think the *Boomerang* groups are very helpful because it helps you have an early start on what you want to do with your future and how to accomplish your long term and short-term goals. The *Boomerang* group has helped me by being able to sit down and think about how my future is going to be and how I want my future to be. That is why I think the *Boomerang* groups are helpful to all youth.

Student 4:

The *Boomerang* group has helped me a lot. It taught me that there are going to be obstacles in life that are going to set you back. But it taught me how to step back, look at the problem and to list my options and how I can overcome them. Steps to take to make my future better than how it has been in the past. So now when I have a problem I know how to step back, analyze the problem and can think about what to do next. Thank you.

Student 5:

I felt like there are going to be things in our lives that we might not change but we can overcome them.



SURVEY QUESTIONS:

1. What has been your experience bringing *Boomerang* to your pods as leaders and role models?
 - *My experience has been inspiring when I brought Boomerang back to the Puma Pod. I liked knowing about something and being able to teach everyone about it.*
 - *It has been a great experience. The girls are inspired and brings them motivation for change and taking steps to go for their dreams.*
 - *My experience with bringing Boomerang back to the pod has been extremely inspiring. I loved the feeling of teaching and being able to open up the minds of my peers.*
 - *I got to share my opinions.*
 - *I have learned that using conflict resolution tools like Restorative Justice it solves a lot of problems on Pod for the better.*
 - *It was difficult teaching what I learned but when I did teach the material, I learned and understood even more.*
 - *Being able to show my peers new ways to become positive leaders was amazing.*
2. How did your peers respond to *Boomerang* lessons and to your taking on a leadership role?
 - *Peers were very interested and excited to learn about this method.*
 - *The girls were interested to learn this method and excited to use it.*
 - *All my peers were very interested and excited to learn this method and use it.*
 - *They liked it better hearing from a peer.*
 - *Honestly, they hated on me and talked down on me at first but realized the benefits.*

- *At first they were reluctant but then they opened up and enjoyed the knowledge.*
 - *Hesitant at first but then went well.*
3. What did you do differently after *Boomerang*? (Did your actions, thoughts, or decision-making process change after *Boomerang*?)
 - *I thought about how I should treat people and have empathy and courage.*
 - *It inspired me to take those steps and know there is always someone out there to help me.*
 - *I have stopped and thought before I acted. I have empathy more so than I did.*
 - *My thought process helped change for the better.*
 - *I focused on my education, stopped blowing off schoolwork and tried to handle my frustrations.*
 - *Yes, I can control my anger better, etc.*
 4. What was life like for you before and after *Boomerang*?
 - *Before Boomerang I really wanted to become a leader. I was always too scared to step out of my comfort zone. After, I believed in myself and became a great leader for my peers.*
 - *I can't say it's changed a whole lot, but I do know I am a leader in the Pod and it motivates me more to come back and share what I have learned.*
 - *My "Big Vision" was never in what I thought was reachable. I always dreamed but never had it in me to believe in myself to actually do it.*
 - *A normal life.*
 - *No, my vision hasn't changed but Boomerang has me inspired and I'm hopeful to reach my "Big Dream".*
 - *Almost the same, a few differences.*
 5. Has your vision for your life (your "big dream") changed in the past month and a half since *Boomerang*?
 - *It has, well it's gone back and forth. I was signed up to start cosmetology school full time, but due to some recent issues I have brought upon myself, caused me to move it back a few months.*
 - *It has stood the same. I am just in the process of making it happen.*
 6. Have you taken any action toward reaching your "big dream"?
 - *I have taken action toward my "Big Dream". Well, at least started to work on it.*
 - *Yes.*
 - *Yes I have.*
 - *Yes, I am committed to reaching my goals.*
 - *Yes, I have my GED and am working on getting into PPCC.*
 - *Yes it has.*
 7. Are you excited about getting back to community to take those important steps in your *Boomerang* action plan?
 - *I am excited, but nervous as well. I am going to be on my own so I am gonna need some guidance myself.*
 - *Yes, I am excited and confident.*
 - *I am very excited but nervous as well. I know it will not be an easy task.*
 - *Yes.*
 - *Of course I'm excited because I have a plan ready to be pursued.*
 - *Yes, I can't wait.*
 8. How would you relate the PAY IT FORWARD concept in bringing *Boomerang* back to your peers in your Spring Creek pods?
 - *I used to be the problem child of Puma Pod. Bringing back Boomerang shows my appreciation, determination and motivation to change.*
 - *Well, once you have empathy and a goal to "REPAIR" the harm, hopefully they will see that effort and make someone else feel the same way.*
 - *It helps us out in the future.*
 - *Through helping each other to be the one to stop the cycle of abuse in our families.*

9. Do you feel that you have contributed to a positive change at Spring Creek?
- *I was contributing positively here until recently. I showed all my peers that it is okay to screw up and do the wrong thing when no one is looking. Now I want to do better.*
 - *Yes, I have been a positive role model for my pod as a level 3 and other girls are looking up to me.*
 - *I was contributing positively here. I have gained my level 3 and successfully completed the "treatment" program.*
 - *Yes.*
 - *I know I've made a positive contribution. Not to Spring Creek but to the people in Spring Creek.*
 - *In a way, yes.*
10. What could we do differently in *Boomerang* that would make it better for the next group coming through?
- *Make it longer, like a 6 week course.*
 - *Have it for a longer period.*
 - *Maybe make it longer like a 6 week program.*
 - *Nothing... Maybe try to get another week to talk with youth and help them understand.*
 - *Nothing. It is great just the way it is.*
11. What lessons had the most important affect or impact on your life?
- *The law of attraction. If I say I am going to be a leader, I'll become one, but as long as I'm putting myself down, I'll always be hiding behind my shadow.*
 - *The law of attraction, if I say I am going to be a doctor, I will become one but if I put myself down and say I can't then I won't.*
 - *That we are 100% in charge of our lives.*
 - *We are in charge of our own lives.*
12. How can you take the concepts in *Boomerang* and apply them to your personal life and your family right now?
- *I can teach my brothers the millionaire concept and soon share with my daughter the amazing maze.*
 - *I can teach my little brother the millionaire concept and the amazing maze.*
 - *Well, I can start my sister off young and hope she will learn.*
 - *Take control and make changes for the better.*
 - *Positive self talk.*
13. How can you support one another during and after Spring Creek?
- *Being someone to talk with is always a great support. Holding each other accountable is important as well.*
 - *Just staying in touch and doing good for them and yourself.*
 - *Being a good help and support doing good for myself and the ones who I am close to the most.*
 - *Give support and never give up.*
 - *Being there for them.*
14. Victim-offender conferences. Are you interested in meeting with any person you've harmed face to face in a restorative justice circle dialog and are you willing to repair that harm? [This would have to be arranged through your supervisor at Spring Creek, or would need to take place after you have returned to your community.]
- *That would be awesome.*
 - *No not really.*
 - *That would be awesome.*
 - *Yes, my victim.*
 - *Yes I am.*

15. Are you interested in supporting someone who wishes to heal the harm through a restorative justice conference by sitting in as a community member? [Again, this would have to be arranged through your supervisor at Spring Creek, or would need to take place after you have returned to your community.]

- *I would love to.*
- *No thank you.*
- *I would love to.*
- *Yes.*
- *Yes I would.*

16. FOR THE YOUTH WHO WERE UNABLE TO BE IN THE ORIGINAL BOOMERANG WORKSHOP BUT WHO RECEIVED THE LESSONS FROM THEIR PEERS UPON THEIR RETURN TO THE PODS: What was your experience with *Boomerang*? How did you feel when your peers came back to lead and present the lessons they'd learned in *Boomerang*.

- *I thought the group was interesting and hopefully I will be chosen next group.*
- *It was great when he peers came back to lead.*