

GUIDE-Sponsored Retreat Reinvigorates P.G. County Juvenile Justice Intensive Aftercare Program

By Sarah Smee

A retreat can be a great way to bring people together and to rekindle enthusiasm for a program. In August, GUIDE's Family Intervention Specialists (FIS) hosted a mini-retreat for the Department of Juvenile Service's Intensive Aftercare (IA) Program Staff. This retreat was led by organizational effectiveness expert Pamela Collins, of Zenstarr Enterprises, Inc. During this all-day event, participants enjoyed hands-on team-building activities, a catered lunch, and some great door prizes. Individuals took the Myers Briggs Type Indicator to discover more about their personalities and interpersonal dynamics within the team. Later in the day, the tone became more serious as the Intensive Aftercare staff brainstormed and planned specific actions based on information from a previous state conference. All 15 participants gave only positive feedback and look forward to implementing the changes developed at this event.

The IA program serves the unique needs of children and youths who have been sentenced to detention centers or residential treatment centers. When these youths are released, they face the difficult and stressful prospect of rejoining both family and community. The IA team supervises and provides services for the youths and families before, during, and after the return home.

As part of the IA team, GUIDE's Family Intervention Specialists help to



Clockwise from top: members of the Intensive Aftercare team; the group working on a team building activity; Zenstarr's Pamela Collins, retreat leader

ensure a smooth transition by counseling both children and parents before release, teaching parenting classes and leading parent support groups, and providing crisis counseling as problems arise after the release. Additionally, they provide referrals for substance abuse treatment, social services, housing, and psychiatric care, as needed.

GUIDE's three FIS workers – Amina Aleem, Christa Calkins, and Camilla Smith – have worked with 43 families since the program began last year. They continually encourage youths and parents to attend their weekly psycho-educational groups. These groups provide a place to discuss sex education, drug abuse, dealing with loss, living with parents, finding personal strengths, and setting and achieving goals for the future. Ms. Aleem says that “full group sessions, especially when parents come” are extremely rewarding.

The Intensive Aftercare program is a unique collaboration between GUIDE, the State Department of Juvenile Services (DJS), and the Mental Health Authority Division (MHAD) of Prince George's

County. GUIDE is involved with the Prince George's County program, and other counties have similar groups. DJS houses the FIS workers in their offices, while the MHAD provides funding for services, training and other program necessities. GUIDE is pleased that it is

able to provide clinical supervision for the FIS workers. Says GUIDE's Executive Director, Scott Birdsong, "one of the most exciting parts about the program is that it allows us to begin working with families early on in a youth's period of incarceration."