

## **2012 CCAP Partners Award: Thresholds of Chester County**

The Chester County Youth Center is proud to select Thresholds of Chester County as its Program of the Year. This program has been instrumental in the ways that it teaches our young people decision making skills. Thresholds is a community based program that is run by a group of dedicated volunteers. The program has had such a positive affect on our detention and shelter youth that many of our residents chose to go through the program a second time.

The Thresholds program was developed by Milton” Mickey” Burglass who was a former inmate at the Orleans Parish Prison in New Orleans, Louisiana. While in prison, Burglass was involved in the literacy program and observed that it took much longer for inmates to learn and read than it did for the general population. Testing had showed that the inmates had trouble solving problems and making decisions. After being released, Burglass developed the Thresholds program as a part of his graduate studies at Harvard University. There are now chapters of Thresholds in Pennsylvania, Delaware, the New England states, New York, Louisiana, Tennessee, Florida and Illinois. In 2008, a revision of Thresholds was made to incorporate young people. Thresholds Guide for Young People was written by volunteers who teach at prisons in the State of Delaware and in Delaware County, Pennsylvania.

The Thresholds program teaches a six-step decisional model. It is taught in a large group, lecture type setting as well as one on one sessions. It includes a separate curriculum for each resident to work through and keep at the end of the program. In Chester County, Thresholds comes to the Youth Center the second and third Saturday and Sunday of every month from 9am until 2pm. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday/Sunday is for our detention residents and the 3<sup>rd</sup> Saturday/Sunday is for our shelter residents. The seven volunteers even share a snack and lunch with our residents and the whole weekend is wrapped up with a meaningful graduation ceremony that includes certificates for our young men and women.

The Chester County Youth Center finds the Thresholds program to be a great collaboration with a community-based program. The program blends in very nicely with our goals here at the center and we are very fortunate to have such a dedicated and committed group of people that enjoy serving our youth here in Chester County. Included in this nomination is a recent article in our local newspaper about the program.

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