

MARATHON YOUTH SERVICES
NEWSLETTER
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At times we all get caught up in our problems, big or small. We tend to forget the really important things in our lives and focus on our petty complaints. For many of us, the events of this past week have put much of this into its proper perspective. Large numbers of our fellow citizens are without even the basics of life; food, water, shelter. The path of Hurricane Katrina has left devastation in its wake like this country has never seen on our shores before. Today's news reports the Governor of Louisiana has ordered New Orleans evacuated as the conditions there worsen. A city of half a million people, described by some as "a city of poor people" has become totally uninhabitable, probably for weeks or months to come. And the body count hasn't even begun yet...

As we give thanks for being spared such a catastrophe, let us all consider how we might help the victims. If nothing else, consider a contribution to the [American Red Cross](#)! They will no doubt be on the scene for some time to come.

While the needs of our clientele are not as urgent or immediate, we do need to forge ahead as the days pass. It's time for school again, and next week at this time our RGH staff and residents will be well on their way to another semester. Most of our young adults are involved already in some sort of gainful employment or other activity, but this time of year things seem to step up a notch for them too.

You may recall that last month we reported that Rick Ferree had left us to return to his beloved Kentucky, and a job with his former employer. We have now filled his position with Chris Gunderson, a man experienced in the group home business who is well up to the challenges.

As is often the case this time of year, Reynolds Group Home has some vacancies. We have had a couple of boys able to move on and start the semester at home or in foster care. This means we can give immediate attention to your placement needs. Please contact Chris or Doug to discuss how we can help.

Marathon Youth Services is also again responding to the need for more living situations for young developmentally disabled adults. We are again expanding on that program and will have more to report on that next month.

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1. Rick's departure from Reynolds Group Home left big shoes to fill. We feel very fortunate to have attracted many qualified applicants, with **Chris Gunderson** standing out as our choice. Chris comes to us with an extensive history of working with adolescents and their families.

Beginning his career with adolescents in 1986, Chris worked in a residential treatment center as a counselor, eventually becoming the staff trainer. Most recently he was employed as the director of five group homes for adjudicated youth. During that same time, Chris also launched his own training business that helps participants in areas such as crisis intervention, decision making, communications and time management. He also became a Master Facilitator in a program called Breaking Barriers and a Trainer of Trainers in Corrective Thinking.



Chris is a native of the area, having grown up on a farm in the Wittenburg area. He has four older brothers who live around the country. Chris and his wife of 21 years, Andrea, have two children, Teran age 18 and Bryce age 13. He enjoys most of his free time with his family and his children's activities.

In his own words, "I have made a lifetime commitment to work with kids. I find it rewarding and it is important for me to feel I'm making a

difference. It's the little success stories that motivate me. When a family reconnects, it is a great feeling."

Welcome to our Team Chris. We all look forward to a long and productive relationship. We're confident that the community will concur in our choice.

We also want to welcome **Bruce Fox** to our Team as well. Bruce has also joined the staff at Reynolds Group Home as a second shift youth worker. Bruce has already made his presence known and his importance to the effort felt.



2. August was a typically busy month at **Reynolds Group Home**, with all summer activities wrapping up before the start of a new semester. With the coming of school, Gary has already begun participation in football at East where he is on the freshman squad. Practice started August 22nd. Luke finished up his softball league with a bang, winning their season finale.

Calvin and Robert moved on to family and foster home respectively. One of our recent discharges, Frank, returned for a visit following his completion of basic training with the Marine Corps. Frank appears to be in a good place, and we certainly wish him well. Needless to say we will be keeping in touch with Frank and tracking his progress, and safety...



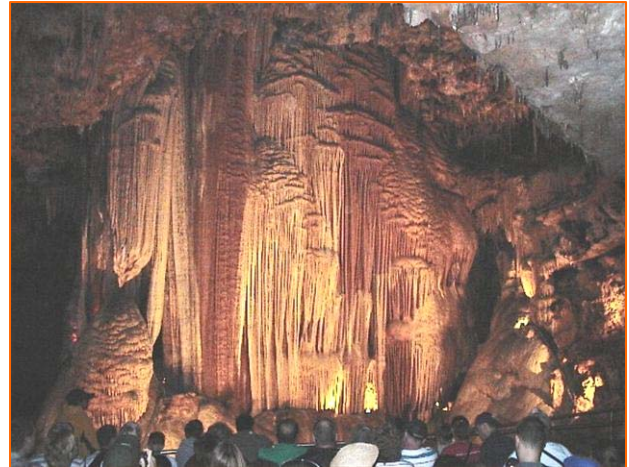
August also saw trips to Devils Lake State Park and the Mead Wildlife Refuge.

However, the big news was the group home's trip to St. Louis for some camping and sight-seeing. This trip was planned all summer and proved to be a success in ending a busy summer vacation.

With all packing and preparations complete, the boys and staff embarked on their trip August 6 at 7:50 AM. Mike and Darwin, accompanied by the guys, picked up Ronda at her home in Stevens Point. Then began a 9 hour odyssey with a brief stop in Rochelle, Illinois for lunch at McD's. The guys got to bring along their CDs and Gameboys, something normally off-limits at the group home. This was a way for them to pass the time on the road.

The weary travelers arrived at their campsite at about 5 PM, finding the weather warm and humid. After a simple supper the guys decided to shower to cool down, then everyone turned in for the night.

Morning brought a beautiful but still very warm day. A perfect day for touring the cool Merrimac Caverns. The guys were quite impressed! As Kris reported, *"It's so cool how nature makes your mouth hit the floor in awe over the mineral sculptures."* In addition to the tour, the guys took a boat ride on the Merrimac River where the water is said to be as clean as out of your kitchen faucet.



After a day of touring the crew returned to camp for a steak dinner followed by a campfire with smores

Day 3 was the day for the St. Louis Science Center. The big exhibition there was the Science of Circus. The boys got to do flips on a bungee cord and walk a tightrope!



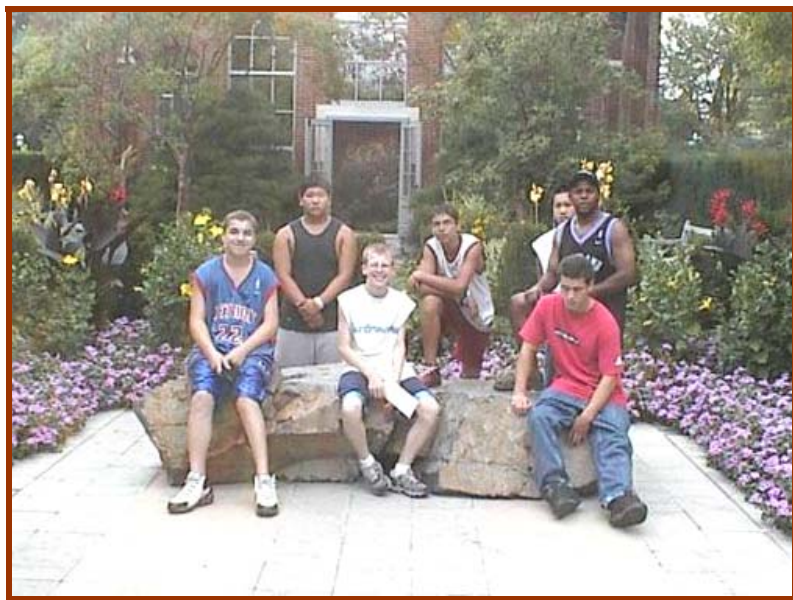
The day also included an IMAX movie called 'Fighter Pilot', and the guys got a chance to fly with a computerized flight simulator. All in all, a very full day!

A trip to "The Arch" was their primary agenda for Day 4. The guys enjoyed it all; from the search of their bags and the metal detector (a sign of the times) to the views of the city from 630 feet!

Mike reports that *"We started the day with a movie about Lewis and Clark. It was a good movie. I had a personal interest in the movie because I have been told by the older generations of my family that I am a direct descendant of William Clark! He is apparently a great uncle to me. There are probably several 'greats' in front of that."*

After the tour of the Arch the group went on a Mississippi River Boat ride. The guide gave everyone a good history of the river and development in the area, along with plugs for the St. Louis Cardinals.

First thing in the morning on Day 5 Luke and Troy got to do a little fishing with Mike before their trip to the St. Louis Zoo and the Missouri Botanical Gardens. This turned out to be a very busy and fun day. The group didn't return to camp until 9 PM! As reported by Mike: *"We got back to camp around 9 pm and the night was still not over. This was the last opportunity for us to have a campfire and pudgy pies. We started the fire and got all the supplies and the guys ate as if they had not seen food before. We had pizza and apple and cherry pudgy pies. Gary even worked out a grilled cheese. It was a good time. The day started to catch up to all of them and slowly everyone started to head off to bed. It got very quiet, very quickly."*



Day 6 was Six Flags over St. Louis day...This kept everyone busy all day on the many rides and amusements, including a much appreciated water park. The group didn't return to camp until late, and then feasted on the remainder of the food and headed for bed...morning and return to Wisconsin was close at hand.

In closing his trip journal, Mike says the trip was about *"building memories for the guys that they can treasure throughout their lives.....I happened to overhear some of the guys talking to their families when they got back. The excitement about trying to tell of all the cool things they experienced into a short phone call was priceless..."* This was a great trip for all involved, and well worth repeating in the future.

3. Our **adult programs** continue to go on smoothly, and in fact are flourishing! It looks like once again Marathon Youth Services will be answering the needs of the community and adding additional bed space to provide permanent homes and guidance to a couple more young men. We'll share more information about this next month...

August was County Fair month for the guys, and most of them enjoyed it daily. The Randy Travis concert and wrist band day were particular favorites...Adam and Mike S also enjoyed the rides.



In addition to the fair, the guys also attended the Edgar Steam Engine show, took a road trip to Wisconsin Dells, and of course, Special Olympics Bowling is again in session for another season. As usual, practices are held at Dale's Weston Lanes.

Speaking of Weston, Adam is now volunteering his time at the YMCA; he's at the Weston Y on Wednesdays and the Wausau Y on Monday and Thursday.

At Grand Place Sean has started work at Northern Valley Workshop and so far he loves his job! The men have also been very helpful around the house lately trying to earn extra money and incentives. They've also been very understanding and patient with the staff changes that took place in August at GP.

Marypat has left Grand Place and we have named Becky Roble as Assistant Program Coordinator. We're all very happy to have Becky accept those responsibilities, and the men have received the change without problem.

4. As you can see, it's been a hectic month! Many changes and lots of activity. And next month promises to be as action-packed. One future activity planned is sponsored by our Clinical Services Office.

Marathon Family Clinical Services is sponsoring a Community Wellness Seminar to be held October 13th. I am attaching a copy of the announcement of this seminar and would ask that you consider it for "parents, educators, church leaders, children's workers and mental health professionals". Please feel free to share this announcement as you see fit. We will again mail you this announcement in a couple of weeks.

For additional information please feel free to contact our Clinical Services Office at 715-848-0011.

**Watch "Child and Family Focus"
with Doug Adams and friends
every Tuesday at 7:00 AM and 10:30 PM, and Wednesday at 5:30 PM.
Local Public Access Television Channel 3**

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