

OU Students 'CARE' For Troubled Youths Through New Program

By Anne Barajas
OU News Services

NORMAN - You see the headlines and the nightly news: drive-by shootings, gang fights, guns in the schools. The spread of crime and violence among youth makes many feel helpless. But for three young men from the University of Oklahoma, such news has made them feel like it's time to make a difference.

Kevin McPherson of PERRY, Wesley Long of OKLAHOMA CITY and Ricky Keys of WAGONER are making a difference in the lives of Oklahoma City youths through their innovative program called Community Adolescent Rehabilitation Effort, or CARE.

CARE is targeted at youths ages 12 to 17 from the northeast quadrant of Oklahoma City who have been convicted of a crime. On average, some 440 juveniles commit misdemeanor or felony crimes each month in Oklahoma County, McPherson said.

"The majority of crimes don't happen in the northeast quadrant," he said. "But the crimes do start there."

McPherson is a doctoral student in higher education and training and development at OU. Long, also a doctoral student, is studying social foundations in education, and Keys recently received his master's degree in health care administration from OU's Health Sciences Center.

The three founders developed the CARE program more than a year ago, after many discussions about the challenges facing inner-city youths, particularly young black men.

"We talked about problems in the community and discovered there were no programs that addressed the problems the way we felt they should be addressed," McPherson said.

So the three consulted with such juvenile justice law experts as Sam Gonzales, chief of the Oklahoma City Police Department; Dave McBride, director of the Oklahoma Department of Public Safety; and then Oklahoma Sen. Vicki Miles-LaGrange.

"Our question was, 'What do you do with kids when they first commit a crime?'" The answer, they discovered, is that most area youths who commit crimes are returned home without any effective follow-up counseling or training.

"We thought, 'When these kids first commit a crime, why not send them through a program to teach them decision-making skills and how to function successfully in society?'" McPherson said.

Together, they wrote and submitted a grant to the Oklahoma County District Attorney's Council. The result was an award of nearly \$250,000 to establish the CARE program.

Since the first funds were made available in July, McPherson and his colleagues have established a corporation with a northeast Oklahoma City headquarters and a staff of four full-time and eight part-time workers and eight volunteers, ranging from social workers to cooks.

CARE's clients, who currently number 25, are referred to the agency by the Oklahoma Juvenile Bureau. The client and a parent or guardian are required to undergo a six-week training and counseling program to

learn life, coping and employment skills. Most of the 25 now in CARE already have been convicted of a felony, McPherson said.

"A lot of the kids have never been taught something basic like how to tie a tie or balance a checkbook, or why you even keep a checkbook," he said.

But the most basic thing taught by CARE, McPherson noted, is decision-making skills.

"A lot of our youth have problems accepting responsibility for their actions," he said.

The fundamentals of action and reaction are key at CARE. For instance, McPherson said, one client is a former gang member who wants to become a computer scientist. So CARE employees are reaching him with what it takes to get to college and succeed.

Although CARE has only been offered for three months, the results already are obvious, McPherson said.

"The community is glad to have someone out there who's willing to deal with the kids. And the kids see successful black men — which is something they don't always see — who are willing to spend time with them."

The time McPherson and the CARE staff spend with clients is considerable, with clients reporting to the program after each school day. Weekends are their own, although McPherson said many students still show up on CARE's doorstep.

"They just want to come," he said, adding that staff members will offer such entertainment as videos to clients who want to join them on weekends.

"The bottom line is, if they're with us, they can't be in trouble." Some clients have been in trouble nearly all of their young lives, and part of CARE's mission is to teach them about commitment to society and their community. As a result, CARE clients are involved in such efforts as feeding the homeless, cleaning up neighborhoods, and mowing lawns and repairing homes of the elderly.

In addition to volunteer work efforts, CARE focuses on the employment future of its clients by teaching them job skills.

"Our program is realistic," McPherson said. "A lot of these kids will never do better as long as they don't get some kind of employment or their parents don't get some kind of employment."

After six weeks in the program, CARE clients are placed in an "aftercare" program, which tracks their performance in school and provides job-search assistance and monthly support groups to help them keep from back-sliding. The CARE staff tries to pair up program graduates who can lean on each other in difficult times. And, graduates always are welcome at CARE.

"Because of our commitment and because it's our community, our involvement continues after they leave. As long as you want to be involved with us, we'll be involved with you," McPherson said.

In the end, the most basic goal McPherson, Long and Keys have set for the youths in CARE is quite simple.

"If nothing else, we want our clients to be able to make critical decisions," McPherson said. "If you choose to break the law, don't blame anyone but yourself — because you do have choices."

CALORIE COUNTDOWN

Bits and Pieces
By Susan Duff

*It was a great boon to dieting parents when those fast-food hamburger joints that cater to kids started offering salads on the menu. It meant we grown-ups could have our nutritious greens, dietary fiber, limited fat grams and reduced-calorie counts while Junior pigged out on the burgers and fries. The irony is that some of the salads sold at such establishments aren't particularly low in fat grams and calories. At one burger eatery, in fact, the chef's salad with ranch dressing has more fat (about 26 grams) and almost the same amount of calories (over 500) as the super big burger. Stick with the raw veggie salads without processed meat and/or cheese, and use the reduced-calorie dressings, too.

*Are you waking up at a new time? Have you recently given up smoking? Is a family member on a new schedule? Any or all such lifestyle changes can affect the effectiveness of your weight-loss diet. If your wakeup and bedtime hours have changed, or if you're on a new shift at work, or if someone in your family has recently changed their hours, you might have to adjust your mealtimes to suit the new schedule. You may want to eat smaller meals more frequently (many nutritionists recommend this), or you might want to change the relative size of your meals, i.e., big breakfast, medium lunch, small dinner. If you just gave up smoking, you probably need to find lots of nibble foods that are low in calories. In addition to raw vegetables cut into bite-size pieces, have fat-free crackers and sugar-free hard candies on hand for a while — at least until you get used to kicking

the smoking habit.

*When you start working out or add new exercise to your usual workout, it may not mean immediate weight loss. Many dieters find their appetites are substantially increased during the first week of starting an exercise program. The best way to deal with this is to increase your intake of complex carbohydrates — grains, breads, pasta, vegetables, fruits — the foods that are most efficiently used for energy when you're physically active. Additionally, there are healthy forms of physical exercise, like weightlifting, that may actually cause you to add muscle weight. Muscle is always heavier than fat, so your weight will increase even if you're losing fat.

The Eiffel Tower is tall, but perhaps not as tall as you might think. Its height is 985 feet, nearly 300 feet less than the Empire State Building in New York.

A Japanese haiku poem has a neat structure of three lines and 17 syllables — five in the first line, seven in the second line and five in the last line. A haiku, by the way, is supposed to capture the essence of a moment.

In medieval times, the so-called "philosopher's stone" was the substance that was believed to turn common metals into gold.

Favorite Family Recipes Can Be Prize-Winning Meals

Good cooks often add their own twists to traditional meals, creating new recipes that are delicious and convenient. Whether designed for family dinners or special entertaining, those are just the types of recipes that could win big at the 1995 National Beef Cook-Off®.

Entries are now being accepted for the National Beef Cook-Off, which food experts recognize as one of America's foremost cooking competitions. Qualifying recipes must be original creations of amateur cooks, ready in an hour or less and contain no more than eight ingredients. Winners of the 1995 Cook-Off will share an all-time high \$45,000 in cash prizes, including a \$25,000 grand prize.

One recipe, entered in the 1993 Beef Cook-Off on its merit for "entertaining," is "Sesame Beef Salad," winner of a \$2,000 honorable mention prize. Created by a Missouri career woman, the light, flavorful recipe features thin-sliced boneless beef top sirloin steak with Asian seasonings, served over rice noodles (or pasta) with crisp-tender vegetables.

Sesame Beef Salad

Total preparation and cooking time: 30 minutes

- 1 pound boneless beef top sirloin steak, cut 1 inch thick
 - 8 ounces fresh pea pods, cut diagonally in half if large
 - 4 to 8 ounces uncooked thin rice noodles or vermicelli
 - Water
 - 1 tablespoon dark sesame oil
 - 1 large red or yellow bell pepper, cut into julienne strips
 - 1 tablespoon sesame seeds
 - 1 small head Boston or Bibb lettuce
 - 1 small head radicchio
 - 1 tablespoon sesame seeds
- Marinade:**
- 3 tablespoons peanut oil
 - 3 tablespoons rice vinegar
 - 5 teaspoons soy sauce or tamari
 - 1/2 to 1 teaspoon hot chili oil (preferably with garlic)



"Sesame Beef Salad" is a prize-winning, Asian-style combination of lean, boneless beef, rice noodles and vegetables.

1. Heat large heavy skillet over medium-high heat until hot. Place beef steak in skillet and cook 9 to 12 minutes for rare to medium doneness, turning once.
 2. Trim fat from steak. Carve steak into thin slices. In medium bowl, combine marinade ingredients. Add steak slices; toss to coat. Cover and set aside in refrigerator.
 3. In large pot, bring water to a boil. Add pea pods; cook 1 to 2 minutes or until crisp-tender. Remove from water; immediately rinse pea pods with cold water. Drain; set aside.
 4. In same boiling water, add noodles. Stir; cook 3 to 5 minutes or until tender. Drain; rinse with cold water. Using large spoon, press noodles against strainer to remove excess water. Drizzle noodles with sesame oil; toss to coat.
 5. In large bowl, combine reserved beef, pea pods, bell pepper and 1 tablespoon sesame seeds. To serve, arrange lettuce and radicchio leaves on serving platter. Top with noodles. Arrange beef mixture over noodles. Garnish with 1 tablespoon sesame seeds.
- Makes 4 servings (serving size 1/4 of recipe).
- Finalists in the 1995 National Beef Cook-Off will prepare their dishes at the National Beef Cook-Off Final, to be held Sept. 21-23, 1995, in Little Rock, Arkansas. Entries are due June 1, 1994.
- For more information or an entry form, contact your state beef council or write to National Beef Cook-Off Entries, P.O. Box 8240, Chicago, Ill., 60664, or call 1-800-621-7011.

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