

Mission Statement

The Second Mile challenges young people to achieve their potential as individuals and community members by providing opportunities for them to develop positive life skills and self-esteem as well as by providing education and support for parents and professionals addressing the needs of youth.



Providing Children
with Help and Hope

Fall 2009

Milestones

www.thesecondmile.org

An Interview with Avery, a Second Mile Challenge Graduate

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Sitting just beyond the space that housed registration for The Second Mile's Challenge Program, Avery, a young woman with brown, curly hair and suntanned cheeks settled into the chair wearing a blue tee shirt proclaiming "Senior Class '08." While I had interviewed more than 20 current Challenge participants prior to talking with Avery, she was the first program "graduate" with whom I had spoken.

Avery had begun attending the program when she was "ten or eleven" and had continued to earn her way back, completing both SMILE (Second Mile Intensive Learning Experience) and the Leaders programs. Her mother, a social worker, had heard about Challenge Camp and realized it might be a good experience for Avery, who'd been diagnosed with Tourette's Syndrome and Attention Deficit Disorder at the age of seven after her grandmother noticed her incessant head-twitching. "In middle school, I was tortured," Avery shared. "They used to call me 'bobble-head.' It was rough. But I look back on it now and see it as a stepping stone." I asked if anything she'd done in The Second Mile's program had helped to effect that change in attitude.

"It changed me a lot," she said. "My first week at camp I was what you would call a problem child." Avery described her younger self as socially isolated—"one to



Challenge Graduate Avery with her mom, Kim.

sit in the corner and not talk to anyone"—and unmannered, and she claimed to have had trouble accepting her disorders. She attributed some of her improvement directly to the teambuilding initiatives that are part of the camp curriculum. "I had bad trust issues. But we had to go over a ladder held up by ropes, and other campers in your small group had to hold the ropes. That was rough for me. It was definitely a trust challenge. But through it, I learned I could trust."

The teambuilding initiatives, then, had provided Avery with the feeling she had

An Interview with Avery, a Second Mile Challenge Graduate continued on next page

Stories from Staff

“A Special Call”



It’s hard to believe that August 2009 marked my 25th anniversary with The Second Mile. I began my tenure with the organization as a volunteer. In 1983, The Second Mile had two programs and neither served girls, so Board Member and fellow school counselor John Sheridan asked if I would recruit female College Friends and talk with area counselors about the availability of the Friend Program for female students. Soon, The Second Mile Friend Program was mentoring girls as well as boys. Since that initial task, my role has changed from volunteer to part-time (in ’84) to full-time staff member as the programs have expanded from two to nine, providing me with many memorable experiences with Second Mile children and teens.

My most memorable experience came in the form of a phone call from a Challenge Program graduate. He was in his mid-20s at the time of the call, and I remembered a young boy with a distinctive nickname and a special exuberance about camp. As we reminisced about his fellow group members and his camp counselors, I also recalled the issues that the school counselor shared when referring him to camp—socially isolated by others, little home support—so his next words stunned me: “I’m calling to thank The Second Mile for keeping me alive. I never told anyone this at the time, but I was sexually abused by my stepfather. Knowing that I could come to camp each summer, where someone cared about me, was the reason I didn’t kill myself. Camp was the one week that got me through the rest of the year.”

He then went on to say, “I may not be one of The Second Mile’s big success stories. I didn’t go to a great college, and I just have a regular job. To that I replied, “I think you are our best success story yet.” And for me, he is...

Katherine E. Genovese

Katherine Genovese serves as The Second Mile’s Executive Vice President.

grown through the Challenge Camp. When I asked her about another activity explicitly intended to bring about change in campers’ lives, the goal setting that each camper completes each summer to earn continued participation in the program, Avery also noted improvement.

“When I was younger, each goal was something I *had* to write on paper. But eventually, I really understood the point of goal setting, and I actually did work on and meet my goals.”

In addition to directly describing the impact of these activities, Avery mentioned other camp experiences that had an equally uplifting effect, such as being a role model for younger campers: “Every year when I came back, there were a couple of new kids in the van with me, and I’d talk to them and make them think camp was this big, awesome thing, and—I mean it is—but coming your first year, you don’t want to be here. But by the time you leave at the end of the week, you don’t want to leave. And, I’d see them walk in that first day, and some of them would be crying or angry, and I’d walk them through the week because I’d be like a buddy. And by the end of the week, I asked them: ‘So, was I right?’ And I’d get big smiles, and that was a great feeling.”

Another great feeling that Avery mentioned was that camp provided a feeling of “being at home.” That sense of home, of belonging, seemed tied to her recognition that campers shared a bond—they



Camp creates a sense of belonging.

all had issues with which they were struggling: “You go to school, and you don’t know if other people have problems In school I felt at a distance from everyone because I had my problems. Knowing everyone else here has their own issues ... my comfort level went up. In the beginning, I really didn’t make that connection, and one day, it just clicked. I saw another girl that had Tourette’s Syndrome, and I realized that everyone at camp was dealing with something.”

Despite all our discussion about the impact of the Challenge Program, Avery chose to end the interview with a statement I’d heard over and over again from other campers, confirming The Second Mile’s ability to provide impact with panache. “Is there anything you think I should know?”

“Camp is fun. Yeah. That’s it. *Camp is fun.*”

This interview was conducted as part of a class assignment for The Second Mile and is reprinted with the permission of interviewee, Avery, and of its author, Samantha Bernecker, a Penn State Schreyer senior majoring in psychology with a neuroscience emphasis and minors in biology and French

Miles Ahead

Past Second Milers: Where Are They Now?



Joshua Sinisi

Then

Joshua attended The Second Mile Summer Challenge Program at University Park, PA for three years. He also assists with the Friend Program.

Fondest Memory

“When I went into camp on day one, I was a shy, scared, unconfident person. By day two, it was like it was never even a part of me. I was changed for the better.”

The Second Mile’s Impact

“The Second Mile taught me that you can only live life once, so do what you can and desire because your life is simple: you make choices and don’t look back.”

Now

Joshua is attending Penn State at the Altoona campus where he majors in Business Administration and maintains a part-time job. He is considering another academic path and possibly changing his major to computer networking.

Jessica Shipman

Then

Jessica is a Second Mile scholarship winner and has been involved with The Second Mile Friend Fitness Program since she was in 7th grade.

Fondest Memory

“My fondest memory was my ‘graduation’ from Friend Fitness at the end of my senior year of high school. My parents were there to support me, as was my mentor, who had become like family.”

The Second Mile’s Impact

“The Second Mile Friend Fitness Program helped me to become a friendlier person and to connect with other people. It’s helped me in so many ways: that’s why I’m still participating in it now.”

Now

Jessica is in her second year at Harcum College studying Psychology and Social Work. She was Student Body President last year and is an RA this year. Also, she works as a site coordinator for Friend Fitness. She hopes to become a Preventative Social Worker or start her own mentoring program for children who have social problems.



Thoughts from the President

While I hesitate to write about an organizational restructuring in this column because it may, on the surface, seem dry, I wanted to share information about the culmination of a year-long process that will provide exciting opportunities and new possibilities for The Second Mile and the children we serve. Recently, The Second Mile put into place an organizational change we had been working on for some time: we restructured our State Board and we inaugurated a Central Regional Board.

We made this transition because we wanted our State Board to be more broadly representative geographically, and in order to make that happen, we needed to change our meeting times from 7:00 a.m. Friday every other month to three times annually, to accommodate those who would be traveling to State College from a farther distance. We also wanted to broaden volunteer leadership opportunities in our Central Region, given the significant program and development agenda in the central part of PA. I’m pleased to report that the new Central Region Board already has 40 active members to lead regional activities. Additionally, our restructured State Board has met twice, holding 2 day meetings in April and July of 2009 with a third annual meeting scheduled in November.

The State Board has wonderful representation from our three Regional Boards (Southeast PA, Southcentral PA, and Central PA), including two elected delegates from each Board as well as at-large members from each region. Importantly, this State Board has representation from Southwest and Northeast Pennsylvania and of our donors who support us from outside the Commonwealth. This broad representation has led to an invigorating exchange of ideas, a sharing of successful practices, discussions about additional resources and opportunities, and new perspectives on our current activities. I am grateful to those who have answered the call to serve and look forward to working with them to secure the future of The Second Mile.

Miles To Go

A Challenge for Us All

*Smiles of thanks from
summer campers*



It's been a challenging year. We start each year at zero and raise every penny needed to support the thousands of children who count on us, and [The Second Mile began our fiscal year on September 1, 2008, just as the financial rug was being pulled out from under us all.](#) Our nine programs continued to run at full capacity. In fact, for most of these programs, we had more children referred this year as a result of the financial uncertainty across our state. [As the year progressed, we continued to monitor our financial health, cut costs where we could without sacrificing program content, and asked our loyal donors to continue to support The Second Mile as best they could during the months of uncertainty.](#) We ended the year with a deficit from the budget we projected last September, but we met the challenge of continuing all our programs, even increasing our enrollment in the Challenge Program.

[A record 825 children participated in our Challenge Program this summer—a number that, frankly, was quite a bit larger than we planned.](#) Our target was 780, based upon the number of children who earned their way back and replacing “graduates” with new participants. Typically, we have a very good track record of predicting how many young people we can accept to the program to reach our target, given the chaotic nature of some of these children's environments. [But this year, the children arrived to the Challenge Program at a higher rate than ever before—a clear indication that Second Mile children are among the most vulnerable in this economy.](#)

For each, it was a week filled with support and encouragement, a respite

from the uncertainty they often face. But as our campers headed home, many expressed apprehension about parents' job losses and home foreclosures and the things we take for granted—food for the table, gas for the car and heat for the winter. [We sent them home with promises that our staff will be there—checking in monthly on goals, being a sounding board for problems, and helping them face daily challenges until they are back at camp next year.](#)

[As we head into the fall of 2009, none of us can be sure what challenges will arise. We start with the challenge of funding the additional angel scholarships for the 45 unexpected children so that we can provide our promised support year-round.](#) Many of you have already provided a scholarship. We are also blessed by those who underwrote an entire camp session: Camp Bank of America, Camp First and Goal, Camp Poole Anderson Construction, Camp S&A Homes, Camp Turner Construction, Camp Willaman. We welcomed support from two new foundations—Brook J. Lenfest Foundation and the Walmart Foundation, as well as benefited from continued support through the Highmark Foundation's Highmark Healthy High 5.

We need to continue to extend The Second Mile family that supports these children. [Maybe you know of a friend or a business colleague who would like to reach out and be an Angel to these additional campers.](#) Working together, we can be here to support both children and families as they face each day and the challenges that come.

Special Projects

Creative Ways to Support Second Mile Youth

While The Second Mile organizes many fundraisers, we are also the benefactor of funds from “special projects” organized by corporations, organizations, or individuals. The projects, reviewed in advance by The Second Mile, are as unique as those creating them. This past year, they included activities such as a 5K Run/Walk, motorcycle and bike rides, special restaurant nights, and golf tournaments, all with pledges or entry fees donated to The Second Mile. Other projects involved a donation of the proceeds of an event for Second Mile kids, and still others included the implementation of special events or direct “solicitation” for donations. We thank those who undertook special projects to benefit The Second Mile and invite those interested in special project fundraising to contact our Development staff.

[Applebee's Neighborhood Grill and Bar](#)

[Brian's Run Charities, Inc.](#)

[Capital Area Behavioral Health Collaborative, Inc.](#)

[Clinton County Poker](#)

[The Cove](#)

[DeAngelo Tailgate](#)

[Domestic Relations Association of Pennsylvania](#)

[DQ Grill and Chill](#)

[Fulton Bank](#)

[Harrison's Wine Country Grill](#)

[JP Morgan Chase](#)

[Karns Quality Foods](#)

[KVF Associates, Inc.](#)

[Lancaster Hoagie Sales](#)

[Live Nation Music Group, Inc/Transiberian Orchestra/Cumulus Media](#)

[Lyon's Family Memorial Ride](#)

[Newport High School Faculty and Staff](#)

[P.J. Harrigan's](#)

[Pennsylvania Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators](#)

[Professional Management Association of Smeal College](#)

[Pump Station Cafe](#)

[SCI Houtzdale-Runathon](#)

[South Middleton School District](#)

[State College Area Motorcycle Enthusiasts Charity Ride](#)

[Vinnie Ranieri Memorial Golf Tournament](#)

[Melissa A. Raniero](#)

[Texas Roadhouse](#)

[Turner Construction](#)

Checking the Mileage

Overview of The Second Mile Outcomes Research

By Casey Spears, The Pennsylvania State University

Five years ago, The Second Mile expanded its program evaluation with the implementation of a strategic plan to engage in outcomes assessment for each program using an outside evaluator. While we are extending this process, we thought the five-year mark was an excellent time to provide a brief summary of those findings, all of which were initially reported in this column in greater detail.

Nittany Lion Tips

Based on counselor surveys, each set of cards is distributed to an average of 115 students (but to as many as 500 students), 60% of whom are male. Counselors reported that the Tips Program is most effective in assisting students in meeting established goals, rewarding positive behavior, and recognizing significant achievements. Tips are also widely used as a discussion starter with regard to sensitive issues and as a token of support during a difficult time.

PEAK (Prevention: Education and Awareness for Kids)

The first two videos have been received very well—*Choice of Champions* was rated as “very effective” in helping students understand peer pressure and how to deal with it effectively, while *Flow—The River Within* was rated “excellent” or “very good” by 78% of respondents in assisting students with self-esteem issues. Data from counselors completing pre- and post-testing and interviews in urban, suburban, and rural school district settings found students are using appropriate strategies to deal with bullying, lowering the number of and severity of bullying incidents and increasing the percentage of incidents

reported to adults after completing the *No Bullying Allowed* module. In a broader counselor survey, 90% of respondents rated the program “very” or “highly” effective in assisting students in identifying and utilizing anti-bullying strategies.

Leadership Institute

After a two year follow-up study with both students and mentors, data showed not only positive outcomes for the students in regards to leadership skills and attitudes towards their schools, but significant, positive impact on the faculty mentors, who are a crucial part of the leadership teams. Even more important, since its inception, the Institute has been the catalyst for hundreds of student-led service projects, impacting thousands of students and communities members.

Challenge Program

Data from the ALEXSA (Assessment of Liability and Exposure to Substance Abuse and Antisocial Behavior) indicated that participants are achieving better academically, experiencing lower levels of depression, committing more strongly to school, engaging in more effective problem solving skills, and resorting to maladaptive coping behaviors less often following participation in the program. Additionally, based on the heightened risk factors for Challenge participants, it would be expected that clients of The Second Mile would have greater prevalence of substance use compared to their same-aged peers. However, when compared with the results of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) national survey of American youth, rates of lifetime

tobacco and alcohol use are lower in clients of The Second Mile.

Friend

Outcomes from College Friend evaluations indicated growth of Young Friends in the areas of pro-social development, attitude, and communication skills. Evaluations from Young Friends matched these findings.

Friend Fitness

In a review of school data from one year to the next, participants had a 65% increase in school attendance or maintained perfect attendance. There was a 75% reduction in unexcused absences, and there was an 88% improvement of all grades. Seventy percent (70%) of participants improved their grades in core courses such as English, math, and science.

Foster Family Support

A survey of foster parents showed that the Foster Family Support Program benefits foster children and parents in the following areas: increased opportunities for educational and recreational activities; gains in feelings of mutual support; increased opportunities for structured visits with birth siblings, if living separately in foster care; and improvements in feelings about the level of community support.

Children’s Scholarship Fund

All students who have received scholarships have or are currently obtaining post-secondary degrees and are achieving their academic goals.

Counseling and Referral Services

The data on progress for counseling sessions is confidential between the counselor and clients.



▶ York County Chapter Sandy Kranich Golf Benefit

◀ Central Region Charity Auction



Miles of Smiles

Second Mile Special Events =
Hope for Kids



◀ Central Region Second Mile Celebrity Golf Classic

▶ Universal Media Second Mile Celebrity Golf Classic



▶ Berks County Chapter Kickoff for Kids

▶ Clinton County Sports Night

▼ Mercedes Benz Reverse Drawing

▼ Clearfield County Chapter Monte Carlo Night



◀ Lancaster County Chapter Divas of Jazz Concert



▶ Pitt vs. Penn State Golf

◀ Chester County Chapter Golf Classic

▼ Lehigh Valley Chapter Celebrity Banquet

▶ KPMG Celebration of Excellence Committee
Courtesy of Fran Weimer Photography

▶ Blair/Bedford/Cambria/Huntingdon Reverse Drawing

