

# Ettie Lee's FIRE RESIDE

Saving Lives. Changing Lives. Building Hope for Youth and Families

February 2007

**ETTIE LEE YOUTH & FAMILY Services provides the following services for abused, abandoned and neglected children:**

- Nurturing, loving environments, for boys 9-17, in 9 group homes
- A network of more than 35 loving foster families
- Permanent placement for boys and girls of all ages
- Fully accredited substance abuse treatment
- Outpatient after-school mental health programs

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Remember Ettie Lee Youth & Family Services when you designate your United Way gift.

## Going to Alaska

### Family raises necessary funds to send Daniel, 15, to basketball regionals

It was like any other weekday afternoon in October. The ten residents of one of Ettie Lee residential boys homes were making their way in from school and starting homework before they helped to start dinner. That's when the phone rang. John, a long time childcare worker at the home, answered the phone.

As he hung up the phone, John asked loudly and excitedly, "Where are we going to get the money?" "Who was on the phone?" everyone asked in unison. "Coach Romman," said John. Coach Romman is the high school basketball coach of Daniel, a one year resident at Ettie Lee Youth & Family Services. The Coach says that Daniel's team made it to the finals...only one problem...the finals were in Alaska on December 26—only 2 months away and they wanted Daniel on the team. Where were they going to get the money indeed?

That the team made it to the finals to participate in Juneau, Alaska, was remarkable. That Daniel, 15, was even asked to participate was even more remarkable. Daniel is a freshman and freshmen are usually not asked to participate in the finals. That's reserved for the juniors and seniors. But Daniel is not just any kid. When asked what kind of player he is, Coach says he is talented

**"Daniel worked very, very hard to get to this point, and he has been trying to overcome a lot of obstacles."**

yes, but more than that Coach says, "Daniel worked very, very hard to get to this point, and he has been trying to overcome a lot of obstacles."

Daniel was placed in an Ettie Lee home due to the neglect of his parents. His dad has been in and out of prison for most of Daniel's life, and his mom has always struggled with drug addiction. But Daniel, in spite of not knowing if he will ever be reunited with his dad, has been keeping a positive attitude and keeping his grades up. Basketball, says John, has increased his confidence, has been keeping him focused and giving him discipline.

Home parents Dean and Kathy Binks agree. "It's an honor for him to go. The coach usually takes the more seasoned players," says Kathy Binks, "But now we have to have a plan on how we are going to get the money for him to go." But she knew they would get Daniel to Alaska. He had earned it.

Just like a family, everyone at the home started working on raising the funds and asking all those they knew in the community. Members of the Board of Directors at Daniel's school gladly pitched in. So did the city council members—even the Mayor. Also, Friends of Foster Children donated \$550. They had done it. They raised the funds needed for airfare, accommodations, clothes and toiletries and spending money for the week's stay. He even bought disposable cameras to document his trip for his "family" back at home.

On the plane up to Juneau, Daniel fondly remembers being picked up from practice every day by John (the childcare worker at "home") as well as his home parents and other "brothers" taking him to practice on weekends. And, of course they were there cheering him on at every game or tournament the team was in. The support that he had received from his Ettie Lee family really gave him strength and



Clayton Downey

Employees are the heart and soul of any agency. The employees of Ettie Lee Youth & Family Services are not only the heart

and soul they are the role models for youth who are trying to find the right path. For the past 15 years, Ettie Lee has bestowed the honor or Employee of the Year to one truly outstanding individual employee. The 2006 Ettie Lee Youth & Family Services Employee of the Year is **Sandra Johnson**. Sandra is the Director of our Foster Family Agency. In this position, Sandra provides the necessary direction and support to her staff of 10 who work with more than 35 loving foster homes. Sandra goes out of her way to motivate her staff and keep morale high. Sandra is always willing to be a mentor to her staff.

**The Nominees for the 2006 Employee of the Year Award included:**

- Melanie Beck
- Clifford Breshears
- Lovene Coleman
- Wilma Cumberland
- Beth Gramling
- Richard Huey
- Omar Ortiz
- Hydeh Raen
- Moana Richardson
- Trung Tran
- Bonnie Williams
- Lisa Woodbury

It's noteworthy to mention that our staff of childcare workers is comprised of individuals whose average length of employment is 5 years. This is unheard of in our field and this consistency, I strongly believe, is the reason why we have so many success stories among the children and youth that we serve. To every one of the Ettie Lee Staff...THANK YOU.



# A Common Sense Approach

## Ettie Lee's professional staff is showing residents a better way

What if there were a common sense approach to changing the behaviors of the youth we serve that lead these young people to become productive members of society? What if we could teach kids that there are practical solutions to manage their wild anger and control their reckless impulses? How can we teach kids that it's not OK to be dangerous to themselves and others...that, working together, we can turn their destructive cycles around?

For the past three years, Ettie Lee Youth & Family Services has embraced just such an approach. \* It teaches kids to practice newly learned skills in real world settings. This could be as simple as using the skills they are learning for completing homework, going to school and hearing the word "no" or something more difficult such as not giving into violent behavior when provoked.

The approach assumes that people are doing the best that they can with the skills that they have, AND if they had a better way they might try it! That's just what the experienced staff at Ettie Lee Youth & Family Services is doing. Showing the kids a better way. Patty Gieselman, Vice President Clinical Services at Ettie Lee says, "Our experience shows that most of the time the kids will want to find a better way. If a child has been placed with us because he has continually used violence to get him out of a situation successfully, we can usually show him that by asking for what he wants and using problem solving skills will also get him out of the same situation AND it will not cause him to hurt themselves or others."

Many of the youths at Ettie Lee Youth & Family Services have had a history of being in and out of different living situations – other than their family homes. At Ettie Lee we want them to be out of the system. We want them to achieve their goals – first of which is usually going home. Commitment is required on the part of the youth. They must agree that there might be better way to behave...a better way to react. A way that won't make people mad at them all the time.

Then the staff at Ettie Lee teaches the skills, motivates and offers encouragement. It's practice, practice, and more practice. When a situation arises that calls for restraint the professional staff coaches and encourages problem solving vs. anger. Staff gives A LOT of positive feedback. "It's been shown that if a child receives four times more positive feedback than negative feedback they will change their behavior," states Gieselman. "If they revert to behaviors that hurt themselves or others natural consequences are put in place. If a child punches a hole in a wall, for instance, he will help to repair it," says Gieselman.

Many of the boys at Ettie Lee do not know how to be in a bad situation without making it worse. Brad (not his real name) only knew how to express his anger through fighting—and this, of course, got him into trouble. Working with the Ettie Lee staff, Brad has been learning to ask for what he wants and to regulate his emotions, which allows him to calm down before acting out. Brad has been practicing.

What about hearing the word "no." Most of the boys have a hard time with

See **SPOTLIGHT ON** page 5

*\*In clinical terms, the approach that is being used is called Dialectical Behavior Therapy (DBT). DBT was originally developed by Marsha Linehan, PhD at the University of Washington to treat severe, suicidal borderline personality disordered clients. It is now demonstrating success with other difficult to treat populations including adolescents and substance abusers. The model is especially effective for those who have highly reactive emotions that lead to impulsive, destructive behaviors and chaotic relationships. For more information on DBT, please contact Patty Gieselman at patty\_g@ettielee.org.*

# Lives We Are Working To Change

Jadon (*not his real name*), 13, was introduced to Ettie Lee by the Los Angeles Probation Department several months ago. He had been smoking marijuana, was argumentative, unwilling to comply with the rules, verbally defiant, and lacked much of his self-esteem. A run-away risk, who did not like going to school, he was just barely maintaining a C average. He did attempt to run away from his Ettie Lee Home, but fortunately the staff caught him just before his second leg went out the window!

While at Ettie Lee he has been attending drug and alcohol classes as well as both individual and family behavior therapy sessions. He is working on being a leader, not a follower and has vowed to be the best in the program so that he can go home on his court date. It has been very difficult, however, for both him and his family to be compliant with the Ettie Lee rules. Just last week, his family brought him some clothes that are not allowed in an Ettie Lee home because they represent gang attire. Reluctantly, the family took the clothes home. But the very next week his family brought him the clothes again and hid them so Jadon could retrieve them after their visit. Soon after, during a room check the clothes were found.

Since his time with us, however, Jadon has become more and more self-sufficient and he has dramatically improved in school. The professional staff at Ettie Lee is quick to give Jadon small rewards and much praise for his good behavior. Additionally since he has worked so hard to get his grades up in school one of his instructors has offered him a challenge — keep your grades up and he will take him and his friends out for a graduation dinner with the school principal. It's too soon to know if Jadon will be able to achieve this, but we sure are rooting for him here at Ettie Lee.

Another young man, Donovan (*not his real name*), 14, is also making some very positive life changes. He came to Ettie Lee because of his gang affiliations and repeated drug abuse. He did not

want to be there and made that very clear.

At first he would not even admit that he had a problem with drugs and alcohol, nor did he intend on removing the tattoos from his neck even though it was court ordered. A positive drug test confirmed that he

**“Jadon has become more and more self-sufficient and he has dramatically improved in school.”**

was still using drugs behind closed doors. At this point, when he realized how sad his mom would be that he would not be going home for the weekend, he decided to start making some positive changes. He finally realized how much pain he was causing himself and others.

With the encouragement of the professional staff and gang specialist at Ettie Lee he has agreed to get his tattoos removed. And, for the past several months, he has been seriously working on his recovery and has stayed drug free. When he leaves Ettie Lee he wants to move away from his old neighborhood and go back to school. Donovan's life has sure changed!

## Commemorative Giving

Consider a commemorative gift to support Ettie Lee's programs and services in memory of an individual or as a remembrance to mark a special occasion (weddings, birthdays, graduations, thank you and others).

In return for your generosity to Ettie Lee, we will send a thoughtful acknowledgement to the family or person you are recognizing. Your gifts are important and appreciated.

For information or to make a commemorative gift contact: Vicki Mastro at Ettie Lee Youth & Family Services, 626-960-4861 or e-mail [Vicki\\_m@ettielee.org](mailto:Vicki_m@ettielee.org). You can visit us online at [www.ettielee.org](http://www.ettielee.org) and see how we are saving lives, changing lives and building hope in the children, and families we serve.



On behalf of the children at



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Youth & Family Services

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## \*7th Annual Golf Tournament Donors



gratefully acknowledges all our donors. If your name is inadvertently missing or misspelled, please call Vicki Mastro at 626-960-4861 so that we can make a correction in our next newsletter.

Donations included are from October 1, 2006 – December 31, 2006

# Ettie Lee's Golf Tournament at South Hills Country Club on October 30, 2006



L-r: Ettie Lee President & CEO Clayton Downey and Ettie Lee Board Treasurer Jim Smith as they finish lunch and resume greeting players on course.

L-r: Actor and Tournament Master of Ceremonies Neal McDonough, Tournament Chairman and EL Vice Chair Lou Fisher and EL Board Chair Ron Bateman join Linda Brandes as she presents Ettie Lee with a \$200K check.

**T**he 7th Annual Ettie Lee Youth & Family Services Golf Tournament was a huge success. This year we grossed over \$93,000 which is a record! Thank you to our sponsors.

### Title

Linda Brandes Foundation

### Platinum

American Energy Operations

### Gold

Brandon V. Cuccia, DDS  
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Naked Juice  
Smith and Bonds Accountancy Corp.



Golfers wonder if a talented (and lucky) golfer would go home with \$5000 hole in one prize. Unfortunately, none of our golfers did. Maybe next year!

## SPOTLIGHT ON *Continued from page 2*

that word. The word brings out such anxiousness in the boys because they see it as something being taken away. Here's where they are coached to "kick in" the skills he has been learning. In this case it might be deep breathing. More practice.

Anger is the primary emotion of boys. So the Ettie Lee professionals spend a lot of time reinforcing positive ways to deal with their anger. They are taught how to replace their initial destructive behavior with a positive replacement behavior. More practice.

The boys are being taught how to stay focused. They learn how to tolerate the situation they are in. For instance, many of the boys do not believe they should be at Ettie Lee. But they are taught how to deal with their current situation, and then coached to make the best of it. More practice.

For the boys to become completely successful, Ettie Lee also brings in the youth's family. This way the whole

family learns the skills along with their kids. This way the whole family has the same language and skills. And, like other families, they often need help in problem solving. It's key is to help the family learn some ways to work with their own emotions. "This is truly the most exciting and effective program I have been a part of in my 20 years in this field," states Gieselman, "And I know that we are truly turning the cycle around."

Ettie Lee is one of few agencies in Southern California who have implemented this approach for adolescents and are having great success. Since starting to use this approach in 2003, Ettie Lee has reduced runaways by 27%, suicide attempts by 67%, police involvement by 40%, peer to peer violence by 20%, peer/staff violence by 51%, and 45% fewer instances of property destruction. Additionally the number of family contacts is up 51% and staff turnover is down 28%.

## TO ALASKA *Continued from page 1*

the skills that will make him a productive member of society as he gets older.

Alaska was cold—no freezing—but Daniel didn't even notice. He was so excited to be there! And, he could not have gotten there if it weren't for his determination and the support of his Ettie Lee family and the community.

When Saturday finally arrived Daniel and his team were ready to take on the Alaskans. All of their hard work paid off. Daniel's team outscored the Alaskans and captured the Capital City Classic boys basketball title. "The thing we focused on was trusting each other and having faith in each other," Coach said. "That's part of why we're here. We're not just here to compete, we're getting ready for our league...It's a very special group of players."

Congratulations to Daniel and his team!

# CALIFORNIA UTAH WOMEN &



**ETTIE LEE**  
Youth & Family Services

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at the

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Trista Eastland @ 310-268-1234

*Proceeds will benefit Ettie Lee Youth & Family Services*



Our Friends at Denny's Restaurant with just a few of the gifts that they collected during the holiday season for the youths we serve. Denny's had trees in their restaurants that were decorated with hundreds of ornaments that contained the wishes of our kids. Denny's patrons then pulled off one (or more) of the ornaments shopped for the gift(s) and brought them back to Denny's. Thank You!

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