



*Helping to Understand, Develop, and Stimulate the Minds of Our Youth.*

120-55 Queens Blvd. | Room G-5 | Kew Gardens, NY 11415

September 15, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

The Misunderstood Youth Development Center's (MYDC) mission is to create various individual, peer, and family oriented programs which will help youth develop their self-expression while *Helping to Understand, Develop and Stimulate the Minds of Our Youth*. One of the initiatives at MYDC is our Fresh Start Program. Fresh Start is a prevention/intervention program that provides services to youth ages 14 – 19 that are at risk, misunderstood, and who have been arrested, charged and have plead guilty to a low level felony crime. The purpose of this program is to reduce crime and recidivism rates while increasing self-awareness/self-esteem, junior high and high school graduation rates, leadership qualities, community involvement, etc. We achieve this through four components of individual and group counseling, social development, life skills, and community service. Currently, through a partnership with the Queen's District Attorney's Office, participants are identified and engaged in a series of anti-crime, life skills and leadership training for a minimum of 12 months. They also receive therapeutic activities, job readiness, financial literacy and college preparation to prepare them for life after they complete the program. Should they complete the program successfully their criminal records are sealed and dismissed.

In 2010 and 2011, MYDC brought a number of youth groups from the Fresh Start Program to participate in a one day EAP (equine assisted psychotherapy) group therapy session with the facilitation team and horses at Spring Reins of Hope (later to become Spring Reins of Life) in New Jersey. While funding only allotted for several one-time visits, the transformations that were witnessed as a result of the session were amazing. The positive reinforcement of healthy behavior from the participants being able to interact and build trust with the horses was visible after a very short period of time. We recommend Spring Reins of Life (SROL) wholeheartedly! Their team, the horses and the protocol are all geared towards helping defiant youth find new, healthier ways of solving problems and achieving goals. MYDC continues to partner with SROL as both organizations continue to seek funding for equestrian therapy so that we can continue to send youth to the farm for more EAP services. In our eyes it is an experiential and effective intervention for issues such as manipulation, lying, bullying, cheating and violence. By finding alternative behaviors with the horses, it allows for teens to do the same in their own lives.

Thank you for your interest to explore EAP for at risk youth populations, you will be in good hands with the team at Spring Reins of Life.

Please contact me if you have any questions or would like more details.

Sincerely,

Terryl E. De Mendonca  
Founder / Executive Director