

# Program succeeds by saying Y.E.S. to drugs and alcohol

KINGMAN – The Mohave County Probation Department and Mohave Mental Health have partnered in the Y.E.S. (Youth Enjoying Sobriety) program to assist juveniles with substance abuse problems to achieve and maintain sobriety.

Probation Operations Supervisor Bridget Albin oversees all treatment programs, including Y.E.S., and treatment providers as well as community restitution for Mohave County juvenile and adult services.

“Y.E.S. is a partnership with the Mohave Mental Health Clinic,” Albin said. “They supply the therapy, we supply the housing. We have one wing of our detention center that houses up to eight juveniles at a time. Y.E.S. is a coed program that focuses on substance abuse, prevention, education and intervention.”

The written mission of the program is to: “Treat substance abuse and addictive behaviors surrounding drugs and/or alcohol in youth; Build stability and communication in families with youth having drug and/or addictive behaviors; Educate youth in healthy lifestyles without drugs and alcohol; Educate families in healthy lifestyles without drugs and alcohol.”

Young people with problems are not immediately placed into the Y.E.S. program.

“All of our probation officers throughout the county are aware of the program,” Albin said. “Prior to being placed in the program, juveniles can attend outpatient therapy and substance abuse education, which starts out once a



Bridget Albin

week for an hour or two at a time. If he or she is testing positive for drugs and the substance abuse education doesn't seem to be working, we bump that person up to the next step which is the intensive outpatient program. That increases the therapy to two hours per day, three days per week and includes family counseling. If problems continue..." positive drug tests, criminal behavior due to drugs or alcohol, "we see the signs and make a referral to the Y.E.S. program."

The child and family team meetings then "involve parents, the family specialist from Mohave Mental Health, a probation officer and pretty much everyone we want to be involved in that process to intervene with that juvenile," she said. "We look at a

multitude of things including where that youth is in school and, sometimes, psychological-educational evaluations are completed. When we decide to place someone in the Y.E.S. program, we usually put them in detention first.”

That will give the youth a couple of days to “dry out.” They need that time to become sober and able to accept the program because, “if we brought them in high, it wouldn’t be any good for the other kids in the program,” Albin said. “Although they are housed in detention, they are not considered detained individuals. They are allowed out to go to AA (Alcoholics Anonymous) meetings and recreational activities. We take them to the park and bowling to show them the positive things they can do in the community without having to use drugs or alcohol.”

Treatment at Y.E.S. is “the beginning of a new and healthier way of life,” according to the programs literature. “All youth have the ability and deserve the opportunity to change; All youth have value and contribute to the recovery process and the community; All youth are different and have different needs; Education and knowledge build confidence; Family involvement and support are paramount in the recovery process.”

“We always try to do the outpatient first,” Albin said. “We give the entire family as much support as we can. If parents are using drugs or alcohol, our chances of success diminish. In those cases, we do separate them and bring the youth into the Y.E.S. program where the parents are also part of the process. Parents will have their own group session while the kids are involved in their treatment. Then we bring the kids and families together. One week, the parents can talk to the juveniles about how it was to deal with them when they were high; if a kid was stealing from them, how that impacts other family members. The next week, the kids get to tell the parents what they have had a hard time with. It can get gut-wrenching.”

Albin also supervises community restitution.

“Restitution is if there was a victim in the case with monetary loss, they have to pay that back,” she said. “With community restitution, they basically pay back the community for the cost of what they have done through work service. This is a voluntary service commitment the judge orders at the time of their sentencing. We have had people who have had 50 hours up to 800 hours that they have to complete during their term of probation. They work cleanups, clearing trails in the Hualapais; they have worked with the BLM (Bureau of Land Management), Bullhead City, Davis Dam and many non-profits.”

Last year, juvenile community restitution completed 28,975.9 hours of service that, at the Arizona minimum wage, would have cost \$195,580.58. Adult community restitution completed 56,332.45 hours which, at the same wage, would have cost \$380,244.04. That’s a total of \$575,824.62 worth of donated services to the community.

“Y.E.S. clients also participate in community restitution,” Albin said. “Our success rate is about 50 percent, which is actually higher than most residential treatment centers across the country.”

Albin extolled the virtues of the partnership with Mohave Mental Health Clinic.

“Before this program, we had no options to deal with these problems locally,” she said. “This partnership was a great option. Mohave Mental Health is a private, non-profit agency licensed through the Arizona Department of Behavioral Health Services. They have offices in Kingman, Bullhead City and Lake Havasu City. Services are available to

all Mohave County Probation juveniles, although the Y.E.S. program is administered in Kingman at the Juvenile Detention Center.”

Right now, she said, there are five males and one female in the Y.E.S. program.

“We always have more males on probation than females,” she said. Although the boys sleep in a different area than the girls, the coed program brings them together to “interact with each other in sobriety. Some of these kids are just learning to deal with peers and adults in an appropriate manner.”

Rules and discipline are important factors in the Y.E.S. program.

“It’s paramilitary style,” she said. “It’s not a boot camp, but we have some aspects of that. The youths march wherever they go. They stand at attention. They have footlockers and must fold their clothes and make their beds in certain ways. They have the structure and intensity of a boot camp as well as the high expectations of what we want from them.”

When the program was formed more than five years ago, “Probation Officer John Crabtree, Probation Officer Girlie Forman, Assistant Chief Probation Officer Al Rosen and Mohave Mental Health all decided to get together. We liked the boot camp aspect of the former SHOCK program, but we wanted to make it residential to pool our resources. Partnering was the only way we could do it.”

The program targets youths age 14 and up to their 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

“We generally start them at 14 because of the need for some maturity,” Albin said. “Marijuana and alcohol are the biggest problems because they can get it at home. Obviously, methamphetamine is a wide-spread problem in our communities, but the problems associated with meth-use may be beyond what we can work with in our program. The negative impacts of meth on their emotional growth, understanding and cognitive abilities is tremendous. We try to get to youths with substance abuse problems as early as possible because, by the time they go on to meth and other drugs, it may be too late.”

Although the battle against drug and alcohol abuse in youths is an uphill battle, the 50 percent success rate has an impact on the local communities and individual lives.

“We have had kids come back after a period of time and tell us that what they learned in the program truly helped them,” Albin said. “This working partnership with Mohave Mental Health has been a great option that has been successful from the start.”