

Teen Challenge Update

December 2007

Letter from the Regional Director



This has been a year full of changes at Teen Challenge of the Midlands! As I write this letter, there are almost 60 men in our intensive 12-month discipleship program. The new Pella Women's Center is up and running, and we've purchased the home next to our Des Moines Admissions Center and both buildings are in the middle of a makeover! Probably the most talked about change was the merger of our Midlands Teen Challenge ministry with Teen Challenge of Florida/Georgia. Part of the merger was a relocation for Gay and I to Jacksonville, FL! If anybody had told me in January that all of this would take place in 2007, I would have crossed my eyes!

Thankfully, the GREATEST change that has taken place at Teen Challenge this year has been in the lives of students that have come our way! After 13 years in Teen Challenge ministry, I am still shocked by the horrible consequences of our rebellious choices. Our students arrive at Teen Challenge physically wracked, and carrying the heavy weight of years of guilt. And then it happens - God begins to chip away at all the layers of hurt and we see real, lasting CHANGE take place!

Thank you for making it possible to offer real CHANGE in Christ to the hurting people God brings across our paths. As you enjoy the Christmas celebration, please remember our students in prayer. Believe with all of us for the MIRACLE of Christ's birth to become real in their hearts!

On behalf of our entire Teen Challenge family, Merry Christmas and best wishes for a blessed New Year!

In the Lord's service,

TC Publications

Starting this January, each of our Midlands centers will begin sending out their own monthly publications. We are excited for this change as it will allow our different centers to share their individual experiences, events, and needs. We will divide our mailing list among the centers based on physical location, unless you specify otherwise. Also, please let us know if you would like to receive more than one center's newsletter. Thank you for your patience as we make this transition!

CONTACT INFORMATION

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Set Free: A Testimony of God's Saving Grace

On August 22, 2006 I began a new journey in life when I walked onto a piece of holy ground known as Teen Challenge in Colfax, Iowa. My life had reached the point where I was completely without focus. In my mind, any reason for living was gone.

In less than two years, I had literally destroyed my life with the use of crack cocaine. My career had been at an all time high. My wife and I were both active in our church; I served as a small group leader and teacher. We were also both active in the community. I had served as a school board member, president of our country club, and was involved in various other civic events. Around 2004 I started to use cocaine. There was a deep hole within my soul, and I tried to hide it with professional success and praise from the community. I even tried to work my way into Christ's grace. There was this image I had to fulfill, and I could never be honest with people about what was really going on inside of me. My life was taken over by panic attacks and flashbacks. Crack cocaine filled this void. It was magic, but oh the price I paid because of my pride and unwillingness to reach out for help.

When I arrived at Teen Challenge I was divorced, estranged from my three sons, unemployed, and bankrupt. Through immersing myself into a program called ChristLife, I was able to grieve and heal. I also learned that I could trust other men with my deepest insecurities. Teen Challenge helped me give up things that I thought were important and learn to focus on what really is important: to be a disciple of the Lord. I finally understood that the hole in my heart could never be filled with activities, but only through the blood of Christ.

In June, 2007 my time at Colfax was over and it was time for me to move into another phase of my discipleship training at the Omaha Re-entry Center. I was full of expectations and looking for-

ward to new freedoms and a new career. For several months I had been praying for God to make His will known to me and to make it very clear as to what He had planned for me. The last thing on my mind was difficulty finding a job. However, God does indeed have a way of getting us where He

wants us to be. For almost two months I searched for a job every day; but to no avail. How could this be? I was an honors graduate with a double major, and I have over thirty years of work experience. My self-esteem was continuing to go down until one day, caught in a torrential thunderstorm, I yelled to God that, "Enough is enough. If you want me to leave Omaha I will do so. I can't take it anymore." The next morning was a turning

point as I went to the Lord with a truly contrite heart and told Him I would do whatever He wanted me to do. The next day I was offered a job and in the next week I had three other job offers. I was given a job that I really like and where I am good at what I do.

Re-entry has been a critical phase of my development. It is the place that we take everything we have learned and put it into practice in real life. This phase is difficult, but also very fulfilling. You have more freedoms, but also by the very nature of differing personalities, more opportunity for conflict, which equates to more opportunities for growth. As I write this, I am winding down to the end of my time as a Teen Challenge student, but not my relationship with Teen Challenge. My plans are to continue in the ministry of Teen Challenge and be a part of the center in Colfax. My dream is to continue to grow in my relationship with Christ and to help men avoid the pain that I have had to experience.

Thank you Teen Challenge for believing in me when I couldn't and helping me understand that God's time table is not defined by earthly standards. Regardless of age, God still has a purpose for our lives.

