

# *Best of the* NETWORKER

## Feature Articles from Past Issues

The Northwest Youth Networker; newsletter of the [Northwest Network for Youth](#), edited by [Jerry Fest](#) of the [InterNetwork for Youth](#)

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**MAY 2008, Issues 1-3**

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### **NEW NETWORK NEWSLETTER FORMAT by Gary Hammons**

Welcome to the new Northwest Network for Youth newsletter. Our plan is to publish it weekly with this totally new look. With abstracts of articles and links to sources, along with a state by state news focus, we hope to provide you with an efficient way to remain current with youth services in your state and with national developments. We look forward to your feedback, suggestions for topics for future additions, and hope you use it as a tool for networking with other agencies and programs.



Some of you have observed that the “ConneXion” newsletter has not been published for several months. Also, our spring conferences on Runaway and Homeless Youth categories were not held this year. This is a direct consequence of Federal funding for RHY Training and Technical Assistance being redirected to a single agency, the University of Oklahoma. Meanwhile, we have been funded for an additional year to focus on capacity building for new Mentoring Children of Prisoners grantees. This has had major impact and we have been caught up in the new program to such an extent that little energy has been available for the original NWNKY mission and purpose. However, we are now working toward a revamped network that incorporates the interests of RHY with other youth serving programs. We expect this will include foster care, Chafee Independent Living, juvenile justice, school completion/homeless education, and mental health/addictions. The emphasis on progressive youth development will continue; and, hopefully, will be part of our impact on the entire range of youth serving organizations.

Thank you for being part of the Northwest Network for Youth as we move into an exciting new future!

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### **PROGRESSIVE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT: By Gary Hammons**

I was pleasantly surprised by the emphasis on “Positive Youth Development” as I assumed the position of Executive Director of NWNKY. However, the semanticist and contrarian in me was/is troubled by the term. My sense is that all youth development is positive and the term is redundant at best. Also, can there be “Negative” Youth Development? The only ways I have noted negative youth development have been in juvenile justice and my many years as a special education administrator. Punishment without equal or greater support for rehabilitation and positive redirection is a guarantee of further offending; and schools, way too often, impact young people negatively.

I have also noted that many professionals simply use the term “Youth Development” -- perhaps subconsciously, to circumvent its otherwise awkward context. Thus, I propose and plan to substitute “progressive” for “positive” in the future. To me, this best describes the intent as it relates to youth serving organizations and endeavors. As a dynamic effort to accelerate or compensate for prior mistreatment or other negative impacts on young people, *progressive* youth development is a much better descriptor. Further, it emphasizes a strengths based model better than the former term.

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## OP-ED: SHOULD ADULTS BE TRIED AS YOUNG PEOPLE?

By Jerry Fest

No, that's not a typo in the title. I intentionally asked this question to point out that the assertion is, on its face, absurd. Of course adults should not be tried as young people. While most criminal behavior shows a lack of maturity and disregards the responsibilities and obligations that we as adults have to each other and to our communities, the fact is that adults are adults. No matter how 'childish' their behavior may seem, it does not alter the fact that they are not children.

But that's not my point. My point is that the mirror of this question -- should young people be tried as adults -- is equally absurd. Just as adults are not young people, young people are not adults; physically, emotionally or developmentally. New research into brain development documents that certain parts of a young person's brain - - specifically the prefrontal cortex, responsible for 'executive functions' such as organizing, setting priorities, strategizing, and controlling impulses -- are not fully developed until early adulthood. No matter how 'adult' a behavior may seem, the fact is not altered that a young person is not an adult. If justice is to be served, this fact cannot be overlooked.