

Looking Glass heads off runaways

By DAGMAR OBEREIGNER
Of the Emerald

Youth counseling offered

Lane County teenagers — the ones with no job or activity to keep them from standing on street corners, the potential runaways and juvenile delinquents — are the reason for Looking Glass.

Looking Glass Family Crisis Intervention Center Inc., of Eugene, is staffed by professionals and volunteers who work with young people in two major programs, a residential crisis intervention and counseling center and their Youth Outreach program.

The counseling center handles problem calls and does individual and family counseling 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Staffers deal with parents who cannot communicate with their sons or daughters, the runaway, actual or potential, and the "throwaway," a child given up on by parents.

Preventive counseling is becoming more frequent, and young people come in before they run, says Jim Forbes, director of Looking Glass. "It's better for a family to receive counseling at earlier

stages of the problem," he says.

The center also houses youth between the ages of 13 and 17, with parental and legal consent, and gets referrals from the Lane County Juvenile Dept. and the Children's Services Division.

Youths from foster homes that didn't work out are also taken in. Young people on their own are helped with job resumes and are taught living skills to use in day-to-day life.

A second program, the Youth Outreach or Community Youth Worker Program, deals with youths in their environment. Workers go to schools and streets to meet the neighborhood young people. The workers act as resource persons, providing job referrals and informal counseling.

Youth needs are assessed and the young people meet with legislators and have a direct voice in advising the Looking Glass director.

Outreach is one of the few programs which actually keeps a

Youth Advisory Board, says Jeff Budd, creator of the Eugene Outreach program. A youth service organization without youth as decision-makers is "like a woman's commission with no women on it," he says. Budd stresses working with youth, rather than for them. We're trying to be honest and have youth input," he says.

The Outreach program got its start when Budd, who'd been a counselor for Looking Glass, realized that some young people avoid agencies. Budd started working with youth who congregated in the Eugene Mall area.

Community Development funding has since been used to place an outreach worker in the West-side neighborhood. Workers also operate in the Whiteaker neighborhood, the Willamette Street "cruising area," and in Springfield.

Budd is optimistic about the Eugene program, and says that while in Dayton, Ohio, where he's also worked with outreach, the most he could do was "help the kids survive." In Eugene, he says, there's a chance of making some changes.

Robin Emmens, a client service worker, says she also feels fortunate to be working in Eugene. She stressed the importance of the outreach program to the shelter home, saying that often because of Outreach, youth problems are prevented.

"The two programs work hand in hand," Forbes says. "We're there as a resource. We're not there to 'save' the children, or to protect them from reality. We can get them involved in activities and with a variety of services."

Outreach uses "counseling volunteers" in the shelter home in addition to the client service workers. They work a dedicated 20 hours per week with the youth in residence, and sometimes handle crisis calls. Recreation volunteers work with the youth 12 hours a week. Persons interested in volunteering should call Don Eliason at 696-2688.

Looking Glass currently receives \$250,000 for all its activities, and Forbes says the increased funding is the main



Graphic by Tom Ettel

Eugene's Looking Glass houses youths between the ages of 13 and 17 and seeks through counseling to prevent some of Lane County's over 1,000 runaway cases before they happen.

reason they have been able to "fine tune" the program. A large portion of the funds comes from the Youth Development Bureau and the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration.

It was not always this way. At its inception in 1970, Looking Glass had a \$3,000 budget, which paid for food and utilities. Short-term crisis intervention services geared toward getting the family unit back together were offered by the all volunteer staff.

The idea for the program was offered by a 17-year-old runaway, who had been in foster and group homes, and was searching for a

new alternative for the runaway. Under the present system, the runaway had a choice of going through the juvenile justice system or returning home, says Forbes.

The problems the center handled were also different in scope, Forbes says. Families usually did not become involved until after their sons or daughters ran away, and youths who had been on the run from one day to three months would come in to the center.

Lane County had, and has, a significant runaway problem. The

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