

Youth Commission tries to aid violent delinquents

By JILL GOLDEN
Reporter

Texas juveniles who habitually break the law or who commit violent crimes can not be sent to prison because they're not adults. They can, however, be sent to the Texas Youth Commission for rehabilitation by county juvenile judges.

The TYC, formed in 1957 by the state legislature, is the juvenile corrections system for the state. "Only 3 percent of all juveniles are committed to the commission," said Joan Timmons, information specialist at the TYC. "The kids who are sent here are the ones who committed bad crimes such as murder or rape." The TYC is a last resort for juveniles with serious problems.

The majority of juveniles, age 10 to 17, are helped at the county level by probation departments.

The first offender is usually given a warning or put on a 6 month probation in the custody of his parents, says Dana Love, a Brazos County probation officer. If the juvenile doesn't get into trouble during his probation, his charges, which were pending, are dropped.

isn't doing well there, the judge may send him to a local detention center or to a private residential treatment center. Love said.

Brazos County is building a detention center, to be completed soon, because a new state law says that juveniles can no longer be kept in adult jail facilities.

"Children should not be housed with adult criminals because it is detrimental to them," Love said.

If rehabilitation at the county level does not help the juvenile, the judge may find it necessary

to commit him to the TYC, Love said.

The TYC system, which operates with state funding, includes: five delinquent institutions, seven halfway houses, two camping programs, several group and foster homes, and a treatment center for dependent or neglected youth who need psychiatric help.

The county judge's recommendations and the seriousness of the crime the juvenile committed determine what level he will be placed in the TYC, Love said. Once committed into the program, the juvenile is sent to Brownwood Reception Center

in Brownwood, for evaluation, Love said. When testing is through and a treatment plan has been developed for the juvenile, he is put in the best place that will meet his needs, Love said.

Juveniles placed in any of the TYC programs take part in community vocational programs, go to school and receive group counseling, Timmons said.

There is no set sentence for these juveniles unless they have committed a violent crime, Timmons said. That juvenile must remain in an institution for a minimum of one year, she said. Juveniles who commit murder, capital murder, or vol-

untary manslaughter must remain for a minimum of two years. Juveniles who have committed violent crimes are sent to the Giddings State School, the most secure facility.

When the commission thinks the juvenile is rehabilitated, he is released into the custody of his parents and put on parole until he is 18, Timmons said. Parole stops when a juvenile becomes a legal adult and then the TYC no longer is involved with the case, Timmons said.

About 35 percent of the juveniles released from a TYC program go on to commit other crimes and are sent to prison, Timmons said.

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Boys Club members have fun, learn skills

By JILL GOLDEN
Reporter

At the Boys Club in Bryan,

boys ages 7 to 18 have fun, learn new skills and make friends.

"The boys come here to find a place to enjoy themselves, be with their friends, and participate in different activities," says J.T. Ayers, director of the Boys Clubs of Brazos County. "The Boys Club gives boys additional guidance and encouragement that will make them better adults."

Membership has grown from 400 boys when the club opened in 1959 to 1,700.

The Club's low membership fees are one reason for that growth: \$2 a year for boys ages 7 to 10, \$4 for 11 to 13 year-olds, and \$6 for 14 to 18 year-

olds. Low fees insure that every boy who wants to join the club can, said Social Director George Meeks.

Although 18 year-olds rarely join, those who do usually work as volunteers by coaching basketball or supervising some other activity, Meeks said.

The typical member is 10 years old, black, and his family is in a lower-income bracket. Sixty-five percent of the boys come from single parent homes.

Boys can participate in a variety of organized activities including woodshop and welding

classes, sports tournaments, game room tournaments, computer and reading classes, the library, all designed to teach them some skill, Meeks said.

The sports and game room activities are the most popular, but the other activities also are successful, Meeks said. The classes are taught by nine full and part-time supervisors, and by community volunteers.

The Boys Club operates on community donations and receives about 40 percent of funding from the Brazos County United Way.

Sheltering Arms refuge called a 'home of love'

By LORRAINE CHRISTIAN
Reporter

Sheltering Arms is a refuge for abandoned, abused and severely neglected children, Peggy Shafer, director of the shelter said.

Sheltering Arms, an emergency shelter for children 18 and younger, serves an eight county radius. It's for children who are under the protective custody of the courts. Shafer said if it wasn't for the shelter, the children would be put in jail for "safe keeping" until a permanent home could be found.

Instead, she said, they are brought to the shelter, which is funded through Twin City Missions, private contributions and a contract from the Department of Human Resources.

The shelter lets life go on as normally as possible for the children, she said. She said the children, who live in the two story home, go to skating rinks, to movies, to libraries, to parks and to school. At the shelter, the children have the choice of playing indoors on the video games or outdoors on the basketball court, she said. Shafer said volunteers and houseparents take care of the children.

Shafer said she couldn't stress the importance of the houseparents. They cook, clean and love the children, she said.

"Hugs and praises are used to show God's love," she said. "We don't want the children to get warehoused," she added.

The address and phone number of this home of love kept quiet so the parents could both the children, she said. In some cases, however, the parents are allowed to see the children in a neutral place.

Presently, four children live at the home, Shafer said. The home could hold 13.

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