



SANDY GARRETT
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
STATE OF OKLAHOMA

January 3, 2008

Dear Superintendents, Principals and Counselors;

Please allow me to inform you of a great program in Oklahoma which can help us reach our goal of an educated Oklahoma. I know our teachers, counselors, and staff members are dedicated, passionate, and work hard throughout the year to provide a quality education to Oklahoma's youth. However, with an average annual dropout rate of approximately 4,000 youth, some youth are more difficult to reach than others.

The Thunderbird Youth Academy's primary mission is to intervene in the lives of at-risk youth, specifically 16- to 18-year-old high school dropouts. Part of a national Youth Challenge Program coordinated by the National Guard Bureau in Washington, D.C., Thunderbird Youth Academy (TYA) is open to youth throughout Oklahoma and is free to all families regardless of income. Using a military academy style approach which instills self-discipline and accountability, TYA provides youth the opportunity to gain control over their lives by increasing academic performance, improving self-esteem, and teaching essential life skills. This whole person approach enables graduates to compete in the work place and manage a healthy family environment. To date, TYA has helped over 2,500 Oklahoma teens.

Oklahoma's Youth Challenge program, awarded the honor of 2006 All Around Program nationwide, has made continuous improvements and enhancements, keeping the Academy in the lead of Oklahoma's youth-serving organizations. TYA offers two classes per year, which begin in January and July. The program consists of a five-month residential phase at the Whitaker Education Training Center in Pryor, Oklahoma, and a 12-month community-based post-residential phase.

I believe the Thunderbird Youth Academy may be the ideal option for some Oklahoma youth struggling with traditional and alternative high school. I strongly encourage you to take the time to meet with a TYA recruiter, learn about the program, and how they can help you help today's young people get their lives back on track.

To learn more about the Thunderbird Youth Academy, visit their Web site www.ngycp.org/state/ok or contact Mrs. Sara Jordan, at (918) 824-4832, to arrange a meeting for your counseling staff with the regional TYA recruiter. Working together, we can save Oklahoma's at-risk youth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sandy".
Sandy Garrett
State Superintendent

SG:dm

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