

# RITE OF PASSAGE

*Dedicated to improving the lives of youth*



## FEMALE STRONG: 15 Years of Girl Power

### **Executive Message**

Leadership's commitment to empowering girls

### **Best of the Year**

Acknowledging the hard work and dedication it takes to change lives

### **New Programs Launched**

Announcing ROP's newest gender-specific programs



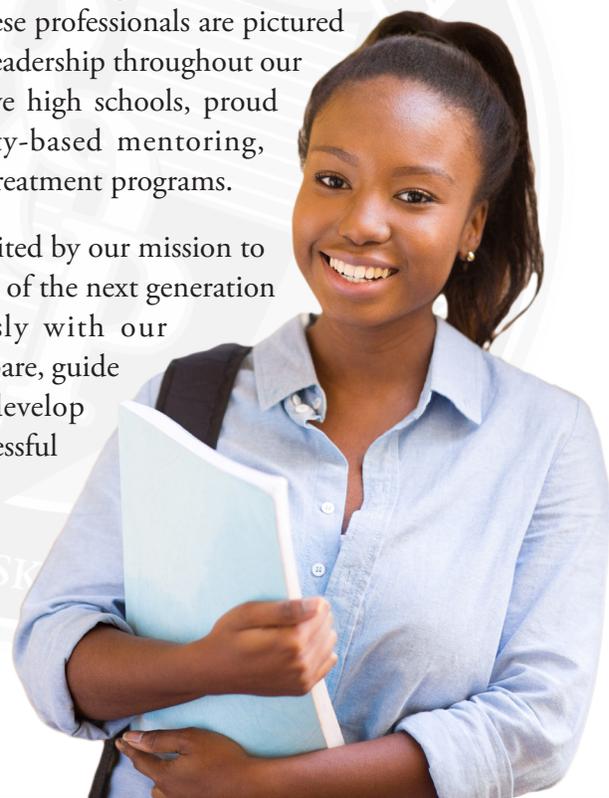


# STRONG WOMEN, STRONG GIRLS

In recognition of our 15 years of work with female youth, I am proud to dedicate this year's magazine to the young women served in our family of programs as well as our staff, stakeholders and students.

During my tenure at Rite of Passage, I have witnessed the organization evolve from working with an all-male student population to an agency serving both young men and women. ROP's changes were met with a concurrent influx of qualified female professionals. Today, our staff includes women who are well-respected executives, directors and managers serving as powerful role models and fierce advocates for youth. Some of these professionals are pictured in this magazine, and represent leadership throughout our agency's continuum – alternative high schools, proud parenting services, community-based mentoring, philanthropic foundations and treatment programs.

Our staff and our services are united by our mission to improve the lives and the futures of the next generation of women. We work tirelessly with our stakeholders and partners to prepare, guide and empower strong girls to develop into strong, responsible and successful women.



**Carolyn Jenkins-Bower**  
Chief Financial Officer

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Chief Financial Officer

**Catherine Gammage**  
Principal, Silver Oak Academy

**Karen Murray**  
Program Director, Robert E. DeNier Youth Services Center

**Kristi Lesley**  
Program Director, Uta Halee Academy

**Tracy Bennett Joseph**  
Director of Education

**Laura Shipman**  
Program Director, Betty K. Marler Youth Services Center

**Lisa Broman**  
Executive Director, Passageway Scholarship Foundation

**Liz Gonzalez**  
Assistant Principal, Canyon State Academy

**Marysol Medina**  
Program Manager, Proud Parenting

**Rebekah Graham**  
Program Director, Sierra Sage Academy

**Tunisia SaBrina London**  
Program Director, J. Walter Wood, Jr. Residential Treatment Facility

# New Female-Responsive Programs Open

The launch of ROP's four newest female-specific programs comes at a time when at-risk young women are becoming the fastest growing segment in the juvenile justice system, and options for females are needed across the continuum of care.

ROP's newest programs include "Proud Parenting," a community-based education and case management program in which staff work with historically under-served and vulnerable young parents with the objective of breaking the intergenerational cycle of violence and delinquency.

In addition to community-based programs, we offer a full continuum of care for young women supported by research on effective female programming. This year, we opened residential treatment programs in Nevada, Alabama and Texas which are trauma-responsive and offer therapeutic services for victims of sex trafficking. Lake Granbury, our Texas facility, has broken ground on a large-scale construction project which will provide additional classrooms and a state-of-the-art gymnasium, creating a normalized environment for our young women.

The newest programs complement our existing continuum of care, and offer strength-based and targeted services to meet the needs of our young women, their families and the community.





“ I am smart.  
I am strong.  
I can do  
anything.  
I am a girl. ”

## FEMALE STRONG: 15 Years of Girl Power

*“...Poetry brings out the inner beauty... poetry allows you to free your opinion  
Allowing you to stand up for your beliefs  
I'll fight for my freedom...”*

These lines written by Rite of Passage student Des'Trell Banks convey the spirit of our definition of “Girl Power”: to take action, make positive choices and enact change for yourself and your community. For nearly two decades, we have witnessed girl power in action with our at-risk young women who have learned to take a positive stand for their lives, futures and beliefs.

Rite of Passage instills students with a set of values and a desire for personal accomplishment which leads, in turn, to improving themselves and the lives of those around them. For example, Ms. Holland, an ROP student, was inspired to give twelve inches of her own hair to Locks of Love, an organization which provides hairpieces to disadvantaged children suffering from medical hair loss. Holland is working on her cosmetology certification and was the first hair cut demonstration for her cosmetology class. She offered her hair with the reasoning that someone else needed it more than she did. “Life has many changes,” she said, “and this is just my beginning.”

In addition to helping themselves, girls enrolled in the Rite of Passage programs serve in community events throughout the year. Students at the Betty K. Marler

Center assisted disabled veterans to navigate the busy terminals of Denver International Airport. One young woman commented that, “this was a great opportunity, listening to the veteran’s stories and helping them... This experience makes me evaluate what’s really important in my life.” This type of self-reflection and community involvement leads our graduates to a life of success and fulfillment. This year, three graduates of the Marler Center were hired into management positions within one year of their graduation.

ROP girls have participated and supported Race for the Cure by participating in a sanctioned 5k race in Nebraska. They also cooked and served dinner to families at the Ronald McDonald House and provided a helping hand to many other events specific to their community’s needs.

Recently, several of our girls from the Marler Center participated in “Crochet the Coral Reef” which asked them to knit for the sake of art and education. The program used the girls’ knitting to construct a large art installation depicting the vastness and beauty of the coral reef. This installation has been exhibited in art and science museums worldwide.

Every day, we see the girls in every one of our Rite of Passage programs take actions to improve their lives and the lives of others in their community. Whether it’s publishing a book of poetry about the pains of her past, donating her hair to cancer victims or participating in a global initiative to spread awareness about our world’s oceans, all of our ROP girls are creating a better world for themselves and others.



## Cate's Story: An Alumna Shares Her Success

After leaving home at age thirteen, Caitlin started shoplifting, taking drugs, and as she described, “the whole lifestyle that goes along with it.” Surrounding herself with the wrong kind of friends, Caitlin found herself constantly running into trouble, which ultimately led to her arrest.

Placement in the Marler Center helped Caitlin turn her life around. “Everyone there was really looking out for my best interest,” she said. During her time there, Caitlin cut off all contact with the people who had been a negative influence on her life. This was a decision stemming from advice she received from a Marler Center staff member, Terry.

Terry said: “If you want to stay successful...you have to start over with your friends.” Caitlin took her advice and after leaving the Marler Center, she steered clear of her old crowd. Caitlin found a new circle of friends, and new opportunities waiting for her.

Caitlin enrolled at Pikes Peak Community College where she earned an Associate's degree in Criminal Justice and plans to return for a Bachelor's degree in Business Administration. Caitlin now holds a realtor license, is a full-time public-service employee, has been married for five years, and has two beautiful daughters, aged one and three.

By any measure, Caitlin is leading a successful and fulfilling life. She recognizes that she cannot change the past, and is focusing on her present and on her future – success lies there. She is helping to forge positive futures for her young daughters and junior high school girls in the community by mentoring and volunteering through her church. She shares her message of finding self-confidence and learning to love yourself.

Caitlin is making a difference today by building a future for herself, her family and empowering a new generation of girls.

“Nobody can go back and start a new beginning, but anyone can start today and make a new ending.”

-Caitlin

## The Science Behind Trauma

A recent study in the *Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness* suggested that the human brain actually changes its structure based on the types of activities you engage – or, are engaged – in.<sup>1</sup>

If you learn to juggle, your visual cortex will grow to accommodate your newfound coordination. Or, if you just started medical school, your hippocampus will experience intensive growth so you can process new information efficiently. It follows, then, that trauma affects the physical structure of our brains. With as many as 75-93% of youth entering child-serving systems having experienced trauma, it's crucial that we address trauma as an emotional *and* a physical wound.<sup>2</sup>

Our research-based approach rests on the latest scientific findings which suggest that trauma-responsive care needs to be multi-modal and holistic. Most importantly, we are learning that physical exercise helps the brain rebuild itself and promotes a more positive outlook. Additionally, exercise has been proven to prevent gray matter deterioration associated with PTSD.<sup>1</sup>

ROP's programs support these evidence-based, trauma-responsive principles:

- Creating a culture of safety, respect and empowerment
- Training staff to recognize signs and symptoms of trauma (and to avoid re-traumatizing)
- Providing appropriate assessments and interventions, such as Seeking Safety curriculum
- Providing education and therapeutic support for families about traumatic stress
- Developing partnerships and collaborations between the youth and the community to sustain resiliency

At ROP, we address every aspect of our students' health and well-being to ensure they have a healthy body and mind to face opportunities and challenges.

1. Gondoh, Y., et. al. "Effects of Aerobic Exercise Training on Brain Structure and Psychological Well-being in Young Adults." *Journal of Sports Medicine and Physical Fitness* 49, no. 2 (2009): 129-35.

2. Justice Policy Institute Report (2010)

# Best of The Year at Rite of Passage

## Center of Excellence Award Recipient

Colorado Department of Education (CDE) annually recognizes schools in the State that enroll a student population of at least 75% at-risk pupils and that demonstrate the highest rating of student longitudinal growth. For the third consecutive year, CDE honored Ridge View Academy with the Center of Excellence Award for its academic outcomes within the Denver Public School District. Ridge View Academy shared this honor with five other charter schools in the State.



**Airport Volunteers**

## Airport Volunteers

With the National Disabled Veterans Winter Sports Clinic held annually in Colorado, nearly 400 disabled veterans fly into Denver International Airport (DIA) to participate in the adaptive winter sports events. DIA is known as one of the busiest and largest airports in the country, and students from the Qualifying House coordinated with DIA administration to assist the disabled veterans as they disembarked from the airplanes and navigated through the bustling airport.

## Youth Village Construction

Borrowing upon Father Flanagan's vision of creating a safe and caring village for troubled boys, ROP is designing a 21st century interpretation of this ideal on its Canyon State Academy campus. ROP's Youth Village is a community that provides nurturing programs for different youth populations. At the same time, the Youth Village concept involves the community. New construction is slated for a 600-seat church and an enterprise zone that will employ students at the on-site businesses.



## University Partners

The University of Cincinnati, School of Criminal Justice provides venues for its graduate-level students to gain practical field experience, and as a result has developed a partnership with Hillcrest Academy. Through the University's Applied Corrections course, the Hillcrest campus is available to the students as they receive instruction on case management, Motivational Interviewing and risk-need assessments. This is one of several partnerships that Hillcrest is proud to maintain with the University.



**Crescent Leadership Academy**

## New School for New Orleans

In response to public demand for the quality education of New Orleans' most disadvantaged youth, the shuttered Saint Julian Eymard School became the permanent home of the Titans of Crescent Leadership Academy. Crescent Leadership Academy is a Type 5 Charter under the authorization of the Louisiana Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). The school's 12-acre campus received over half a million dollars in improvements from Rite of Passage, prior to opening and features up-to-date classrooms and technology.

## Three Years of Proud Parenting

In the past three years, 278 young parents and about 300 children have benefited from the Proud Parenting program. The exit survey showed that parents spent more time with their child, and the school-aged parents increased school attendance as a result of the program. Rite of Passage is proud to have the opportunity to improve knowledge about parenting, enhance parent-child relationships and work to break the cycle of intergenerational delinquency.

## Maryland General Assembly

Silver Oak Academy students conducted research at the National Archives in Washington, DC on a neighboring town and its iron furnace located at the base of Maryland's Catoclin Mountains in which cannons and cannonballs were cast for George Washington's army as early as 1776. Students shared their findings with the community on the role of slave labor in the operation of the iron plant. They presented their research to the Maryland General Assembly and were awarded funding for continued support of the Catoclin Furnace Historical Society.



## Women Build

Habitat for Humanity is the world's largest non-profit homebuilder, relying on a vast network of volunteers to build affordable homes for families around the world. Over the last three years, these volunteers included the young women from the Marler Center in Colorado. Through one of Habitat's unique programs, Women Build, Marler's young women participate in all-female teams and learn construction skills and techniques — from power tools to painting — as they build homes and communities for Colorado families.



## National Athletic Award Bestowed

Each year the National Federation of State High School Associations (NFHS) recognizes a handful of outstanding high school athletic directors, awarding them for their contributions to interscholastic athletics at the local, state and national levels. After a state nomination process and approval by the NFHS Board, ROP's Athletic Director, John Dibble, was selected for this coveted award, and traveled to Washington, DC to receive national recognition with seven of his peers.

## Phoenix Youth on the Rite Path

Aligned with Juvenile Detention Alternative Initiatives (JDAI) to reduce reliance on local confinement of court-involved youth, the Arizona Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) sought alternative programs to secure detention and out-of-home placement for the juvenile probation population in Phoenix. Through a Request for Proposal process, AOC awarded a contract to Rite of Passage's Rite Path Evening Reporting Center which provides structured services and supervised activities in a community environment to male and female youth.

## Expanding to the Lone Star State

In response to Senate Bill 653 and the restructuring of the Texas Juvenile Justice Department, ROP opened Lake Granbury Youth Services in 2014 and established its first program in the State. Working in partnership with the State and County stakeholders, the 96-bed co-ed facility was acquired with plans underway to construct new classrooms and a multi-use full court gymnasium to enhance and contribute to the academic environment for assigned youth.

## Fight Human Trafficking

Human trafficking is the fastest growing global crime according to the United Nations and the U.S. Department of State. To break the cycle, cities and towns across the nation are raising awareness on human trafficking issues. In Omaha, KETV Channel 7 conducted an in-depth investigation on sex trafficking and interviewed ROP Regional Director, Mike Cantrell, at Uta Halee Academy who spoke to the mental, emotional and physical impact sex trafficking has on its victims as well as the treatment needed for recovery.



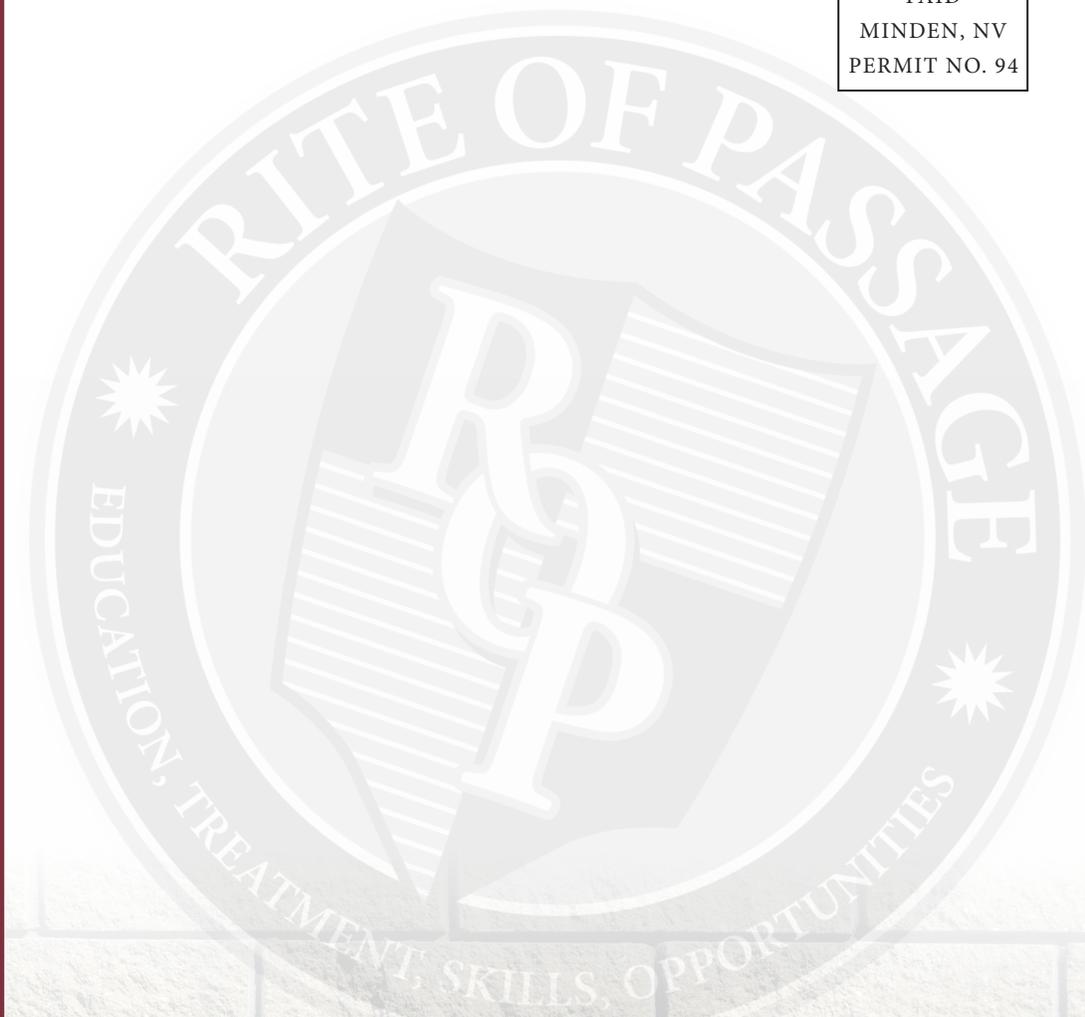
# RCP

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