



Providing A Second Chance for At-Risk Youth

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As you know VERY well, the most at-risk groups of people in the U.S. are the young people who have dropped out of high school or are at risk of doing so. This is a major problem that has affected communities throughout the country and appears to be a growing phenomenon. **The National Guard Youth Challenge is federally and state funded to provide a FREE residential program for any drop-out or struggling student regardless of family income.** We have programs in 30 states and have been providing these life saving programs for 17 years (although not many people know about us).

Grizzly Youth Academy is one of two programs in California and is located in San Luis Obispo. GYA's goal is to educate young people through a nontraditional, military structured learning environment that addresses life, leadership and academic skills, while also improving self-esteem, pride and confidence levels. GYA is a charter school funded on a 60-40 basis with federal and state funds, respectively. There is NO military commitment and the program is voluntary. It can't be court ordered.

Participants are 16 to 18 years of age and feel a responsibility to positively change their lives. Each applicant must be a U.S. citizen or legal resident and reside in California; a high school dropout, or a student not on track to graduate, chronically truant, expelled, or extremely behind in credits. Applicants must be free of substance abuse upon acceptance and be free of any serious involvement with the criminal justice system (i.e., no felony convictions). Also, an applicant must be physically and mentally capable of completing the program. This program is offered in twice a year, with classes starting every January and July. We are taking applications now for the July class, so I wanted to get this information to you in time.

Phase One is a two-week pre-challenge program in which applicants are introduced to the program, campus environment and evaluated by the GYA staff. Phase Two is a 20-week residential stay during which cadets wear uniforms, follow a daily schedule, attend classes and daily study hall. On weekends, they are involved in community service and field trips. This phase provides cadets with an educational curriculum, emotional support and physical training based on educational excellence, responsibility, citizenship, life coping skills, health and hygiene, physical fitness, leadership and community service. There is also a Job Shadowing program and many extra supports such as AA, Hospice, SARP, Tobacco Cessation, and Anger Management classes. The third phase or post-residential part of the program, consists of a one-year period following graduation from GYA. A mentor is assigned to each cadet to provide advice and assistance.

Upon completion of the residential phase, each cadet will receive 55 high school credit hours, an amount roughly equivalent to one year of high school. They typically go back to their original high school and graduate. Cadets also may opt to graduate from our Academy or receive a GED if they meet the requirements..

The GYA staff reports a 90 percent to 93 percent success rate for those cadets who complete the five-month in-residence course and the 12 month Post Residential mentoring phase. We would love to come up and give a presentation to your students. Please contact me if you would like more information.

Sincerely,

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