

NEXUS

Mark Krueger

*Child and Youth Care Learning Center
University of Wisconsin – Milwaukee*

Last Spring, I attended an award and recognition banquet for children from several community organizations and independent living programs. Children from each agency were honored for their accomplishments and contributions. Some had displayed good character and, others, creativity.

Before the ceremony, workers and children had dinner together. They sat around fifteen tables. I sat at a table with four adults and five children.

As we ate, Daphne, who was raising her own son, going to college, and working in the office at our Child and Youth Care Learning Center, asked one of the girls where she went to high school. "North" she replied with a smile.

"How about you?" Daphne asked, looking at another girl whom she did not know.

"I don't go to school," the girl smiled sheepishly.

"Why not?" Daphne said with concern and shock.

"I don't want to."

"Hasn't the school called?"

"Yes, but they stopped."

"Don't your parents make you go?"

"They don't care."

"You have to go to school, girl. I'll go talk to the workers at your agency."

"Stay out of this, you don't even know me."

"I know you enough to want you to go to school," Daphne replied.

When I witnessed this event, it reminded me of the following passage from *Reclaiming Youth at Risk*:

"In traditional Native Society, it was the duty of all adults to serve as teachers of younger persons. Child rearing was not just the responsibility of biological parents but children were nurtured within a larger circle of significant others. From the earliest days of life, the child experienced a network of caring adults." (Brendtro et al., 1990, p.37).

A few weeks after the ceremony, I was running along a bike path in our city where some people have stopped running because kids, who should be

in school, harass them. There is one wooded spot where they stand on a bridge that crosses over the pathway.

Usually I run by hoping not to get hit by a rock.

This time, however, I stopped and told them they should be in school. They made some unpleasant comments and they did not leave, but I felt good about saying something and about calling the school when I got back.

Thanks, Daphne.

Reference

Brendfro, L., Brokenleg, M. & Van Bockern, S. (1990) *Reclaiming Youth at risk: Our Hope for the future*. Bloomington, IN: National Education Service.