



RITE OF PASSAGE

Silver State Academy

# Newsletter

Fall /Winter 2011

*Improving the Lives of Youth*

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### Gang Expert Provides Insight to At- Risk Youth: Life Lessons, Challenges and Triumphs

As Rite of Passage Silver State Academy celebrates the end of 2011 and the beginning of 2012, and what will be their 28th year of improving the lives of youth, reflection is the order of the day.

During the Fall/Winter Graduation of 2011 a very special guest speaker stood up in front of almost two hundred students at Silver State Academy to share his own reflections, challenges, and triumphs. He shared hope and wisdom to encourage the youth graduating the program and those staying behind to finish the course.

As a law enforcement professional, you would not expect that Officer Robynson is an accomplished actor who has performed in over forty-two feature films.

Deputy Probation Officer Robby Robynson is a master of all trades. But then, with his career working for the Los Angeles Probation Department Special Enforcement Operations, he has to be.

Some days when he gets ready for work, his attire includes a bullet-proof vest and a sidearm. Other days, his encyclopedic knowledge of gang culture and his commitment to the community that he serves is all he needs.

Perhaps his success comes from understanding these troubled teens in a way his peers cannot. He too was raised in poverty, lacking role models and a solid support system. His mother, too young for the responsibilities of parenthood, left him in the hospital the day he was born. He was

raised in a foster family, separated from his seven brothers and sisters.

Robynson says he easily could have been lured by the street--all around him were the influences of drugs and crime. Instead, he sought refuge in a recreation hall in northwest Washington, D.C., where for years he took martial arts classes (Los Angeles Times, 1996).



*Robby Robynson (middle) shares wisdom and hope with the students of Silver State Academy. Pictured with (left) Larry Woodford, Western Region Admissions Manager; and (right) Lawrence Howell, ROPATCS Executive Director*

From these personal experiences Mr. Robynson was able to share his remedy for life in the gang culture, and how to find success by emphasizing the unique protective factors that each student at Silver State Academy is taught to recognize when they enter the program.

His passion for improving the lives of at-risk youth provides each graduate with the hope of overcoming life's challenges through prosocial attitudes. His dedication to the potential of each student offers a lasting message of triumph over the obstacles to their success.



*Silver State Academy Students Learn to Care for and Train Rescue Kennel Canines*

# Program News

From the Desk of...

John Dibble

Western Regional Athletic Director



Many of our programs at Rite of Passage have changed over the years, but one has remained constant: The concept that athletic participation in a team environment and for an individual striving to go beyond limits and reach new goals, is an overriding ingredient to success. I am fortunate to be able to "live my dream" as Western Region Athletic Director, while helping the youth in our program live theirs.

Many label athletic programs as the 'Front Porch' of an organization. They don't see the endless hours spent by admissions staff, medical professionals, ancillary personnel, case managers, teachers, administration, and group living staff. Each of these help to determine the success or failure of these athletic programs. I am proud of the efforts of everyone and our 'front porch' looks good thanks to their hard work.

We are one of a very few schools in the State of Nevada that webcast our athletic events (both audio and visual) enabling our fans to enjoy RAM athletics over the internet

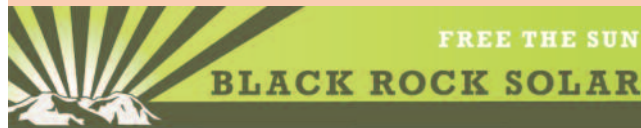
Silver State Academy has closed the book on another fabulous year. Our Student Athletes have been recognized as Nevada State Champions for the third year in a row for the national "Presidential Physical Fitness Challenge." SSA won Western Region Championships in wrestling, basketball, and baseball, and won the Ram Bowl for the 4th straight year and qualified for the basketball playoffs for the 8th straight year. 2012 here we come!

## Renewable Energy for Students Renewing their Lives

### Silver State Academy wins SolarGenerations Rebate



**"Renewable energy is not a new phenomenon for NV Energy. The company signed its first contract for geothermal power in 1983, and just this past year, we surpassed the renewable energy threshold of one gigawatt (1,000,000,000 watts) under contract. NV Energy's longstanding renewable energy commitment has resulted in one of the most diverse and extensive renewable energy portfolios in the United States."** *NVEnergy.com 2011*



*The Project is eligible to receive \$4.70 per watt in rebate funding from the SolarGenerations program. This equates to \$235,000 for a 50 kW array*

Rite of Passage Silver State Academy works very hard to educate at-risk youth regarding accountability in their lives, vocation, and communities, so it was especially gratifying to work in partnership with Black Rock Solar towards a rebate program that would provide sustainable renewable energy.

This grant will improve the campus where the students live and go to school, and provide both staff and students at Silver State Academy with an opportunity to participate in an important renewable energy community effort.

Silver State Academy recently partnered with Black Rock Solar to successfully submit a request through NVEnergy for the development and

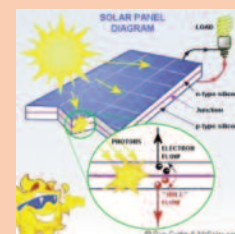
construction of a 50 kW photovoltaic solar array to be built on the Silver State Academy campus worth approximately \$235,000.00. While this project will help reduce costs and will further sustainability efforts in Northern Nevada, it is also teaching students the importance of being accountable for our natural resources.

Black Rock Solar is a non-profit organization that, among many other sustainability projects, provides solar array purchase and installation for other non-profit organizations. Their mission: *Black Rock Solar is*

*committed to expanding the use of renewable energy through installation, art, education, and job training.*

The installation will convert the sun's energy into electricity for a large portion of the Silver State Academy campus. Just as important is the experience that the campus students will have as the campus is readied and installation occurs.

Students will have the opportunity to watch and learn about the importance of finding alternative energy sources. Black Rock Solar is committed to teaching students grades K-12, through the GREENEVADA program, the importance of finding, using and sustaining alternative sources for energy.



## Community Project “Builds” Empathy for Shelter Animals

*From an article in the Reno Gazette Journal dated November 14, 2011: “With many people losing their jobs and their homes from the downturn, the human crisis is turning into one for animals as well.”*



**B.A.R.K. Safe Haven Rescue Shelter**  
A no-kill shelter located in Yerington Nevada

### Rite of Passage

Silver State Academy is located in a rural area of Northeastern Nevada. It is an agricultural area where many families rely on their animals not just for companionship but to sustain their livelihood. Horses, sheep, goats, chickens, dogs and cats all provide needed resources to sustain agricultural farming.

They are considered part of the family, but when the family starts struggling, often animals must be surrendered to shelters due to the cost of feeding and housing them.

For Silver State Academy who runs an animal husbandry vocational program (see page 7 Employee Spotlight), it is especially hard to watch the community struggle with the decision of feeding a family or feeding their animals.

In an effort to make the students who attend Silver State Academy aware of the needs of these surrendered animals and the effect it has on the community, a program was started that has allowed students to volunteer at the local “B.A.R.K. Safe Haven Rescue Shelter” to provide care for the dogs housed there.

Empathy building has long been a part of the Restorative Solutions program at SSA that assists youth by helping them internalize what victimization means and how their actions effect those around them.

By working with animals surrendered by families who in many cases do not want to let go of a beloved pet, SSA youth learn to



**Relationship Building.** Silver State Academy Students work with surrendered and abandoned animals and develop empathy in the process.

empathize with those struggling in a difficult economy, and can provide care for the pets left behind.

Silver State Academy youth involved in the program also builds dog houses to help house the many shelter animals so that they are not left out in the elements as Winter weather sets in.

## Season Traditions “Ring In” the Holidays

Silver State Academy is rife with traditions that help instill a sense of belonging and brotherhood in the students that pass through its halls.



*A Silver State Academy Tradition, the annual “Silver Bell” performance Rings in the Holidays, as the students show off their musical talents!*

One of the most beloved traditions is the annual Staff and Student Recognition and Christmas Celebration which provides entertainment to all and acknowledges staff and students for their accomplishments during the past year. This year was no exception, as the holiday goes prepared for a day of feasting, fellowship, and fun.

These traditions give staff and students an opportunity to slow down the competitive pace in education, academics, and vocational endeavors and relish being a “kid” again.

This year Ms. Emms and the SSA Student Body RAMS presented “Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer.”

The El Dorado office of Education Charter School teachers opened the performance with a rousing rendition of “Be Our Guest”.

This tradition gives each staff member and



*Teachers get in on the fun performing their holiday skit for the students enjoyment*

student at Silver State Academy an opportunity to shine their light, create friendships, and mend fences. It is truly a season of giving that reaches out to the most troubled among the students and gives them new hope as they begin to reach for their destiny in the new year!



# *Ram-Page*

**Nevada Presidential Challenge Winners 2011**

**Students & Staff from Silver State Academy Celebrate another stellar year in athletics**



# Ram-Page



*15 Year Employee Award recipients John Temean and Guadalupe Madera are recognized by Mike Debusk Program Director at Silver State Academy for 24 years*



*Mike Debusk Program Director of Student Services (left), and Chris Ellison Regional Case Manager of the Year 2011 Jennifer Keats*



*25 year Award Recipient Bob West receives a well deserved standing ovation for his service*

*Silver State Academy Staff are committed to success for the students in their care, and are here to stay!*



*5 Year Employees receive an ROP Letterman's Jacket. This Year Silver State gave out 7 of them!*



*Kudos to Chef K Garrido! Chef K as he is lovingly known is Silver State Academy's 2011 Employee of the Year!*



*Daryl Notyce - 2011 Coach of the Year - receives his plaque from Western Regional Athletic Director John Dibble*

Collection of comprehensive data is an essential function in implementing Evidence-Based Practices (EBP). Outcome data from EBP aligned with Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) measures presents rich data sets for Rite of Passage to use in quantitative analysis. Every area of at-risk youth programming must be considered, with one of the most important being Incident/Critical Incident Reporting (ICIR). Data in and of itself is insufficient to create and implement needed change. Qualitative

According to an article in the May/June 2006 Child Welfare Journal, “Enhancing the Safety of Children in Foster Care and Family Support Programs: Automated Critical Incident Reporting”, automated critical incident reporting programs can affect every aspect of a program when used to fidelity (Child Welfare League of America Journal, June 2006). Assessment of critical incidents effects the individually placed youth by identifying and quantifying exhibited negative learned behaviors. Tracking this data generates the quantitative data used to target and improve program outcome.

took place. This will give a birds-eye view of where clusters of incidents occur so that steps can be taken to determine why they happened and make changes necessary to correct the problem.

Implementing change within an evidence-based program requires proven data collection methodologies. Following the Assess, Plan, Identify, and Coordinate process, Rite of Passage leadership has developed an incident reporting process and program accessible to clinical staff to assist them in analyzing situational and global incidents as they occur. This allows them to immediately determine solutions that will reduce incidents and improve programming.

ROPSTAT, Rite of Passage’s secure, HIPAA compliant, online incident reporting database was created as a means of automating the incident reporting system across Rite of Passage sites. Researching, choosing, and implementing this type of database was especially important as it allowed a larger body of clinical experts to staff incidents, and simultaneously review and analyze trends in incidents specific to individual sites. This outcome data has remarkable implications for Rite of

*...The data from critical incident reporting also helps ensure that direct service staff are providing high quality casework and clinical services. Finally, critical incident reporting strengthens an agency's ability to meet licensing and accreditation standards and can minimize liability risks to the agency significantly. Although critical incident reporting can be done manually, automating this process has clear advantages...(Brenner and Freundlich, 2006)*

Passage and the industry as a whole. By reviewing and analyzing data at a site level, clinical staff can identify patterns of behavior attributable to culture, area of placement, similar criminogenic risk factors, etc., and work to find solutions within the program that will have the most positive effect on changing thinking errors and negative behaviors.

**Rite of Passage Applying Verifiable Outcome Data**



*Working as a Team to continually improve the process*

analysis and process review must be performed with the data collected in order to transfer the robust knowledge into practice.

Through this framework of analysis, Rite of Passage has been able to determine that incident reporting data can be one of the most useful tools in an alternative placement facility’s toolbox.

Additionally, Rite of Passage leadership staff review data from a macro level so that Critical Incidents such as running away and assaults can be seen from a global perspective...literally.

Within the database is GPS software that lets the reporter identify where the incident

Rite of Passage is committed to improving the lives of youth. By making substantial strides in capturing how a site program identifies, documents, and reports incidents, Rite of Passage provides lasting solutions for youth as they transition back into their community. By implementing and utilizing a database that will help reduce incidents while creating better processes and systems, Rite of Passage continues to grow and improve just as our students do.

**Works Cited**

Brenner & Freundlich. Child Welfare Journal. Enhancing the Safty of Children in Foster Care. Vol. LXXXV, #3, May/June, 2006.

## Staff Spotlight

### Career Technical Education Teacher - Scott Robinson



Hello, my name is Scott Robinson. I grew up in a little agricultural town called Simi Valley in Southern California, Ventura County. The last place I worked down there was a ranch, El Tapo de Simi-a 400 year old

Spanish land grant, where they filmed the TV show Little House on the Prairie.

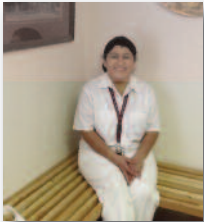
Needing a place to keep my horses closer to home was the key to my involvement with Silver State Academy. I boarded my horses at the farm and began feeding and doctoring the other animals as well, when Mike DeBusk had an idea for an animal husbandry class. I helped him set up the program and currently run the 4-H and equestrian programs.

I am most proud of my 11 year old son, an "A" student and Lyon County

Jr. Champion sheep exhibitor in 2009, and a very talented horseman. My wife, Steffanie is the love of my life! For many years, she has enjoyed her job with Lyon County. Steffanie is known for her kindness towards others... Her pride & joy is her son and her horses. I am pretty darn proud of the Ranch and the program we have developed here. I am also particularly proud of my Full Instructor Certification from the American Association for Horsemanship Safety. In the 15 years she has been conducting the course, the Executive Vice President has only certified 8 people as Full instructors, and I am the only man and only cowboy she has certified!

Riding and teaching the boys how to handle, ride, and care for the animals is what I like best about working at ROP. I think it is important to pass on the traditions of proper horsemanship to the next generation.

### SILVER STATE ACADEMY'S EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH JULY - NOVEMBER 2011



#### July

**Maria Monahan (Kitchen Staff)** Being part of the kitchen staff has given me the opportunity to work with troubled youth. This experience has made me a better parent. I enjoy the students, especially when you see that they are finally trying to improve their lives.



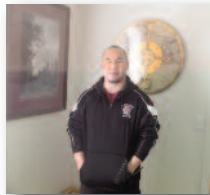
#### August

**Hal Morgan (Group Leader)** A few things come to mind ... I was referred to ROP, and it is really interesting work! The best part, is the students and staff and the relationships that are created. Of course, I think about a vacation in Hawaii, especially Maui! My children are amazing and our pets are named Roxy and Rosie. Happy Holidays!



#### October

**Moren Dahl (Group Leader)** I came to work at ROP to help at risk youth realize that they can be more than what the gang life has to offer. Personally, I have overcome and learned to deal with struggles in my own life and now I am able to help others with similar struggles. I truly enjoy the students, especially when you see that they are finally trying to improve their lives. I have learned that a lot of my best experiences are the journey not the destination. My dog is a pug named Lenard. My favorite candy bar is a king size KitKat so that I can share with my family.



#### November

**Jason Martinez (Group Leader)** I want everyone to know, that I came to ROP to help young men in need of guidance. I'm proud when I see these Student Athletes opening doors for themselves for their future. The best part about ROP is seeing these young men go home the right way.



#### September

**Terry Lee (Awake Night Staff)** What I most enjoy about working at Silver State Academy is being part of a program which offers so many opportunities for these students to improve their lives.

We continually (as night staff) witness students transform from kids with issues to young men who are gaining self-respect, manners, socially accepted behaviors, and so much more. As a Vietnam Era veteran I can say I would be proud to have anyone of the graduating students of SSA fight beside me.



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## Finding Gold in a Job Well Done

Dear Mr. Debusk,

I want to let you know what an outstanding job Chef K [Garrido] and his students did catering our dinner on September 28, 2011! Chef K and his students were friendly, while maintaining their professionalism.

They prepared tasty appetizers and a delicious dinner per the menu we had agreed upon. The students were well behaved, polite and cheerful the entire evening. I received numerous positive comments about them and their culinary skills.

We chose the ROP Culinary Arts students to cater our dinner after overwhelmingly positive references from various groups and individuals around the Yerington area. We are pleased to add our voice to those in the community who hold Chef K and his students in high regard!

I complimented Chef K several times that evening on the meal and the behavior of his students. I also complimented each student on his cooking expertise. They seemed proud of their accomplishments. While Chef K maintained control over the students, it was obvious that he enjoyed

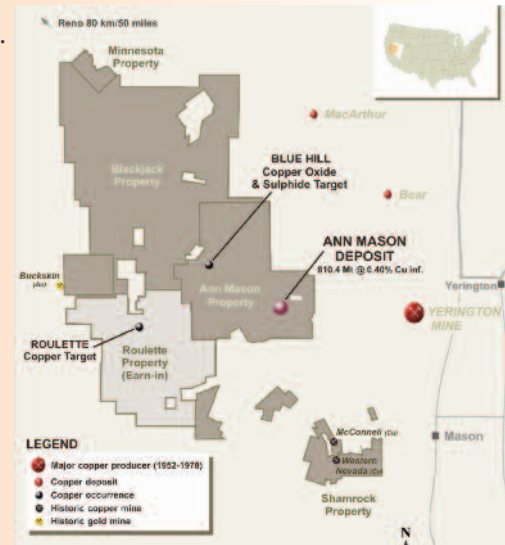
teaching them his craft.

We look forward to our next event when we again as the ROP Culinary Art Students to cater.

Sincerely,

Sherry L. Talbott  
Administrative Assistant

Entree Gold, Inc.  
Yerington, NV



A picture of the Entree Gold Inc "Ann Mason Mine - Ann Mason is a porphyry copper-molybdenum deposit located near Yerington