

SHADOW MOUNTAIN HIGH SCHOOL PROGRAM EXPANSION

By Koni Withers, Counselor

Teen AA has been at Shadow Mountain for the last four years. Shadow Mountain High School is the pioneer for hosting Teen AA at the high schools and, currently, the only Paradise Valley Unified School District High School offering the program.

It is not an easy task in a time when staff is reduced and students are experiencing a higher rate of addictive behavior than ever before. Offering our Teen AA program requires a commitment of consistency and passion in order to reach teens.

The process begins with referrals from counselors, administration (non-punitive), and word of mouth. Regular and consistent weekly meetings are conducted. Last year, SMHS had 17 students total with 7 regular attendees. This year we had 31 students sign up with 16 in regular attendance!

The student's grades, attendance and behavior are monitored closely and students are encouraged to "do better today than yesterday" in all areas of their academics. They are aware that we are monitoring their work while trying to make them accountable for their own success. Although our students would like to think they have control over their behavior, many continue to struggle. Teen AA meetings offer our students a deeper perspective about how to work through personal change.

Despite their initial resistance, teens soon enjoy attending the meetings and often come into our office to make sure they can make the time slot scheduled.

Teen AA is a student lead activity, facilitated by two counselors, who do their best to minimize any leadership role. They simply provide guidance, to keep meetings on track, to stay positive, and to move forward "one day at a time".

Do teens have setbacks? Of course. However, teens know that they can return the next week and continue to work the 12 steps.

A previous member quoted "I feel as though I can accomplish anything. Teen AA created a tight bond with the people around me, and gave me a place at school where I didn't have to hide anything. Now I'm sober and looking forward to a bright, successful future."

Students with challenges need a place that offers them structure and solutions. Teen AA offers students a "second chance" at Shadow Mountain.