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# MCF-Togo - Thistledew Camp. A historical analysis examining a specialized juvenile residential correctional program.

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**MCF-Togo: Thistledeew Camp: A Historical Analysis Examining a  
Specialized Juvenile Residential Correctional Program**

by

Anne Chelin-Anderson

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

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December, 2017

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### **Abstract**

This is an historical analysis of a specialized residential Minnesota youth program, Thistledew Camp, governed by the Minnesota Department of Corrections and approved by Minnesota Department of Education. This program served at risk youth ages 13-17 (age 18 if they had a birthday while at the camp) who were court ordered to the program because of behaviors, truancy, or probationary violations. Additionally, some students were placed in the facility by social services or their families because they were chemically dependent youth in need of addiction counseling services. The students assigned, or court ordered to the Thistledew Camp facility, were taught essential skills to meet both societal and legal expectations in their educational and personal lives. Even though this is chronicling the history of a single small Department of Corrections program for juveniles, it is important in contributing to the research regarding best practices for juvenile justice and examining non-punitive, relationship based programming for disenfranchised youths.

The timeframe for the research is from 1955 to 2015. Thistledew Camp was originally established as a Youth Conservation Commission (YCC) to teach the logging trade to trouble males ages 19 to 21. Upon its closing, it was servicing juveniles ages 13-17 who had problems with truancy, chemical dependency, and behavioral issues. The study chronicles the changes in programs, funding, and the age group it serviced until 2015 when the Department of Corrections closed the juvenile programs to expand the Challenge Incarcerated Program (CIP) which created more bed space for adult males.

The literature review analyzes global, regional, and local juvenile justice systems. It also examines special education ties to juvenile delinquency and truancy. A historical look at Outward Bound which influenced the Wilderness Challenge portion of the Thistledew Program is reviewed. Analysis of the archive materials and discussions were chronicled for dates and important events throughout the formation of the program. Various studies that were conducted by the Department of Corrections were gathered and reviewed.

The major influencing factors regarding the development of Thistledew's programs were the following: lack of education or illiterate youth; so an educational program was established and grew to include special educational services, credit recovery, and GED testing. Many of the juveniles needed chemical dependency counseling; due to their addiction, many of the juveniles made poor choices or demonstrated a lack of judgement. Drug and alcohol counselors were hired on staff and chemical dependency programs were created. Initially, there was no trust between staff and the incarcerated youth which created barriers to the juveniles' learning and understanding of the negative criminal thinking which brought them to Thistledew; cognitive skills, wilderness programs, and relationship building through activities and open communication created a foundation of trust. This opened the door to a willingness for the juveniles to try new experiences. Character building and

personal confidence of the delinquent youths was reinforced through the Wilderness Challenge Program. Finally, Thistledew's Program was examined and proposed to be cut to save \$300,000 annually in the Department of Corrections budget in 1972-1973. An emergency senate committee meeting was called and funding resources were established, making the juvenile program self-sufficient.

### **Acknowledgements**

I have been blessed with a very supportive family. As much as I want to say my dissertation did not interfere with my home life, I'd be lying. My husband, children, and grandchildren all know we spent less time together than I really would have wanted because I was in the loft writing, researching, or gathering artifacts. They understood how very important this research is to me and were willing to make sacrifices. Thank you to my husband, Dennis, for being understanding, loving, reassuring, and encouraging. I don't think words can express how I feel for everything you have done for me but know, I did see when you cleaned the kitchen because I was too tired, or put the laundry away so I could stay in the loft a bit longer. It was all the little things along the way that made me really appreciate you, and all you have done.

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Dr. Frances Kayona and Dr. Kay Worner have been my guiding lights when I felt lost. Thank you to both of you for your friendship, patience, kindness, and support. I appreciate everything you two have done for me. Dr. Kayona has spent countless hours reading drafts and learning about the juvenile justice system more than she may have wanted. Thank you for the extra push when I needed it, and for understanding when I needed to step away and

grieve. I have been blessed with knowing these ladies for years and I hope to make you proud.

Finally, thank you also to the staff of Thistledew Camp. You are amazing and a special group of people. You give all of yourselves every day to those you work to help. For some of the youth, it was the first time they were treated like “kids” and not labeled “delinquents.” The juveniles who passed through Thistledew Camp were blessed to have such a caring staff guiding their journey and showing them all the possibilities they have for a brighter future. Thank you for your time and allowing me access to all the rich historical archives.

## Foreword

Thistledew Camp in Togo, Minnesota opened as a logging camp under the Youth Conservation Commission (YCC) in 1955 to train 19 to 21-year-old delinquent males a trade. Overtime, their mission changed. Thistledew Camp evolved into a relationship-based correctional facility for juveniles ages 13-17/18-year-olds which was funded self-sufficiently. Thistledew Camp had drug and alcohol addiction treatment services/counselors; an academic credit recovery program as well as GED testing; the first wilderness program in the United States for corrections which had multiple program offerings; and they had the adult Challenge Incarceration Program (CIP) for women, which later became a program for males when the women's program was moved to the Minnesota Correctional Facility-Shakopee, Minnesota. Thistledew Camp operated for 60 years servicing delinquent youth and teaching them an alternative life style to violence, gang activity, drugs, alcohol, and academic failure. Over the course of 60 years, thousands of young men partook in the residential and wilderness programs; and hundreds of young women participated in the three-week Wilderness Challenge program.

In 2015, all the juvenile programs in Thistledew Camp were terminated. This transpired due to lack of bed-space for the adult males in the Minnesota facilities and state-wide budget crunches. Thistledew Camp was repurposed to be one of two male CIP sites for the Department of Corrections. The other CIP site is in Willow River, Minnesota. The last brigade of the juvenile males marched across the grounds headed to the final graduation to be held at the facility in June, 2015.

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The study is a historical analysis of a specialized residential Minnesota youth program, Thistledew Camp, governed by the Minnesota Department of Corrections and approved by Minnesota Department of Education. The program served at risk youth ages 13-17 (18 if they have their birthday while residing at Thistledew Camp) who were placed by the court because of behaviors, truancy, or probationary violations. Additionally, some students were placed in the facility by social services or their families because they are chemically dependent youth in need of chemical dependency counseling services. The students assigned, or court ordered to the Thistledew Camp facility, were taught essential skills to meet both societal and legal expectations in their educational and personal lives. Even though this study chronicles the history of a single small Department of Corrections program for juveniles, it is important in its contribution to the research regarding best practices for juvenile justice and for examining non-punitive, relationship based programming for disenfranchised youths. Because Thistledew's program was a relationship-based correctional alternative school setting offering special education services and a treatment facility for at risk male youth ages 13-17, it was unique in design.

Programs for "at risk" youth cover a wide range of options but all have the common threads. These programs provide: individualized attention; a wide variety of activities; a safe environment; and some type of aftercare. The programs include, but are not limited to, "Federal Title I funding, special education, School Within a School, area learning centers, care and treatment residential and non-residential programs, Outward Bound programs, Big

Brother/Sister mentoring programs, and numerous drop-out prevention programs offered at both the public schools and the communities” (L. Hart, personal conversation, November 26, 2013).

The researcher believes that the descriptive historical analysis study provides insight and information that could assist governmental and educational leaders in not only understanding the complexity of serving a small but high risk population of young people, but also how Thistledew Camp’s program had evolved over the years as a successful alternative placement option earning the recognition as a top-rated program (State Auditor Report, 1995) ranked in the upper 10% of correctional programs for juveniles nation-wide (Johnson, 2001).

### **Background Information**

Through Minnesota Department of Corrections (MN DOC) (n.d.), Thistledew Camp offered treatment resource[s] for juveniles who have experienced failure in the home, school, and community. Minnesota Correctional Facility-Togo, (MCF-Togo), otherwise known as Thistledew Camp, is in the heart of the George Washington State Forest, approximately 30 miles north of Nashwauk, Minnesota. The program was unique because it served at risk youth in a remote wilderness region and provided academic as well as character building educational services to its teen residents. Thistledew Camp could serve up to 50 students, ages 13-17-year-olds. The program provided academic credit recovery assistance to its residents through the Alice O’Brien School located on the camp site. It also offers a drug



treatment program and a Wilderness Challenge program that focused on character and relationship education through cognitive skills training.

Thistledew Camp was originally established in 1955 as a state funded logging camp program serving hard core delinquent males 19-21 years of age. The average stay for these young offenders at that time was 9 months (MN DOC, n.d.). In 1970, the Commissioner of Corrections changed Thistledew Camp to a closed-ended 3-month facility for less sophisticated delinquents with a drug and alcohol treatment component for the juveniles with chemical dependency issues (Nylund, 1975).

From 1969 to 2001, the program expanded to include multiple programs that provided educational and support services; it also lowered the age range of the participants from 19-21 to 13-17-year-old males; 18-year-old participants were sent to the other state run adult prison facilities. (If a juvenile celebrated his 18<sup>th</sup> birthday while residing at Thistledew Camp, he would remain in the program and accommodations were made.) Thistledew Camp's juveniles program eventually became financially self-sufficient by billing the home counties of the residents directly instead of relying on state funding. This allowed Thistledew to be the only state governed juvenile facility to be mainly self-reliant upon clients rather than state funding (Hegg, 2002). In June, 2001 an independent consultant completed an evaluation of the program using the Corrections Program Assessment Inventory (CPAI), which is an instrument for scoring a correctional program on the presence or absence of several "best practices" that were known through research and clinical experience to be effective in reducing recidivism. The CPAI evaluated 135 programs across

the nation and the average score was 35%; Thistledew's score was 72% which put them in the "excellent" range (Hegg, 2002). During the years from 1969 to 2001, the program participants lived at the facility and were usually assigned to the camp for a period of 3 months, or 84-105 days, depending upon their arrival date or extensions to the program due to disciplinary issues.

In 1971 a new wilderness/survival phase was implemented at Thistledew camp requiring residents to participate during the last 3 weeks of their stay (J. Nylund, personal conversation, December 12, 2014). This new program was called the Wilderness Challenge Program. The original premise for this type of program was based upon the successes of the 1940s Outward Bound Program developed by Kurt Hahn. The Outward Bound Program used the survival camp concept. Outward Bound Programs stressed *character training* and an unequivocal *focus on education for leadership* (Freeman, 2010). With the belief that *confidence could be taught*, Hahn started the first survival type school in the British Isles. It was viewed as very successful (Nylund, 1975). Based on the success of Outward Bound, the leaders at Thistledew Camp were interested in providing similar experiences to its residents.

The Thistledew Camp Wilderness Challenge Program was the first of its kind in the United States. The program challenged and educated participants through extreme outdoor experiences including year-round camping, rock climbing, canoeing, hiking, or skiing treks depending upon the season, and a high-ropes course (J. Nylund, personal conversation, December 12, 2014). Only one other program like the Wilderness Challenge Program existed at that time and that was found in Canada (Spavin, 1972). Since the inception of the

Wilderness Challenge Program, the staff had mentored staff in other facilities across the country by sharing their knowledge, expertise, and strategies gained while working in the program (Nylund, 1975; Spavin, 1972).

The Thistledew Camp program could serve up to 50 youth over a 3-month time frame and required each student to participate in the 3-week Wilderness Program designed for small groups of no more than 10 male students per group. Since their implementation in 1971, the wilderness programs had been part of the Thistledew Camp experience. Due to the success of the Wilderness Challenge Program offered in the 3-month stay for the young residents, another experiential program for males was added in 1997 known as the Wilderness Endeavors Program (WE Program) (MN DOC, n.d.). Originally designed just for male students, in the summer of 2001, Thistledew Camp program directors initiated a 3-week wilderness summer program for females, ages 13-17-year-olds (Hegg, 2002). The WE Program was designed to empower both male and female residents to make good decisions, boost their self-confidence, and provide them with the skills necessary to persevere through the stress and challenges of life (Kruse, 2014).

During the 3-week Wilderness experience, the course instructors and the recreational therapist stressed: teamwork, self-reliance, self-awareness, resilience, motivation, reflection, and cognitive skills development. Education was a fundamental part of the Wilderness Program; students could earn part of their language arts, science, health, and physical education credits through participating in the program. A more in-depth description of these programs is provided in Chapter 4.

Most of the young residents who were placed in Thistledew were court ordered, probation officer and/or social worker recommended, or committed by their parent or legal guardian. All the at-risk youth at Thistledew Camp were from Minnesota with most residents coming to the program from the three counties of Hennepin, Saint Louis, and Itasca (Hegg, 2002). Many of the resident placements were high school aged and most were behind their peers in academic credits. Graduating with a high school diploma was highly unlikely unless these students could earn credits to catch up with their peers. Students residing at Thistledew could earn their GED while attending the mandated education facility, Alice O'Brien (AOB) School. All residents were expected to participate in educational programming during their stay.

The Alice O'Brien School is located on site at Thistledew and provides an opportunity for students to earn academic credits. During the three-month program at AOB, students could earn four to six full academic credits by successfully passing all classes; this equates to nearly one full year of academic credits. More credits could be earned by students through independent study, guitar class, treatment sessions, and participation in culinary arts.

The AOB School had three to four full-time instructors, at least one of which was a licensed special education (SPED) instructor. Each instructor taught multiple disciplines. The SPED instructor/s assured all Individual Education Plans (IEP) were current and accommodations for the special education students were being fulfilled. Classes were mixed containing learners with multi-ages and with varying skill levels. Students participated in independently structured classwork to correspond with the individualized academic needs of

each resident. All students attended school Monday through Saturday; Saturday was a science/social studies focused day. The daily school schedule rotated between all the major disciplines: English/Language Arts and Literature; individualized mathematic studies; Social Studies/History; Environmental Science. In addition, there are elective courses: GED preparation work; Cognitive Skills Development class; A+ Computerized Credit Recovery Program; Careers/Transitions course; Banking and Money Management; Healthy Choices and Team Building. A chemical dependency treatment program, which began in 2005, was offered for the students with substance abuse issues (MN DOC, n.d.). Students attended a daily counseling session Monday through Friday for the last six weeks of their programming. Chapter 4 provides a more in-depth look at all the programs' history, development, and operation description.

A Thistledew Camp Education director (2005) recognized that the incarcerated youth served by Thistledew had few, if any, successes in their lives; they lacked self-confidence, and self-worth. Without programs like Thistledew, students often continue to fail to succeed in school. Student failure and eventual incarceration can usually be traced back to early academic failure (Meltzer, Levine, Karniski, Palfrey, & Clarke, 1984). When juveniles feel very little academic success there is a potential to lead to truancy and other criminal behaviors early on in their lives thus perpetuating a cycle of failure (Sheridan & Steele-Dadzie, 2005). All the programs at Thistledew were based upon recognizing successes, building self-confidence, and teaching self-reliance (MN DOC, n.d.; Nylund, personal communication, December 12, 2014). That was accomplished by all staff and residents understanding and utilizing The Five

Guiding Principles listed below. The Guiding Principle were meant to build positive, appropriate relationships between staff and residents; and create trust so meaningful and open dialog about issues could help facilitate change in the youths' lives (MN DOC, n.d.). The Five Guiding Principles are as follows and are discussed further in Chapter 4 (p. 104; p. 205):

1. I recognize that physical and emotional safety will always come first.
2. I will have empathetic, respectful, and sincere attitude at all times.
3. I will follow the HOW principle (Honest, Open, and Willing).
4. I believe that recognizing success is more effective than pointing out failure.
5. I will take responsibility for my own actions.

In the 1995 State Auditor's Report, Thistledeew was a *top-rated program* and was *ranked in the top ten percent of correctional programs for juveniles* nation-wide according to the Correctional Program Assessment Inventory (Johnson, 2001). Thistledeew Camp was a unique program which asked the youth to step out of their comfort zone and take accountability for their actions (Minnesota Correctional Facility-Togo, 2010).

Because of the distinctive design of the program and the strengths and benefits it provided to at-risk youth, this historical analysis is needed to provide insight and information to those who may be looking for practices and program components to include in their alternative education settings.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The historical analysis study examines the life cycle of Thistledeew Camp including the strengths and challenges which were instrumental in transforming Thistledeew Camp from a

work camp for youth offenders, to adopting current day programs, and finally, to its juvenile program closure in 2015. The Thistledew Camp program was a correctional alternative school setting which included special education services and a treatment facility governed by the Department of Corrections. The Thistledew Camp's programing was *relationship-based* which is opposite of the traditional *deficit based* juvenile correctional programs. Barton and Butts stated (2008):

[Deficit-based juvenile correctional programs] implement policies and programs designed to identify youth problems and to implement strategies for reducing those problems. Youth are classified by the seriousness of their problems, including the offenses they commit, the level of risk they present to the public safety, and their service needs. . . . This problem-focused juvenile justice system is designed to protect public safety by incarcerating youth or closely supervising their behavior (incapacitation), imposing sanctions for their past offenses (deterrence and retribution), and reducing the likelihood of future offenses (rehabilitation). (p. 5)

Thistledew staff worked diligently to establish positive mentoring relationships with the male youth who resided at the facility. The goal was to help them build self-esteem, self-worth, and confidence so they could make choices to positively impact their futures (J. Nylund, personal conversation, December 12, 2014). The focus was to look and build on the positives not the negatives, as is stated in the Guiding Principles which provides the philosophical foundation from which the program is designed. This is a very different way of approaching corrections for adjudicated youths (Barton & Butts, 2008).

Barton and Butt's (2008) study stated "there is very little guidance in academic or professional literature available for practitioners who wish to implement a positive youth development perspective in juvenile justice program" (p. 5). The historical study examining Thistledew Camp's juvenile programs provides insight in the quest to better serve all

populations of students regardless of their unique challenges. No one program can meet the needs of all children; especially those who experience legal, social, emotional, and academic problems. The report published by the Office of the Surgeon General, *Youth Violence* (2001) discussed the various youth intervention programs and promoted the concept that they should be identified as either effective or ineffective depending on whether they can prevent youth violence or not. Both time and money were invested into ineffective programs (Mendel, 2000). Small but effective programs receive little attention however they can have a profound impact on those they serve. In an article published in the *Eastern Itasca Newspaper* August 26, 1976, Adele Englund chronicled the challenges which lead to success through the Thistledew Camp's program and the profound impact it has made on the young men who have participated. Englund met with and interviewed numerous young men who were participants of the 3-month program. She summarized her findings in an article examining the perspectives of the youth interviewed and their views on the effectiveness of the program. Englund's interviews with the young men echoed the life changing experiences the juveniles had by participating in the program, discovering their inner strengths, self-confidence, and pride. They all spoke of feeling successful after accomplishing, what seemed to them, as an impossible feat (Englund, 1976).

The Thistledew Camp historical analysis study can contribute to the body of knowledge about successful alternative programs whose goal is improving the future for even a handful of disenfranchised young people. This study is descriptive in nature using primary source information from archives including: copies of personal correspondences,



Department of Corrections studies, oral historical narratives, and conversations with staff: past and present; and secondary sources including newspaper articles, contemporary research studies, and documents that examined the strengths and challenges of the Thistledew Camp's juvenile program.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The researcher conducted an historical analysis of Thistledew Camp. An 'historical analysis' presents a holistic description and examination of a specific case from a historical perspective. Sharan Merriam stated (1998):

In applied fields, such as education, historical case studies have tended to be descriptions of institutions, programs, and practices as they have evolved in time. Historical analysis may involve more than chronological history of an event. . . . To understand an event and apply that event, the assumptions behind it, and perhaps the event's impact in the institution or participants. These studies focus on a specific organization and trace its development. (p. 35)

There are several different methods a researcher can implement to gather information for an historical study. One method is the use of primary source materials such as interviews, letters, journals, historical documents, archival records and physical artifacts (Cherry, n.d.; Stark, 1995; Yin, 1994). Secondary source materials such as newspaper articles and print documentation is also of value but need greater scrutiny as to the reason for its publication and authenticity. The historical analysis study utilizes both primary and secondary resources including contemporary documents; archival records, documentation, and studies; personal conversations and letters; photographs and other artifacts as part of the data gathering process.

Little research was found that examined the historical development of youth corrections facilities such as Thistledeew Camp. The study of Thistledeew Camp, from a labor camp teaching work skills to hard core delinquent males ages 19-21-year-olds to a relationship-based, correctional alternative school setting including special education services and a treatment facility for at risk male youth ages 13-17, was needed to contribute to current and future planning regarding residential programs for youth. Data were gathered in the form of archival documents, relics, photographs, and selected conversations of former administrators and retired staff collecting oral history and their perspective from a first-hand participant. The chronological timeframe of interest for this study ranges from 1955 through the year 2015. Thistledeew Camp historical analysis study provided information about how the program evolved from a rural logging work camp in northern Minnesota to a top-rated program (State Auditor Report, 1995) ranked in the top ten percent of correctional programs for juveniles nation-wide (Johnson, 2001) to its final program closure in 2015.

The historical analysis study provides a service to leaders responsible for developing or maintaining small, effective programs for disenfranchised youth. Although this alternative program is targeted to a specific population, adjudicated youth, and some of those in need of chemical dependency treatment, the study of even one such program can lead to greater understanding of the nuances of program development, and its strengths and challenges leading to program sustainability. Thistledeew Camp historical analysis study is important to corrections administrators, educators, and to the youth who need unique options to be successful in school, and more importantly in life.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the historical analysis study is to examine the events, challenges, and benefits associated with the transformation of Thistledeew Camp from a correctional logging camp for youth to the final program which was governed by the Minnesota Department of Corrections and approved by Minnesota Department of Education as an alternate school setting offering a variety of services for youth participants. Thistledeew Camp historical analysis study provides a unique service to leaders responsible for developing or maintaining small, effective programs for disenfranchised youth.

The search for effective programs serving at risk youth populations is not new. In 1904, G. Stanley Hall stated in an article that he wrote:

There remains a subgroup that does experience storm and stress, whose transition into adulthood is marked by turmoil and trial. Further, only a recluse could be unaware of the statistics that show an upsurge in adolescent suicide, pregnancy, and venereal disease, as well as continued patterns of drug and alcohol use and abuse, school dropouts and delinquency. For some young people, adolescence is an extended period of struggle; for others, the transition is marked by alternating periods and quiescence. During periods of stress and turmoil, the latter group's ability to draw on effective adaptive coping behaviors is taxed. The resulting maladaptive behavior risks compromising physical, psychological, and social health. These young people are at risk. (p. 1)

In a published study entitled, *Barriers to Providing Incarcerated Youth with a Quality Education* (Houchins, Puckett-Patterson, Crosby, Shippen, & Jolivette, 2009), the authors inquired of educators their perception of the barriers that they experienced in providing quality instruction to incarcerated students. The results were categorized into nine themes: personnel concerns; academics; student needs; behavior and discipline; materials and

supplies; parental involvement; funding; communication; facilities. One comment was made in the findings by a teacher regarding behavior as a barrier to education, “. . . students must develop a sense of worth or confidence” (Houchins et al., 2009, p. 164). North Carolina Division of Youth Services found the average 15-year-old adjudicated male typically scored four grade levels below their peers on standardized achievement tests (Thacker & Kearney, 1994). Juvenile offenders in a traditional school setting demonstrated a lack of success which reinforced the student’s lower self-esteem and the “belief that he . . . cannot do school work. Poor performance in school also is a predictor of future problem behavior” (Thacker & Kearney, 1994, para. 2). Another study’s findings demonstrate that there is a direct correlation between “one’s self-esteem and academic competence. . . . The higher the self-esteem of the nonmainstream student one feels, [the] more control [they will] feel [they] have of their behaviors” (Connor, Poyrazli, Ferrer-Wreder, & Grahame, 2004, p. 459).

Thistledew Camp leaders, teachers, and staff worked to build on the individual youths’ personal strengths by reinforcing positive behaviors and attitudes within their daily encounters. Their perspective implemented a positive youth based focus. This type of “perspective . . . focuses on what is right with each youth rather than on what is wrong with the youth. This approach involved working with families and communities to enhance the positive social supports and opportunities that may improve a youth’s chances of developing to his or her fullest potential” (Barton & Butts, 2008, p. 5). This is a very different way of approaching corrections for adjudicated youths as compared to the punitive traditional correctional means.

Because this program is unusual in design, the researcher believes that this descriptive historical analysis study provides insight and information that could assist governmental and educational leaders in not only understanding the complexity of serving a small but high-risk population of young people, but also how this program has evolved over the years as a successful alternative placement option.

**Assumptions of the Study**

1. The amount of primary and secondary source material will be sufficient to conduct a full historical analysis. If all retired administrators are located, the discussion and chronicling of the responses could become exhaustive. There is a distinct lack of research materials on this topic and that creates an issue with the foundation of the Thistledeew Camp historical analysis study through the literature review.
2. Variations of dates, sequences, and occurrences may vary in accuracy due to the recollection of the individuals reporting. The researcher relied on self-reported data through personal conversations and must trust the validity of the individuals' memories since the means to verify the information may be limited or non-existent. The researcher chronicled dates for repetition to assure accuracy in the reporting of major dates.
3. The information is accurate and reflects actual historical events and timelines.

**Research Questions**

The historical analysis study examined the events, challenges, and benefits associated with the transformation of Thistledeew Camp from a correctional work camp for adjudicated youth to the current day program which had an alternative school program offering a variety of services for youth participants. The program was governed by the Minnesota Department of Corrections and approved by Minnesota Department of Education.

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What were the major influencing factors in the development of the Thistledeew Juvenile Programs?
2. What were the major challenges encountered in the development of the Thistledeew Camp Program?
3. What were the benefits/advantages of Thistledeew Camp Program as compared to the other juvenile reform correctional facilities?

**Delimitations of the Study**

Delimitations of the study include parameters of the study, what variables are considered, and what variables are not considered for the research and why:

1. The study is limited to one program for study purposes.
2. The researcher is a member of the program faculty so personal bias is an ongoing consideration throughout this project.

3. Researcher will refrain from feelings of bias in study by implementing journaling to reflect on the findings and do a review of personal perspectives and biases.
4. Information obtained throughout the course of the study is specific to the program being studied or, can only be extrapolated to the specific program study purpose.

### **Summary**

Thistledew Camp historical analysis study is an historical analysis of a Minnesota alternative setting program for youth ages 13-17 who experience behavioral, academic, or legal difficulties causing them to need placement in a safe, supportive, and highly refined residential setting to best serve their academic and other essential needs required for their success as a student and as a future citizen. The study focuses on one program, Thistledew Camp, governed and operated by the Minnesota Department of Corrections. This study examines the history of the development of the program and gathers data related to the events, challenges, and benefits associated with the development of the Thistledew Camp juveniles program.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Thistledeew Camp historical analysis study is examining the creation and development of a juvenile male correctional program that was set in the northern wilderness of Minnesota. It was founded in 1955 as a Youth Conservation Commission (YCC) logging camp designed to teach young male offenders a trade. Since its establishment, it evolved to include education, chemical dependency counseling, and an outdoor Wilderness Challenge program designed to build character, perseverance, and self-esteem.

The literature review includes educational journals found on ERIC; NCBI Bookshelf for government related documents and research; EBSCO Publishing for studies related to special education and alternative education; Journal of Offender Rehabilitation; historical reports from the Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice; Minnesota Department of Corrections archive reports, studies, and journals; Minnesota Historical Society; Minnesota State Legislature; The Department of Health and Human Services; The Center for Mental Health in Schools; The United Nations Reports; Center for Disease Control (CDC); Research from the John Jay College of Criminal Justice and The Annie E. Casey Foundation; History of Education Journal; plus various other books, articles, and studies examining best practices for juvenile justice systems.

The chapter is organized in a broad global perspective down to a narrow viewpoint focusing on the Minnesota's state juvenile justice system. The information reporting to the United Nations from various counties will summarize their history, historical incarceration trends; recidivism rates; and each region's punitive systems. These findings will be compared



to the United States practices, and finally Minnesota's perspective on juvenile justice and how the state's policies and procedures impact juvenile justice. Also, the correlation between special education and incarcerated youth will be examined. Finally, a brief review of the history and influence of the Outward-Bound Program and its impact on the therapeutic wilderness youth camps.

### **An Overview of Global Juvenile Justice**

Per the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) (2006) defining the term "delinquent" or finding an agreed upon definition worldwide is difficult at best; since not all juveniles who have encounters with the criminal justice system are delinquents. For their safety, some youth are placed in detention centers for reasons such as being homeless and taking them off the streets, removing them from an abusive household, or there is a lack of adequate household supervision. These juveniles clearly have committed no crimes and yet they are being detained in the same facilities as those who have (UNODC, 2006). This can be detrimental to the youth who is on the cusp of criminal behaviors. The likelihood of future misbehavior is increased, not decreased (UNODC, 2006).

To be able to discuss juvenile delinquency with globally unified terms, UNODC (2006) defines delinquent youth as a person who has had *conflict with the law* and this provides criteria for a working definition. Situations that are specifically listed by UNODC (2006) are as follows:

- Children who have committed or are accused of having committed an offence.

- Children considered to be *at risk of delinquency* and/or considered to be in danger by virtue of their behavior.
- Children found in an irregular situation, or considered to be in danger from the environment in which they live.
- Children arrested by law enforcement authorities acting for improper reasons.
- Children detained in relation to an application to claim asylum by the child or his or her family.

Various cultures view “adulthood” differently also. For the purposes of common language, The United Nations (2010) defined a “child” as all persons under the age of 18; currently the United Nations does not specify a minimum age of responsibility.

When examining juvenile justice in other countries, one must be aware of the various dynamics or factors that influence the criminal thinking and tendencies. Worldwide findings mirror those found in the United States with offenses committed by males being more than double that of females (UNODC, 2006). Petty crimes may be committed just for the sake of basic human need for survival. Humanistic psychologist Abraham Maslow’s (1943) research discusses a hierarchy of human needs with the first being safety and security; until one has achieved their basic needs, they cannot go on to achieve their full potential. In countries of civil war and where there are many orphaned youths, homelessness is a major issue (Butts & Evans, 2014). Orphaned youth will band together for survival. Per data from the Russian Federation, criminal behaviors among groups of youth are about three to four times higher than that of adult offenders. Findings indicate that group crimes committed by 14-year-olds

are the most prevalent, whereas the least is by 17-year-olds (United Nations World Youth Report, 2003).

Reports illustrate as juveniles mature, the tendency towards criminal conduct reduces significantly in most youth. Mercer Sullivan wrote, *Getting Paid* (1989), in which he indicated that most males “age out of youth crimes and accept . . . low wage, unstable jobs” (p. 250). Also, the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (1990) states that “Youthful behavior or conduct that does not conform to overall social norms and values is often part of the maturation and growth process and tends to disappear spontaneously in most individuals with the transition to adulthood” (p. 2). The conclusion being that the majorities of adolescents commit some sort of crime while in their formative years but do not carry this behavior on into adulthood, nor do they become career criminals.

Studies conducted by Dr. Giedd, chief of brain imaging in the child psychiatry branch at the National Institute of Mental Health, are indicating that this trend may be because of the brains formation and hormone levels (Wallis & Dell, 2004). Giedd (as cited in Wallis & Dell’s 2004 study) maintains that in Jean Piaget’s cognitive development studies concluded that the brain was fully developed in size and formal operations by age twelve; but with the advancement of modern technology and MRI studies Giedd has conducted brain scans and imaging and found this to be inaccurate. His research indicates that the adolescent brain undergoes extensive structural changes in both white and gray matter well beyond puberty and closer to age 25. Researchers are examining the physiological changes to see if there is a correlation between the newly detected physiological changes and at-risk behaviors

demonstrated by teens. Some experts believe that the deviant actions demonstrated are a bi-product of both increased hormones and a paucity of cognitive controls needed for mature behavior (Wallis & Dell, 2004).

The detention time for crimes committed by juveniles can range from a few days in detention to capital punishment or execution in some countries depending upon the laws and the severity of the crime. The United States Supreme Court passed a ruling stating the death penalty is forbidden for those who are under the age of 18 at the time of their crime in the case *Roper vs. Simmons* (2005). In 2003, the United States executed their last juvenile offender, Scott Hain, who was 17 at the time he committed murder in October, 1987. From 1642 to 2003, the United States had a total of 365 juvenile offenders who were executed. The Supreme Court has heard various arguments regarding the punitive levels for which a juvenile should be sentenced. In the 1960s a formal series of decisions were handed down regarding juvenile court, sentencing, representation, and due process (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, 2016). More will be discussed in the national perspective of juvenile justice in the United States.

The juvenile justice systems world-wide vary greatly from country to country. In most areas of the world the police are the gatekeepers for the first contact with the law, but in certain regions they hold a greater power of authority over the juvenile offender's outcome regarding court appearance or probation. Also, the law regarding age of responsibility as well as age of incarceration fluctuates immensely. Finally, the effectiveness to reduce recidivism using government funded or community-based programs is radically different

with some being highly efficient, others being ineffective, and yet others being too new to have data available. The following is a synopsis of reporting various countries to the United Nations Collation.

**Russia.** Many of the juvenile justice systems around the world have ineffective or detrimental practices. Per the Research and Evaluation Center (John Jay R&E Center) of John Jay College of Criminal Justice (2015) Russia has the age of criminal responsibility as 14 for serious crimes and 16 for minor offenses. The judges have discretion regarding sentencing due to the lack of alternatives. The two options that the system has in place is secure custody or suspended sentences. The suspended sentences lack community-based alternatives for services to rehabilitate the juveniles, so they end up reoffending and eventually end up in custody; 65% of the custody sentences ranged from 2 to 5 years and has remained constant since the 1990s through 2005 with 25,000 youth in secure custody.

Russia has multiple options for placement of the sentenced youth. It can be in a government funded educational facility usually a distance from the youth's home; a Secure Training Center, or a Young Offender Institution as well as a private operated Secure Training Center (John Jay R&E Center, 2015). The alternatives to custody that exist in Russia are inadequately funded by the government and thus ineffective. The national reforms have been basically non-existent in recent times (John Jay R&E Center, 2015).

**Ireland.** Republic of Ireland echoes this same lack of government support as Russia. The first act of juvenile justice was the Children Act of 1908 which stayed active until it was superseded by the Children Act of 2001. The original 1908 Act held children as low as 7 years

old responsible for their criminal activities and focused on institutionalizing rather than rehabilitating (John Jay R&E Center, 2015). The Children Act of 2001 eliminated incarceration for youth under 18 years of age and worked to make secure detention a final option. It also created three levels of probation: residential, intensive, and activities training. Another component of this Act was to hold parents responsible for their children's actions. They would either financially compensate for their child's wrong-doing, or take parenting skills, or drug and alcohol classes (John Jay R&E Center, 2015). The goal of this Act was to implement the least restrictive punishment so the youth could remain with family and continue their education at their home school. The problem came with implementing and transitioning to the less restrictive settings. The Act of 2001 called for the elimination of juvenile prisons but there was a lack of alternative placements as well as a commitment from the government to prioritize and allocate funding; so, the Act 2001 has been suspended until further government prioritization of resources occurs (John Jay R&E Center, 2015).

**Scotland.** Scotland has one of the highest rates of juvenile custody in the world (John Jay R&E Center, 2015). In 1971, Scotland created the Children's Hearing System which was supposed to encourage the least restrictive approach with rehabilitation as an alternative to punitive custodial placements. This could have been anything from community service and probation, to drug and alcohol treatment. Over the course of time, politicians pushed for stiffer sentences for repeat or "persistent" offenders. This has contributed to a larger number of juveniles being held in custodial placements rather than in a treatment facility

which would be more in their best interest (John Jay R&E Center, 2015). Also, the increase use of electronic monitoring and intensive supervision have proven to be counterproductive.

The shift to youth being put into secure settings steadily increased over the next decade because of judges issuing more frequently shorter custodial sentences which lack the rehabilitation component. In 2001, 218 youth were admitted to prison; by 2007-08 there were 346, an increase of 40% which does not include the other 1400 sent to residential treatment and schools. The numbers continue to increase annually (John Jay R&E Center, 2015). Concerns are for the financial obligations and increasing confinement costs of housing youth rather than implementing intervention and rehabilitation measure which would decrease punitive confinement sentences and ultimately be in the best interest of the children.

**England and Wales.** England and Wales had adopted a punitive system out of response to the 1993 abduction and murder of a 2-year-old boy by two 10-year-old youths. This in turn lowered the age of incarceration to 10. The public outcry demanded it. Before this time, England had the Criminal Justice Act of 1982 which set limits on judges' abilities to order incarceration of youths. One of three factors had to be met: the youth was "unresponsive to non-custodial punishments; custody would ensure public safety; or severity of the crime warrants custodial placement" (John Jay R&E Center, 2015. p. 2). The police also could issue warnings to youths which also helped circumvent the number of incarcerated youths. This reduction continued until 1993 when the public became fearful and the shift to incarcerate youths greatly increased the number of youths in custody. For

example, in 1992 there were 100 juveniles under the age of 15 in custody; by 2006, there were 824; in 2008 there were roughly 3000 incarcerated in England (John Jay R&E Center, 2015). Many these young people are incarcerated for low level non-violent crimes. Also, 82% will be reconvicted in under 2 years of their release (John Jay R&E Center, 2015). There was much overcrowding in the facilities. Tony Blair's solution to the juvenile justice issue was not to address the punitive nature of the system but to vow to reduce the length of their sentence (John Jay R&E Center, 2015). New legislature has been passed since this time but it has done nothing to change the young age of incarceration (10-years-old) and instead has contributed to muddying the public perception and the country's objective to *reduce the number of incarcerate youths' sentences to less than six percent of all sentences* (John Jay R&E Center, 2015).

**Germany.** Germany's juvenile justice system was heavily influenced by the political powers of the time. During the 1940s with Nazi Germany, punitive measures were mandated. In the 1960s there was an air of reform sanctioned to address youth detention and confinement; but by 1970 it was abandoned; 1980s Germany implemented reform measures that would adopt alternative sentences for youth and create community-based programs. The formal proceedings were replaced by "diversions." There are four diversion levels: complete diversion without intervention; diversion with non-legal entities (parents, school); diversion with intervention (apology, community service, or fine); and diversion following court proceedings. The courts use of diversionary practices increased 69% from 1980 to 2006 rather than custody based sanctions. Also, German law recognizes four age-



based categories: “Children” under the age of 14, are criminally responsible; “juvenile” between 14-17, are the responsibility of youth welfare departments; “adolescents” are at age 18-20 and are criminally responsible; “legal adults” are age 21 and up (John Jay R&E Center, 2015).

Diversion is used with children’s cases which call for the least restrictive interventions such as community service, social training or mediation. Imprisonment is used only as a last resort. Juveniles (age 14-17) can be imprisoned with sentences lasting a minimum of six months to a maximum of 5 years. For very serious crimes, imprisonment can last up to 10 years. No life sentences will be issued to those under 18-years-old (John Jay R&E Center, 2015). Youth courts are prohibited from sending juveniles to adult court but can instead do the reverse and send young adults to juvenile court. Rehabilitation of the youthful offenders seems to be ineffective even though they do have treatment, behavioral, and mental health programs available. Studies indicate that there is roughly an 80% recidivism rate (John Jay R&E Center, 2015).

**China.** In China, their juvenile justice system is a fairly new innovation. It was established in the 1990s because of the juvenile crime rate more than doubled in the 1980s. Due to the delinquency increase, China created a program entitled the Law on Protection of Minors in 1991 which was supposed to promote morality, intellect, and physical-well-being (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). The intent of the law was to have a collective effort with the government, society, education, and families to instill culture, patriotism, discipline, and collectivism in the children. It also put the responsibility of disciplining youth under the age

of 16 in the hands of the parents; only the most serious of crimes would be handled by the courts.

The Law on Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (1991) was created to make all facets of society responsible for eliminating juvenile delinquency. The system's original design was to educate the offender using the least restrictive means possible first. The law gave the first step of the process to the police or law enforcement. It was at their discretion as to whether the youth would be given back to their parents for punishment or if they would go to a prosecutor for possible administrative sentencing. Other than imprisonment, the only other option available is fines. Judges have the option to dismiss charges; release them to their parents; or require the offender to make amends with the violated party either through compensation or apology. The judge can also suspend sentences of less than 3 years in length if there are good family supports and the youth poses a low risk to society. In the cases of violent and/or serious crimes, judges can sentence the youth to the maximum 3-year prison term. In 2003, there were 19,000 juveniles being detained in correctional facilities in China (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). This is due to the lack of mid-alternatives to the lighter sanctions of parental punishments, charge dismissal, and other minimal penalties. The only option remaining to the judge is the maximum three-year sentence for youthful offenders. It was found this was issued over 70% of the time in all juvenile criminal cases in China (John Jay R&E Center, 2012).

**Spain.** Spain has gone full circle shifting from incarceration/punishment, to rehabilitation of youth, back to punitive sentencing in 2002. In Spain, the Organic Law (OL) of

4/1992 which was also known as the Juvenile Court Reform Act, gave full power as decision maker in juvenile cases to the prosecutor. They had the right to dismiss or send the case to court depending upon what was in the best interest of the youth. Spain had a unique system established; they implement two judges- one to investigate and one to set sentence. This was created to keep the sentencing as impartial as possible (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). The OL was structured with minimal interventions in the lives of the youths with limits set on imprisonment or other custodial sentences. The sentencing judge could issue alternatives to custodial placement such as suspending their driver's license, placement with a trusted family member, community service, or participation in a community-based treatment facility (John Jay R&E Center, 2012).

The custodial placement options range from treatment facilities to full confinement with a variety of placement restriction options. The most restrictive was the closed center option which was meant to "instill social competence;" half-open option allowed the youth to leave periodically to receive services off-site; and the least restrictive was the open centers which allow the youth to participate in various community-based activities (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). The therapeutic centers provided mental health support and/or drug and alcohol counseling. Spain also had weekend custody centers. These allow the juvenile to attend school and work during the week and spend their weekends in custody (John Jay R&E Center, 2012).

The closed custodial centers were meant for youths who have committed a violent or serious crime; but the consistency with sentencing was inconsistent and was more

determined by region. Some areas rarely use the closed custodial centers whereas others order youths there frequently (John Jay R&E Center, 2012).

Since the establishment of the OL of 4/1992, there have been modifications and additions. The Organic Law 5/2000 restricted prison and custodial sentences and age-graded punishment/sentences. The older youths are being held more accountable for their actions. The changes allow judges to sentence 16- and 17-year-olds up to 5-year sentences for serious crimes, whereas the 14- and 15-year-olds can only serve 2 years. The law also established new community-based sanctions such as walk-in services and improving social competency education based programs (John Jay R&E Center, 2012).

The Organic Law 7/2000 was created to respond to terroristic threats. The new law allows judges to issue youths engaging in terroristic activities longer sentences. It also changed the first-offense law to a warning, restriction of licensure, restraining order, probation, or community service (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). With the passage of both OL 5/2000 and 7/2000, custodial and community sanctions increased because of the judicial warnings decreased by over half. The system which was designed to be rehabilitative has become punitive in nature and the overall incarceration rate appears to be on a rise (John Jay R&E Center, 2012).

**Japan.** Japan has had a system which has evolved from the early eighth century with a very punitive system, which barely recognized the rights of juveniles, and would incarcerate youths for indeterminate amounts of time to a far more lenient system in 1990s where the judges would dismiss cases, increase probation, or suspend sentences.

Imprisonment was only for extremely serious cases or repeat offenders. Custodial options were still used but they were for rehabilitation and training purposes and varied in length from 4 months to 2 years. The training schools provide education, vocational training and rehabilitation services (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). At first glance, it appears that Japan's juvenile justice system is highly effective when one examines the numbers of youth incarcerated, but those numbers are off-set by the thousands of youth housed in the training schools. In recent times, Japan enhanced the punitive nature of their system by increasing the prosecutors' ability to send 14-year-olds to criminal prosecution and young people, ages 16 to 20, who commit murder automatically to criminal trial. It is speculated that this will increase the number of youth in prison in Japan (John Jay R&E Center, 2012).

**Columbia.** Columbia did not implement different juvenile laws or penalties verses adults until after 1991. Before that time, all were tried and sentenced the same as well as housed in the same prisons. Juvenile sentences were open-ended and could be extended at the discretion of the prison staff. The Code for Minors (1991) stated that minor offenders are not legally responsible for their actions to the same degree and adults and it recognized rehabilitation rather than incarceration of youth. The law stated that no youth under the age of 18 could be incarcerated under any circumstances (John Jay R&E Center, 2012).

Treatment facilities were supposed to have been built but due to lack of government funding these never were constructed. Overcrowding and lack of options for juveniles forced child welfare workers to release them completely. Juvenile courts disregarded the Code for Minors law and sent the juveniles to adult prisons in high numbers (John Jay R&E Center,

2012). The Colombian government attempted to address the issues by establishing the Code of Criminality Procedure (2004) which banned juvenile incarceration in adult prisons and sent youths to the juvenile facilities that were overseen by the Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). No numbers regarding effectiveness were available.

**Belgium.** Belgium traditionally has two parties overseeing the juvenile justice system. The national government oversees the judicial portion of the courts whereas the local communities oversee the implementing of the sentence. The legal proceedings for juveniles was based on Belgium's Youth Protection Act (YPA) of 1965 (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). The focus was rehabilitative rather than punitive. Originally the age of responsibility for criminal actions was set at 16 but later was amended to 18. There is no other younger age group recognized. The YPA allowed juveniles to be sentenced to life in prison for heinous crimes but in 2006 this was prohibited. Juveniles can still be sent to the criminal court system for extended incarceration. The prosecution sends 1% to 3% to criminal court annually (John Jay R&E Center, 2012).

In 2002, Belgium prohibited juveniles to be incarcerated in the same facilities as adults. They constructed facilities that look and run the same as the adult facilities and are operated by the local government. The main purpose of these establishments is not rehabilitation of the incarcerated but confinement for public safety. The sentences are usually for 3-month periods with a review at that point. The sentence can then be extended by an additional 3 months with a review following; after that point the confinement is month

by month and is open-ended. Generally, most of the sentencing is alternative sanctions which are rehabilitative or restorative in nature.

Prosecutors have four courses of action as that can be use when dealing with youthful offenders:

1. They can dismiss the charges.
2. Send the youth to Special Youth Services to get treatment for family or personal problems.
3. Order alternative sanctions- restorative justice; rehabilitative services; community service.
4. For serious crimes, send the case to the youth court.

Most the cases are handled with implementing one of the first three options. Only 20% of the cases are heard in juvenile court and of those, half are sentenced to residential confinement (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). Belgium has been working since the 1990s to encourage more inclusion of restorative justice which would bring together the offender and the victim with the intent to give insight to the offender as to how the crime impacted the victim. Belgium is trying to make restorative justice the central component for the juvenile courts (John Jay R&E Center, 2012).

**France.** France has historically had a unique youth justice system. Up until the late 1600s the parents could have their children imprisoned upon their request, and for 250 years, there has remained very little in the line of a juvenile justice system. In 1945 French government passed the Order of 2/2/1945 which established educational options as the

preferred method of dealing with youthful offenders. The options were treatment and educational in focus; imprisonment was the last resort. Juvenile Court was created and the judge ordered the placements. If the judge did not feel the juvenile was remorseful, or the crime was exceptionally violent, they could order custodial placement. Crime rates increased significantly between 1985 and 2005. The percentage increase for 1985 was 36% but by 2005 it had climbed to 670% with convictions being 29,000 in 2002 and increasing to 59,000 in 2005 (John Jay R&E Center, 2012).

Due to the increases, the Juvenile Court shifted from educational and rehabilitative to punitive sanctions. Repeat offenders from ages 16 to 18 were ineligible for the rehabilitative sanctions and would now receive the same sentence that an adult would be issued for committing the same crime. The Order of 2/2/1945 offered two choices to the Juvenile Courts: custodial services and educational or vocational trainings. The government passed the Law of 9/9/2002 which made a medium alternative available for youth between 10 and 18. The new law included: compensations; participation in civic projects; bans on associating with victims, accomplices, and/or visiting the scene of the offense. Judges could also order parental custody, fines, community service, electronic monitoring, and suspended sentences (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). The law also created juvenile detention centers for youths ages 13 to 18. If the youth was non-responsive to the court ordered educational component, the court could order them to secure placement.

Juveniles under the age of 16 normally do not get sentenced in custodial placements. If the crimes designated sentence is at least 5 years, and they have served the educational



component already previously, then the judge can have them incarcerated. If the offender is age 13 to 16 and has had no prior offenses but the crime is punishable with a sentence that is 7 or more years, the judge has the right to incarcerate immediately without implementing other sanctions (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). The courts have issued custodial sentences for youths convicted of serious crimes nearly 95% of the time; also, the sentence cannot exceed one-half of the incarceration time of an adult's sentence who is convicted of the same crime (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). Custodial placements in France range from educational, rehabilitative, vocational, to closed secure placements. The first three offer transitional services to youths who are close to getting out of custody. The closed secure placements generally are a far distance from the juvenile's home and family.

Even with the shift towards more punitive discipline, the courts ordered lesser sanctions nearly 5% more between 2000 and 2006; the increase number for court ordered alternative sentences was 117 in 1980 compared to 3,275 in 2006 (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). France is also implementing programs for at-risk youth. They created a program which targets juveniles who are at risk of dropping out or who have dropped out. The goal was to get more to return to the educational system. Nine years after the beginning of the program, 70% of the participants returned to school (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). No rates on recidivism were available.

**Netherlands.** In the Netherlands, children under the age of 12 are not criminally responsible for their actions and historically the youth court judges have not needed to issue custodial sentences. But due to a large increase in violent juvenile crimes in the Netherlands,

the judicial system developed a punitive focus which created rising detention rates. The increases were noted beginning in the 1960s. From 1960 to 2005 the custody rate of juveniles doubled. Between 1997 and 2003 alone there was a 20% increase of detained youths. Holding spaces in juvenile institutes doubled in number going from 1000 to 2000 beds by 2005 (John Jay R&E Center, 2012).

The government began to look for diversionary programs to try and circumvent the juveniles before they reach the point of detention. Much like the other countries the police are the first contact from the legal system. They have been given the power to issue a warning, refer youths to support services, or place the youth in the juvenile Halt Program (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). The Halt program implements restorative justice practices such as payment of restitution or correct and/or repair damages from their offenses. For the juveniles to be part of Halt, they must take accountability for their actions. The police used Halt program over 21,000 times between 1996-2003 and it appears to be highly effective at reducing recidivism; the rate for recidivism for those who completed the program was quoted between 6% and 13% after 6 months (John Jay R&E Center, 2012).

Judges of juvenile courts have various options for sentences ranging from conviction without punishment, issuing a fine, rendering a suspended sentence or ordering detention. The incarceration can be from 1 day to 6 months. These non-custodial options were created in the early 1980s and took a while for them to be implemented. In 1983, 304 alternative sanctions were issued; 1990 had 2,771; and in 2003 more than 8,600 alternative sanctions were issued which was for more than half of the punishments issued that year (John Jay R&E

Center, 2012). Another program implemented is Kwartaalkursus. This is an intensive day program consisting of education and increasing vocational skills training. The success rate for the alternative sanctions is high with only a 12% to 15% failure rate (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). Due to the success rate, the Netherland government advocates for alternative sanctions. Per John Jay Research and Evaluation Center (2012) the Dutch government increased its use of alternative sanctions and treatment programs by more than three times that of 1995. The government is finding, based upon independent studies, that alternative sanctions are more effective at rehabilitation for juveniles than incarceration. Finding show that juveniles awarded alternative sanctions have lower offense rates than those in detention and if they do reoffend it is at lower frequency, and less serious (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). The Netherlands has an effective juvenile justice system in place.

**Italy.** Italy has a unique and effective approach within their juvenile court systems. Officials in Italy understood that the longer a child is removed from their educational setting, it disrupts the learning and maturing process. So, the government created the Juvenile Justice Procedural Act of 1988 which requires courts to use diversionary tactics first when dealing with juvenile offenders and have custodial placement as a last resort. The Act puts more power in the judges' hands to choose appropriate sentences. The three main choices options are that the judge can dismiss the case if s/he sees the offense as petty; they can issue a pardon if they think the youth is remorseful and will not reoffend; or they can order *messa alla prova* which means "putting you to the test" (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). *Messa alla prova* is basically a pre-trial probationary period which can be issued for all crimes,

including murder. If none of the other options work, and the youth ends up in court, the remaining outcome for sentencing is incarceration. Judges do still have the right to suspend a youth's prison sentence and have them put on intense community supervision. This happens frequently but the most severe crimes will result in custodial detention in an Italian prison. The number of cases that result in incarceration is about 20% (John Jay R&E Center, 2012).

Since the implementation of the Juvenile Justice Procedural Act of 1988, the number of incarcerated youths has dropped significantly. In 1988, there were approximately 7500 juveniles in prison settings; this number dropped in the first 2 years to under 1000 incarcerated youths (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). In the years to follow, the numbers increased to 2000 annually but had remained stable throughout the 1990s. At any given time in Italy, there are generally only 500 youths incarcerated at one time and this number includes those waiting for pre-trial. Since 2001, there have been less than 200 juveniles sentenced to prison terms (John Jay R&E Center, 2012).

Due to the decrease in prison sentences being issued for juveniles in Italy, the country now has one of the lowest incarceration rate in the world for youthful offenders. The use of alternative diversionary techniques has been highly effective keeping juveniles out of the legal system. Judges issue far more educational support services that aid in the rehabilitation process rather than punitive sanctions and this has proven to be extremely effective and worth the decade it took to get the alternative rehabilitation programs established (John Jay R&E Center, 2012).

**New Zealand.** New Zealand adapted a unique approach to dealing with youthful offenders which implements restorative justice principles. They developed a collaboration between youths, their families, the victims, the community, and the government (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). Historically, New Zealand's juvenile justice system was punitive in nature allowing children as young as 7 years old to be responsible for criminal acts; but in 1961 that was raised to the age of 10. In the 1970s the Children and Young Person's Act of 1974 defined the ages of responsibility in the eyes of the court. A "child" was a person under the age of 14. Murder and manslaughter are the only punishable crimes for a "child" in the New Zealand courts. A "young person" is an unmarried person between the ages of 14 to 16; young persons are liable for all criminal offenses. Ages 17 and up are considered adults and criminal responsibility is handled in the adult courts (John Jay R&E Center, 2012).

Like many of the other countries, New Zealand corrections implements the least restrictive punishment to youthful offenders. The leaders' hope of their correctional juvenile programs is to rehabilitate and reintegrate. They recognize that incarceration of youths is detrimental, ineffective, and does not reduce recidivism. The juvenile courts have options ranging from the harshest which is transferring the case to adult courts and incarceration to the least restrictive of discharging the case. The residential confinement for a youth cannot exceed 3 months and then their case is transferred to a social worker who supervises them for the next 6 months. In between confinement and discharge are the options to have community supervision with set activity requirements, community service, fines, restitution, and reprimanding (John Jay R&E Center, 2012).

With the passing of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families (CYPTF) Act, juveniles were to be incarcerated if the youth was likely going to abscond, reoffend, or interfere with their case, otherwise it made arrests the absolute last resort. It encouraged courts to keep youths in their own communities with their families. It allocated funds for rehabilitation services which incorporated the family, victim, and community to be involved. This gave a voice to the victim and the offender's family as to the consequence for their action.

Like many other countries in the world, the police are the first step for the youth judicial system in New Zealand. The CYPTF Act gave the police the authority to pull the offending youth and their family or guardian into the police station to discuss the youth's criminal activity and provide a formal written notice. The percentage of cases handled outside of court up to 2003 was 84% and 76% were issued warnings or alternative sanctions; 44% received the written notifications and 32% were given either participation in alternative educational programs, written apologies, or restitution (John Jay R&E Center, 2012).

The number of arrests of 14- to 16-year-olds dropped significantly in New Zealand between 1987 and 1990, nearly 75%; but then it began to steadily increase to 2001. The initial number in 1987 was over 8000 arrests and 11,327 juvenile cases which dropped to 2000 arrests and 2249 cases by 1990. Even with the steady increases up to 2001 the numbers never reached the highs of previous years. The country had a total of 4046 cases and of these, only 234 were transferred to higher courts; of these 234, only 73 resulted in incarceration versus 295 sentenced in 1987 (John Jay R&E Center, 2012).

The CYPTE Act gave voice to people who normally would not have had a voice in the outcomes of the court. It created the Family Group Conferencing (FGC) which took the place of court hearings for those youths who are persistent and serious juvenile offenders. It allowed offenders, offender's families, victim(s), and a youth coordinator to determine the best course of action for the youth (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). It is a three-stage process: first is information sharing; private family deliberation; and reaching of an agreement. These agreements were then submitted to Youth Courts as plans for the juvenile's plan for restorative justice. The plans were accepted 95% of the time. The juveniles who were low-level offenders were normally heard in the Youth Court. The initial findings from the FGC found that 26% who participated were reconvicted within a year which was no higher than those who were released from a residential confinement. One interesting finding was that those who did not apologize to their victim in the FGC were three times more likely to be reconvicted than those who did apologize. Also, the FGC has replaced formal court hearings in 75% of the cases (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). Between 1991 and 1994, the department of juvenile justice was given a \$7 million budget cut (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). It was anticipated that this would greatly affect the programs and alternative sanctions available to youths and the FGC. No statistics were available regarding recidivism directly related to the budget cuts.

**South Africa.** South Africa's juvenile justice system is fairly new and is too young to deem effective or ineffective. The country spent 13 years in debates, drafting various bills, researching and exploring alternative methods of punishment and sanctions before they

passed the Child Justice Act (CJA) in 2009. Before this legislature, there was no formal specification as to criminal law for youthful offenders so most ended up incarcerated. CJA was created to offer alternatives for diversionary options. In the early 2000s, South Africa had the second highest incarceration rate of juveniles in the world; they were just behind the United States (John Jay R&E Center, 2012).

Under the Child Justice Act the juvenile courts were given another option for residential placement rather than prison. The courts could order youths to residential care centers which offer counseling for substance abuse, physical abuse, as well as numerous other services for runaways, and children living in deprivation without adequate family resources to help with any on-going physical disability. These placements were meant to be temporary and a last resort. Per John Jay Research and Education Center (2012), in 2008 there were 20,000 youth housed in these centers.

Limitations were placed on the age of imprisonment for children under CJA. Youths under the age of 14 cannot serve prison sentences. Juvenile courts can issue prison to those over 14 but it must be for the minimum amount of time possible. Before the passage of CJA, South Africa had the second highest incarceration at 69 per 100,000 as well as the second highest youth custody rate in the world. The United States is the highest with an incarceration rate of 295 per 100,000 youths (John Jay R&E Center, 2012).

Diversionary sanctions that were created with the passage of the act include a new four-category sentencing option: community-based sentences, restorative sentences, correctional supervision, and secure detention (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). The diversions



can be issued by the prosecutor, magistrate, or the sentencing court. They can range from the prosecutor issuing a sanction; the magistrate dismissing the case; or the court ordering a diversionary sentence at trial. The Child Justice Act makes restorative justice a key component with the implementation of family group conferencing and/or victim-offender mediation. The alternative sanctions purpose is to make the offender take accountability, improve integration, allow reconciliation, promote rehabilitation, and reduce incarceration (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). It is too early to know the true impact of the CJA has had in South Africa. Research was not available now.

**Australia.** Australia is like the United States in the fact that the regions vary tremendously. In the United States, every state can have their own juvenile laws and procedures. Australia has the same construct with each of its states and territories implementing its own set of laws and various sanctions. The age recognized as a juvenile in Australia is 10 to 17 years of age.

The police are the gatekeepers in Australia, as they are in many countries around the world. The police can issue formal and informal warnings or refer the case to the Youth Justice Court system (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). The incarcerations rates vary across all the regions. According to John Jay Research and Education Center (2012) Victoria had the lowest incarceration rate in 2006/2007 with 9 per 100,000 youths; the highest was in Northern Australia with a 99 per 100,000. The national average is relatively low though, 31 per 100,000.

The court can order formal supervision and that can take form in either detention or community-based supervision. “Community-based supervision” includes probation, parole, youth supervision orders and youth attendance orders (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). Policy makers are researching other community programs to further reduce incarceration.

Victoria’s success is based upon the reform efforts their juvenile justice system made in 2000. They implemented alternative sanctions to be used especially with high-risk youths. These were rehabilitation programs and transitional support programs aiding those who are being released from custody. They also identified the at-risk youth with the Vulnerable Youth Framework (VYF). These tracked juveniles with reports of high truancy, substance use, and family conflict (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). The VYF promotes rehabilitation through educational and vocational training.

South Australia passed the Youth Court Act 1993 which advocated for programs that promote mentoring, youth and family support, poverty intervention, and victim-offender mediation (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). The area does have two secure detention facilities but they provide supports to the youths upon their release. The Youth Court Act required courts to provide offenders with care and guidance to aid in their rehabilitation into becoming productive members of the community. This is done by keeping them in their community and they learn responsibility by holding a job and continuing their education.

Western Australia passed the Young Offenders (YO) Act of 1994 which calls for custody as a last resort. Instead the system depends upon sentencing options such as fines, community-based sanctions such as community service or treatment-based programs,

intense supervision outside of detention, conditional release orders with the possibility of incarceration if the juvenile did reoffend, and detention followed by supervised release (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). Western Australia implemented Intensive Supervision Program (ISP) for the juveniles who commit minor offenses. It has therapeutic and mediation programs for which the juveniles can participate. It has been effective in reducing recidivism and imprisonment costs.

Northern Australia has the highest rate of incarceration of youths because it is blocking repeat offenders from participating in alternative sanctions. The northern region also has The Family Responsibility Order which holds parents responsible for their children's criminal actions. Parents are required to monitor their children's participation in school attendance, curfews, and any mandated treatment programs. Failure to do so will result in the parents being punished through fines, or property seizure (John Jay R&E Center, 2012).

Finally, Queensland juvenile justice is overseen through a partnership between the Department of Communities and the police department. Juveniles can be sentenced to prison and they are required to serve half of their sentence in a secure facility while the other half is done with supervised release (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). To reduce the number of incarcerated youths, Queensland enacted the Correctional Bail Program. This allows the courts to suspend a detention sentence if the juvenile agrees to participate in an intensive community program. If the juvenile reoffends while on the program, they are immediately incarcerated to serve their sentence. Queensland is the only territory to house 17-year-olds in adult prison facilities (John Jay R&E Center, 2012).

The Juvenile Justice Act of 1992 was developed in Queensland to promote the reintegration of youths from custodial placements. It promoted the use of alternative sanctions for those with minor crimes or who were non-repeat offenders. The Act made the juvenile accountable for their actions and to take responsibility for their crimes. Secure custody was a last resort for the minimal amount of time possible. Police powers were also expanded with amendments that were added to the Act. This gave police the power to arrest, impose curfews, increase minimum sentences for murderers, and relax orders against the publishing of identifying information for juveniles (John Jay R&E Center, 2012).

In the Australian Capital Territory, the Children and Young People Act was passed in 2008. It created the groundwork for the juvenile justice system of the area. Parents, communities, and government all play a part in securing the well-being of their children. It also encouraged community sentence options (John Jay R&E Center, 2012). The law prohibited life sentences for juveniles under the age of 18. It also split detention sentences allowing half to be served in a secure setting and the remainder served with intense community supervision. Rehabilitative and treatment services could also be customized to the needs of the youth. Police were given the power to issue warnings and/or diversionary programs to juveniles depending upon their criminal history, maturity, and their parental input (John Jay R&E Center, 2012).

### **Global Summary**

Overall, the countries with the greatest success rates with juvenile offenders have some common core elements. The police are the first contact the youth have with the

judicial system. They have the power to be the gatekeepers to alternative constructive rehabilitative services if they feel the youth will not reoffend and will benefit from less punitive and more restorative measures. They are given the authority to: issue a formal caution or warning either verbally or in a formal written notice; recommend alternative sanctions including restitution, apologies, participation in educational programs, and community service. They can also arrest and recommend court proceedings.

In all the countries with lower incarceration rates, parents, family, community and government all worked together to assure the least restrictive and most rehabilitative and restorative diversionary programs were implemented. In Queensland using split sentences to reduce incarceration time and having community-based intense supervision; in Italy sentencing with a pre-trial probation period; Netherlands Halt Program which makes the juvenile responsible for their actions; and South Africa implementing restorative justice as a key component to the diversion by encouraging family group conferences and victim-offender mediation. These actions encourage youths to recognize how their actions impacted another person. It allows them to take responsibility, make amends, as well as help them integrate back into and be a productive part of society.

### **An Overview of the United States Juvenile Justice**

The United States has the highest incarceration rate of any country of the world. While the United States has 5% of the world's population, the combined number of men, women, and juveniles being housed in detention centers across the country at any point is roughly 25% of the entire world's prison population; approximately 2.2 million people

(Collier, 2014). Per the United States Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) (2010), for every 100,000 residents there are 500 prisoners; compared to worldwide incarceration rate of 100 per 100,000 residents on the average. In 2013, 2,220,300 adults were either in federal, state, or county jails. An additional 54,148 are juveniles being held in juvenile detention (US Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2013).

Table 1

*Age on Census Date by Sex for United States, 2013*

Age	Sex		
	Total	Male	Female
Total	54,148	46,421	7,727
12 & younger	706	602	104
13	1,957	1,555	402
14	4,717	3,879	838
15	9,473	7,918	1,555
16	14,108	11,942	2,166
17	15,100	13,112	1,988
18 & older	8,087	7,413	674

(Sickmund, Sladky, Kang, & Puzzanchera, 2015)

According to the Juvenile Justice Policy Oversight Committee (JJPOC) meeting minutes at the University of New Haven (2015, February 11) Connecticut's Representative Toni Walker has been fighting since 2008 to reduce the number of residentially confined juveniles. She states most of these are non-violent and involve property crimes such as theft, vandalism; and of this delinquent population only 3% are considered dangerous. Walker is advocating for more rehabilitative rather than punitive practices for youths within the United States (Hammond, 2008).

## History of Juvenile Justice in the United States

The United States juvenile justice system came into existence because of a public outcry for better conditions for the youth who were incarcerated. Before the 1800s there was no alternative placement for delinquent youth other than housing them in adult facilities. Children as young as 7 years old were held with adults. The outcome of this was to teach those who were unsophisticated delinquent youths the ways to be better criminals. The young people were mentally, physically, and sexually abused while incarcerated. Upon their release a savvier career criminal emerged and this began a trend that would stay with the delinquent youth (Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, 2016).

Rehabilitative rather than punitive sentences were being examined for possible effectiveness by political and social reformers based upon studies of psychologists of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (Einstein Law, 2016). The housing of incarcerated juveniles in prisons was changed to a reform school hoping to rehabilitate rather than punish. In 1824, the New York House of Refuge was established. By 1899, 48 other states followed and created similar reform schools for supervised placement of the juveniles.

**The progressive age.** The Progressive Era reforms of 1900- 1918 began the transformation of the juvenile system. Society felt it had a commitment to the young offenders to rehabilitate before they became career criminals. One of the changes was for the court system to have the authority to exercise its right to *parens patriae* (state as parent or guardian) role (Einstein Law, 2016). This gave the judicial system the responsibility to oversee for the well-being of the juvenile while in their care. The government was

responsible until they deemed that there were positive changes demonstrated or until the juvenile became an adult. One of the changes of this time was the court system for juveniles. It was now separated from the adults and was less formal. The juvenile did not have legal representation and it was up to the judge to make any legal considerations regarding the nature of crime as well as the overall disposition of the juvenile. Sentencing was at the judge's discretion. At that time, the reform schools were like orphanages and many of the youth housed there were indeed homeless or orphans (Einstein Law, 2016).

**Supreme Court decisions.** By the 1960s juvenile courts had full jurisdiction over all cases for persons under 18 years of age. The Fifth Amendment, which is the right to a trial by jury and freedom against self-incrimination, and the Fourteenth Amendment, which requires all peoples to have equal protection under the law were not recognized for juveniles. The Supreme Court delivered a decision in 1967 by Judge Abe Fortas in the case of *In re Gault*, 387 U.S. 1 (1967). This was the turning point for legal rights for juveniles. The findings stated all youth had the same legal rights as adults when facing criminal proceedings. The youth have a right to receive fair treatment under the law and stated the following rights of minors (Einstein Law, 2016):

- The right to receive notice of charges
- The right to obtain legal representation
- The right to confrontation and cross-examination
- The right to receive a transcript of the proceedings
- The right to appellate the review



Up until this time, it was not mandated that juveniles have legal representation while being questioned by law enforcement. Many of the juveniles incriminated themselves out of pressure and intimidation. The *Miranda Rights* would limit the confrontation a juvenile would experience without proper representation; it also gave them rights within the eyes of the law. The court's outcomes for *Gault* set in motion other key Supreme Court cases for juvenile rights.

*Gault's* outcomes were quoted as the Supreme Court issued its decision for *In re Winship*, 397 U.S. 358 (1970) which stated, "that for adjudications of delinquency, the standards of proof required is the same as for criminal cases (beyond a reasonable doubt). As *Gault* confirmed, 'civil labels and good intentions do not themselves obviate the need for criminal due process safeguards in juvenile courts'" (p. 1) (National Juvenile Defense Center, n.d.). This was the beginning to various juvenile court cases to be decided by the Supreme Court. It also lessened the difference between juvenile court proceedings and adult.

*McKeiver v Pennsylvania* 403 U.S. 528 (1971) held that "the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment did not guarantee the right to trial by a jury in the adjudicative phase of a state juvenile court delinquency proceeding. If a jury were imposed upon juvenile trials, there would be little left to distinguish a juvenile delinquency hearing and a criminal trial. That ruling by the Supreme felt it wasn't necessary to have a jury for fact-finding" (p. 1) (National Juvenile Defense Center, n.d.). The Supreme Court stated in *Breed v. Jones* 421 U.S. 519 (1975) that once a juvenile has been tried in an adjudicated hearing, it is in violation of the Double Jeopardy Clause of Fifth Amendment to subsequently have a criminal trial for the

same offense. This demonstrates the differences between the adult and juvenile criminal due process procedures.

The Supreme Court ruled on *Roper v. Simmons* 543 U.S. 551 (2005) regarding the death penalty and juveniles. Justice Kennedy stated that “the imposition of the death penalty for crimes committed by individuals under the age of 18 is cruel and unusual punishment within the meaning of the Eighth Amendment . . . The Court consistently limited the death penalty to the very worst of offenders” (National Juvenile Defense Center, n.d., p. 1). Justice Kennedy cited the neurological studies outcomes that were new finding at the time. He stated that there were three distinct differences that separated juveniles from adults and removed them from the entitlement of “the very worst offenders.” First was that,

“juveniles lacked maturity and have an underdeveloped sense of responsibility resulting in impetuous and ill-considered actions and decisions. Second, juveniles are more vulnerable and susceptible to negative influences and outside pressures, including peer pressure. Third the character of a juvenile is not yet formed as that of an adult. Thus, they possess far more potential for rehabilitation. (National Juvenile Defense Center, n.d., p. 1)

*Graham v. Florida*, 130 S. Ct 2111 (2010) expanded upon *Roper v. Simmons* saying that life in prison without the possibility of parole was unconstitutional for individuals age 18 and under. The opinion of the Court stated “while a state need not guarantee the offender eventual release . . . it must provide . . . some realistic opportunity to obtain release before the end of the term” (National Juvenile Defense Center, n.d., p. 2). There was no clarification on the statement “realistic opportunity to obtain release” which leaves it very ambiguous. *Miller v. Alabama*, 567 U.S. (2012) continued with this same type of case. The Court found

that juveniles cannot be sentenced to life without the possibility of parole for homicide crimes, even if this is the only sentence option; other mitigating factors need to be considered regarding the case before a juvenile can be sentenced to *life without the possibility of parole* (National Juvenile Defense Center, n.d.).

**Juvenile justice 1975 to 2010.** From 1975 to 1995, the United States saw a steady incline in the number of juveniles being incarcerated. In 1995, the number peaked with 107,637 confined on any single day; since then the numbers have been declining but the U.S. still has the record for the most individuals incarcerated, for both adults and juveniles. Politicians and lawmakers thought that the year 2000 would introduce us to the ultimate super criminal due to the rapid rise of violent crimes up through 1995, but the rates steadily declined and are currently holding equal to the 1980s totals.

From 1995 to 2010 the confinement rates dropped by 41% with the decline from 2006 to 2010 was roughly three times faster than from 1997 to 2006 (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013). The study completed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation (2013) compares the disparities in confinement by race:

Table 2

*Youth in Confinement in the U.S. (rate per 100,000)*

1997	Ethnicity	2010
201	Non-Hispanic White	127
968	African American	605
468	Hispanic	229
490	American Indian	367
195	Asian & Pacific Islander	47

Per the study: African-American youth are nearly five times as likely to be confined as their white peers. Latino and American Indian youth are between two and three times as likely to be confined. The disparities in youth confinement rates reflect a system that treats youth of color, particularly African Americans and Latinos, more punitively than similar youth (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013). By 2010, there was a decline of young people being confined in 44 states and in the District of Columbia with several of the states reporting that the confinement rates dropped to half or more than half of those of 1997s reported totals (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2013).

In 2008, just over 2,000,000 youth under the age of 18 were arrested; about 95% had not been accused of violent crimes, such as rape, murder, or aggravated assault; in 2010, of the nearly 100,000 juveniles serving time in a residential placement, 26% were convicted of property crimes only, such as arson, burglary, or theft (Gottesman & Wile Schwarz, 2011). States are being encouraged to examine different alternative sanctions for non-violent juvenile crimes rather than residential placements.

**Varying state laws.** The United States law is directed by the Supreme Court and the Amendments; but each state can govern their courts independently from each other. An example of that is the “once an adult, always an adult” law which states once a minor is tried in the adult court system for an offense, regardless of the level of the offense, they will always be recognized as an adult from that point forward in any judicial proceedings (even if the youth is acquitted or had the case dismissed); this is recognized in 34 states. Another

example is the age of competency to be tried as an adult varies from state to state. Most recognize 17 as the minimum age but a few have 16 and two have 15. All states can seek a waiver to have the right to try any age individual as an adult depending upon the severity of the crime. Anne Teigen (2014) published the following chart and explanation of the United States and their age of jurisdiction to stand trial within an adult court system.

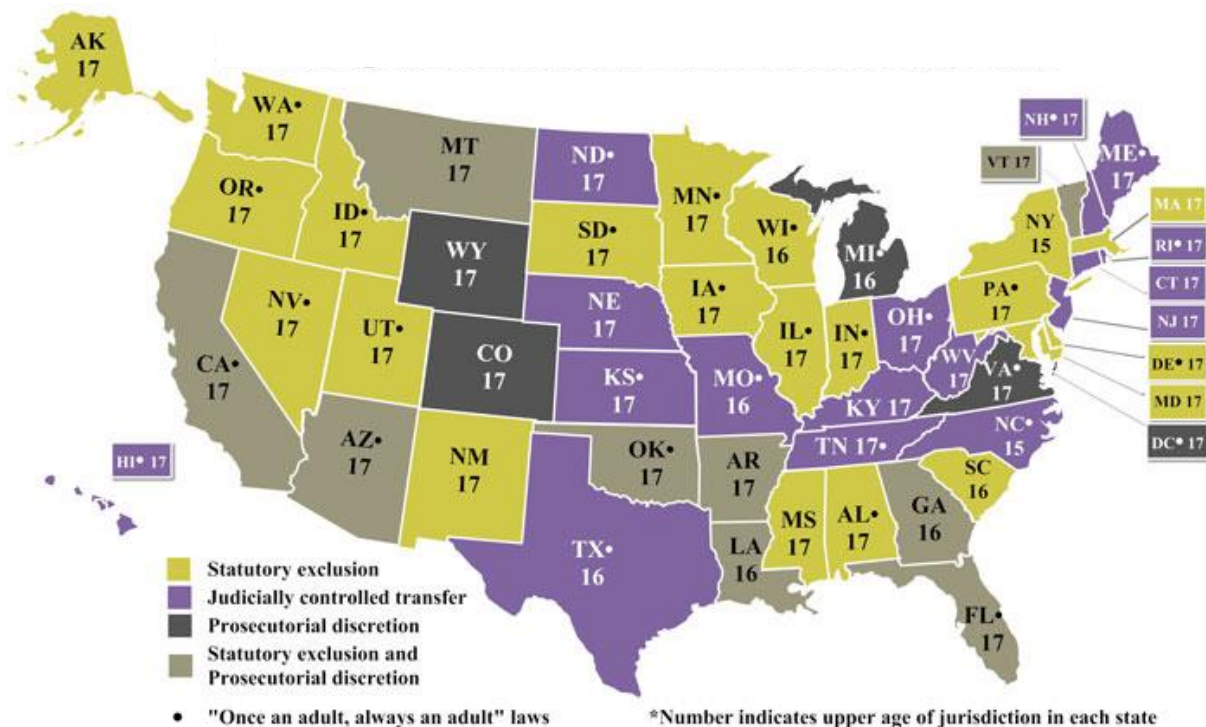


Figure 1. Juvenile age of jurisdiction and transfer to adult court laws.

State juvenile courts with delinquency jurisdiction handle cases in which juveniles are accused of acts that would be considered crimes if adults committed them. In 41 states, the maximum age of juvenile court jurisdiction is age 17. Seven states draw the juvenile/adult line at 16 and two states set it at 15. In these two states, 16- and 17-year-olds are automatically tried in the adult system. However, all states have transfer laws that allow or

require young offenders to be prosecuted as adults for more serious offenses, regardless of their age. Four forms of transfer laws are:

- Statutory Exclusion—State law excludes some classes of cases involving juvenile age offenders from juvenile court, granting adult criminal court exclusive jurisdiction over some types of offenses. Murder and serious violent felony cases are most commonly "excluded" from juvenile court.
- Judicially Controlled Transfer—All cases against juveniles begin in juvenile court and must literally be transferred by the juvenile court to the adult court.
- Prosecutorial Discretion Transfer—Some categories of cases have both juvenile and criminal jurisdiction, so prosecutors may choose to file in either the juvenile or adult court. The choice is within the prosecutor's executive discretion.
- "Once and adult, always an adult" Transfer—The law requires prosecution in the adult court of any juvenile who has been criminally prosecuted in the past, usually regardless of whether the current offense is serious or not.

The Center for Disease Control and Prevention Task Force (2007) as well as studies conducted in New York (1996), New Jersey (1996), Florida (1996), and Pennsylvania (1999) found juveniles who enter the adult judicial system are not being "rehabilitated" but are more likely to reoffend with more violent crimes following their release, usually in less than a year. Also, the legal stipulations affiliated with a felony conviction in the adult systems can have a life-long impact on a juvenile. In some states, juveniles would have some of their rights revoked same as the adults, and their crimes would become accessible through public

record. Also, they would never be allowed to serve in the military; own a gun; or vote in elections.

Experts argue that juveniles are far more responsive to rehabilitative services based upon the structure and development of the juveniles' brain and their lack of understanding of the ramifications of their criminal actions. Legislators and reform activists argue that it is in the youths' best interest to be kept within the juvenile system, provide treatment, guidance, continued education, and restorative consequences. They argue that juveniles are less likely to reoffend when interventions are appropriate such as mental health screenings and treatment or using pre-trial diversionary programs (National Conference of State Legislatures, n.d.).

Community-based sanctions have been producing positive results. Juveniles are given punitive sentences but they remain close to their families and have the support and structure of a therapeutic center. The placement numbers are smaller per facility; juveniles tend to stay within their community; in some instances, juveniles can still attend their regular school assuring that their education is not disrupted; treatment for drug and alcohol abuse, and mental health services can be provided; and it is less expensive to house the juvenile offenders in a community-based facility than in a traditional residential facility (Gottsman & Wile Schwarz, 2011).

There was, and still is, tension regarding the social obligation to these youth and social control. Should society focus on the "best interest" of the child and rehabilitate, or focus on safety of the community by punishing with incarcerating? The debate has been

ongoing for nearly a century; this has been the concern in the forefront regarding society's obligation to its youth and its communities (Einstein Law, 2016; National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2001). The behaviorist approach, which focuses on reward and punishment, has been used on-again/off-again for many years with minimal effectiveness for reducing recidivism (Sheridan & Steele-Dadzie, 2005). Whereas countries around the world and communities within the United States have experienced positive outcomes with community-based sanctions that have a restorative, therapeutic basis (Council for Crime Prevention, 2016; Gottsman & Schwarz, 2011; John Jay Research & Evaluation Center, 2012).

### **Overview of Youth Incarceration and Recidivism Trends in Minnesota**

Minnesota Department of Public Safety: Office of Justice Programs published the September, 2013 study by Dana Swayze and Danette Buskovich, "Back to the Future: Thirty Years of Minnesota Juvenile Justice Policy and Practice 1980-2010" and "Back to the Future: Thirty Years of Minnesota Juvenile Justice Data 1980-2010." Minnesota trends mirrored those of national levels only delayed by approximately 3 years. There was a steady incline of juvenile arrests with the peak being in 1998 versus the national peak in 1995. The increase was an astounding 150% from 1980 to 1998 and then a steady decline back to approximately the same as the 1980 rates. From 1980 to 2011 the actual arrest rate variance was an increase of only .5%. In 1980, there was a reported 36,008 arrests; in 1998 it peaked at 79,584 arrests; and other than an occasional small influx the overall final amount of arrests reported in 2011 was 36,192; that equates to a variation of just 184 with those numbers remaining steady.



Table 3

*Minnesota Juvenile Arrests Based Upon Violent Crime from 1980 to 2011*

<b>Year</b>	<b>Rape</b>	<b>Robbery</b>	<b>Aggravated Assault</b>	<b>Murder</b>
<b>1880</b>	40	288	393	16
<b>1981</b>	36	313	337	3
<b>1982</b>	43	263	318	2
<b>1983</b>	58	232	377	6
<b>1984</b>	55	268	393	2
<b>1985</b>	98	270	562	8
<b>1986</b>	65	275	611	10
<b>1987</b>	88	265	602	8
<b>1988</b>	66	240	687	28
<b>1989</b>	65	286	906	7
<b>1990</b>	75	304	955	18
<b>1991</b>	89	381	893	20
<b>1992</b>	217	413	1,003	27
<b>1993</b>	202	437	1,095	33
<b>1994</b>	230	668	1,296	32
<b>1995</b>	217	661	1,196	49
<b>1996</b>	175	599	1,222	30
<b>1997</b>	192	644	1,210	24
<b>1998</b>	211	513	1,343	26
<b>1999</b>	186	365	1,072	7
<b>2000</b>	202	353	1,113	13
<b>2001</b>	160	355	942	12
<b>2002</b>	181	368	918	21
<b>2003</b>	165	359	831	14
<b>2004</b>	181	348	879	14
<b>2005</b>	131	416	807	7
<b>2006</b>	154	432	879	4
<b>2007</b>	134	423	807	7
<b>2008</b>	127	406	724	13
<b>2009</b>	108	356	632	3
<b>2010</b>	116	306	593	9
<b>2011</b>	115	335	486	6

United States national dropout rate in 1980 for 16- to 24-year-olds was just over 14% but by 2011 it had declined to 7.1%. These figures reflected students who exited high school and did not acquire a high school equivalency degree (Swayze & Buskovich, 2013). As the number of dropouts declined, the number of high school graduates or persons earning a G.E.D. ages 18 to 24 increased by 5.9% during 1980 to 2009.

Minnesota mirrored the national trend with their dropout rates. Minnesota's records chronicled that 1996 had just over 11% of all ninth graders who dropped out of high school before completing their four-year degree. By 2012, that number dropped to just over 5%. The graduation rate, or persons earning their G.E.D. on time in Minnesota also increased (Swayze & Buskovich, 2013).

These findings are significant because research has indicated that academic success is a factor for reducing the likelihood of a youth participating in delinquent behaviors. These elements include positive school attendance, academic engagement, and positive school climate and attitude. Per Dana Swayze and Danette Buskovich (2013) factors such as comprehensive school retention and dropout prevention initiatives, new focuses on positive school climates and behavioral support, and emphasis on the importance of high school and post-secondary degrees may have collectively worked to keep more youth engaged in school.

### **Positive Youth Perspective Development**

The punitive practices of the 1980s-2000s were re-examined for effectiveness and were discredited by numerous researchers. They found that punitive consequences were

ineffective and even exacerbated delinquent behaviors (Swayze & Buskovich, 2013).

Restorative justice with the support of community, family, and therapeutic structures have had the greatest impact regarding recidivism and rehabilitation of juveniles.

Various countries around the world have implemented creative alternatives to incarceration and have reduced the number of juveniles being put in residential placements. Numerous countries have the police or law enforcement as the gatekeeper to the youth's next step within the judicial system. Many times, law enforcement can circumvent the delinquent from becoming a statistic and help them to turn around while they still have an opportunity to make amends outside of the court system.

Researchers also have recognized that success within the educational system usually helps keep the youth's feeling of self-worth high. Students become discouraged when they feel they are failing or when they feel inadequate compared to their peers. The discouraging disposition makes students despise school and increases the likelihood of them dropping out without earning a high school diploma. Thacker and Kearney's (1994) study discusses the correlation between the lack of academic success and self-esteem. It is the slope on which one begins the downward spiral. There is a direct correlation between academic failure and delinquency. Students would rather not attend school than attend and feel they are inadequate compared to their peers. This is usually the beginning to truancy and eventually dropping out.

Currently, Finland ranks number one in the world for education whereas the United States is ranked number 29 (Sahlberg, 2014). Pasi Sahlberg (2014) is an expert regarding

educational change, classroom teaching, and teacher training around the world. His book, *Finnish Lessons: What can the World Learn from Educational Change in Finland*, chronicles the changes Finland underwent to reform their educational system without undertaking controversial reforms such as increased school choice, competition, and test-based accountability for teachers and schools.

Sahlberg discussed the educational system in Finland at an Education Minnesota Conference in St. Paul, Minnesota. Per Sahlberg, learning is a cooperative adventure in Finland's schools and pointed out that Finland has no special education department such as found in the United States. Instead, all students are considered in need of special educational services. If one student is struggling with a concept, the class will work with the student until s/he is comfortable with the concept and the class then moves forward. Everyone has concepts or issues throughout their academic career. Finland decided to try a different approach which has been very effective. Students do not feel as though they are unsuccessful; instead they are taught that everyone needs help occasionally. This has greatly reduced their students in need of academic services, reduced the dropout rate significantly, and dropped the delinquency rate Sahlberg (2014) shared. Finland has one of the lowest incarceration rates for juveniles of any country. Per Annie E. Casey Foundation (2013), Finland has 3.6 juveniles per 100,000 incarcerated compared to the United States which has 336.0 per 100,000. Reinforcing the importance of academic success and positive self-esteem for reducing juvenile delinquency. Having a juvenile justice system with a holistic approach to recognizing the needs of the young people, reinforcing academic success, and making

youths feel as though they are a valued part of the community could lead to reduced delinquency and incarceration.

### **Special Education and Early Precursors to Juvenile Delinquency**

Numerous studies have been conducted over the years trying to determine or understand the correlation between special education and juvenile delinquency. The National Center on Education, Disability, and Juvenile Justice cites Casey and Keilitz's (1990) study stating there are roughly 10% of the juvenile population in need of special education services in the United States educational system compared to 30% to 50% of the incarcerated youth having disabilities and need services. An Analysis of the Learning Styles of Adolescent Delinquents by Meltzer, Levine, Karniski, Palfrey, and Clarke (2001) sites the "importance of early educational failure intervention as a possible precursor of delinquency" (p. 600). Per Sheridan and Steele-Dadzie (December, 2005), reading and math skill delays can be documented in the majority of the children in the correctional institutes. Skill delays range from 2 to 5 years in delinquent youth; the delays were detected as early as second grade through documentation provided by parents, teachers, and educational records (Meltzer et al., 2001).

**Student academic level grouping.** It is common practice in schools to group children based upon their ability levels for ease of instruction. Some schools separate students into classrooms based upon their ability to learn. The National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (2001) concluded "when children that are considered to be slow learners are

grouped together, they come to see themselves as unfavorable. This can lead to a feeling of inadequacy and contribute to a dislike for school, truancy, and even delinquency” (p. 88).

If an elementary student begins a negative downward spiral without early interventions, the problem exasperates by high school leading the student to drop out. This was reinforced in the three studies chronicled in *Breaking the School to Prison Pipeline: Identifying School Risk and Protective Factors for Youth Delinquency* by Christle, Jolivet, and Nelson (2005). The first study examined “school variables related to academic failure and the differences characterizing high and low academically performing elementary schools” across Kentucky (p. 71). After comparisons were made, six schools stood out reporting they had high percentages of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds but three reported high achieving schools’ assessment scores and three reported low achieving academic scores. The first study wanted to examine the influences to create such variables. The second study examined school variables related to suspension rates and the differences characterized in the high and low suspension rates. Socioeconomics did not play a part in this study because the researchers could not locate a sample of schools that were demographically compatible so the focus was on the 20 schools with the highest and lowest suspension rates and four from each were selected. Finally, the third study examined the variables related to 20 of the highest and lowest dropout rates and chose four of each for this study.

The findings for these studies reinforced that socioeconomics and behaviors do play a role in a student’s academic success but it is not the only factor. It was discovered that

characteristics associated with risk factors for delinquency were found across all three academic levels (elementary, middle, and high school) (Christle et al., 2005). Some of the common findings were school personnel's negative beliefs regarding expectations for students' success, negative perceptions of school climate, and negative perceptions of family involvement. The largest contradiction to the socioeconomics playing a role in the students' academic achievement came with the six schools who have very low socioeconomic status yet students scored high on all academic assessments. The findings suggest that the teachers and staff's attitudes influence the student achievement. It was documented that the staff at those schools held high expectations for their students and had optimistic attitudes regarding their students' ability to be successful. Staff that have poor behavior management skills and lack instructional skills produce low achieving students (Christle et al., 2005). Christle and associates cite a piece of research by Jimerson, Anderson, and Whipple (2002) that states students, ages kindergarten through fourth grade, who were retained to repeat a grade were five times more likely to drop out than non-repeaters; and repeaters in grades five through eighth were eleven times more likely to drop out of school.

**Attendance.** Attendance has a bearing also on student academic success or failure. The schools who implemented positive proactive disciplinary measures rather than punitive strategies, had a lower risk level of student dropout rates (Christle et al., 2005). Whereas the students who have multiple instances of disciplinary suspensions have a far greater chance of academic failure and dropping out of school. Maguin and Loeber (1996) research demonstrated that low school achievement predicts delinquency. They state that the

frequency a student is removed from their learning environment due to discipline, sets in motion a cycle of academic failure and no means for the student to gain the proper academic or social skills to progress. Suspensions were the key reason given for students dropping out of school and per Coalition for Juvenile Justice (2001), 82% of the adult prison population is composed of high school dropouts.

**Dropout rates of incarcerated individuals.** The National Longitudinal Transitions Study found that 36% of the students with educational disabilities exited school by dropping out (Wagner et al., 1991) which may be correlated to the 1970s and 1980s studies conducted by Gottlieb and Zinkus (1981), Menkes (1976), Rutter (1984), and Williams (1976) which tied negative self-esteem to reoccurring school failure. Per Leary (1999), research has shown that low self-esteem is linked to many psychological issues and personal problems including depression, loneliness, substance abuse, teen pregnancy, academic failure, and criminal behavior. Per a study by Jolivette, Swoszowski, McDaniel, and Duchaine (2016) found that there are approximately 93,000 school-aged youth incarcerated annually and of this number, 30% or more will be eligible for special education services. Another study states that young people with disabilities more often experience academic and social failure and thus are more susceptible to dropping out (Baltodano, Platt, & Roberts, 2005). Thacker and Kearney (1994) state that academic failure reinforces a student's low self-esteem and perpetuates the belief for the student that they will not be successful with school work.

Research by Christle, Jolivette, and Nelson (2005) ties the academic failure of both students with and without disabilities to a higher rate of delinquent behavior and the



beginning of possible life-long negative issues or problems. Meltzer and associates (2001) stated an argument could be made that the inefficient and “erratic remediation” of basic skills by high school age may have contributed to the student dropping out.

On the other hand, positive interventions early in a student’s academic career can strongly influence them. By providing a safe, secure learning environment with positive caring staff and teachers who believe in their student’s ability to succeed, as well as believe in holding the students to high, yet attainable academic standards and expectations, will help to provide and reinforce strong academic and social successes (Christle et al., 2005).

### **Outward Bound History**

Outward Bound was founded in 1941 by Kurt Hahn and was based on the “character training” movement that was a strong influence of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries (Freeman, 2010). Per Freeman (2010), Hahn imparted portions of both the older muscular Christianity values of the 19<sup>th</sup> century which combined Christianity, health, fitness, and masculinity with the character traits exhibited by the survivors of the aftermath of war. The Outward Bound training originally was mariner type training. The first school was established by Kurt Hahn and Lawrence Holt in Aberdovey, on the coast of Wales, in 1941.

**The Blue Funnel Line.** The original Outward Bound School had a partnership with Alfred Holt and Company, which Lawrence Holt was a partner and co-owner of the Blue Funnel Line (Freeman, 2010). The Blue Funnel Line had a 4-year program for midshipman focused on “character training” and educated boys who were destined to become officers. Much of the Outward Bound’s training was similar in context; it was extreme athleticism,

seamanship, and preparation for the “land-based expeditions.” The biggest difference was that the Outward Bound’s course was 4 weeks long whereas the Blue Funnel line was a 4-year program. The boys were broken into groups, termed “watches,” to promote teamwork and friendly competition. Military terms were used commonly throughout (Freeman, 2010). The school came under scrutiny with accusations that they were using a disproportionate amount of training for seamanship. According to Hahn (1951) the school offered “not training for the sea but training *through* the sea” (Freeman, 2010, p. 25). Most of the participants were male industrial apprentices ages 15 to 19. The declared aim of the school was the development of character. The organizations main funding was from corporations sending their trainees to their school to help build future leaders for the organization.

**Additional training schools.** In 1946 the Outward Bound Trust was established to manage the existing school and to establish new ones. The next school created would use the premise of adventure through mountaineering. It was opened in 1950 by Adam Arnold–Brown who was one of Hahn’s first students in the Aberdovey site (Freeman, 2010). The context was the same in regards to exposing the students to extreme conditions and adventure for strengthening the character of the boys, but it would use challenging situations in the mountains rather than at sea.

Hahn founded the third school which was the Moray Sea School at Burghead in 1952. Many of the instructors at the sea schools were recruited from the military and the merchant navy. In 1954 a second mountain school was established at Ullswater and another in 1959 in Devon. The first Outward Bound School was founded in 1962 in the United States

by Joshua Miner, who had taught at the Moray Sea School. An all-girl school was created in 1963 in Rhowniar, Wales. It was the sixth school established but it was the first for females with courses for them to run (Freeman, 2010). The female school came under scrutiny saying it was creating “Tough Women” and opened the door to unfavorable publicity questioning “the idea of manliness” and its appropriateness (Freeman, 2010).

**Problems faced by the Outward Bound Program.** According to Freeman (2010), the Outward Bound program was contending with a multitude of issues: the accusation that Outward Bound was militaristic; the growing doubt of the long term effectiveness of a 4-week course; and the largest being the lack of verifiable evidence of the program's claims regarding the effectiveness or impact on the young participants' character. Another issue was the verbiage that changed over the course of time. What was once acceptable in the 1940s and '50s now in the 1960s had a distasteful connotation. Terms such as “character training” and “leadership” became associated with accusations of creating a militant youth and similarities to Hitler Youth (Freeman, 2010).

Outward Bound was an expensive program for businesses to invest in for employee development. Not only did the company pay for the program but they had to pay for the salary of a person who would be absent from their job for 4 weeks as well as run with a shortened crew for that time frame. The businesses began to question the effectiveness of the program. They felt that it may be just a high adventure vacation at their expense. There was no tangible evidence suggesting that Outward Bound provided long term life changing, character development, or leadership skills. In the mid-1960s this was discussed in great

length within the Outward Bound panel. It became less of an issue when the terms were changed and the focus was said to be “personal growth” and “self-discovery” (Freeman, 2010).

Finally, there was no realistic scientific study that could be used to reliably measure the impact of the program on its participants. Outward Bound Trust initiated two studies but they were deemed to have used “inherently problematic methods and cannot be described as independent research having been initiated by the Trust itself” (Freeman, 2010. p. 35). Other studies were conducted by Roberts, White, and Parker (1974) using various adventure outdoor courses including Outward Bound.

The outcomes were more pessimistic because of the descriptions used by the participants of the studies. They described the long-term effects as “marginal” and nearly two-thirds said they felt “different” but could not elaborate clearly as to how. This was crucial for the Outward Bound Trust. It became difficult to justify the investment for character training where there was no reliable evidence of the program having merit. Peter Rowntree, chairman for the Outward Bound Trust, suggested that a study be conducted gathering evidence from the boys who participated in their program and following them through their careers. They had no systematic way to accomplish this task nor have a control group on which to base their findings (Freeman, 2010).

**Character training for juvenile offenders.** During the 1960s there was a shift from “character-training” to “personal growth” and “self-discovery.” This became the “therapeutic method of dealing with juvenile delinquency” (Freeman, 2010. p. 36).

Reinforcing strong work ethic and teaching personal self-control were possible benefits of the youths' participation in the programs. The original Outward Bound mountain-training camps incorporated a feature which required the participants to "solo" in the mountains. This was just as the name suggested. Each participant would spend time alone in their camp in the mountain sites. It was done to strengthen their character and personality during adverse situations. This practice became standard for all Outward Bound Programs and especially in the American programs of the 1960s (Freeman, 2010).

Over the course of time, Outward Bound struggled with the terminology for which to describe its outcomes of the participants. Vocabulary was mainly the chief thing that changed or evolved from 1950 to 1970. According to the research from Freeman (2010), "The physical training, expeditions, encounters with the natural world, and team-work all continue to form the main elements of the training even if the impact of these activities was increasingly described in terms of 'personal growth, citizenship, and self-discovery' rather than 'character-training'" (p. 41). Over the years, many have tried to find softer terms to describe what Outward Bound's mission; but per Roberts, White, and Parker (1974) they concluded it was all about character-development or training all along.

**Growth of similar programs.** Outward Bound has been imitated many times over since its inception in the 1950s. The camps range from therapeutic in nature, juvenile detention facilities located in the woods, to military styled boot camps. Throughout the United States there are a few military based juveniles' "boot camps" which still discipline with hard work and long hours for the incarcerated youth. They are in Illinois, Alabama,

California, and Louisiana. The wilderness/adventure programs, which mirror Outward Bound more closely, are located all over the United States. Richard Kimball (1980) wrote a paper on the wilderness/adventure programs and at that time he cited over 80 nationwide. They range from court ordered incarceration programs, drug and alcohol treatment facilities, and voluntary placement for at-risk youth which are designed to teach self-control, raise self-esteem, and build character. Leary (1999) stated that there is a direct link between enhanced self-esteem and positive psychological changes. Kimball (1980) also stated that definitive research finding to the validity of these programs is scarce but the “positive personal changes and reduced recidivism, in the short term” is significant enough to continue the programs.

### **Summary**

Per the United Nation’s World Youth Report (2003), juveniles who are most at risk for becoming delinquent share common characteristics: parental alcoholism or drugs, poverty, breakdowns in family, and abusive family dynamics. In war-torn countries, delinquency is usually due to survival because of being orphaned due to the death of one or both parents because of the turmoil or conflict. For survival purposes, orphaned youth will band together. Another issue is urbanization breaking the family structure because of modern work demands and economic circumstances. Some studies speculate that delinquency is a by-product of modernization. The study published by the United Nations insinuates that delinquency is a natural part of youthful behavior. United Nations Guidelines for Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (1990) states that “youthful behavior or conduct that does not

conform to overall social norms and values is often part of the maturation and growth process and tends to disappear spontaneously in most individuals with the transition to adulthood” (p. 2). This statement indicates that all youth commit some sort of minor infraction during their formative years but for the most part, it does not create a life-long criminal. Due to this, many countries have the police as the gate-keeper to juvenile infractions which allows leniency and potential for the youth to have an opportunity to avoid further interaction with the legal system. The police have the power to call in family, mediate issues, and/or send them on to the courts for a higher power of jurisdiction if they feel the seriousness of the crime merits judicial intervention.

The reduction of juvenile incarceration is directly correlated to juveniles’ academic success, self-esteem, family and community support. Implementing rehabilitative non-punitive programs has reduced recidivism in Belgium, New Zealand, Spain, Netherlands, and Italy. All the countries have alternative sanctions using the least restrictive option as their first choice. For the youths, that means keeping them within their own communities so their education is not disrupted and/or they can maintain a job while getting treatment or counseling. They also have the community play an active role in the rehabilitation process. Mediation between the offender and the victim as well as family group conferencing has been shown to be effective in South Africa.

In Central America,

Honduras has a very serious gang issue with the members being fairly young: 41 percent are under the age of 15 and 20 percent are 15-24-years old . . . About six percent of the youth population is illiterate; twenty-nine percent of the children drop

out of school before eighth grade . . . These factors create a fertile breeding ground for young members who are recruited by older youth and adult leaders of the gangs” (Cox, Allen, Hanser, & Conrad, 2014, p. 337)

Education is critical has a key factor in reducing/ eliminating delinquency or reducing recidivism. France created a program that encourages juveniles to earn their GED after dropping out of high school. This, in turn, increases the likelihood of the young person becoming a valuable member of the workforce.

Italy created the pre-trial probation allowing the offender a second chance before their actions become permanent scars on their records. Juveniles who were incarcerated for serious crimes were found to be more likely to reoffend because of the feeling of *having nothing to lose*. The impetuous actions of their immature nature have lifelong consequences that most youth do not realize until it is often too late. In the United States, juveniles who are convicted in adult court with a felony, forfeit their lifetime rights to vote, serve in the armed forces, or to be able to own gun plus it can limit their career options depending upon the severity of the offense.

Juvenile correctional programs are most effective when there is adequate funding by the government; parents are actively involved in their children’s life; police are given the authority to be a fundamental component as a first step intervention before the juvenile’s actions become truly detrimental; services are given early to the children who need special education programing to help facilitate academic success and eliminate the desire of truancy or dropping out; drug, alcohol, and physical abuse counseling services are provided. Rehabilitative community involvement including family, victim and offender mediation is



used as restorative justice practice so the victim's voice can be heard and the opportunity to correct the infraction may be given; this allows healing for the victim, the offender, and their families. Finally, having the court system issue the lowest possible penalty to the juvenile offender as well as be willing to explore alternative options to out-of-home placements or incarceration.

### **Chapter 3: Methodology**

The purpose of the historical analysis study was to examine the events, challenges, and benefits associated with the transformation of Thistledew Camp from a correctional logging camp for youth to the current day program which is governed by the Minnesota Department of Corrections and approved by Minnesota Department of Education as an alternate school setting offering a variety of services for youth participants. The analysis provides a unique service to leaders responsible for developing or maintaining small, effective programs for disenfranchised youth. Data and reported information were collected and analyzed to develop conclusions regarding program design, detail, and operations through research of historical public documents and historical archives stored at Thistledew Camp; oral historical recollections of events from former administrators and Minnesota Department of Corrections personnel; and numerous published related studies including from the Department of Corrections and Minnesota historical society.

#### **Research Questions**

The study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What were the major influencing factors in the development of the Thistledew Juvenile Programs?
2. What were the major challenges encountered in the development of the Thistledew Camp Program?
3. What were the benefits/advantages of Thistledew Camp Program as compared to the other juvenile reform correctional facilities?

## Research Design

In the review of literature, the researcher did not locate any studies on juvenile corrections implementing restorative justice with a wilderness camp element. Since this was a study of a historical nature, the researcher accessed primary source archival records, letters, journals, and oral historical information to fill in the gaps where documentation was scarce; and secondary source materials: newspaper articles, documents, and Department of Corrections' studies. Conversations with past Thistledew Camp Superintendents, Education Directors, Wilderness Challenge Directors and retired education staff were conducted face to face when possible. If distance was an issue, email was used as correspondence.

Isaac and Michael state (1995), "Case-studies are in-depth investigations of a given social unit resulting in a complete well-organized picture of that unit. Depending upon the purpose, the scope of the study may encompass an entire life cycle or only a selective segment; it may concentrate upon specific factors or take in total elements and events" (p. 52). "Oral history can be useful in helping to uncover knowledge of personal experiences which might not have been obtained from any other historical source . . . Oral evidence may provide us with a totally new perspective on historical events or perhaps reveal new lines of enquiry" (McDowell, 2002, p. 59). Thistledew Camp historical analysis study pieced together the historical events and key legislative elements that transformed Thistledew Camp from a vocational training logging camp into a minimum security, early intervention program.

## **Participants Selection**

The individuals who contribute to the study were selected because they were employed in various departments of the Thistledeew Camp program and could provide insight as to the events, challenges, and influences that occurred over the years to develop the program. It is from the participant perspectives that insight could be gained as to the key components which contributed to the program evolving from a work camp correctional facility to a facility which offers chemical dependency treatment, alternative education with special education accommodations, and utilizes a wilderness setting for cognitive development for the residents. Most of the participants were retired employees of Thistledeew Camp who were employed at the facility for 5 to 20 or more years.

All participants were employed in a variety of professional levels including but not limited to: facility superintendents, education directors, Wilderness Endeavors Director, case manager, and teachers. The researcher selected participants from these groups to obtain a broad range of opinions, insights, oral historical narratives, and historical data. Conversations were structured with the questions being open-ended to allow each participant to elaborate his/her own experiences, perspectives, and understandings. All the inquiries focused on the expertise or first-hand knowledge that each participant recollected.

The expertise of each of the participants (i.e., Education, Superintendent, and Wilderness Challenge) provided past and current knowledge which contributed to the foundation of the study. Knowing these contributing factors will give insight assisting

governmental and educational leaders who are establishing alternative programs to help service disenfranchised youth.

The researcher contacted past Thistledew Camp Administrators and staff which included, but not limited to the following:

- Retired superintendents
- Original Education Director
- Wilderness Program Director

#### **Institutional Review Board Approval (IRB)**

Stated by New Hanover Regional Medical Center (n.d.), An Institutional Review Board is charged with protecting the rights and welfare of people involved in research. The IRB reviews plans for research involving human subjects. Institutions that accept research funding from the federal government must have an IRB to review all research involving human subjects. The Food and Drug Administration and the Office for Human Research Protections (OHRP) set the guidelines and regulations governing human subjects' research and IRBs.

The definition of research involving human subjects is broad. The IRB must review research that involves the following areas, among others:

- Medical and administrative record data
- Research that uses leftover tissues
- Health services research
- Survey research

- Behavioral research
- Biomedical and other clinical research

Studies on the requirements for conducting a human subject study and the corresponding exams were taken to fulfill the requirements for the IRB and permission to conduct the interviews for the study even though there will be no human subjects directly involved the study.

### **Department of Corrections Approval**

After the prospectus is approved by the dissertation committee, and the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process is completed, the researcher must submit a copy of their Chapter 1, 2, and 3 along with all signed forms to the Minnesota Department of Corrections (MN DOC) Research Board for approval. A form requesting permission to do the study was submitted along with afore mentioned materials. Approval can take 6 to 8 weeks for the DOC review board to decide and no interviewing could proceed until approval was acquired.

DOC (2014) did not approve formal interviews of current employees for the use in this study but did allow for use of all retired and past employees. A broader scope of the study was requested by the Department of Corrections to include all the state-run juvenile facilities. Due to the extensive nature of that request, and the time restraints, that request could not be fulfilled in this analysis study. For future research, it would be a valuable contribution to the body of studies regarding juvenile correctional facilities. Department of Corrections did approve the use of all archived materials and photos. All other photos used will require copyright permission to use and it will be requested before publishing.

**Summary**

The purpose of the study is to aid administrators or leaders of programs for disenfranchised juveniles by examining the program design, detail, and operations which have made Thistledew Camp successful. The results of this study can be emulated to help create new programs to better serve adjudicated or troubled youths. Chapter 3 summarizes the research design and data collection methods. Chapter 4 provides findings and Chapter 5 details conclusions, discussions and recommendations for present practice and for future studies.

## **Chapter 4: Findings**

The historical information is chronicled in Chapter 4 into a timeline beginning with the establishment of territorial prisons up to the modern formal correctional facilities found in Minnesota 2015. Originally, all criminals regardless of age and gender were held in the same building. Confinement of the juveniles with the hardened criminals created career criminals out of the youth; the need for change was obvious if the delinquency cycle was to stop. This recognition contributed to the formation of the boys and girls reform schools which grew in time to form various juvenile correctional programs. Thistledeew Camp evolved from a juvenile correctional work camp of the 1950s which was established to teach the logging trade to delinquent youth.

### **History of Minnesota Department of Corrections**

Before the formation of “Minnesota Department of Corrections” in 1959, all incarceration was originally in a small territorial prison located in Stillwater, Minnesota which was built in 1853 (MN DOC, 2009). Its construction was entirely of stone and the total cost was to not exceed 40,000 dollars. In 1858, Minnesota became a state and the territorial prison became the first state operated facility. At that time, the prison had 22 cells to accommodate *all ages of male prisoners*. It also had manual labor complexes and two external buildings: a warden’s residence, and a stable. Per Minnesota DOC (2009), the number of jail cells in the Minnesota prison system grew from 22 in 1858 to 582 by 1889.



A new facility to house male offenders in St. Cloud, Minnesota was constructed in 1885 for three specific reasons; to aid in the over population of the Stillwater Prison; to have a facility which would be used as a men's reformatory; and the board hoped to circumvent



Photo 1: House of Refuge (1866,  
Courtesy of MN DOC)

the possibility of creating career criminals by not having the "young" men locked up in the Stillwater Facility with older, already hardened offenders (MN DOC, 2009). The board who decided to create the reformatory also thought that this would

"correct criminal tendencies" (MN DOC, 2009) and eliminate the establishment of chronic illegal behaviors.

In New York, 1825, Thomas Eddy and John Griscom created an organization that focused on abolishing the incarceration of youth and adult offenders together (The Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice, 2016). They named it *The Society for the Prevention of Pauperism*. Their work is the basis for the creation of the New York House of Refuge. It was the first ever to house poor, vagrant youth in an attempt to reform or circumvent the youth from delinquency. By the 1840s there were 25 other facilities established nationwide.

Minnesota followed what was a growing trend nationwide. In 1866 the Minnesota legislature authorized the construction of a juvenile correctional facility named the House of Refuge, which was to open in 1868 with two main goals in mind: first was to admit boys under the age of 16 and girls no older than 15 keeping them out of adult prisons and jails;

and provide education, shelter, and training for young people found guilty of crimes or neglected by incompetent parents (Nelson, 2014). The facility was established in St. Paul, Minnesota. This was the first state established facility that housed only juveniles. It was called The House of Refuge when it first opened but the name was later changed to Minnesota State Reform School shortly after being established (MN DOC, 2009).

The Minnesota State Reform School had two separate buildings- one for males and one for females (MN DOC, 2016; Zanders, 2005). Per Paul Nelson with Minnesota Historical Society (2014) it was one of the first reform schools without bars and security walls. It was located west of the Minnesota State Capitol building. The Minnesota State Reform School originated as a small 39 bed facility but by 1885 it had expanded to accommodate 162 juvenile residential placements, including some children less than 8 years of age. It grew from the two single gender buildings to a “complex of dormitories, workshops, and outbuildings” (Nelson, 2014, p. 1). The Minnesota State Reform School eventually became overcrowded. Thus, the facility suffered structural deterioration and insufficient water supply. Also, the population in the city limits of St. Paul was growing quickly and was closing in around the reformatory site. The legislature determined it was unsafe and not economical to allow the Minnesota State Reform School to remain open. In all, over 1260 juveniles passed through this facility (Nelson, 2014).

In 1886, the state legislature decided to move the juvenile facility to Redwing, Minnesota. Construction began in 1889 and Minnesota Reform School opened on their new

site in Redwing, Minnesota in 1890. Concordia University is now housed where the reform school was originally in St. Paul, Minnesota (MN DOC, 2009).

Red Wing Reform School's name was later changed in 1895 to Minnesota State Training School for Boys and Girls. In 1907, delinquent juvenile females were still housed within the facilities that served the males offenders. Support for separate female housing came from the legislature, facilities administration, and by local press. By 1908, the Minnesota state legislature authorized the creation of Minnesota Home School for Girls in Sauk Centre, Minnesota (MN DOC, 2009). The construction was completed and the facility was fully functional by 1911. The Sauk Centre location remained opened for 88 years, until it closed on January 1, 2000, due to budget restructuring (Minnesota House of Representatives, 2003).



Photo 2: Minnesota Home School for Girls, Sauk Centre, Minnesota (Courtesy of MN Historical Society).

This postcard image is of the main administrative building from the Minnesota Home School for Girls Sauk Centre, Minnesota. Architect: Clarence H. Johnston, Sr. This site encompasses 830 acres, 18 buildings and one main structure (Minnesota Historical Society Agency History Achieves, 2010). The Red Wing

facility is still fully operational, housing male juvenile offenders. The facility is licensed to house 10 through 21-year-olds but the Red Wing Admissions Office mandated that they not admit younger than 14 without administrative approval because the average age of residents is 17 years and 11 months. Red Wing also provides a separate community re-entry

program for 42 minimum-security adult male offenders (MCF-Red Wing, 2013). The facility has been thoroughly renovated, including adding a pre-vocational building which was completed in the fall of 2009 (MCF-Red Wing, 2013). The original stone buildings are unused but remain on site as part of the Minnesota Historical Society. The original structures can be seen in this early photograph by Charles George Steaffen (1905) entitled “Dress Parade on the Campus of Red Wing Training School”.

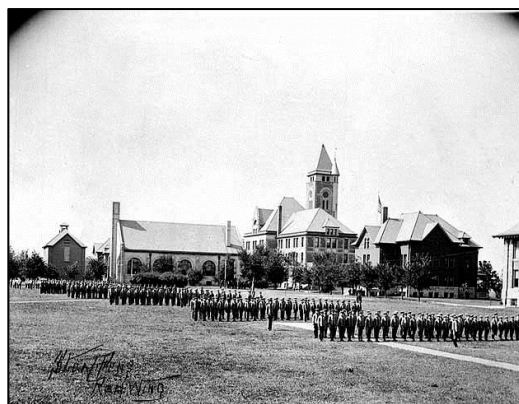


Photo 3: Dress Parade on the Campus of Red Wing Training School (MCF-Red Wing (1905). Courtesy of MN Historical Society.

Per Minnesota Department of Corrections

(2009) by 1945 a portion of the State Reformatory was set apart by the Director of Public Institutions for the care of delinquent “feeble-minded or mentally deficient persons.” These persons were committed as mentally deficient wards, rather than sentenced as criminal offenders. (This law was over turned in 1963.) In 1947, the Youth Conservation Commission (YCC) was created to assume authority from the Director of Public Institutions relating to older juvenile offenders. Minnesota was the second state to create this type of youth authority (MN DOC, 2009). The YCC’s mission was to prevent delinquency and juvenile crime,

and train the offenders in a trade in hopes to reduce recidivism. Their focus was to teach young male offenders, 18-23 years of age, who were committed from district courts.

By 1948, training programs were also offered in young females' facilities, and eventually in the adult male facilities. Per Minnesota Department of Corrections (2009), the first statewide system of probation and parole for juveniles was established that same year.

Full authority over all juvenile offenders in all the state correctional schools was transferred in 1947 to the YCC. The YCC open two male juvenile logging camps, one in 1951 in Willow River, Minnesota. The other was opened in 1955 in Togo, Minnesota and was named Thistledew Camp. The purpose was to teach 19-21-year-olds the logging trade. This was the establishment of



Photo 4: Thistledew Camp Original Site (1955; Courtesy of MCF-Togo)

Thistledew Camp (MN DOC, 2009); which today is also known as MCF-Togo. Over the course of time, the age of the juveniles served dropped to 13-17-year-olds; some residents turn 18 while at the camp. Thistledew Camp, is in the heart of the George Washington State Forest, approximately 30 miles north of Nashwauk, Minnesota (Nylund, 1975).

The actual state department entitled "Minnesota Department of Corrections" was established in 1959 by combining the YCC, the State Board of Parole, and adult institutions under the oversight of the Department of Welfare. At this same time, 1959, the renaming of

the State Board of Parole occurred; their new title was Adult Corrections Commission (ACC). Also, a new definition for the jurisdiction of juvenile courts was established entitled The Juvenile Court Code (MN DOC, 2009). By 1961, there was an expansion in the youth services for the DOC and a fourth Vocational Center was opened to train 16- to 18-year-olds in both automotive repair and food service. There was a restructuring in 1973 which abolished the YCC and ACC and gave the full authority to oversee the juvenile programs to the commissioner of corrections (MN DOC, 1999).

Over the course of time, and with restructuring due to budget restraints and financial reallocation recommendations provided by independent studies, only two male juvenile state operated correctional facilities still existed in 2015: MCF- Red Wing and MCF-Togo/Thistledew Camp.



Photo 5: Clearing the Land for the Camp. (1955, Courtesy of MCF-Togo).

These facilities operate under the same jurisdiction and rules, yet they function very differently. Per Minnesota DOC, MCF-Red Wing is a razor-wired fenced facility for serious and chronic offenders; it is a traditional correctional institute with more of a punitive discipline structure. Whereas MCF-Togo, also known as Thistledew Camp, is a relationship-based facility and utilizes its wooded surroundings to its advantage (MN DOC, 2009). The average stay for a youth at MCF-Red Wing is 18 months, but can be longer. Thistledew Camp's stay was 3 months, for the most part; on occasion a stay might be extended due to behaviors. There are no fences or confinement cells. Discipline issues were handled with

hand-cutting “ricks” of wood or by doing a writing assignment. The boys culminate their stay with a 3-week Wilderness Challenge before they graduate the program. The juvenile programs at Thistledew have changed dramatically since their original inception.

### **Construction of Thistledew Camp**

***Programing Model:** Our purpose is to motivate and empower youth to make positive changes in their lives (MCF-Togo, 2010).*

The establishment of the Thistledew Camp program originates in the 1950s. The idea of housing juvenile offenders in a camp-like setting to learn trades or skills for the future was a focus for Youth Conservation Commission (YCC) who had responsibility since 1947 to



Photo 6: Cutting Down the Trees by Hand (1955, Courtesy of MCF-Togo)



Photo 7: Clearing the Trees (1955, Courtesy of MCF-Togo)

oversee juvenile offenders. Two forestry camps were established in 1951 and 1955 by the YCC. The first was in Willow River in 1951 for young male felons ages 18-25; the second was established on Thistledew Lake in Togo, Minnesota in 1955 for boys ages 19 to 21 (MN DOC, 2009). The age lowered for the juveniles serviced at Thistledew Camp; first it dropped to 16-18- year-olds and then to the current ages of 13-17. Both sites were established so male

youths could learn work skills and trades in the forestry industry. The young men were in and out of the judicial system most of their lives, nearly all had dropped out of school, and none had hope of attaining a career (Nylund, 1975). The camp's mission of teaching trade skills was an attempt to circumvent on-going criminal behaviors (Nylund, 1975). The average stay for these young offenders at that time was nine months. Different from Thistledew Camp, Willow River's logging program operated until 1972 and then was replaced by a program for adult males called the Challenge Incarceration Program (CIP).

Thistledew Camp is located 50-miles northeast of Hibbing in the heart of the George Washington State Forest. It is seated between two lakes- Thistledew Lake and Moose Lake. The temperatures range from minus 30 in the winter to 110 plus degrees in the summer. It is a rugged, untamed, heavily wooded pine and birch forest. Wildlife is free roaming; it is not uncommon to see deer, skunk, wolves, porcupine, bears, moose, and the occasional bobcat.

The entire area where the camp is housed was cleared by hand by the staff and the boys who were sent up to the camp to live. It was grueling work. A summary of the history of Thistledew Camp was described in a 1972 letter written by the Director of the Challenge program to the Governor of Minnesota, Wendell R. Anderson. The director spoke of the initial purchase of thirteen tin Quonset



Photo 8: Construction of Permanent Buildings (1961)

hut-type tin buildings for \$500.00 apiece from the State of Minnesota by the Department of



Corrections in 1955 which were transported to the current site from Hibbing, Minnesota (Hegg, 1972; Nylund, 1975). All the buildings were “painstakingly renovated by the boys and staff until [they] had a kind of livable camp” (Hegg, 1972). Per the director, most of the work was completed by staff after regular work hours. Staff and their families all lived onsite (Hegg, 1972; Full letter is Appendix B).

For 16 years, beginning in 1956, renovations and modernization occurred; the older buildings were replaced, modern water and sewer were installed, landscaping added. The new superintendent’s house was built in 1956; a chapel was constructed in 1959; a maintenance shop and garage in 1961. In 1965 a building project started that would encompass the next 15 years renovating and eventually replacing all the original tin sheds with new buildings (Nylund, 1975). A three-unit staff apartment



Photo 9: Construction of the Challenge Lodge (1971, Courtesy of MCF-Togo)

building, new administrative office building, and an updated dorm for the boys was constructed in 1965 (Nylund, 1975). A second three-unit apartment building for staff, a wood shop was added to the maintenance building, and a new mess hall were constructed in 1969. Technology was updated, and in 1971 a new Challenge Lodge was completed which became the home to the Wilderness Endeavors/Challenge Program (Hegg, 1972), an integral part of Thistledeew Camp. The Wilderness Challenge Program is described in detail later. Two classrooms were added to the chapel in 1972. The last project was finished in 1972 which

was a “bachelor’s quarters.” It was meant to provide housing for single staff, interns, and married staff whose families lived quite a distance from the camp (Nylund, 1975)

The State of Minnesota changed Togo’s title from Department of Corrections-Togo (MN DOC-Togo) to Minnesota Correctional Facility-Togo (MCF-Togo) in 2005, following suite with all the other state operated correctional facilities. Even though MCF-Togo is the formal name of the level one facility, the community and staff still refer to the facility as “Thistledew Camp.” All youth services for the DOC were offered at either MCF-Red Wing or MCF-Togo/Thistledew Camp facilities.

**Thistledew Camp programs.** Since the opening of Thistledew in 1955, “over fifty years of programming have expanded and evolved into specialized programs that have adapted to meet the needs of today’s adjudicated youth” (MCF-Togo, 2010, p. 2). There were three juvenile programs which ran concurrently year-round and one adult program called Challenge Incarceration Program (CIP). Thistledew Camp had a short-term boy’s residential program which operates from 90



Photo 10: The Original Dorms/Sleeping Quarters for the Juvenile Boys (n.d.)

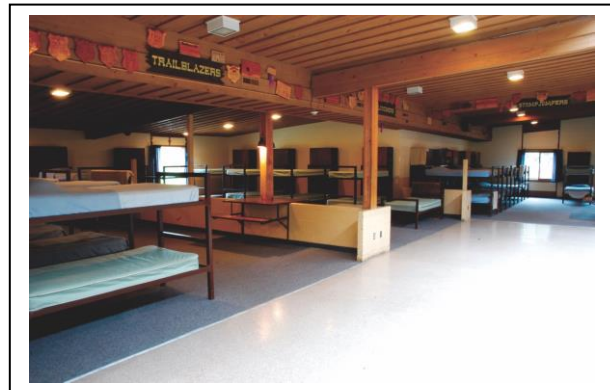


Photo 11: The Dorms for the Juvenile Males after the New Construction. (n.d., Courtesy of MCF-Togo)

to 116 days entitled “Challenge.” It was for juvenile males’ ages 13 to 17. The juveniles reside in a dormitory setting and participate in regular programming which included full educational services, cognitive skill development, work crew, and recreation/leisure activities.

Thistledew added the chemical dependency (CD) program entitled “Portage” in 2005. It served as a residential chemical dependency treatment program (MCF, 2010). The CD treatment program was short-term, ranging from 90 to 116 days (120 hours) working in a group setting with a chemical dependency counselor who taught coping skills as well as recreational options that are drug-free. Group met daily Monday thru Friday during the regular school day as elective programming and after school on set days. The Portage residential program was certified and overseen by the Department of Human Services (DHS).

The final program Thistledew Camp offered was “Endeavors.” It was for both male and female youth groups. The 21-day wilderness trek also had an educational component where the participants earn high school credits while they learn self-reliance and team building. This program was established to facilitate wilderness treks concurrently with separate programming for both males as well as females. The females generally participated only in the summer months whereas the male’s program functioned year-round. (Appendix C has more details on the full Endeavors program.)

Discipline earned in school, dorm, and in the woods due to poor behavior choices was traditionally addressed with the cutting of “ricks” of wood. They could be assigned to the boys and girls by any staff member who felt the juvenile’s behaviors earn it. A rick was

not a true logging rick but a 8-ft or 96 inch log that was cut into 16 inch lengths then split and stacked for bundling (Heaton, personal email, August 15, 2017). Staff would sign off when it was done. The act of cutting the rick was meant to help the juvenile work off extra energy, anger, and help them to refocus and think about what they had done (Hart, personal conversation, February, 2014). Towards the end of 2013, DHS deemed “rick cutting” as corporal punishment for the boys in the chemical dependency treatment programing and they would not allow it. The camp eliminated the traditional cutting of ricks and incorporated “Thinking Error Reports” that the juveniles had to write. In the paper, they needed to address their behavior, why it was wrong, and how it was going to change. It needed to be reviewed and signed off by the staff who issued it (Hart, personal conversation, February, 2014).

All juvenile residents at Thistledew Camp were assigned to a caseworker who oversaw their stay. Caseworkers aided in all aspects of the residents’ daily life right up to their departure and transition to their next phase: whether that is going home, foster care, another correctional facility, or a halfway house placement. The caseworkers advocated for their clients as well as held them accountable for their behaviors during their stay.

Caseworkers complete an intake packet during the first 72 hours of the juveniles’ arrival. They also assess the needs of the youths and alert staff of potential problems while building rapport and establishing trust. They “impressed upon the youth that MCF-Togo was a learning environment and not a correctional consequence. [Caseworkers] encouraged

questions and tried to make staff members allies and not adversaries [to the youth]”

(Heaton, n.d., p. 1.). All the programs will be discussed in greater depth later.

### **Mission Statement and Three Pillars of Support**

MCF-Togo’s Thistledew Camp mission statement (MCF-Togo, 2010) is as follows: Our purpose is to motivate and empower people to make positive changes in their lives. The foundation for all programming is based upon Three Pillars of Support which were established in 2005 during a workshop involving all the staff at Thistledew Camp (L. DuMarce, personal correspondence, August 22, 2017).

***The First Pillar*** is: The Five Guiding Principles. The Five Guiding Principles which were established through a staff strategic planning meeting held in 2000. These became the mantra for Thistledew Camp and are emulated in all aspects of the Thistledew Camp programming. Staff as well as residents are expected to use these as a foundation for all daily encounters and activities.

The Five Guiding Principles are listed and explained as follows (MCF-Togo, 2010):

1. I recognize that physical and emotional safety will always come first. Safety is essential to change, and it is the responsibility of both staff and residents. Providing for emotional safety will often ensure physical safety. Safety will be monitored through open communication and respect with a clear definition of limits and boundaries, and nurtured by staff through a culture that encourages and stresses caring and empathy.
2. I will have empathetic, respectful, and sincere attitude at all times. [Staff at Thistledew Camp] encourages residents to listen and share their life experiences. There are circles to discuss themes of the day, resolve conflict, and check in. [Staff] expect both residents and [themselves] to listen, share, and live with an empathetic, respectful, and sincere attitude.
3. I will follow the HOW principle (honest, open, and willing). Residents and staff are asked to be honest with themselves as well as others, open to other points of

view, and willing to step outside of their comfort zone. [Thistledew] provides a safe space where they can learn to feel comfortable challenging themselves and attempting new activities, and means to solve problems.

4. I believe that recognizing success is more effective than pointing out failure. It is critical to recognize the strengths, resilience, and survival skills of the residents in our program. Changing the pattern of perceived “failure” into acknowledgement of the reasons behind the resident’s choices is the first step toward healing. [The] program is strength-based and builds on students’ natural strengths.
5. I will take responsibility for my own actions. [Thistledew’s] program holds both residents and staff accountable for their actions by dealing in a restorative manner with choices they have made. [The program’s beliefs are] that we are all accountable for our actions when we verbally acknowledge responsibility and are given the opportunity to repair harm. [The program] allow[s] residents to acknowledge their effect on others and others’ effect on them. Consequences, together with restorative approach, help promote accountability without minimizing personal responsibility. (p. 3)

***The Second Pillar*** is: Restorative Justice Philosophy. As stated in Thistledew’s

Program Outline (MN DOC, 2010):

Restorative Justice Philosophy is focusing on the harm created by the offender. Instead of looking at the offender, criminal charges, and punishment, it looks for ways to heal those hurt by the crime. [This] might include victims, offenders, and families of both; the neighborhood, and the larger community. Restorative justice values offender responsibility in repairing the harm created by the crime. It also values the victim’s point of view. . . . The principles of restorative justice are integrated into all program services and activities. (p. 6)

***The Third Pillar*** is Relationship-Based Community. Thistledew Camp is relationship

based which means:

building positive, appropriate relationships between staff and residents that provide for emotionally meaningful learning interactions between staff and residents. [Thistledew’s staff] is not just focused on residents developing isolated cognitive skills based on demonstrated surface behaviors but use a holistic approach that facilitates the personal growth of an offender. [Staff] believes creating meaningful change in [the] residents require meaningful dialog about issues facing their lives. Meaningful

dialog can only occur when there is sufficient trust between residents as well as staff to provide a safe place for residents to share, learn, and grow. (MCF-Togo, 2010, p. 7)  
A portion of the responsibilities assigned to case managers in the youth program

included the following: generating reports and transition paperwork; administering various mental health assessments including: Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument (MAYSI) and Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLSI/CMI); facilitate checking-in and out the residents' personal belongings upon arrival and departure; making medical and dental appointments as the need arises; contacting the placing probation officer or county office and being the liaison between the facility, families, outside agencies, and other interested parties making certain communication is happening on behalf of the youth (Heaton, n.d.).

At the end of the student's stay in the dorm, the caseworker creates a transition exit report detailing what the resident has accomplished in the program and what is expected of them upon leaving. It is reviewed and finalized during an exit interview referred to as a Staffing which is attended by the resident, their assigned caseworker, and any or all the following: parents or foster parents; probation officers; social workers; facility administration if available; school education staff; tribal workers, and the resident's treatment counselor when applicable. All aspects of the residents' accomplishments are discussed. The residents are told of the expectations that are remaining such as remaining restitution amounts, community service hours, and school or home placement arrangements (if returning to their original school or residence is not an option). (Appendix C has outline of full case manager duties).

### **Thistledew Program Components Overview**

Thistledew Program has multiple components. As described, it is a level one juvenile correctional facility but it has also the *adult* Challenge Incarcerated Program (CIP) running simultaneously on the same site. Academics and drug/alcohol counseling is available for both juveniles as well as adults, who are court ordered for treatment. General Education Diploma (GED) and adult diploma preparation is facilitated at the Alice O'Brien School.

**Challenge incarceration program for adult offenders.** Thistledew Camp added a Challenge Incarceration Program (CIP) in 2004 for adult women from MCF-Shakopee facility. CIP is a military-style operated program. The CIP program requires participation in a military-style boot camp including such activities as marching and singing cadence. It is also the only Minnesota Department of Corrections funded program at Thistledew. CIP was mandated by the legislature in 1992 and it was originally only for male offenders at MCF-Willow River; 2004 allowed females to participate at a separate facility from the men. Per the Minnesota Department of Corrections (2009), it is a voluntary program for offenders who meet certain statutory and department requirements. Education and drug counseling are vital components for the program. CIP consists of three phases:

Phase I: a highly-structured and intensive phase that lasts a minimum of six months. Phase I for men is at Willow River site at the Minnesota Correctional Facility (MCF)-Willow River/Moose Lake; the women's Phase I is located at Thistledew Camp at MCF-Togo. Programming is military bearing with courtesy, drills, physical exercise, and ceremony. This phase includes chemical dependency treatment; education; cognitive skills; restorative justice; work crews; and transition preparation.

Phase II and III: are highly-supervised community phase where the participants live in public community but under intensive surveillance by probation officers. The newly



released offender must be accountable for every moment of their time for the first six months. They must communicate regularly with their supervising probation officer as to their whereabouts and be subjected to unplanned checks. The participants must follow very strict rules and guidelines.

Each phase lasts 6 months. When offenders successfully complete Phase III, they are placed on supervised release for the remainder of their sentence. Failure to complete CIP phases II and/or III may result in a return to prison, extending an offender's period of incarceration. (MN DOC, n.d.)

Thistledeew Camp expanded the CIP program from three platoons to four in 2013.

This expansion added an additional thirteen women taking the number of participants to 38 in the program. In July, 2014 the women's CIP was moved to the Shakopee Women's Correctional Facility and CIP became a men's non-treatment program for individuals from the MCF-Willow River (Anselmo, personal conversation, February 15, 2013). This move of the men's CIP up to Thistledeew will allow for an additional forty open beds in the treatment facility at MCF-Willow River.

A fulltime educational instructor works with the CIP offenders who do not have their high school diploma or General Education Diploma. The teacher helps them to earn their General Education Diplomas (GED). Discipline in CIP consists of pushups or "Thinking Error Reports" that the women and men would write. The reports examined what behavior they needed to "refocus" and how they were going to accomplish this. The two educational programs, juvenile and adult, were housed under the same school building but never had sight nor sound contact because of privacy and security for the juveniles (MCF-Togo, 2010).

**Original juvenile academics and programs.** The first teacher was hired to create an education program in 1968. It began in the foyer of the newly constructed gym. The instruction was held three afternoons a week using a ping pong table for desks. His main goal was to teach the boys to read. At that time, the camp was just for juveniles and the majority had dropped out of high school or were failing. The idea was to meet the boys at each of their academic levels and then give individualized instruction to each of those whose reading level fell below sixth grade (Nylund, 1975).

Over the course of time, the education department grew and expanded to the onsite Alice O'Brien School. It housed four fulltime teachers, at least one of which was a licensed Special Education Instructor; one fulltime teacher's aide; school administrative assistant; and an Education Director. At its peak, the school had 50 students with all varying capabilities and ages ranging from 13 to 18 years old (MCF-Togo, 2010).



Photo 12: The Gymnasium and First School on the Ping Pong Table (1969, Courtesy of MCF-Togo).

**Current day Thistledeew academic programming.** Education consumed a large portion of the residents' day. The residents earned a significant number of credits from their 6-day school week at Alice O'Brien School (AOB). Saturday school was implemented in 2011 to allow for intense science and social studies experiences. All residents were expected to

participate fully in the academic portion of the program. Many of the young men who came to Thistledeew were significantly behind in credits and graduating with their peers was highly unlikely, so for those earning their GED was an option. The school was staffed with highly qualified teachers who were knowledgeable to teach and differentiate lessons for accommodating students of all ages and capabilities housed in one classroom. Each classroom of students could have grade ranges from possibly seventh grade to seniors with some students being extremely high functioning cognitively and socially skilled, and others extremely low. Staff include a licensed special education teacher, a teaching assistant, an executive assistant, and an Education Director. The total enrollment at AOB and the student percentages requiring special educational (SPED) services for the years of 2005-2015 are reported below.

Table 4

*Student Annual Enrollment and Percentage of Students Requiring Special Educational Services*

Year	Total Juveniles in all Programs	Total Number of Students Requiring SPED Services	Total Annual Percent of SPED Students
2005	291	131	45%
2006	296	142	48%
2007	306	141	46%
2008	315	157	50%
2009	259	103	40%
2010	187	96	51%
2011	227	115	51%
2012	168	83	49%
2013	187	92	49%
2014	165	90	55%
2015	56	28	50%

An education director was hired in 2012 to be permanently fulltime at the school.

The education director oversaw all aspects of the juveniles' educational programs as well as CIP participants who are earning their GED. Until then, no actual fulltime education director had been on site since 2010. The position was overseen by the education director from Red Wing. The Department of Corrections hired the high school principal from the neighboring Nashwauk school district as a part time administrator for a 1-year period prior to the current education director being hired; the principal was contracted to be on site 10 hours a week. Realizing that a fulltime, on site education director was a necessity, one was hired. The Education Director had been instrumental in creating and endorsing a more hands-on or expediential learning approach in the classrooms. Her philosophy was that learning should be fun and engaging (L. Hart, personal communication, January 16, 2014).

The academic credits each student earned were substantial. All students had a Personal Education Plan (PEP) which examined their current academic progress and aided the students in establishing a plan to get back on track to graduate with their peers. Several options were available to students to earn their academic credits: an independent study with an instructor in a subject area or project; time spent working in the kitchen to earn Culinary Arts credit; or participating in the guitar class for music/fine arts credits (L. Hart, personal communication, January 16, 2014). "We are constantly looking at ways to improve and broaden the classes/credits we can offer our students" (L. Hart, personal communication, January 16, 2014).

**Thistledew cognitive skills development class.** Cognitive (Cogs) skills development classes are required of the residents during their first 3 weeks in the education program. The classes incorporate the Five Guiding Principles which are then used in daily life at Thistledew. Also, lessons taught were created to help the students understand their misguided or criminal thinking patterns, and open them up to being able to trust staff as well as each other. The conversations that took place were candid and honest. Many times, this is the first time the students had shared their feelings and emotions openly without fear of reprisal or rejection. For many it is an eye-opening experience to find that their concerns or fears were shared by their peers. They were taught empathy and trust through the process (L. Hart, personal communication, January 16, 2014).

Cog skills were stressed and reinforced constantly throughout the residents stay at Thistledew Camp (Heaton, 2014). Each day, students were held accountable for their actions and they learn ways to make amends. It is a new way of thinking about their lives, where they came from, and where they ultimately want to go. Building trust was an essential part of students' camp experience; teambuilding was also an important educational component of the education program at Thistledew Camp. Students were accountable for developing positive interpersonal relationships while living in a dormitory setting; they must be willing to trust a peer with their safety in the high ropes course; they know staff is an arms-length away if they need to talk; and the qualities of openness, honesty, and willingness to step out of their comfort zone were stressed throughout their time in the school and dorm (Heaton, 2014).

### History of the Juveniles' Wilderness Challenge Program

The Wilderness Endeavors/Challenge Program which began in 1969 is a therapeutic wilderness program designed to intervene in the lives of boys and girls to empower them,



Figure 2: Map of Northern Minnesota showing the Voyageur's Highway. (n.d.)

boost their self-confidence, and provide them with the skills necessary to persevere through the stresses and challenges in their lives (Kruse, 2014; Nylund, 1975). The Challenge Program Director at that time was instrumental in publicizing the wilderness program through letters to local television stations, newspapers, and other outreach programs (Hegg, 1971). Per letters written by the director, in 1970 the

wilderness program added a north canoe trip which spanned over 200 miles following "Voyageur's Highway". Residents and wilderness staff followed the original passage of the Grand Portage Route from Lake Superior to Rainy Lake in a man-made 30-foot birch bark canoe. They dealt with all weather conditions on their journey, including storms and wind which nearly tipped the canoe in rough waters. Everyone slept outdoors with the heat of an open campfire to warm them. It was dangerous and challenging. "[This is] the only such canoe to have traveled the route in over a hundred years" (E. Hegg, personal communication, n.d.).

Per another article by Hegg (n.d.) entitled “This is Corrections?” he describes a typical trek as:

Challenge courses are three weeks long. The courses run back to back: as one course ends, another begins. Each course is open to one brigade (Challenge group) with a limit of 12 members. . . . For them, challenge is the culmination of a ten-week intensive treatment program involving school, work, and recreation. . . . Young men who complete Challenge feel much like the same as those who complete basic training in the armed forces. They feel good about themselves and their Challenge buddies. Challenge is no picnic, and they know it.

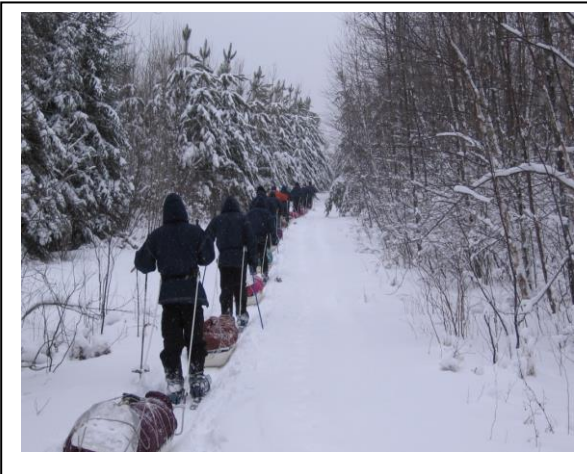


Photo 13: Typical Winter Wilderness Expedition. (n.d., Courtesy of MCF-Togo).

A Challenge brigade jogs single file through waist-high ferns. . . to a two-mile running course . . . a swim in the brisk Thistledew Lake after the run . . . then they get breakfast. [After] breakfast, an obstacle course . . . this is training week. [A] few days [are] spent learning about canoeing, conditioning the body, and canoeing in white water; then the expedition. Two weeks of canoe travel, 100 or more miles across wild northern lakes, including four days of solo camping. Challenge is more than a canoe trip—it’s an endurance test (p. 1). (Full article in Appendix B.)

**Current Wilderness Challenge Program.** During the culmination of their last 3 weeks of programming at Thistledew Camp, the residents embarked upon the outdoor program portion of their stay which is conducted year-round and uses the cogs skills they have learned. Challenge is a high-adventure wilderness experience designed to build self-confidence, develop leadership abilities, acquire a pride of accomplishment, and teach the importance of group effort (Englund, 1976). The whole time from training trek to mini solo is

time spent looking back on what influences or choices brought them to where they are now. They are looking at all the crossroads and the path they chose to take that brought them to Thistledew (D. Kruse, personal correspondence, March 24, 2014).

There are three phases to the Wilderness Challenge Program. First is the 7-day training trek and making sure all the boys are familiar with the equipment, how to use it, and are educated in safe practices in the woods. There is an intense focus on wilderness travel, hygiene, outdoor group living, and the circle process (Kruse, 2014). During their time in the woods they work on their cognitive skills programing, process daily themes which they think and journal about during their quiet time, and school work earning a combined total of two full academic credits in the following: physical education, health, English, and science (D.



Photo 14: Wilderness Program was a High-adventure Camping Experience Held Year-round in All Weather. Safe housing was available when temperatures dipped in the extreme sub-zeros and during storms. (n.d., Courtesy of MCF-Togo).

Kruse, personal correspondence, March 24, 2014; L. Hart, personal communication, January 16, 2014).

The second phase is Expedition portion which is an 8-day wilderness travel where the cohort hikes, skis while pulling sleds, or canoes cross country from site to site depending upon season and the trail (D. Kruse,

personal correspondence, March 24, 2014). Throughout this time, they are given many physical challenges they need to overcome, i.e., rock climbing, crossing a choppy lake in a



canoe, skiing 14 miles towing a sled full of equipment, hiking for miles in the woods carrying a 70-pound backpack in high heat while combating deer and horse flies, mosquitos, wood ticks, and biting gnats. Each of these obstacles is meant to push the boys further out of their comfort zone and help them to build self-confidence (Kruse, 2014).

The Director of the Wilderness Program stated:

When pushed by Mother Nature [the youths] are naturally challenged and the staff sees how they react to the challenge. During that time the staff can process any reactions that they are having issues with as well as recognize that they can accomplish anything to which they set their minds. [The youths] can accomplish things they didn't think they were physically or mentally capable; [the] feeling of accomplishment builds and breaths self-confidence when it is processed and recognized by the youths. We are working on the issues they are here at [Thistledew] for during the expedition portion of the program and building a united group...helping them put together the pieces of the puzzle by drawing together those daily themes or life lessons.

All food is high in carbohydrates and proteins. Hydration is extremely important and water consumption is stressed. The goal is to consume four quarts of water spread over the course of the day. All hot food items are cooked over the open fire; meals and snacks consist of sandwiches, Raman Noodles, rice, beans, hot cocoa, and a trail-mix blend called "Gorp." There are no luxuries such as running water or toilets. The boys learn to rough it and they also learn to appreciate the little things at their homes they may have taken for granted before, such as a hot shower and a good, warm meal (D. Kruse, personal correspondence, March 24, 2014). (Full correspondence is included in Appendix C.)

During the wilderness portion of the stay, students do a high ropes course which is an obstacle course set thirty feet in the air.

This course forces them to genuinely look at their support systems and asks them, *who do you want holding the ropes for you during your life?* This exercise also makes each of them step out of their comfort zone, challenging them by putting them into a very uncomfortable position for

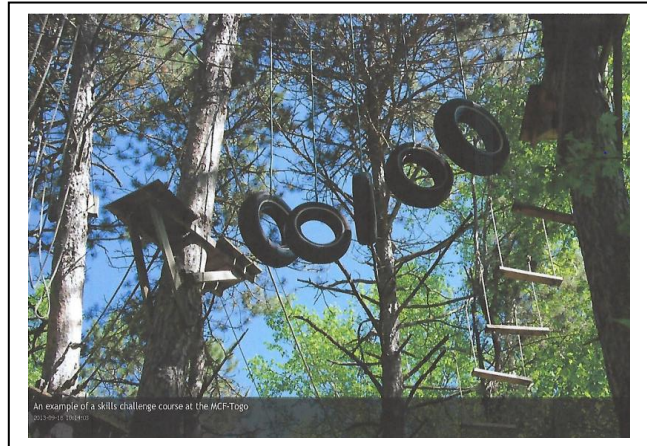


Photo 15: High-ropes Course 30 Feet in the Air. (n.d, Courtesy of MCF-Togo)

most participants, and forces them to trust other people. Staff help process with participants' the whole day's events afterwards with the students sharing their feelings, fears, apprehensions as well as their sense of accomplishment, and self-confidence (D. Kruse, personal correspondence, March 24, 2014).

During the final week of the wilderness phase, the boys make their way back down close to Thistledew Camp where they do a "solo" camping for 4 days without interaction with their peers. The juveniles are visited by staff who check on their safety and aid them with their reflection process. Each youth is expected to set up camp, build a fire, and practice the skills he/she was taught as well as use this time in self-reflection and establishing a relapse prevention plan for when he/she return home. The youth are also given a challenge during this time: A Snicker's candy bar. They are instructed not to eat it but to label it with whatever he/she are looking to overcome with his/her time at Thistledew.

For many residents, it is drug and alcohol addiction; for others, it is learning to control their anger; yet others its reestablishing a relationship built on mutual respect and trust with their parents and family; and for some it is learning to repair broken relationships with parents or family, and learning to communicate and trust. Regardless of what their issue is they are looking to overcome, they must look deep inside and use the four days on their solo as reflective time (D. Kruse, personal correspondence, March 24, 2014).

The students will write a speech while on “solo” that he/she deliver at their graduation ceremony which is held in a circle format on the last day of the juvenile’s stay. The circle format is used throughout their whole stay at Thistledew. It is the primary means of group communication, support, expression, and conflict resolution. Daily circles are held to check in each day for processing or sharing ideas, feelings, and thoughts. The strength of the circle process is the following (D. Kruse, personal correspondence, March 24, 2014):

1. Every voice is heard and respected;
2. One person speaks at a time using a talking piece;
3. The atmosphere encourages speaking from the heart;
4. We are held directly accountable for what we do and say.

**Program graduation.** During graduation, a talking piece, usually a Thistledew coin, is passed around the circle and all take a turn expressing who they are and why is it important for them to be there. The residents are then called upon, one by one with a brief introduction about each of them, to read their speeches in front of their support systems, family, probation officers, social and/ or tribal workers and Thistledew staff.

At the end of their speech, each pulls out their Snickers bar and turns to their support system and tells them what the candy represents to them and what they are going to do to change it. At that point they lay the Snickers bar down in the center of the circle signifying they are leaving their habits or other issues behind and pick up a Thistledew coin which they take with them as a constant



Photo 16: Thistledew Coin earned at Graduation. (n.d., Courtesy of MCF-Togo)

reminder of their many accomplishments. For the few young men who eat their Snickers bar, they must get up and be accountable for their actions by telling parents and all present of their actions, and what they looked to change.

Again, the talking piece (Thistledew coin) is passed and everyone present has a chance to share their final thoughts and wishes for the residents who are leaving. It is a very emotional time for parents and frightening for many of the boys as they must go back to face the negative influences or poor choices which landed them in Thistledew Camp in the first place. The juveniles must make better choices (Heaton, 2014). Often, this means disengaging with peers whom they have fraternized with for years just to start new. It is a difficult task or journey they must embark upon but the hope is: they have learned to be able to trust their support systems; communicate honestly and openly with them; maintain a more open perspective to different points of view; and have gained enough self-confidence and pride during their time in the Wilderness Program to be able to turn their

back on the negative influences in their lives and start new. All graduating participants leave the facility with the Thistledew coin in their pocket. Imprinted on the back of the coin are the five guiding principles which they have lived by and have governed their whole stay at Thistledew Camp. It is hoped that it will be a constant reminder of their outstanding accomplishments (Heaton, 2014). The juveniles all leave with a feeling of accomplishment because the program was not an easy task; it took determination, willpower, openness, and a look internally as to the person they were, are, and what to be. The staff at Thistledew try to stress that the juveniles have control over their own lives; it's all about their choices.

### **Thistledew Program's Funding History**

Minnesota state funding through the Department of Corrections was the main source of funding for Thistledew Camp after its restructure from a state operated YCC Camp. During the 1970s a study was conducted to discover revenue reductions. The DOC used the services of an independent consultant to examine the department's budget for cost savings and to advise which facilities and programs should be restructured or eliminated. Per the findings, the report listed under-utilized facilities and programs which included, but was not limited to, Thistledew Camp (Minnesota Department of Corrections, 1972). The findings report entitled: Youth Institutions Operations Project—Report: No. 50 (MN DOC, 1972) stated:

Problem: At present, the juvenile institutions are not being utilized to their capacity. Overall, the facilities are at 65% capacity. Projecting current trends, it is clear that two institutions could serve juvenile needs by July, 1974. Solution: The closing of Thistledew Camp is recommended. No program loss would result and the State would save \$300,000 a year. (p. 1)

The report stated that with the combined closures of multiple facilities/programs and with the restructuring of services, the State would have an estimated annual savings of \$2,249,600 with a one-time savings of \$1,042,000.

Implementation of the recommendations were recommended for January 1, 1974. Status was filed as, "Disagree by department head" (MN DOC, 1972, p. 53). At that time, the Department of Corrections had holding centers for adjudicated youths that were supposed to distribute them to various facilities throughout the state depending upon age, and severity of the crime (Nylund, personal communication, December 12, 2014). But with the threat of closures of facilities, most facilities kept as many residents in their own structures as possible so very few boys were sent to Thistledew Camp.

**Letters to the governor and other supporters.** Multiple letters were written to the Governor of Minnesota, Wendell R. Anderson, and Lieutenant Governor, Rudy Perpich asking for Thistledew Camp to remain open (Hegg, 1972). December, 1972, the Administrative Assistant to the Regional Director of Minneapolis Corrections Commission wrote a letter to Field Director for Hennepin County Region in Minneapolis, Minnesota regarding the closing of Thistledew Camp. The Director for Hennepin County Region voiced great concern about this decision and about the consultant's statement that no juvenile programming will be lost. In his closing paragraph in his he states (McCoy, personal correspondence):

In my opinion it would be a great mistake to eliminate a good, strong program with well-trained and capable staff such as we have at Thistledew and I implore the

department administrative personnel to consider all factors prior to arriving at a decision regarding the future of the camp. (p. 1)

A supervisor in the Department of Corrections also wrote a letter on December 29, 1972, to the Field Director of Hennepin County Region which strongly disagreed with the closure of Thistledeew Camp but urged examination of Thistledeew's short term Challenge programs usage benefits. He also suggested that Hennepin County Field Director make a legislative request that the camp be opened to county use on a per diem basis. (All correspondence is in Appendix B.)

**Emergency legislative session regarding Thistledeew Camp.** An emergency legislative session was called and the passage of the amended Use of Facilities Bill–Thistledeew Camp was passed by the full Senate Corrections Committee (1973). The Bill read as follows:

MSA 241.01 is amended by adding a subdivision to read:

Subd. 7. The commissioner of corrections may authorize and permit public or private social service, educational, or rehabilitation agencies or organizations and their clients to enter upon and utilize the facilities, staff and other resources of institutions under his control and may require the participating agencies or organizations to pay all or part of the costs thereof. All sums of money received pursuant to the agreements herein authorized are hereby appropriated annually to the commissioner of corrections for the purpose of this act.

Sec. 2 This act shall be effective upon final enactment. An office memorandum went out to all county court judges explaining the bill. The intent of the legislation was to provide greater local control by offering additional options. This piece of legislature gave power to the Commissioner of Corrections to contract services on a per diem basis to Thistledeew Camp thus allowing the facility to be self-sufficient. This also gave power to the judges and probation officers to choose which facility they felt would be in the best interest of the adjudicated youth (Schoen, 1973). The bill was drafted specifically for Thistledeew Camp.

**County billing before and after technology.** The billing process for Thistledeew Camp originated with the counties and was very simplistic. The billing office had a 3-ring binder with all the counties in the state represented and the invoices would be manually created and mailed out by the bookkeeper. It was her/his responsibility to keep track of all the checks and payments from the counties which were mailed directly back to the Camp (L. DuMarce, personal correspondence, July, 2014).

Today's process is far more involved and complicated. Upgrades were made in the year 2000 and Access was installed on a few computers for those individuals involved in intake. When a youth arrives, instead of typing a Master card on a typewriter, they now use the Access computer program which provides a monthly billing option; a billing report can be generated by month and year. The report also separates the Chemical Dependency (CD) Program days from the Residential Program (non-treatment) days (L. DuMarce, personal correspondence, July, 2014). The Access program allows for multiple monthly billings and payments to be tracked including medical insurance billing for CD treatment and school district billing for residential youths. Access helps simplify and organize what has become a very complex system (L. DuMarce, personal correspondence, July, 2014).

**Independently funded juvenile programs.** Per diem billing directly to the parent's resident school district pays the expenses of room and board of the juvenile population relieving the state of the financial burden it once maintained. Chemical dependency counseling for juvenile residents was covered by independent private insurance, medical



assistance, or by social service. With direct billing of the residents, Thistledeew Camp was one of the most self-sufficient state run correctional facilities.

### **The Closing of the Juvenile Programs**

Thistledeew's programs from 2004 through 2008 grew. The year 2009 showed the first sign of a decline and the numbers fluctuated up and down year after year. In the autumn months of 2014, the juvenile numbers had decreased due to school starting and the legislature looking at reallocating its funding for programs. Many of the local programs were keeping their juveniles so they could maintain their funding. Thistledeew always had a decrease in the number of juvenile residents at the camp in the beginning of every school year and at the holidays but this time, the numbers never came back up.

Table 5

#### *Monthly Average Daily Population—Thistledeew Juvenile Programs*

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Number of residents admitted during FY in Wilderness Endeavors (WE)</b>	<b>Number of residents admitted during FY in 3-month programs</b>	<b>Total number of juveniles (Combined WE and 3 month)</b>	<b>End of year average daily population (ADP)</b>
FY04	150	104	254	Est. 37
FY05	153	139	292	Est. 47
FY06	145	154	299	Est. 51
FY07	153	165	318	Est. 54
FY08	161	151	312	Est. 51
FY09	130	108	238	37
FY10	115	98	213	33
FY11	117	110	227	37
FY12	92	94	186	31
FY13	61	114	175	35
FY14	68	106	174	33

(Courtesy of MN DOC, 2016)

At the same time, there was a large statewide shortage of bed space for adult male offenders. Numerous scenarios were considered as to what would be the best use of Thistledew Camp for the Department of Corrections. It was determined that closing the juvenile programing, housing all juvenile males out of MCF-Red Wing, and expanding the men's CIP programing would be in the most cost effective means to gain the necessary bed space (MN DOC, 2015).

A mandatory meeting was held for all staff at Thistledew Camp informing them of the Department of Correction's decision. A letter was sent out to all the stakeholders informing them of the change that was

going to be initiated on July 1, 2015. The letter and the write up that was shared among the facilities in the monthly newsletter is shared in Appendix B. A celebration of the camp and

its accomplishments was held on June, 2015. All staff, past and

present, were encouraged to attend. It was an emotional day filled with tears and laughter as stories were shared and the programs ended.



Photo 17: Thistledew Camp Superintendents Who attended the Closing Ceremony June, 2015.

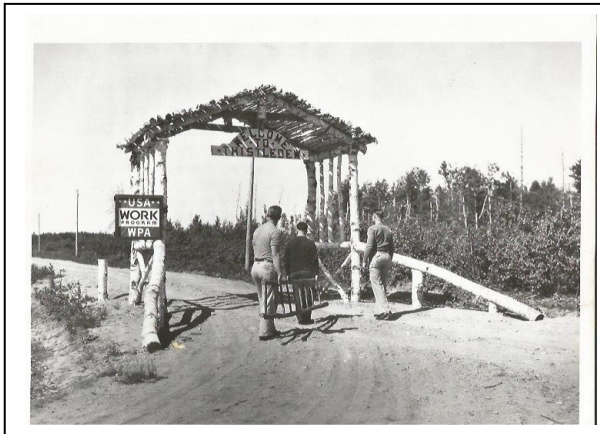


Photo 18



Photo 19



Photo 20



Photo 21

Photos 18-21 are the progression of the various Thistledew Camp's signs from 1955 to 2016. As the camp changed, so did their sign. Over 60 years the sign marked the location and welcomed visiting judges, probation officers, family members of residents, and other visitors to the camp. Photo 21 has a portion of the staff that still work at MCF-Togo/ Thistledew Camp. (Courtesy of MCF-Togo).

### Research Questions Findings

**Research Question 1:** What were the major influencing factors in the development of the Thistledew Juvenile Programs?

1. In 1947, the United States Government created the Youth Conservation Camps (YCC) to help delinquent youths learn a trade. Willow River, Minnesota opened

the first YCC site to teach the logging trade to juvenile male felons in 1951.

Thistledew Camp opened as a YCC site in Togo, Minnesota to teach logging to felon males ages 19 to 21-years-old. They later reduced the age of the participants at Thistledew to 16-18-year-olds. In 1969, the program changed again allowing 13-17-year-olds to be sent to Thistledew.

2. The Superintendent found most of the young men sent to Thistledew were illiterate. He knew education was a key component to the success of their wards so he hired a teacher in 1968. This was the beginning to the educational department of Thistledew Camp. The educational department aided the students in credit recovery so the students could return to their home schools with the potential to graduate with their class. The creation of Saturday school and electives such as guitar class and culinary arts were a creative means for the students to earn credits. If graduating with their class or returning to their home-school was not the case for one reason or another, the opportunity to earn their GED as well as do their college application and funding paperwork was provided. Special Education services were readily available.
3. Outward Bound was popularized in the 1940s by Kurt Hahn and the news of his success with character training/building created the groundwork for the Wilderness Challenge Program which was established in 1971. It was one of the first of its type in the United States. It used the premise of the work of Hahn to

put the boys in physically and mentally challenging situations to help build confidence and self-esteem.

4. In 1972 the Department of Corrections announced the closing of Thistledew's program. Because of this announcement legislation was set in place in 1973 that would allow Thistledew to direct bill the counties and the insurance companies for the juvenile residents sent to the camp. This made Thistledew one of the only financially self-sufficient programs within the DOC.
5. Thistledew was relationship based rather than punitive. The staff and residents used the "Five Guiding Principles" in all their daily encounters and actions. This created a foundation of positive successes rather than dwelling on negative behaviors. It allowed the juveniles an opportunity to build trust so they would be open to the educational opportunities, cognitive skills programing, treatment services, and the Wilderness Challenge Program. Communication was stressed in the programs and the "Circle Process" was used daily for "check-ins" and mediation. This process was also implemented with the juveniles and their parents when there were major communication issues or problems that needed to be resolved.
6. In 2005, a drug and alcohol treatment program was created for the juvenile males and the CIP residents. It was treatment services that were offered daily and the introduction of clean and sober activities.

**Research Question 2:** What were the major challenges encountered in the development of the Thistledew Camp Program?

The camp overcame numerous challenges in its 60+ years of existence including these issues:

1. Construction and renovation of the camp site began in 1955 and continued to 1980. It was difficult working in a location with rugged, unmanaged terrain, little access to power equipment, and using the camp personnel and juveniles for the construction crew.
2. There were extreme weather and temperature fluctuations with the seasonal changes of northern Minnesota.
3. The camp had financial struggles and fought against the Department of Corrections program funding cuts in 1972. There was an emergency senate session called in 1973 which created the current billing allowing Thistledew to become one of the first self-sufficiently funded juvenile programs.
4. In 1971 technology was introduced where none existed before due to the camp remote location. Major updates to modernize computer programing in 2000 brought the program Access for bookkeeping and daily record keeping.
5. There was an ongoing issue regards to finding, recruiting, and hiring quality professional staff in an isolated area.
6. From 1965 to the closing of the juvenile program, Thistledew Camp leaders and educators sought to develop programing to best serve their clients; this included

teaching literacy with the hiring of the first teacher in 1968. Since then expanding to what was the educational staff of 2015 which included an education director, an education administrative assistant, a teaching assistant, and four highly qualified teachers which included a special education teacher to serve academically challenged youth.

7. In 1969 the Wilderness Challenge Program was started. The 21-day Endeavors program was introduced later. Both programs were facilitated with expert staff to help the juveniles step outside their comfort zone and push them to see their true capabilities. Finding qualified individuals to instruct was difficult due to the remote location and the unique curriculum for this program.
8. The camp's location was both a positive and a negative. The positive is its wilderness setting was ideal for the Wilderness Challenge Program. It pulled the juveniles out of their comfort zone and made them try new experiences which instilled self-esteem and confidence. The negative side of the location was the inability for parents, family, and support people to come and have an active part in the rehabilitations process. Making it up for visits was challenging due to weather conditions and distance.
9. The camp's enrollment was in flux beginning in 2012. It dropped from 227 in 2011 to 186 in 2012. The juveniles participating in the programs continued to drop due to the uncertainty of government funding and programs trying to keep their own numbers up. This in turn, had reduced numbers being sent to Thistledew. In

2015, Thistledew closed all their juvenile programs to create bed space for adult male offenders.

10. In 2004, Thistledew Camp housed adult female offenders who were taking part in the CIP program. By law they could have neither contact visually nor verbally with the juvenile residents. Creating a means to accomplish this task was mandatory for the safety and security of the juveniles.
11. Many of the residents that were sent to Thistledew had chemical dependency issues. Thistledew's administration recognized that for the clients' rehabilitation to be successful, they would need to participate in a treatment program. Drug and alcohol treatment counselors with a fulltime treatment program was added in 2005 for both the juveniles and the adults in CIP.

**Research Question 3:** What were the benefits/advantages of Thistledew Camp

Program as compared to the other Juvenile Reform Correctional Facilities?

1. Thistledew Camp lacked the classic corrective setting of punitive structures such as holding cells, segregation, and razor wire fences. The residents were encouraged to interact with nature as a learning experience. Positive behaviors were rewarded with a point system which allowed the top percentage of boys to be taken into town for a movie and pizza.
2. The staff at Thistledew all implemented restorative justice techniques for discipline and built on the positives rather than dwelling on the negative behaviors. Residents were taught tolerance and communication skills.



3. Juvenile residents were given an opportunity to go off-grounds with education staff to experience new educational opportunities such as: visiting a planetarium; touring the Soudan Mine; visiting the Bear and Wolf centers.
4. The Wilderness Challenge/Endeavors Program used the outdoors as a classroom to teach self-esteem, confidence, and endurance. The juveniles were taken for 3 weeks to a camping experience with wilderness instructors who challenged the juveniles to push themselves harder than they thought possible. The juveniles also participated in a ropes obstacle course which was 30 feet in the air. At the end of every day, the staff and juveniles would discuss and share what they learned from their experiences.
5. Thistledew Camp had no wire fencing or holding cells. The other juvenile facility in Red Wing, Minnesota does have a razor wire fence surrounding it as well as holding cells and segregation. The delinquent males in Red Wing live in cottages grouped by offense, mainly. Thistledew had a dormitory setting for their residents. There was no separation other than treatment mandates verses non-treatment; all juveniles were still housed under the same roof, attended the same classes, and slept in the same dorm but in separate wings.

### **Summary**

Thistledew offered an alternative method for working with adjudicated youth, it was a positive relationship based facility. That concept is opposite of a traditional correctional facility which is typically a deficit based juvenile correctional program. Barton and Butts'

study (2008) describes the practices of the deficit based facilities as classifying incarcerated youth by the seriousness of their problems, including the offenses they commit, the level of risk they present to the public safety, and their service needs. It is a cold, isolated experience for most youth; following the rules, going to education, participating in recreation, and doing what is necessary to be released is emphasized.

On the other hand, Thistledew staff emphasized building healthy, appropriate relationships with residents focusing on communication, and establishing trust; administration and staff acknowledged and rewarded success rather than failure in all aspects of the residents' stay; they encouraged students to step out of their comfort zone and try new experiences; they helped with building character, self-esteem, and confidence by helping the juveniles face the challenges of academia, societal expectations, and building or recognizing their positive support groups (Thistledew programs, n.d.).

A study entitled, *An Analysis of the Learning Styles of Adolescent Delinquents*, suggested that there is a correlation between academic failure and antisocial behaviors. The research examined the importance of assessment and remediation services throughout the school careers of these youngsters (Meltzer et al., 2001). Alice O'Brien School's teaching staff looked at past Individual Educational Plan (IEP) from students' home schools or reviewing academic records, staff identifies areas that need additional focus. The special education instructor created a modified IEP if needed for the special education students; and the regular education staff created a Personal Education Plan (PEP) with each student to help them better achieve their goals. The educational staff helped students regain some of

the academic credits or classes they may be missing due to chemical dependency issues, infractions with the law, or truancy. Instructors helped teach better study habits and build self-confidence by helping students learn basic core skills in their primary subjects; this in turn increased their chances of academic success. If a student was too far behind in credits to graduate in a timely fashion, the student was encouraged to earn their GED. College applications and financial aid paper work was completed and processed for students who were emotionally and academically ready for college.

As stated in the study in the Journal of Learning Disabilities (Meltzer et al, 2001):

A 'spiral' model may be most appropriate; that is to say, chronic treatment –resistant education failure may promote delinquent behavior, and the latter will include such maladaptive outcomes as truancy, alienation from the adult world, and defiant indifference. The latter, in turn, aggravate pre-existing skill delays, superimposing over poorly-assimilated abilities a lack of practice and low motivation to improve . . . [I]t is likely that at least some delinquent youngsters would prefer to be perceived by their peers as aggressive and brave rather than mentally deficient. As a result, they adopt a stance of disengagement and academic disinterest. (p. 606)

By helping the student gain the skills to be academically successful, it may stop the spiral which has been noted in studies chronicling educational failure and delinquent behaviors, and possibly providing the youth a chance at a new beginning.

## **Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, Discussion, Limitations, and Recommendations**

This section includes a brief summary of the study, conclusions presented in order of the research questions posed, a discussion of the results, limitation encountered in the study, and recommendations for practice and future research.

### **Summary of the Study**

The study is an historical analysis of Thistledew Camp which chronicled the construction and transformation from a logging camp for young male criminals, ages 19-21, to the modern-day camp which serviced 13- to 17-year old juveniles in need of drug/alcohol treatment services as well as an out-of-home correctional placement for those with a delinquent, turbulent past.

The camp embodied a restorative justice method rather than a punitive approach; positives were built upon and the negative behaviors were addressed with cutting “ricks” of wood or by other means of refocusing. All the staff worked to help the juveniles see that this was not a permanent life-choice/sentence but instead, a fork in the road for them to make changes. They had an opportunity to go back to their families and communities to start over if they chose. One of the benefits of the camp was the natural surroundings and the utilization of the rugged isolation to help the juveniles be challenged and refocus, but the location was also a huge downfall for the camp. Parents, family members, and other support people found it difficult to make the trek up to the camp. This limited the external supports for the juveniles and the youth had no home/community involvement in their rehabilitation.

The literature review examined global, national, and local practices for juvenile justice; special education connections to academically challenged youths and the delinquency rates; and the final section explored Upward Bound character training developed by Kurt Hahn. Studies were located from the United Nations, Department of Corrections, multiple published journals and books, and online resources. Research indicated that the countries that had a far greater rate of success of reducing recidivism invested in positive programming implementing restorative justice practices, kept the youth with their families, schools, and communities, and allowed for an opportunity for the juvenile offenders to make amends. Out of home placements were used as a final alternative if other practices failed.

The study used primary and secondary sourcing for resources. Much of the primary information was verbal recollection, letters, and documents from past superintendents, employees, and education directors. Archives were retrieved which allowed for access to historical photos, artwork, awards, and carbons of original letters which are included in Appendix B. The secondary sources utilized included studies conducted by the Department of Corrections as well as other sources, newspaper articles and published stories, and historical information housed with the Historical Society and the Department of Corrections.

## **Conclusions**

Three research questions lead the historical analysis study and conclusions of the study were derived and discussed below.

**Research Question 1:** What were the major influencing factors in the development of the Thistledew Juvenile Programs?

Thistledew juvenile programs developed over time. One of the major influences of program development was the literacy rate of the young men who were being assigned to the camp. Many did not have a sixth-grade reading level and some were illiterate. The educational instructor who was hired in 1968 as an intern was later offered a full-time teaching position, and eventually become the Education Director. He realized that these young people needed to be taught to read if they were going to be successful but with the limited staff on site, and behavioral issues with the boys, it made instruction difficult (Nylund, personal conversation, February 28, 2014). Three afternoons a week were blocked out for reading instruction and the class was taught at that time in the front of the recreation building on the ping pong table.

Using free time to go fishing and do other recreational activities with the boys allowed the instructor to overcome the perceived barriers of an authoritarian teacher and created a positive influence within the reading program. It enabled the boys to be open to instruction and receptive to learning allowing for academic success. The relationship which was built outside the classroom with the boys allowed the instructor to be able to gain the trust and create an atmosphere conducive to learning. That was the beginning to the relationship-based model which became the ground work for the Thistledew Programs (Nylund, 1975).

As was stated in the Thacker and Kearney's (1994) study, the correlation between the lack of academic success and self-esteem begins the downward spiral. The direct correlation between academic failure and delinquency is stated in the 2001 studies by Meltzer et al. which site the importance of academic intervention to intervene and possibly prevent the feelings of failure which are the precursors to truancy and delinquency (Slavin, 1987). Students would rather not attend school than attend and feel they are inadequate compared to their peers (Thacker & Kearney, 1994).

The findings of Christle et al. (2005) study highlighted that the negative perceptions of school climate and school personnel, negatively influenced the learner outcomes. The opposite was found when the instructors had optimistic attitudes about their students' abilities, and held their learners to high expectations, the learners were successful. The positive perception emulated by the Thistledeew instructor that the boys were valued and could learn, created a school atmosphere which lead towards academic success. Alice O'Brien School continued to invest in the juveniles creating programs to help get the boys academically on track with their peers and potentially graduate.

The investment of time and listening to the boys' concerns outside the classroom demonstrated to the students they were valued. Most juveniles, who were trapped in the negative downward spiral, could view this as their first real-life success. Also, reinforcing daily the positive actions and behaviors witnessed in contacts with the juveniles, and addressing any negative behaviors and issues with a holistic, restorative approach, eliminated the punitive consequences. Finally, providing chemical dependency counseling in

a group setting and teaching the juveniles recreational activities that were drug and alcohol free was eye-opening to many of the youth.

The staff at Thistledew implemented the circle process to help open lines of communication with the juveniles and the parents or care-givers. The circle process was used daily at the camp in mornings, evenings, graduations ceremonies, and during mediation sessions between family members and the juveniles. It was taught to all the residents and staff. The circle placed all participants in a level playing field where they could speak openly and honestly from the heart without judgement from their peers. It was a means for two-way conversations to begin for staff, parents, and residents. Mediation was also practiced regularly between juveniles who had issues with peers at the camp. The opinions of the residents were valued and this was emphasized by the board meetings with the residents and the camp superintendent. The residents were given a voice to suggest new programs or changes they felt would be beneficial. The boys felt they were valued as well as their thoughts and opinions.

Challenging the boys to step outside of their comfort zone was taught from their very first day at the camp until the day they left. Using the principle ideas from Kurt Hahn, creator of Outward Bound, about building confidence through physical and mental tests, the staff at Thistledew challenged the juveniles in many ways. The juveniles could attempt a task and fail, but have a take away that taught them about themselves or the situation; or be successful and celebrated it with everyone. By living in tight quarters with other individuals they did not know taught tolerance; going to a school which encompassed all educational



levels in one classroom, and held all the students to a high but attainable level of competency demonstrated the ability to be academically successful in a very challenging setting; being instructed to talk or share openly from the heart and to not worry about their peers' reaction or thoughts, taught self-esteem and value; and physically going beyond their own perceived capabilities raised their levels of physical endurance, self-esteem, and self-reliance. All the juveniles' successes academically, emotionally, socially, and physically reinforced and rebuilt the self-confidence that was lacking or stripped from them prior to coming to Thistledeew Camp. As stated earlier, positive interventions . . . can strongly influence [juveniles]. By providing a safe, secure learning environment with positive caring staff and teachers who believe in their student's ability to succeed, as well as believe in holding the students to high, yet attainable academic standards and expectations, will help to provide and reinforce strong academic and social successes (Christle et al., 2005).

**Research Question 2:** What were the major challenges encountered in the development of the Thistledeew Camp Program?

One of the key issues with any program is funding. Nothing else can exist if not adequately funded. Thistledeew Camp faced closure when the 1972 report was published that stated that if Minnesota DOC closed the camp, it would save \$300,000.00. The staff were determined that this was not going to happen. Staff wrote letters to legislators and by becoming very vocal regarding their perceived value the camp contributed to rebuilding the lives of the delinquent youths, aided them in getting officials higher in the DOC to consider alternative means for billing that the camp could pursue. This opened the legislature to

allow for the passage of the amendment: Use of Facilities Bill–Thistledew Camp. It was passed by the full Senate Corrections Committee (1973) and for the first time allowed for a facility to bill school districts and insurance companies directly for the care of the juveniles.

The only portion of Thistledew's budget that was carried over by the DOC was the adult CIP program. Alice O'Brien School had to maintain an average of 27-29 students for them to be financially secure (Anselmo, personal conversation, February 15, 2013). As numbers dropped, which was common with the beginning of the school year and during holiday seasons, the administration and staff would worry about the intake regaining its client population. It was a constant ebb and flow of juveniles. The camp had strong support from the three counties who sent most of the clients, and from the juvenile probation officers who were familiar with the camp and its mission.

The other issue with the program was finding qualified teaching, administrative, counseling, technical, maintenance, and trek staff. Thistledew's location is an hour from any major city. For young couples this may be too far for travel for a job, school, and/or daycare. Applications came in for posted positions but upon visiting the remote location, many withdraw their interest. The staff who are employed at Thistledew are a unique group of individuals who enjoy the outdoors and the challenges associated with the isolation. Over the years, the staff with the help of the residents, have grown their own vegetable gardens, raised animals, and picked wild-growing berries to be incorporated into facility meals. They take pride in being self-sufficient and self-reliant.

As previously mentioned, Thistledew Camp's location is remote. Studies as well as best practices from various countries show that the support of family and community are critical for rehabilitative success of the juveniles. The United Nations (2003) studies examining the various countries methods of handling juvenile delinquency and reduction of recidivism demonstrated that if the least restrictive means was implemented first, it gave youth a second chance to prove themselves and kept them out of the judicial system. China, New Zealand, Netherlands, and Australia allows the police to make the decision to give the juvenile back to the parent for discipline before sending them on to more restrictive punishments.

Finding an alternative to imprisonment of youth has been key to keeping youth out of the judicial system. Italy has one of the lowest recidivism rates for youth in the world and it is because they use intense community supervision, keep youths with their families and schools, and implement alternative diversionary techniques using restorative justice, which allows the youth to have a chance to make amends. New Zealand courts encourage youth to stay in their own community with their family and school. It also gives voice to the victim of the crime; the offender has their family, the community, and the victim involved in the rehabilitative process. Family and community are the key to their ongoing success.

Thistledew Camp location and varying challenging weather conditions in the winter months created issues for parents who wanted to visit their children. Some parents from lower income families struggled to find a means to get to the camp for a visit or graduation. It was a minimum of a 4-hour drive from the Minneapolis/St. Paul region to the camp and

some of the youths' parents were coming from the extreme southern region of Minnesota creating a 6- to 7-hour one-way commute. Adding the possibility of severe weather conditions in the winter months, the frequency of the family visits became considerably less. As research shows, it is critical that family plays an active role in the rehabilitation of the juvenile. The juveniles need to know their family is supportive and it also allowed for the youth and their families to begin to communicate and heal.

Department of Corrections recognized the distance was an issue not only for the juvenile's parents but for the female CIP members. Many of the females were mothers and they were trying to maintain or rebuild relationships with their own children. The distance created a barrier for them and that was why the women's CIP program was relocated completely to MCF-Shakopee. This move also created bed space for the men's CIP. Per the Minnesota Department of Corrections "Fact Sheet" (March, 2016) Togo can house 75 men.

Department of Corrections submitted an article in their correctional paper which stated the need for additional prison bed space for higher security offenders. With no state budget allotted for construction of new facilities, a creative alternative had to be sought. The closing of the juvenile program in Thistledeew and moving the females CIP to Shakopee allowed for 75 beds to be available. The Deputy of Corrections, Terry Carlson, stated in the article "DOC Moves Forward with Plans to Expand the Challenge Incarceration Program" (MN DOC, 2014):

We are finding that CIP-Togo's remote location was a barrier to visitation for women with children; because women are most often the caretakers of young children after release, we feel it is important to reduce barriers to visitation. Having two male CIP-

programs will allow us to adjust programming to better meet the needs of offenders. CIP has a proven track record in changing offender behavior and reducing recidivism. As we move forward with the Transitioning from Prison to Community (TPC) model, expanding this programming makes good correctional sense. (Full article is in appendix B)

Also in the letter sent to stakeholders in late 2014, Superintendent Gino Anselmo wrote about the reason the DOC decided to close the juvenile program and DOC's plans. He stated (2014):

It is with mixed emotions that I announce the decision to discontinue Thistledeew Juvenile Programs at the Minnesota Correctional Facility-Togo on July 1, 2015. Our final intake period for our 3 month programs will be in April and the last 3-week Wilderness Endeavors boy's course will begin in late May.

Now, nation-wide trends show a decline in juvenile out-of-home placements, with juveniles increasingly being served in their home communities. After much consideration, we have made the decision to move forward in a new direction.

The MCF-Togo will continue to operate its Challenge Incarceration Program (boot camp) for adult males. In addition, after July 1, we will start a minimum-security male offender program. (The full letter is included in Appendix B)

**Research Question 3:** What were the benefits/advantages of Thistledeew Camp Program as compared to the other Juvenile Reform Correctional Facilities?

In summary, Thistledeew implemented restorative justice and positive affirmation rather than a punitive structure. The juveniles were allowed off-grounds with the staff for academic programming or as a reward for positive behavior. Trust was given until proven otherwise and then a meeting with the superintendent, case manager, staff, and youth discussed the behavior, implications, and how the youth was going to make amends. Open communication about expectations was implemented. Positive goal setting and behaviors

were modeled. All programming was relationship based. The residents were challenged to step outside of their comfort zone throughout their stay and try a new way of dealing with their problems as well as life. These practices got the camp recognized as in the top 10% of all juvenile programs in the United States by the Corrections Program Assessment Inventory (2001).

### **Discussion**

The U.S is known as one of the wealthiest, best educated countries in the world, and yet the country has the largest population of incarcerated folks. That is counterproductive to society. Many of these individuals began their criminal career as juveniles. Meltzer and associates study (1984) traced student failure and eventual incarceration back to early academic failure. This began the perpetual downward spiral. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention Task Force (2007) as well as studies conducted in New York (1996), New Jersey (1996), Florida (1996), and Pennsylvania (1999) found juveniles who enter the adult judicial system are not being “rehabilitated” but are more likely to reoffend with more violent crimes following their release, usually in less than a year.

Thistledew’s original staff found that many of their delinquent young men were illiterate and this coincides with the studies that associate educational failure with juvenile delinquency (Meltzer et al, 2001; National Research Council Institute of Medicine, 2001). Even though schools’ intentions may not be to be punitive or contribute to the delinquency issues, but the National Research Council Institute of Medicine stated by implementing tracking, grade retention, suspension, and expulsion they may be doing just that. Meltzer et

al. (2001) study indicated that the most effective means to deal with juvenile delinquency is prevention through “highly individualized school programs that are non-punitive, ‘customized’ to the specific learning style coordinated with services that meet the psychological and health needs of the child [who may have] multiple learning disorders and academic lags” (p. 608).

Sahlberg (2014) discussed the intensive nature of the specialized education the Finnish schools implement especially in the elementary grades. They do not have standardized testing or special education as defined in the United States. Finland recognize *all* students have special needs and struggle from time to time. This mindset does not allow for one student to be singled out or to be left behind their peers. As Sahlberg (2014) stated “You’re an odd student if you *don’t* use services.” The class works together to find a means that works to education the person who is struggling. They have shorter school days because they feel there should be a time for children to “play” and time for the teachers to collaborate. Finland also has one of the *lowest incarceration rates* in the world which should point out that they are doing something right. It involved a full restructuring of their educational system but the gains have been well worth the investment.

Education must become a priority in Minnesota, and the U.S., rather than a burden or an afterthought. The current government system looks at ways to reduce educational spending at the expense of our children’s academic needs. When the bill passed allowing schools to hire “highly trained” staff who are no longer required to be licensed teachers, that sent a message to the Master Teachers that their skills they have honed and worked to

perfect, as well as the knowledge gained through many years of college, was not valid.

Finland requires their teachers to have their Masters Degrees to be considered a qualified educator. Minnesota's passed a new law that does not require individuals to have training in pedagogy techniques to become licensed teachers through "the highly-qualified clause."

Instead individuals can become classroom teachers by following a newly established set of state established guidelines.

Special Education funding in Minnesota has been a quagmire of complex formulas that only specialized individuals with extensive knowledge and experience understand. The formula for funding has become so cumbersome and shifts with each legislature; it reinforces the idea that state government condoned reduced investment in those students who have greater academic needs. Once again, if investment is made in the early years to aid all the children, with better, more intensive programs, and reduce testing, the delinquency rate and the number being incarcerated could be reduced. The Department of Corrections stated that it costs one dollar to educate to every five dollars spent to house an offender. The money saved from the housing can be used to educate juveniles, and in turn, they can become a contribution to society.

The National Conference of State Legislatures (n.d.) discussed the stigmas that go with adolescents going against peer pressure. They listed the following reasons that most succumb rather than challenge: lack of status, being ostracized, or being assaulted. They also lack the resources or freedom to remove themselves from potential situations that may get them involved in a criminal activity. Juveniles have "diminished decision making abilities.



They lack future orientation, are more vulnerable to peer influence, have poor assessment skills, and are more emotional and impulsive” (p. 8). Gottesman and Wile Schwarz (2011) also point out the lack of maturity which makes the youth far more susceptible to peer influences which is why adolescents commit so many crimes in groups and could gain them access to the juvenile justice system.

Per Gottesman and Wile Schwarz (2011), in 2008, just over two million juveniles under the age of 18 were arrested; of these, “95.4 percent had not been accused of violent crimes; 4.6 percent were convicted of murder, rape, or aggravated assault. In 2010, of the nearly 100,000 youth under the age of 18 who were serving time in residential placement facilities, 26 percent had been convicted of property crimes only, such as burglary, arson, or theft” (para, 2).

The juveniles were being convicted by the same incarceration standard of that of an adult. Until 2005, the United States was the only developed country that subjected individuals, who were convicted as juveniles, to the death penalty and as of today, our country is the *only* nation that still gives life without parole sentences to juveniles (Drinan, 2015). Yet, within society, there is acknowledgment that there are maturation differences between adolescents and adults. State laws set guidelines for age requirements for nearly all aspects of life; juveniles are subject to restrictions in driving, voting, firearm purchases, tobacco, alcohol, and gambling and yet we treat them the same as adults when it comes to incarceration. The large residential facilities are more detrimental to the youth than beneficial (Gottesman & Wile Schwarz, 2011).

In 2012 there was a change to the Eighth Amendment through rulings in the Supreme Court Cases *Graham v. Florida* (2010) and *Miller v. Alabama* (2012). Florida has some of the toughest stands on crime (Drinan, 2015). One is the *Graham* case; Graham was 16 years old in 2003 when he and three other teens decided to rob a restaurant. They went in through an unlocked back door at closing time. When the manager started yelling at them they fled, *taking no cash and not harming anyone*. Florida courts gave Mr. Terrence Graham life without parole for his involvement in the attempted robbery. In 2010, the Supreme Court struck down that ruling saying it was unconstitutional. The punishment did not fit the crime. He was resentenced to 25 years in prison.

In the case of *Miller v. Alabama*, Mr. Miller was 14 years old and had been drinking with a friend when they beat Miller's neighbor and set fire to his trailer. The neighbor died and Miller was charged at first as a juvenile but later it was motioned he be moved to adult court and he would be "charged with murder in the course of arson" (Supreme Court, 2011, para. 2). The jury found Miller guilty and sentenced him to life without parole. Alabama court of appeals upheld the sentence saying it was not overly harsh compared to the crime. The Supreme Court overturned it citing the psychological development and maturity of a person 14 years of age. Due to the "under developed sense of responsibilities, heed to recklessness, impulsiveness, and heedless risk-taking . . . they are more vulnerable . . . to negative influences and outside pressures (Supreme Court, 2011, para. 6). The argument that life without parole was equal to a death sentence for a juvenile. It is a harsh, disproportional sentence due to the age and maturity of the defendant. Due to this ruling,

Delaware, Hawaii, Massachusetts, Texas, West Virginia, and Wyoming, have abolished life without parole sentences for juveniles.

Examining other countries best practices may serve U.S. leaders in adopting programs which would reduce the overall incarceration rate. Italy's pretrial probation program is worth a closer look, especially for juveniles of non-violent crimes. It allows for an individual to be given a second chance without leaving a permanent scar on the juvenile's record. Italy implemented the pretrial probation where one is "given a second chance" to correct their behaviors through restorative justice and rehabilitative services. They are given a set amount of "probationary" time within the court system and if they are successful, they will have no record; but if they reoffend, they will serve the original sentence. Courts have a tremendous amount of leeway to forgive crimes or place lengthy timeframes for probation on the juvenile. Italy's government also felt it was of greater detriment to the juvenile to be pulled out of their school setting so they assure that the juvenile attends classes without missing any of the educational experience.

New Zealand allows the victim to have a say in the sentencing of the individual. They are given a voice, as is the family of the accused. Restorative justice is implemented rather than residential placements most the time. The police are respected and are the "gatekeepers" in *many* counties. They are the first individuals who decide the course of action: return to parent; citation; or arrest with future court date. Police can give the juveniles to the parents to discipline, especially in first offenses or smaller offenses. This allows the juvenile a second chance to not have a permanent record.

Many of the countries acknowledge drug and alcohol addiction is an illness. They do not think of it as a reason for incarceration but a reason to get the treatment needed to help recover. Treatment is paid for by the insurance companies. No one would incarcerate a person for having a disease such as cancer or pneumonia; yet the United States incarcerates for drug and alcohol addiction; individuals are given a treatment mandate while serving their sentence but one must look at the numbers of reoffenders and wonder if the treatment programs are intensive enough or effective. Rather than spending the money to incarceration those individuals, it would be a better investment to improve and intensify the rehabilitative programs.

The United States spends an enormous amount of money to incarcerate people. It is society's responsibility to find a means to reduce the numbers being housed in prisons; whether that means reexamining archaic, ineffective laws, or examining alternatives to residential placements. It would be in the country's best interest, as well as for at-risk juveniles, to examine the programs and incentives being implemented successfully in other countries that have significantly reduce the number of incarcerated folks as well as recidivism numbers. Many of those programs start before a juvenile enters in the court system. Reducing incarceration rates begins with a strong academic foundation that helps promote active learning, self-confidence, and offers fundamental resources for all children so they can be successful.

## Limitations

A “limitation of a study” is defined as “those characteristics of design or methodology that impacted or influenced the application or interpretation of the results of your study” (Price & Murman, 2004). The limitations for this study were as follows:

1. Many of the original staff are elderly and/or have passed away since this study was proposed and approved. They took with them a wealth of historical knowledge that cannot be ascertained in any other means.
2. The Department of Corrections did not approve the study as was proposed. The Department of Corrections reviewed the submission and requested an expanded study to include Red Wing’s Juvenile Correctional Facility as well as examining juvenile justice globalized best practices. Due to the extensive nature of their request and the delimitation from the original historical study, permission for continuing this study will not be granted by the DOC without adjustments to the foundation of this study. Because of the restrictions implemented by the DOC, interviews of current employees will not be permissible so interviewing was eliminated as a source for data gathering; due to time restraints, interviewing was not an efficient data gathering tool for this study. Conversations would be allowed of current staff and retired personnel who no longer hold positions at Thistledeew Camp.
3. The juvenile program was terminated during this study. When the study was proposed, and approved, there was no indication that the camp would have

reason to shift their focus from a juvenile correctional treatment facility to an adult male Challenge Incarceration Program.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

1. The recommendations would involve government investing in schools and restructuring current budget allotted for special education by state and federal elected representatives. The government must recognize the cost-effectiveness of investing in the front end of a child's education before the youth reaches a point of delinquency. Currently, schools use testing to identify those students who may have academic, emotional, or physical difficulty and students are grouped by ability. Funding is allotted for those labeled as special needs or have an Individual Educational Plan (IEP).

The United States should emulate Finland's educational approach recognizing that everyone needs help occasionally and all students are needing services. Then, the funding would not be addressed to specific students but to *all* students to assure academic success. The money could be used for academic supports with multiple teachers in a classroom or for teaching assistants. This would help alleviate the downward spiral the students begin as early as second grade. If more students are feeling academically successful, more would remain in school. This would reduce delinquency and incarceration rates which would pay for the classroom subsidies.

2. The Department of Corrections should consider having a fulltime college or college program *on site* for MCF-Red Wing for the juveniles. Once they earn their diplomas, they can start college and start their AA degree and transfer it upon their release or earn their AA degree with a fully transferable program to earn their Bachelor's Degree. Since research has shown that it costs one dollar to educate for every five spent incarcerating a person (MN DOC, n.d.), pay for the college of the released youth so it is not a burden for them or their family or set up a scholarship fund. This, in theory, should reduce recidivism and stop the downward spiral plus reduce the numbers we are housing in prison facilities. The young people would become active members of society contributing both with work and taxes while giving back to their communities.
3. Finally, juveniles who commit crimes in their youth before reaching full maturity, and are convicted with life sentences, should be allowed an opportunity to appear before a parole board regularly for consideration for release. As was documented in the psychological analysis conducted by Dr. Giedd, a person matures closer to age 25. It is believed that young people are not fully capable of understanding the consequences of their behaviors before this point. Yet the court recognizes individuals as young as 15, in some states, responsible for one's actions and they stand trial as an adult.

Having the review board documenting the interpersonal growth, attitude, and psychological changes of the offender will help with confirming the readiness for

them to be released when the time is appropriate. It may be a highly-supervised release, but it is still an opportunity for parole and to start contributing to society. Denying them an opportunity to go in front of a parole board gives offenders little reason to better themselves or make amends. Nothing is more dangerous than a person who has nothing left to lose. Having an opportunity at earning their freedom, and the resources available for a young person while incarcerated, gives them the desire to *want* to better one's self and make life changes. Having an education and being involved in their community helps assure they will work to stay out of prison.

#### **Recommendations for Future Studies**

1. It would be interesting to conduct research examining Minnesota's juvenile offenders individually by identifying their age and first criminal offense and monitoring each to document their ongoing behaviors until reaching age 25. Do they increase in severity or does it follow the theories that juveniles "age out of youth crimes" (Sullivan, 1989, p. 250) and the United Nations findings that juveniles' behaviors change based upon maturation? If it is the case that they do indeed reduce criminal activity with age and maturity, it may be worth exploring Italy's pre-trial probationary period practice to reduce out of home placements of youthful offenders.
2. Finally, in a statement discussing the advantages of the Pell Grant for prisoners it was stated that, "National recidivism rate after 5 years is 76 percent; 3 years it is



67 percent, with Minnesota having a 26 percent.” Christopher Zoukis (2015, para. 20) was quoted saying,

Recidivism rates decrease significantly when post-secondary education is provided: Prisoners who earn an associate degree recidivate at a rate of 13.7%, while for those who obtain a bachelor’s degree the rate is 5.6%. Upon earning a master’s degree, the rate is effectively 0%.

A recommendation is to conduct a study examining students who are in detention but are given full academic support to not only achieve their high school diploma or GED but are also enrolled fulltime in college with the same supports against those who have earned their high school equivalency diploma.

Document the rate of recidivism among the two groups and see if it holds true to the statement that the higher the education level, the lower the recidivism level.

Currently in Minnesota, incarcerated students who do not have a high school diploma or GED are mandated to school until a high school diploma/GED is achieved or they are released.

3. Implement the study the DOC requested examining all state run juvenile facilities. Examine the recidivism rates of all the youth that are serviced at each facility and study the effectiveness of each of the varying programs.

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### **Appendix A: Definition of Terms and Acronyms**

1. Adjudicated youth: The number of arrears reduced to a judgment or specified in a court or administrative order. To have prosecuted, proceeded or followed (Merriam Webster Dictionary, n.d.).
2. Alternative schools: An elementary or secondary school with a nontraditional curriculum. (Merriam Webster Dictionary, n.d.).
3. Challenge Program: Boys' residential three-month program.
4. Challenge Incarceration Program (CIP): Was mandated by the legislature in 1992. It is a voluntary program for inmates who meet certain statutory and department requirements. CIP consists of three phases which is highly structured and intensive. The program can ultimately shorten the incarceration period of the inmate (Minnesota Department of Corrections, n.d.).
5. Conflict resolution circle: Is a process which helps to resolve issues between parties. All members of the circle speak uninterrupted and discuss what happened and how it impacted them. Then a plan to move forward from the incident is discussed and agreed upon (University of Rochester, n.d.).
6. Disenfranchised youth: Having had [their] legal rights taken away. (Cambridge Online Dictionary, 2013).
7. Endeavors: Boys or girls 21-day wilderness program (Kruse, 2014).
8. Expedition: An 8-day period of daily wilderness travel, coupled with intensive interaction with staff and peers, twice daily therapeutic circles, and time set aside for

reflection. Residents begin to develop their Personal Relapse Prevention Plan (Kruse, 2014).

9. The Five Guiding Principles: Are behavioral and emotional expectations/guidelines which are emulated in all aspects of the Thistledeew Camp experience; staff as well as residents, are expected to use this as a foundation in all daily encounters and activities.
10. General Education Diploma (GED): High school diploma equivalent: a diploma for adults' equivalent to a high-school diploma (Bing Dictionary, 2013).
11. Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA, 2007): The original legislation was written in 1975 guaranteeing students with disabilities a free and appropriate public education and the right to be educated with their non-disabled peers. Congress has reauthorized this federal law. The most recent revision occurred in 2007 (UnderstandingSpecialEducation.com, n.d.).
12. Individual Education Plan (IEP): Special education term outlined by IDEA to define the written document that states the disabled child's goals, objectives and services for students receiving special education (UnderstandingSpecialEducation.com, n.d.).
13. Inpatient Treatment Programs: Refers to programs for teens that provide therapeutic care and supervision 24-hours a day in a residential facility where the teen lives while participating in treatment. These programs are highly structured and intense. This level of care may be necessary when [the] teens' behavior is dangerous, out-of-control or if they aren't improving in an outpatient program. The specific type of inpatient treatment program a teen [requires] is based on several factors to include the



problems they are having and what other treatment options have been tried (Rudlin, 2013).

14. Massachusetts Youth Screening Instrument (MAYSI): The MAYSI is a standardized, reliable, 52-item, true-false method for screening every youth of ages 12-17 entering the juvenile justice system, to identify potential mental health problems in need of immediate attention (Grisso, & Barnum, n.d.).
15. Master card: An intake card which has all the resident's pertinent information including: full name; age; birth date; arrival and departure dates; Probation Officer contact information; parental contact information; mailing addresses; and program type: residential, treatment, or Challenge 21-day program (DeMarce, personal communication, 2014).
16. Minnesota Department of Corrections: The Minnesota Department of Corrections, otherwise known as the MN Department of Corrections, oversees the state jails and prison population of Minnesota. (Laws.com. n.d.)
17. Minnesota Correctional Facility–Togo (MCF-Togo): A Minnesota correctional facility with separate programs housing male juvenile and female CIP offenders located in Northern region of the state.
18. Minnesota Department of Education (MDE): Administers testing and compliance programs throughout the State and provides for issues related to the funding of Minnesota located schools on the primary and secondary level (Laws.com, n.d.).

19. Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS): Is a state facilitated program “working with many other [programs] help[ing] people meet their basic needs so they can live in dignity and achieve their highest potential” (Minnesota Department of Human Services, 2013, p. 1).
20. Nonmainstream student: One who attends an Alternative Learning Center or Charter School (Connor et al., 2004).
21. Personal Education Plan (PEP): Individualized education plan addressing the students’ current credit accumulation verses their need to be on target for graduation with their peers (Hart, personal communication, 2013).
22. Portage Program: Boys’ three-month residential chemical dependency program (Kruse, 2014).
23. Recidivism: A person's relapse into criminal behavior, often after the person receives sanctions or undergoes intervention for a previous crime. Recidivism is measured by criminal acts that resulted in the re-arrest, reconviction or return to prison with or without a new sentence during a three-year period following the prisoner's release (National Institute of Justice, 2010).
24. Residential Programs: Provide treatment while the teen lives outside the home in a residential setting. This type of program is needed when your teens’ behavior is dangerous, out-of-control or if they aren't responding to outpatient programs (Rudlin, 2013).

25. Special Education programs: Qualifying students that meet one of 13 handicapping conditions are provided with individual education programs that include specially designed instruction to meet their individual needs (Logsdon, 2013).
26. Title 1 Services: Provides financial and academic assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2011).
27. Thistledew Camp: A Department of Corrections facility located in Togo, Minnesota
28. Training trek: A seven-day immersion into the wilderness program and all its components, with a special and intense focus on wilderness travel, hygiene, outdoor group living and the circle process (Kruse, 2014)
29. Wilderness Endeavors Experience: Is a year-round, 21-day adventure therapy program for boys or girls (the girl's program operates separately from the boy's program and has a strong gender-specific focus). It provides students with a safe but challenging environment in which to discover and develop tools for change and personal growth (Minnesota Department of Corrections, 2013).
30. Youth Conservation Commission (YCC): Was established in law to assume the authority of the Director of Public Institutions relating to juvenile offenders. Minnesota was the second state to create this type of youth authority. Its purpose was to prevent delinquency and crime and to re-train the offender. The YCC received youth 18 to 23 years old committed from district courts (Minnesota Department of Corrections, 2009).

31. Youth Level of Service Inventory/Case Management Inventory (YLSI/CMI): The YLS/CMI, derived from the LSI-R, helps probation officers, youth workers, psychologists, and social workers identify the youth's major needs, strengths, barriers, and incentives; select the most appropriate goals for him or her; and produce an effective case management plan (Hoge & Andrews, n.d.). An assessment to "classify and assist agencies with developing treatment and service plans per the offender's criminogenic risk factors" (Bechtel, Lowenkamp, & Latessa, 2007. p. 85).
32. Youth Forestry Work Camp: Was established at Willow River for young male felons in 1951. It was established so youth could learn work skills and trades. In 1955, a Forestry Camp opened at Thistledew Lake in Togo, Minnesota (Minnesota Department of Corrections, 2009).

## Appendix B: Thistledew Camp's Archive Materials

### *Youths Following Route Of Ancient Voyageurs*

Sashes and songs appropriate to the ancient voyageurs identify the party of 12 excursionists paddling eastward on U.S.—Canadian border lakes in a 30-foot birchbark canoe.

The group consists of seven boys of the Thistledew Youth Camp at Togo, 30 miles north of Nashwauk, and five adults, including three camp staffers.

The other adults are Roy Walholm, Colorado Springs, Colo., executive director of the Survival Rescue Laboratory, and John Humphrey, Brainerd outdoors enthusiast. Walholm is making photographs of the trip and expects to write an article based on it.

"The party is following the route of the early travelers in the region," said Glenn Joplin, Thistledew superintendent.

He explained that the boys are participants in the camp's outdoor program which is modeled after the survival program adopted by the Outward Bound camps, one of which is at Ely.

The party set out from Crane Lake last Friday and is expected to arrive at the site of old Fort Charlotte, 14 miles northwest of Grand Portage, this weekend, "with good luck," according to Joplin.

The party either will portage from Fort Charlotte to Grand Portage along the Pigeon River or will be picked up at Fort Charlotte by truck, according to Joplin.

The canoe was built by William Hafeman, widely known Bigfork outdoorsman.



30 FOOT HAND-MADE BIRCH CANOE — Bruce Roots of Camp Thistledew near Hibbing is shown with the camp's canoe which was on Leech Lake Wednesday afternoon. The canoe was used to give rides to parole agents from northern Minnesota. The canoe seats 12 and was built about three years ago by Erlen Haig from the camp. Over 1,000 hours went into the construction of the birch canoe which has spruce seats fastened with rawhide.

## THIS IS CORRECTIONS?

The boy in the photograph is taking part in Challenge, a program aimed at developing self-confidence. Challenge headquarters is the DYC Camp at Lake Thistledeu, Togo, Minnesota. There, the wilderness areas of northern Minnesota provide the challenges for a rugged outdoor experience.

Challenge is a year-round outdoor program, involving physical conditioning, camping, and wilderness travel. Young men who complete Challenge feel much the same as those who complete basic training in the armed forces. They feel good about themselves and their Challenge buddies. They have come through three tough weeks together. Challenge is no picnic, and they know it.

A misty drizzle drenches the woods. A Challenge brigade jogs single file through waist-high ferns and up a pine-covered slope on their way through a two-mile running course. A plunge in Thistledeu Lake caps off the run. Frigid water sets the brigade to thrashing around and bellowing like wounded bulls. Then breakfast - and after, on to the obstacle course, a jungle of rope-swings, rope-climbs, ditch-jumps, and other ingenious machines of torture. This is training week, a few days spent learning about equipment, learning to canoe, conditioning the body, and canoeing in white water. Imagine a boy's first look at black boulders and frothing waters of a rapids. Imagine how he feels when he has steered a canoe safely through.

Then, the expedition. Two weeks of canoe travel, 100 or more miles across wild northern lakes, including four days of solo camping. A summer Challenge expedition is more than a canoe trip - it is an endurance test. Difficult routes are sought, not avoided. Days begin at dawn and often end after dark, up to eighteen hours in midsummer. Discomfort is a Challenger's partner. Sleepless, short nights in rain-soaked sleeping bags. Shoulders sore. Two miles of carrying a canoe through soggy, rain-drenched woods. Sweat burning the eyes. Mosquitoes attacking. How low can spirits sink? How close to quitting does a man come? Yet, at journey's end, how good one must feel. What relief one knows.

Then, the final test. Solo camping. Like the young man in the photograph,



each Challenger spends four days and nights alone on an island, confronting the elements with sleeping bag, knife, matches, and a square of canvas, confronting his fears with his own determination. He's on his own, and he knows it. But when solo is over, triumph is his alone.

Challenge groups have camped several days at a temperature of  $45^{\circ}$  below zero, an open fire the only source of heat. A challenge group has traveled 200 miles of the voyageur's highway, using a 30-foot birchbark canoe, the only such canoe to have traveled the route in over 100 years. A challenge group has peddled and portaged a canoe 40 miles in a single day. Challenge groups have traveled on skis, using a dog sled for freighting equipment. Challenge groups are continually trying to accomplish adventurous objectives. In brief, this is Challenge: an experience with success. The Challenger will triumph over physical stresses beyond any he has experienced. He will achieve goals beyond his dreams.

#### Schedule of Challenge Courses

Challenge courses are three weeks long. The courses run back to back: as one course ends, another begins. Each course is open to one brigade (Challenge group) with a limit of 12 members. The majority of the brigade members come from the population of the DYC Camp at Thistledeu Lake. For them, challenge is the culmination of a ten week intensive treatment program involving school, work, and recreation. At present, any youths under the jurisdiction of the Youth Conservation Commission are eligible to fill course vacancies.

Challenge short courses are also available to interested groups in the Department of Corrections. These courses are usually one week long and cover such areas as camping, canoeing, fishing, hiking, nature study, and edible wild foods.

For further information write to DYC Camp #2, Box W-10, Togo, Minnesota, or call 218-376-3811.



One-time cost: \$917,000

Status: Under review by the Governor's Office.

**YOUTH INSTITUTIONS OPERATIONS  
PROJECT** — Report No. 50, Department of  
Corrections

**Problem:** At present, the juvenile institutions are not being utilized to their capacity. Overall, the facilities are at 65% capacity. Projecting current population trends, it is clear that two institutions could serve juvenile needs by July, 1974.

**Solution:** The closing of Thistledeew Camp is recommended. No program loss would result and the State could save \$300,000 a year. Close Lino Lakes Correction Center in July, 1974, with the metropolitan area relying on Glen Lake and Totem Town. This action would yield \$2,400,000 a year in savings. A portion of the savings, \$900,000 per year, would be transferred to the counties. The State is spending nearly \$500,000 annually for capital improvements for its juvenile institutions. This amount seems unrealistic in view of declining populations and increased community service activity. Based on the previous statement, it is recommended that: 1) the Minnesota Home School not build its proposed \$290,000 security building until the effects of regionalization have been evaluated, and 2) the Minnesota Reception and Diagnostic Center in Lino Lakes not build its proposed \$800,000 education facility.

Large differences exist among the staffing patterns in the institutions. The recommendations are: 1) abolish the Minnesota Reception and Diagnostic Center's custody force which no other institution has, 2) reduce Minnesota Rehabilitation and Diagnostic Center's food service staff, 3) reduce the State Training School's education department, which is twice the size of other institutions, and 4) reduce the Minnesota Home School's overall staff, which, in proportion to population, is high. These reductions will yield the State savings of \$350,000 annually. Establish a staff-to-population guideline.

Estimated Annual Savings: \$2,349,600

One-time savings: \$1,042,000

Could be implemented by: January 1, 1974

Status: Disagreed by department head.

## State to slam door on youth program

Ely Echo  
Feb 28, 1973

by Bob Cary

Camp Thistledew, located at Togo, Minnesota and noted for operating one of the nation's most effective youth correction programs, is slated for extinction in an "economy and consolidation" move by the 1973 State Legislature.

A blue-ribbon "Corrections Task Force" of four prominent Minnesota businessmen have recommended the closure. Supporters of Thistledew point out that the camp operates on \$300,000 per year, less than 1 per cent of the state's \$44 million corrections budget and has the lowest per-capita operating cost among the correctional institutions. In addition, under its unique outdoor-oriented "Challenge" program, the camp has an outstanding record of youth correction in the northeastern area.

Ely has been the scene of several recent winter and summer camping expeditions under the Challenge activity. This is a tough, three-week wilderness survival project which camps off the three-month outdoor work and indoor school program.

Under the Challenge concept, two weeks of intensive physical conditioning and technical training are followed by a week's trip by canoe, skis or snowshoes, depending on the season of the year, plus a three-day "solo" where the youngsters live alone with a tent and sleeping bag using the woodcraft skills learned earlier. As a gauge of effectiveness, some 80 per cent of Thistledew's graduates have no further brushes with the law.

The crunch on the youth program is a direct result of fewer young offenders being committed for state correction. However, authorities are quick to point out that this does not reflect a sudden sharp decrease in law violations. Rather, it reflects a reluctance on the part of judges and juvenile officers to commit young offenders to standard steel-and-concrete institutions where they "serve time" and often become more schooled in criminal activity.

There is a strong suspicion among some Thistledew supporters that the very economy and success of its outdoor program has been its undoing. They feel the emphasis on personal responsibility and tough self-discipline are not exactly in vogue with some corrections experts who seek to probe for "social maladjustment" and tend to view the offender as a victim of society. Also the fact that the camp operates in northeastern Minnesota and is not part of the St. Paul-Minneapolis government complex, vexes some Hennepin County politicians who prefer to see state money tidily spent in the Twin City environment, supporters claim.

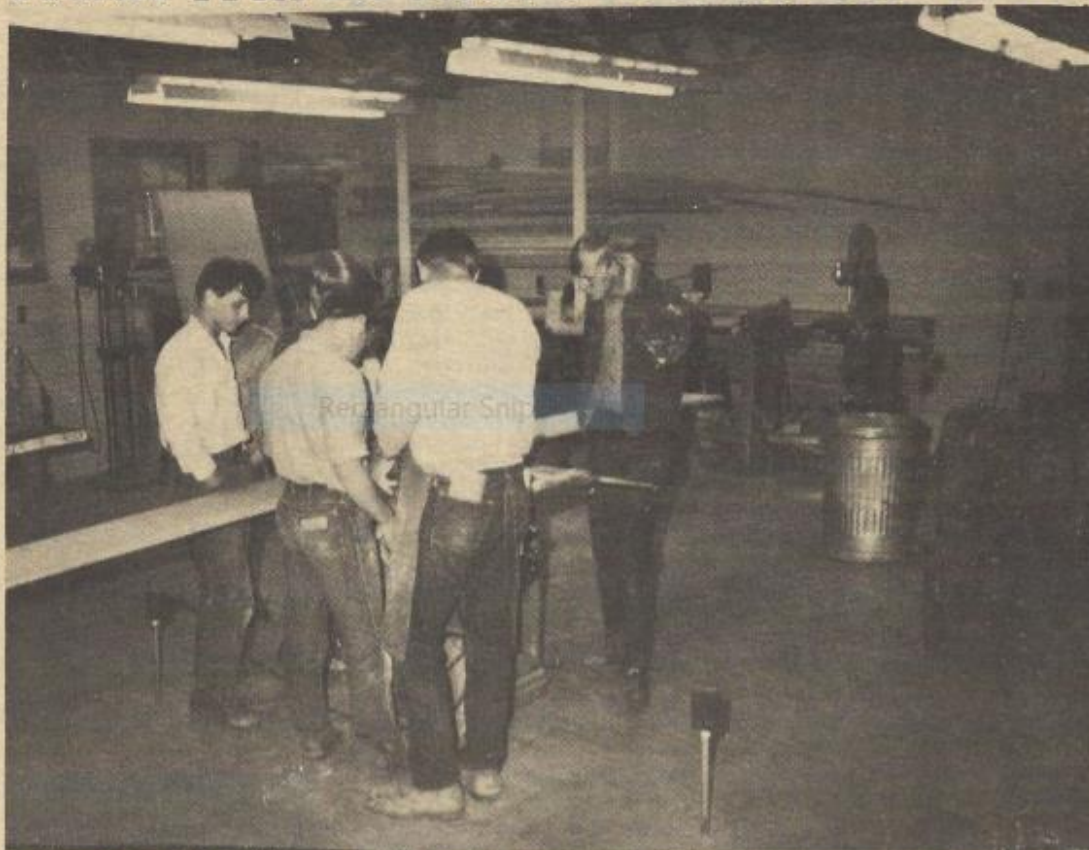
A large part of the support for Camp Thistledew comes from outside the state government. All of the camping equipment has been furnished by private donations. Such groups as the Winton Foundation, Hill Family Foundation and Blandin Foundation have contributed to the camp. Facilities of the Charles Sommers Boy Scout Canoe Base at Ely have been made available for the Challenge program. Experienced Sommers canoe guides have donated their time and skill to the school. Currently, three Scout guides, Dave, Martin, Greg Krion and Mike Sowinski, are working at the camp for no salary.

This Echo reporter interviewed a recent group of Thistledew winter campers and advisors heading for Knife Lake with skis and backpacks. All of the young men were enthusiastic about the Challenge concept and several of them pointed out that for them it was one part of the state corrections program that "made sense."

A handful of state legislators, plus many private citizens supporting the corrections camp, have expressed the thought that rather than closing down Thistledew, the Minnesota Legislature might better study the methods which have made that institution one of the midwest's most effective youth rehabilitation schools and at the lowest-per-capita cost in the state.

Page 16

# What Will Be The Fate of Thistledew?



The fate of the Thistledew Camp, which falls under the State Department of Corrections is in serious question, and only intervention by citizens of the area and an understanding attitude from the Governor can save the facility, which is the only one of its kind in the State of Minnesota and one of two in the entire nation, with Massachusetts operating a similar one.

During the past year, a task force of business executives have been making surveys and determining ways to cut down costs. Thistledew is due for the axe, yet the question arises, how in depth was the study, and how and why was it determined that

Thistledew was an operation that has to go when the costs per client are LESS than in any other Juvenile Institution.

Thistledew is unique. It is located 40 miles north of Chisholm in beautiful forest country, surrounded by many lakes. It is devoid of the harsh lights of the busy cities and the hot pavement. This is a camp of short term treatment, usually lasting three months for boys aged 13 to 18 who have gone astray. The boys are involved in mandatory education. They get credits and the incentive is given for them to return to school once they are released. They become involved in shop courses, minor building, home

maintenance, and the UNIQUE and unparalleled Change Program which is designed to build self confidence.

The cost at Thistledew is \$9,000 per capita, while at Red Wing it's \$12,000, and \$13,000 at Sauk Center.

The camp was started in 1955 and only the young people who have been there, and the area organizations involved, who have cared enough to participate and help, can truthfully evaluate the values and determine the worth of this camp.

This will be the first of a series of articles on Camp Thistledew.



Published every Thursday from 216 West Lake Street, Chisholm, Minnesota  
 Legal newspaper as of first date of publication, July 24, 1947, under purchase  
 of legality and publishing rights of "Aurora News."  
 Publisher and Editor ..... Veda F. Ponikva

## Let's Take A Second Look!

A state committee, known as Loan Executive Action Program, comprised of businessmen on a volunteer basis, has been conducting surveys throughout the state in an attempt to curtail expenses and eliminate various projects for the purpose of reducing the budget.

This is commendable; and perhaps should have been inaugurated years ago. The task of deciding what to retain and what to eliminate must be overwhelming. What criteria is used, and what type of yardstick is known but to those involved. However, as citizens, concerned for those in our society who need help and direction, we are forced to ask why the sudden decision to abandon Camp Thistledew?

### A PROVEN FACILITY

This state Corrections Department Camp was started in 1955. Located in a peaceful, wooded area about forty miles north of Chisholm, it has been a training ground for boys aged fifteen to eighteen who find themselves in trouble with the law and for whom life has become a startling, disturbing frustration. They have come from poor, middle-income and wealthy homes. The temptation to get into trouble has no barriers.

The short term treatment program involves a mandatory attendance at school where a new approach and enlightenment is given to subjects that once plagued the youth. An incentive is created to go on to school once the youth is released, with credits earned to strengthen other programs in regular public schools. In addition, there are shop courses and interesting work projects around the camp which whet the imagination and give the youth direction and purpose. Over the past seventeen years, since 1955, civic organizations in many communities of the state have found it worthwhile to not only visit Camp Thistledew, but to support it, and to inaugurate programs that broaden the boys' outlook on life. Everyone has benefited from such participation.

(Minn.), Wednesday, Aug. 23, 1972

## Borden Visits Camp Thistledew

State Senator Winston Borden spent Tuesday touring the Thistledew Forestry Camp near Togo, operated by the Minnesota Department of Corrections.

Thistledew Forestry Camp is a residence for some sixty Minnesota boys between the age of 16 and 18 years. The camp emphasizes physical conditioning, practical and remedial schooling and a challenge program modeled after Outward Bound.

Commenting on the tour of the camp, Senator Borden said, "Over the past few weeks I have toured the Sauk Centre home school and the St. Cloud Reformatory. In the weeks ahead I hope that I can visit all the correctional institutions in the state of Minnesota so that I can make a personal evaluation of their effectiveness.

"It is clear that in large measure our correctional system has failed. Prison doors have frequently been little more than revolving doors where inmates reside for a short period of time, are released, and return again. That has to stop.

"Programs like the one in Thistledew which emphasizes the need for physical work and physical fitness, along with schooling, appear to be among the most successful programs available to us."

September 17, 1972

The Honorable Wendell R. Anderson  
Governor of Minnesota  
Room 130, Capitol Building  
St. Paul, Minnesota 55155

Dear Governor Anderson,

I am writing this letter to you with the thought that it seems to represent the general feelings of most staff at Thistledeew. It is an effort to relate our feelings directly to you since we think it is important that you have a clear understanding of why we now must appear a kind of renegade or disloyal part of our Corrections system. Further, we feel that without your help we would now be getting ready to close the doors of Thistledeew. We are grateful for your intervention which will allow us to continue at least for a while longer.

Without sounding like an idealist, we would like to give you a very brief description of the history of Thistledeew, for it is this history that seems to reflect on the spirit and pride of our staff.

Thistledeew began in 1955, and most people who pioneered its beginning still remain on the staff. With meager funds, shortage of staff and not ideal conditions, several old buildings purchased by the department for \$500.00 apiece, were painstakingly renovated by boys and staff until we finally had a kind of livable camp. How well most of us remember good and bad times during the history of Thistledeew. Often we worked well beyond a normal work week to accomplish a task that needed completion. We often still do in fact, not because we are exceptional people, but because we are interested and believe in our programs here.

As years have gone by, the old buildings have been replaced with new ones, water and sewer lines and a modern sewage plant built, landscaping done, until last year, the final building was completed and it now stands a new modern facility, a facility that likely is worth near the million dollar figure. But more, we think, than new structures, the programs at Thistledeew have progressed too. Although many people here have grown older, and grayer perhaps, they have generally remained young in ideas and are continually seeking new ways to developing programs that will be effective in helping those youths who come here.

We believe, Governor Anderson, that through the years Thistledeew has, although it is a small place, been in many ways the most innovative and progressive institution



Letter to Governor Wendell R. Anderson from Erling Hegg dated 9/17/72:

in Minnesota. We believe that it is viewed with pride by a great many people in Corrections today. Almost all who come to visit camp, families of boys, legislators, parole agents and often judges and law enforcement people, generally feel the program is good and boys who come here get a good experience out of their stay.

The Department of Corrections' decision to close Thistledew this fall was accepted by staff here with dismay, hurt, and anger. I hope that my letter explains enough about our camp and its history so that you may understand better why these people felt betrayed. The people here are proud of Thistledew. They believe they have worked hard for Corrections, they believe they have good programs and can develop better programs yet. They believe they are right in trying to keep going even though it is apparent our department would prefer to close it.

We know you obviously don't have the time to visit Thistledew. However, later this fall we plan to complete our new Challenge lodge, a building made possible by donated funds. We plan to dedicate this building which hopefully will be completed before December and would at least like to have representatives from your office attend. We feel you will be pleased with our program.

I hope this letter will help you understand why we continue to struggle to keep Thistledew alive. We feel that even with dramatic changes in Corrections programs, this staff and this camp is flexible enough to change, and with alternative in programs, could be utilized.

Although we may appear to be disloyal to our department, we are hopeful that you at least, will understand that our struggle to keep Thistledew Camp is because we believe programs here are worthy of our effort.

Very sincerely yours,

Erling Hegg, Career Agent  
Director of Challenge

EH:vh

DEPARTMENT Corrections

STATE OF MINNESOTA

*Office Memorandum*

TO : THISTLEDEW CAMP STAFF

DATE:  
August 25, 1972FROM : David Fogel  
Commissioner*Fogel*

SUBJECT:

This office has been bombarded with questions about the closing of the camp. Rumors range from immediate closing to wholesale firings. The purpose of this memo is to provide accurate information.

1. There is no date or decision to close Thistledeew.
2. A study will shortly get underway to find out how effective the Thistledeew program is. What future populations will Thistledeew be serving as a result of dwindling populations in the entire Youth Division?
3. Discussions will go on in September with the Y.C.C. and with the Juvenile Court Judges at their conference to receive their input concerning regionalization and the future of all institutions -- including Thistledeew.
4. Because we are in a changing environment as a result of low populations (which we ought to be happy about), I am forming a task force with Civil Service and Manpower Services to study retraining, transfer and reassignment problems for all correctional personnel who in the future might be affected.

I believe that the Thistledeew staff is one of the best units in the Department. Whatever happens, I want to see the staff stay as much together as a unit as possible. You will all be involved in the process of thinking through the current program, any alternative use of the camp or in its closing. Nobody will simply issue a memo closing it!

I solicit your mature participation in this planning process.

DF/fc

September 13, 1972

Senator Winston Borden  
Brainerd, Minnesota

Dear Senator Borden,

I am writing in behalf of the staff at Thistledew Camp to make you aware of our appreciation regarding your comments about this Corrections facility. The article apparently was put in the Brainerd newspaper and we quote the last paragraph, "Programs like the one in Thistledew which emphasizes the need for physical work and physical fitness, along with schooling, appears to be among the most successful programs available to us."

We want you to be aware of the tremendous struggle we are putting forth to keep this camp in operation. It's obvious, and I believe most staff here realize that if our struggle is lost our future in Corrections will be dim indeed. However we are fighting for a cause that we think is right. The high spirit of Thistledew has always seemingly been kind of a mystery to our department in St. Paul. With a staff composed of quite ordinary people, it has always been innovative and progressive to the extent that I believe it has often provided a feeling of "fresh air" in a department that we think is too often involved in turmoil and unrest. The answer is the tremendous dedication of people here, most of them have worked alongside of boys to grub out the trees for room to build Thistledew. Their heart and spirit is in this camp and to ask them to be quiet and accept the decision to close it would be akin to putting them in a gas chamber and handing them a cyanide capsule to kill themselves.

It is the intent of the Corrections Department to close Thistledew, make no mistake about that! But, because of staff who believe in what they are doing more strongly than what is currently department philosophy, they have made their stand almost to a man to go down fighting.

Thistledew, I truly believe, was born in a spirit of adventure and hope. If it is to be cut down I believe its memory will live long in the minds of many.

There is little more to say other than we continue to work hard with a fervent prayer of hope. Obviously there are many unsaid things here. But whatever effort to get us to do otherwise, we will, until the door closes, do our best to help those who come here.

Sincerely,

Erling Hegg, Career Agent  
Director of Challenge





STATE OF  
MINNESOTA  
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

GAME RESEARCH  
111 Golf Course Road  
Grand Rapids, Minnesota 55744

Rectangular Snip

October 30, 1972

Glenn Joplin, Supt.  
Thistledeu Forestry Camp  
Box M-10  
Togo, Mn. 55788

Dear Glenn:

After talking to you about your meeting in Hibbing, it occurred to me that I also have "good" things to say about the Camp. Perhaps I should have been at the meeting. The thought did not occur to me at the time.

Throughout my work you, your staff, and the boys have been very helpful and cooperative. If in the future should you need any written or verbal comments from me regarding our cooperative projects, please feel free to call on me.

Sincerely,

*Jack*  
Jack Mooty  
Game Biologist

JM:sp

of Corrections - MRDC

December 21, 1972

Harold Hansen  
Field Director

Doris Dege  
Cottage Director - IDC

Thistledeu Camp

• Rectangular Snip

As you know the rumor that Thistledeu Camp will be closed by the department runs rampant and apparently there is some substance to this rumor. I understand the Department's desire to reduce institutional cost and to be involved as a leader in the movement away from institutionalization towards community programming. However I believe Thistledeu provides a unique alternative to the programs we currently have at MRDC. We at IDC have used Thistledeu in the past years and found it to be of great benefit to our clients. This has been generally used for boys in Phase II of our programs. In Phase I we have used a Thistledeu type experience provided by the Plymouth Youth Center. There is no reason why, if the option were available to us, we could not use the Thistledeu Challenge Program instead.

Because of the unique alternative it provides and because of Glenn Joplin and his staff have assumed a posture of flexibility and willingness to serve other programs I would strongly urge you to use whatever influence you have to see that Thistledeu Camp will continue as an alternative for programming for our clients.

DD:rh

cc: Glen Joplin  
File

OF CORRECTIONS-Minneapolis

Harold C. Hansen, Director Hennepin County  
Region, Minneapolis

12-2.

Victor McGay, Administrative Assistant to Regional Director,  
Minneapolis

**Thistledeu Forestry Camp**

I have just learned with some alarm that the Licensed Executives Program has recommended the closing of Thistledeu Camp. Their reasoning appears to be based on the high cost of the program and the fact that the state will not lose anything in juvenile programming if the camp is closed. With this I must disagree. Although the cost for running the camp is high it falls within an average range for juvenile institutions in the state, with both MDC and the Home School costs being higher.

I disagree most emphatically with the consultant's statement that no juvenile programming will be lost. At the present time both the Youth Commission and the agents are feeling the squeeze of a diminishing number of treatment programs. More alternatives should be offered rather than less and I fear that the juvenile division is placing itself in the position where we are limiting ourselves to either group therapy or operant conditioning. This would appear to me to be a regressive move.

Thistledeu Camp offers an unqualified success experience for our clients and is the only program we have which does. The clients I see coming from Thistledeu look better than any I have observed from our other programs. With a follow up program to maintain what strengths they have gained from their camp experience I believe that we can develop a program with a high success rate. If the Self-Concept Improvement Program is funded, a marriage between the Thistledeu institutional program and the SCIP "street" program can offer such a follow up.

In my opinion it would be a great mistake to eliminate a good, strong program with a well trained and capable staff such as we have at Thistledeu and I implore the department administrative personnel to consider all factors prior to arriving at a decision regarding the future of the camp.

Sincerely,

Victor S. McGay

VSM:ald  
cc: Milt Olson, Deputy Commissioner, CO  
Glenn Joplin, Camp Supervisor, Thistledeu.

DEC 29 1971

December 28, 1972

The Honorable Delbert Anderson  
Starbuck, Minnesota 56381

Dear Delbert, Rectangular Ship

One of the findings of the LEAP Study Commission that disturbs me has to do with the possible closing of the Thistledew Lake Forestry Camp at Togo, Minnesota. We in the Division of Education at UMN have had opportunities to become acquainted with the camp and I feel the closing of the facility would definitely be in error. It is a unique operation and I think particularly effective in its mission to assist in the rehabilitation of youngsters. I know that our college seniors who have completed their student teaching assignment at Thistledew are unanimous in their praise of its operation.

Congratulations on your re-election.

Sincerely yours,

William Scarborough  
Acting Chairman, Division of Education

WS:jb

cc: David Fogel  
Commissioner of Corrections

Glenn H. Japlin  
Superintendent of Thistledew



STATE OF MINNESOTA

DEPARTMENT of Corrections - Minneapolis

Office Memorandum

TO : Harold Hansen, Regional Director

DATE: December 29, 1972

FROM : Richard Quick, Supervisor

SUBJECT: THISTLEDOW CAMP

Speaking as a representative of my unit, there is much concern at the present time regarding the status and use of Thistledow Camp now that we have begun to proceed on a regional basis of treatment in the state regarding juveniles. Questions have been raised on whether or not Thistledow is going to remain open, will there be competition between Thistledow Camp and the other programs at MROC and whether or not it does in fact make sense to have youth treated in a setting so far removed from the Metropolitan area. Our unit has tried to address ourselves to these questions in order to give some feedback.

It is the opinion of myself and the Agents in my unit that Thistledow Camp should remain open and accessible to Metropolitan youth. We base this opinion on the level of performance that paroled youth from Thistledow Camp have been able to exhibit upon the streets when released. The program is challenging youth and bolstering their self-confidence and their motivation to get involved in a legal manner in the community.

While working in the state system we realize that money management is an important aspect to be considered, we also are convinced that our best possible way of having success with clients is to individualize to the extent that needs are met so that individuals can be successful in their own life. There are clients in our system that we are able to identify that need the challenge experience in order to find and control themselves when they return to the community. I believe that we must weigh programs under the merit of the program rather than the number of beds that are filled and the cost for that bed.

We are convinced that continuity of services in a closely located facility has much merit and should be used as often as possible. However there are instances when the distance of the treatment from the metropolitan area is not an over-riding concern. In fact, the level of communications between Thistledow and the Metropolitan Agents is at a very high level and we do have intentions to continue to cultivate this relationship by interchanging of visits between our staff and their staff in the near future.

As a unit we also recommend that Thistledow Camp be used as a worthwhile asset to other programs as a supportive service and we would go on record supporting short-term challenge programs within other programs, based at Thistledow Camp, we would also request that an exploration of the use of a short-term return or shorter stay from field service be permitted at Thistledow if and when we could free staff to travel with a group of

JAN 4 1973

- 2 -

Harold Hansen, Regional Director

December 29, 1972

## THISTLEDOW CAMP

youths to the camp, or work out an individual parolee contract to go through a weekend to two week experience at the camp. What I am trying to say is that we feel Thistledow could be one of the front saving institutions in the opening of points of entry to the camp, in response to the Community Services and Juvenile Action Plans.

In fact, maybe there is still time to make a legislative request that the camp be opened to county use also on a per/diem basis which would more likely insure capacity status of the camp.

BQ:rah

cc: Lynn Nelson  
Glen Joplin  
Hilt Olson



STATE OF MINNESOTA

DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

310 STATE OFFICE BUILDING  
SAINT PAUL, MINNESOTA 55155

February 1, 1973

Mr. Hubert F. Dear, Manager  
Chisholm Area Chamber of Commerce  
Chisholm, Minnesota 55719


Dear Mr. Dear:

Thank you very much for forwarding the resolution in the support of the Thistledew Camp. The Department of Corrections, under Dr. Fogel's leadership, took exception to the LEAP Report, which recommended the closing of the Camp. This means that we plan as a Department, to continue to ask for funds for the next two fiscal years. If the Camp is to be closed, it will be by legislative mandate.

I have briefly talked to our new Commissioner, Kenneth Schoen, and he expressed the feeling that we should endeavor to support continued operation of Thistledew Camp. We have also introduced legislation which would broaden the usage of Thistledew so that surrounding counties and agencies could use its facilities. This bill was introduced to the Correction Committee and it was recommended for passage to the full Senate Corrections Committee.

Thank you for your continued interest.

Sincerely,

  
Milton S. Olson  
Deputy Commissioner  
Division of Youth Conservation

MSO:rjk



SIGURD F. OLSON

106 WILSON EAST-ELY, MINNESOTA 55731

2/2/73

Dear Erling:

I shall do all I can to help  
in your battle to keep Thistledeu with  
letters to Governor Anderson and John Elstrik  
and others.

It is wonderful that you have  
Veda Ponikver on your side. She is a powerhouse  
and with her Chisholm Free Press Articles  
can do a tremendous amount of good.

I have a good feeling about  
Thistledeu. It simply cannot go under.

Sincerely



Page 16

# Thistledew Challenge Lodge To Be Dedicated Saturday



On Saturday, February 3, 1973, a new building will be dedicated at Thistledew D.Y.C. Camp No. 2 at Togo, Minnesota. It is the latest in new buildings for the use of our youth.

Thistledew Camp is a camp for juvenile boys, ranging in age from 14 to 18 years of age. It is a state operated camp with a well rounded program that has

met with considerable success. We have a good school, work and recreation program for our boys.

The culmination of their stay with us is our "Challenge" part of the program. It is three weeks of intensive training for living and survival in the wilderness. The object of this training is for our client to develop self

confidence and pride so he can have a better chance to succeed in life.

It is with pride that we will be dedicating this new building on the 3rd of February as it is our new "Challenge" lodge. This building will house all of our challenge supplies and mementos of our various trips.



State of Minnesota  
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

January 19, 1973

Rectangular Snip

Mr. Erling Hegg  
Thistledew Camp  
Star Route, Box W-10  
Togo, Minnesota 55788

Dear Erling:

An invitation was sent to me concerning your February 3rd ceremony. I have put it on my schedule; however, I am not sure that I will be able to attend, due to conflicts which have arisen.

I have enclosed with this letter a copy of the LEAP report concerning corrections.

Howard Costello indicated before the Crime and Corrections Committee last week that currently there was no intention to close Thistledew. ✓

Representative Donald Moe is apparently going to be named Subcommittee Chairman for Corrections this session. You may remember that he was one of the members of my subcommittee during the Interim. Don lives in St. Paul, making it somewhat difficult to get to Togo. If you could devise a rapid travel vehicle (such as a ride up in a DNR airplane), he might be interested in attending the February 3rd event. He might attend even without this. I have not communicated with him on the matter.

Sincerely,

James E. Ulland  
State Representative

JEU/kr  
Encl.

*answered 1-27-73*





April 9, 1973

Mr. William H. Wadsworth, Director  
High Adventure Programs Service  
Boy Scouts of America  
North Brunswick, New Jersey 08902

Dear Bill,

Thanks for your letter of March 12. We were sorry too that you couldn't be with us for the dedication of the Challenge Lodge. However, we realized it likely would have been impossible for you to attend on such short notice. We only hoped we might "luck out".

At the present time we are still not certain of the camp's future. At best it's uncertain and unpredictable. I have tried, and others with me of course, to make people understand that we have a good program, particularly in regard to the high adventure part of it. Obviously we have convinced many but politics continue to be involved and I fear Thistledeew could be a pawn to be used in indicating to the people that an effort is being made to save tax dollars. Unfortunately the fact that our budget is a mere pittance in comparison to the total Corrections budget is a difficult message to get across to the people. Particularly when there is apparent effort by our department to at least more or less ignore our pleas for help. Obviously too, we realize that the pressure is on our department to close something, and being a kind of far flung outpost in the north woods, it appears we are the likely candidate.

We are still trying to "hang on", Bill, and plan for the future. But generally morale is not good now and I doubt we can really be effective much longer. I am sure you know better than I that high adventure programs stay alive and effective by high spirit and enthusiasm of staff.

We want you to know how great it has been to work with your Charles L. Sommers Wilderness Canoe Base and we appreciate the offer of Boy Scout books for our proposed library. However please let us take a rain check for a bit longer since it is apparent a decision must be reached soon by our legislature as to our future.

In closing I can only say that in all good things there must be a "Great Spirit" that really directs us. It often seems to me that in our effort to uphold or stick with something that we believe in, we are forever being tested. My greatest concern now is if we have enough courage and faith (and wisdom) to see it all through to whatever end, and still hold our heads up high and keep our handshake firm.

Sincerely,

Erling Hegg,  
Director of Challenge

EH:vh

## CORRECTIONS MODEL FOR OTHER STATES

# Reprieved Thistledew Camp To Continue Challenging Youth

By DON SPAVIN  
Staff Writer

TOGO, Minn. — One of Minnesota's unusual corrections programs appears to have been saved by the bell after being on the ropes for a time.

Action by a full Senate committee restored funding to Thistledew camp here after a Senate subcommittee had recommended closing the institution. Full committee approval was given for continuing operation of the camp for at least two more years and prospects are bright for its future.

**THISTLEDEW** WAS founded in 1955, carved from the wilderness of the George Washington State Forest. It was designed and has operated as a short-term camp for youthful offenders. Its occupants were to be assigned to the camp from

Youth Conservation Commission reception centers. It was built to handle 50 youths. It is located about 30 miles north of Nashwauk.

In recent years that population, seldom above 40, had dropped to as low as a dozen. It was because of this and also because LEAP (Loaned Executives Action Program) had recommended it that the camp was slated for closing.

"One of the problems at Thistledew was that it was not a reception center but had to depend on other reception centers for its population," said Dennis Hanson, superintendent. "If these centers sent no one up here, there was little we could do about it."

Another employe, who

asked not to be named, blamed Thistledew's population troubles on "politics." Under changes in the corrections system as well as a move toward more economy, he said, each of the corrections institutions was attempting to prove its worth by keeping its population near capacity. None was about to transfer offenders to Thistledew even if the program at this camp was better suited to that individual.

UNDER THE regional setup for corrections," he said, "Red Wing, Lino Lakes, and Sauk Centre have been designated as reception centers, one for the eastern half, one for the metropolitan area and one for the western half. Juveniles from the north were required to go many

Turn to Page 18, Col. 6



or corrections program in northern Minnesota.

## Program Providing Challenge To Youth

Continued from Page 1

miles to reception centers for processing. It would only seem logical to have a reception center in the northern part of the state also."

Regardless of the reasons, abandonment of Thistledew, in addition to adding to the state's amount of surplus real estate, would have brought the end to a program that has become the model for many other states.

It is based on the idea that by achieving something that few people achieve, a boy learns to hold his head up just a little higher.

"Our program also shows a boy the necessity of working together with others toward a common goal," said Erling Hegg, director of a program called Challenge.

Challenge, the basis of the Thistledew program, pits a boy against nature in a contest of endurance and learning. Before he can graduate from Thistledew, he must complete the Challenge program.

IN THE SUMMER months that means taking part in a canoe expedition into the Boundary Waters Canoe Area; in the winter it means a ski trip into the same wilderness. The last three weeks of his stay at the camp is taken up with that program, and the last few days of his man-against nature test puts him on his own in the wilderness.

"Challenge is an important part of our pro-

gram," said Earl Gunsalus, assistant superintendent, "but we do not neglect such things as schooling. School attendance is mandatory and students attend class from 12 to 20 hours a week. In addition they get learning in vocations such as wood-working and gasoline engine repair. Boys, with the supervision of staff, constructed our new Challenge building at a fraction of what it would have cost to have had built."

Hegg, who designed and heads the Challenge program, said it is basically an outdoor high-adventure program conceived as a way to build self-confidence and pride within the individual.

"Young people who get in trouble often have histories of past failures," Hegg explained. "Young men who experience an exciting and challenging adventure develop a feeling of self-reliance and a concern for others. In addition they do something under often extreme hardship, that few youths of their age can or ever do. It becomes a point of pride and accomplishment to replace an attitude of defeat."

Such high adventure is not a leisure trip given as a reward but instead an often difficult requirement for completion of training. Trips are not postponed because of bad weather so the youths learn to keep going no matter how tough that going might be.

FOR MANY OF those who participate, and 500 young men and women have tackled the program since its start about three years ago, it will be the first time they have ever been out of the asphalt of the city. They do not go on these trips unprepared. During their stay at Thistledew recreation is designed to fit them for this ultimate adventure.

Physical conditioning as well as learning the skills of canoeing, snowshoeing and skiing are all part of the program. Six youths are now preparing for the graduation test.

Day after day they are put through their paces by Earl Lund, Challenge guide, and others in the program in a series of tests that help build the muscles and coordination needed. By the time they embark on their great adventure, these six will be hard as nails. They will have been taught how to utilize their muscles and ability for the best results, how to deal with danger and how to avoid it. Most of all they will have been taught the importance of team work.

Each day's training takes a candidate through a series of obstacles from swimming in an icy lake to walking a slack rope swung between two high trees. At the start of a Challenge program, some of the youths look forward with fear toward the final test. By the time they have completed the conditioning program, they are ready for anything.



**THISTLEDEW PROGRAMS - OVER 50 YEARS OF SERVICE TO YOUTH IN MINNESOTA**

It is with mixed emotions that I announce the decision to discontinue Thistledeew Juvenile Programs at the Minnesota Correctional Facility -Togo on July 1, 2015. The final intake period for our 3-month programs will be in April and the last 3-week Wilderness Endeavors boys' course will begin in late May.

I am extremely proud of the programs we have offered since 1955 when Thistledeew first opened as the Youth Conservation Commission (YCC). Through the years, our programming has evolved to include wilderness programming, residential programming, 21-day short-term programs for boys and girls, and chemical dependency treatment services. Our many successes are evident through testimonials from referring agents and from former residents who have found success following graduation.

Now, nation-wide trends show a decline in juvenile out-of-home placements, with juveniles increasingly being served in their home communities. After much consideration, we have made the decision to move forward in a new direction.

The MCF-Togo will continue to operate its Challenge Incarceration Program (boot camp) for adult males. In addition, after July 1, we will start a minimum-security male offender program. This program will focus on preparing men for successful transition into their communities. Our staff will continue to offer the quality programming that has earned a reputation of excellence throughout the years.

All of us at Thistledeew Programs are extremely grateful for the support, partnerships, and positive relationships we have developed with all of you over the years. Much of our success can be attributed to these relationships. We value the dedication and passion you continue to put forth toward the important mission of helping Minnesota youth.

Gino D. Anselmo, Supt.

**THISTLEDEW PROGRAMS**

**MCF-TOGO**

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### DOC Moves Forward with Plans to Expand the Challenge Incarceration Program

The Minnesota Department of Corrections (DOC) is moving ahead with a plan to expand the Challenge Incarceration Program (CIP). The expansion will free up prison beds needed for higher security offenders and will allow the DOC to enhance programming for both male and female CIP participants. The female CIP program will be moved to MCF-Shakopee, and the male program will expand to Togo.

To make the expansion possible without building additional facilities, MCF-Shakopee will begin working with Scott County to house short term offenders whose sentences are not long enough to accommodate programming. That will allow the female CIP program in Togo to be moved to MCF-Shakopee. The juvenile program at Togo will not be affected.

“We were finding that CIP-Togo’s remote location was a barrier to visitation for women with children,” said Deputy Commissioner Terry Carlson. “Because women are most often the caretakers of young children after release, we feel it is important to reduce barriers to visitation.”

The DOC’s male CIP program will then expand by 45 participants, in Togo. The addition of another 45 participants to the male CIP program also frees up a like number of beds across the system that are needed for offenders with higher security needs.

CIP-Willow River will enhance its chemical dependency programming and continue to have a population of 180 participants. The new male CIP facility in Togo will offer traditional programming for a smaller population.

“Having two male CIP – programs will allow us to adjust programming to better meet the needs of offenders,” said Carlson. “CIP has a proven track record in changing offender behavior and reducing recidivism. As we move forward with the TPC model, expanding this programming makes good correctional sense.”

The anticipated date of the expansion is July 1, 2014. The administration is working with the facilities, staff and unions as the development of the expansion plan unfolds. Over the next several weeks additional information will be made available on iShare for all DOC staff. Attached is a list of frequently asked questions for your review.





# Corrections Hotline

Volume 42, Issue 7

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## Togo Farewell Event Filled With Memories and Praise



Superintendents Dennis (Denny) Hanson, Dave Hagg, Glen Arvola (former superintendent), Phil Nafey, and Glenn Jaglin at the farewell event at Togo on June 18.

Current and former staff, along with friends and family, gathered at the Minnesota Correctional Facility (MCF) -Togo on June 18 to celebrate and bid farewell to 60 years of juvenile programming.

Nation-wide, juvenile crime is down significantly and the justice system has embraced the evidence-based practice of using local, community-based programs for treating juvenile offenders. While this is good news for communities, it's no longer feasible to sustain Togo's juvenile programs. Togo transitioned to a minimum security facility for adult males on July 1, while also maintaining its current Challenge Incarceration Program (CIP) for men.

During the celebration event, roughly 175 attendees were moved by stories from previous staff ranging from how the program was developed, its transitions through the years, and more importantly about the profound impact their work had on the juveniles and themselves.

"We are inspired by the success stories that came out of this program and are grateful for the dedication of staff and volunteers over the years that made all of this possible," said DOC Deputy Commissioner Terry Carlson. "Even though Togo's mission is changing, our future is bright and we will continue to be a leader in effective evidence-based correctional programming."

Attendees listened to a number of presentations from staff involved with the program over the years and wrapped up the event with a historical slide show. They also toured the facility and gathered to share stories.

The DOC thanks the staff, community of Togo, Itasca County, and volunteers and families of the juveniles for their years of service. The department looks forward to continued success in the programming at Togo and contributing to a safer Minnesota.



The final Boundary Waters Canoe Area expedition returned to Togo on June 18.

(MN DOC, 2015)



## Appendix C: Supplemental Materials

**From:** Kruse, Deanne (DOC)  
**Sent:** Monday, March 24, 2014 4:38 PM  
**To:** Chelin-Anderson, Anne (DOC)  
**Subject:** I hope this is helpful this is from our host county contract - just bits and pieces

### Mission Statement:

**Our mission is to motivate and empower youth to make positive changes in their lives.**

### SERVICES OFFERED:

#### Introduction to Program

Wilderness Endeavors a therapeutic wilderness program designed to intervene in the lives of boys and girls in order to empower them, boost their self-confidence, and provide them with the skills necessary to persevere through the stresses and challenges in their lives. It provides them with support and instruction in goal setting and creating and implementing a plan for their return to the community. It identifies and addresses thinking and behavior patterns that conflict with their Personal Relapse Prevention Plan and successful re-entry into their home and community. It is an intense and powerful program.

Five guiding principles provide the framework for the Wilderness Endeavors Program.

1. Physical and Emotional Safety Will Always Come First. Safety is essential to change, and it is the responsibility of both staff and residents. Providing for emotional safety will often ensure physical safety. Safety will be monitored through open communication and respect, a clear definition of limits and boundaries, and nurtured by staff through a culture that encourages and stresses caring and empathy.
2. We will have an Empathetic, Respectful, and Sincere Attitude at all times. We encourage the residents to listen and share their life experiences. There are daily circles to discuss themes of the day, resolve conflicts, and check-in. We expect both the residents and staff to listen, share, and live with an empathetic, respectful, and sincere attitude.
3. We will follow the HOW Principle (Honest, Open, and Willing). Wilderness Endeavors challenges the residents to be honest with themselves and others, open to other points of view, and willing to step outside their comfort zone. We provide a safe space where they can learn to feel comfortable challenging themselves and attempting new activities and means to solve problems.
4. We will recognize Success over pointing Failure. It is critical to recognize the strengths, resilience, and survival skills of the residents in our program. Changing the pattern of perceived "failure" into acknowledgement of the reasons behind the resident's choices is the first step towards healing. Our program is strength-based and builds on resident's natural strengths.
5. We will take Responsibility for our own actions. Our program holds both residents and staff accountable for their actions by dealing with choices they have made in a restorative manner. We believe that we are all accountable for our actions when we verbally acknowledge responsibility and are given the opportunity to repair harm. We utilize natural consequences, the actual effects of our actions, as teaching tools as much as possible. Community responsibility is a key concept that guides our

program. We allow residents to acknowledge their effect on others and others' effect on them. In this way we get to the heart of disputes in a way that honors their connections to each other without minimizing personal responsibility.

#### Restorative Justice Philosophy

...represents an innovative way of looking at crime by focusing on the harm created by the offender when a crime occurs. Instead of just considering the offender, criminal charges and punishment, it looks for ways to heal those hurt by the crime. Those hurt by crime might include the victims, offenders, and families of both, the neighborhood and the larger community. Restorative Justice values the offenders' responsibility in repairing the harm they created when they commit a crime. It also values the victims' point of view. The Restorative Justice Philosophy provides for meaningful participation of the community, the victim, and the offender in the restorative process. The principles of restorative justice are integrated into program services and activities and are identified more as a philosophy inherent in all aspects of our program than a specific program model used.

#### Relationship-Based Community

...focuses on building positive, appropriate relationships between staff and offenders that provide for emotionally meaningful learning interactions between staff and offenders. We are not just focused on offenders developing isolated cognitive skills based on demonstrated surface behaviors but use a holistic approach that facilitates the personal growth of the offender. We believe creating meaningful change in our residents requires meaningful dialog about issues facing their lives. Meaningful dialog can only occur when there is sufficient trust between residents as well as with staff to provide a safe space for residents to share, learn and grow.

All staff are trained in the critical elements of the Five Guiding Principles, Restorative Justice Philosophy and the philosophy of the relationship based community including:

- Intervention Strategies and Techniques
- Offender Roles and Responsibilities and Expectations
- Staff Roles and Responsibilities and Expectations
- Safety and Security
- Interaction with cognitive/behavioral skill development and thought restructuring
- Wilderness Endeavors is broken into five basic components:
- 
- Training Week: A seven-day immersion into the program and all its components, with a special and intense focus on, wilderness travel, hygiene, outdoor group living and the circle process.
- 
- Expedition: An eight-day period of daily wilderness travel, coupled with intensive interaction with staff and peers, twice daily therapeutic circles, and time set aside each day for reflection. Residents begin to develop their Personal Relapse Prevention Plan.
- 
- Ropes Course/Rock Climbing: The ropes course has both high and low elements. The low ropes course allows the staff to assess group dynamics, helps the residents learn to work as part of a team, and demonstrates the group's strengths and weaknesses. The high ropes element allows the staff to assess the residents as individuals. It consists of obstacles suspended between trees approximately 30 feet off the ground. The resident is attached to a safety tether the entire time. Residents are given the opportunity on the high ropes course, to step out of their comfort zone, which is one of the main tenants and expectations of an Endeavor's course. The Ropes Course is used as a metaphor for the importance of identifying and using a positive support system in their Relapse Prevention Plan.
- 
- Residents are also asked to step out of their comfort zone during Rock Climbing, which is conducted either indoors or outdoors depending on the season. Residents attempt different climbs of varying difficulty, anchored from above by a safety rope set up by a qualified rock climbing instructor. They also rappel from

the top of a cliff to its base. The Rock Climbing is used as a metaphor for overcoming barriers to success in their Relapse Prevention Plan.

- 
- **Solo:** The residents spend four days without contact with other residents in a campsite in the George Washington State Forest near MCF-Togo. Staff check on the residents every two hours, and through the night. During Solo residents focus on finalizing their Personal Relapse Prevention Plan, Goals and Action Steps and prepare for their Family Circle. Staff spend a minimum of one hour each day of Solo with each resident doing one-on-one counseling focusing on their Personal Relapse Prevention Plan, Goals and Action Steps and preparing for their Family Circle.
- 
- **Graduation:** Upon successful completion of the program, residents participate in a Graduation ceremony that involves a public stating of their goals, and a speech detailing what they have learned during their stay. Each resident's family, probation officer, and other close members of the resident's support system are invited to participate in the graduation ceremony.
- **Personal Relapse Prevention Plan** – The purpose of the Relapse Prevention Plan is to provide the resident with a specific, clear, realistic and achievable plan to successfully transition from MCF-Togo into their home and community without relapsing into past negative behaviors. This plan also assists the offender in identifying and meeting post release goals. Each offender develops a plan that includes: identification of support system, development of lifestyle, family and work/school goal with three measurable action steps for each goal. Offender identifies barriers to success and effective strategies to deal with those barriers as well as a detailed personal schedule for the first week of their release.
- 
- **Daily Themes** – are used in the Adventure Programs as the primary means of delivering Cognitive/Behavioral Skill Development activities and programming as well as development of the Personal Relapse Prevention Plan. Each day focuses on a specific topic or issue related to the offender's successful reentry into the community. Various activities and methods such as Journal Writing, Initiatives, Wilderness Travel, and Use of Metaphor are used to help the offender connect with the Theme. Each evening, offenders spend two to three hours in Circle processing the Theme with their group. The circle process is facilitated by trained staff.
- 
- **Family Involvement:** Family Involvement. We believe that the effects of the family on our residents are extremely important. To this end we offer the resident's family and community an opportunity to meet, in a circle of support, at some point during the resident's final week. The purpose of this circle is to give each resident the opportunity to take responsibility for his/her actions and to repair any harm they have caused, to allow everyone involved to heal, and to plan for a meaningful transition back to the community. Letters will be sent to each resident's home support system (as defined by themselves within his/her first few days in the program) inviting participation in a family circle to those who can make the trip to MCF-Togo. Additionally, family members are invited to the graduation ceremony, which takes place on the final day. If families can make the trip to MCF-Togo just once, we work to arrange scheduling so that a circle may take place the day of graduation.

#### **Primary Methods of Connection**

**Circles.** Circles are our primary means of group communication, support, expression, and conflict-resolution. As such, it is also our means of change. We hold circles daily to check in, to process each other's wisdom, and to share ideas and thoughts. Group Circles can be directed and facilitated by any trained staff including Caseworkers, Corrections Officers, **Instructors** and Recreation Therapists. The strengths of the circle include the following:

- a. Every voice is heard and respected
- b. One person speaks at a time using a talking piece
- c. The atmosphere encourages speaking from the heart
- d. We are held directly accountable for what we do and say

Personal Journals. Residents are provided with journals in which they write and draw daily. Journals provide the resident with a means of personal expression and private space. These are their individual issues. Examples of such topics include: family relationships, setting goals, anger, impulsiveness and barriers to success.

Experiential Learning. Each day at Wilderness Endeavors is packed full with activities. The residents and staff are busy from the moment they wake up and crawl out of their tents in the mornings until they return to their tents after dark in the evenings. The outdoor environment takes residents out of their comfort zone and provides the opportunity for healthy risk-taking. The presence of constant physical and emotional challenges and the staff's guidance in connecting their feelings and actions to what goes on at home provide the backdrop for learning. Everything is larger than life in the wilderness; the joys and misery more acute, the relationships more intense. Three weeks is a short time to bring about internal change; we find that it is best utilized through intensive action and interaction, coupled with opportunity for reflection. Residents will earn two academic credits: one semester credit in physical education, one semester credit in Science, one semester credit in Health and one semester credit in English.

Specific activities include:

- e. Group initiatives/group projects
- f. Six-day training and preparation
- g. Eight-day expedition (backpacking, ski-packing, or canoeing, dependant upon the season)
- h. Four-day solo (they are separated from the group but have regular staff interactions)
- i. High ropes course
- j. Rock climbing day
- k. Three weeks of living outside with a group of up to ten peers and two staff.
- l. Community service projects
- m. Circle of Support with home support system (including family, social worker, PO)
- n. Graduation ceremony

Daily Check-in - regularly scheduled, staff-directed, peer group check-in meetings occur twice daily, seven days a week, with each session being approximately fifteen minutes to an hour in length. \_\_\_\_\_

One-on-One Counseling - sessions designed to enhance the resident's understanding of how their behaviors (negative or positive) are affecting his/her performance in the program. Redirection is given when necessary and connections are made with how these behaviors will contribute to his/her ability to be successful upon release. These sessions may be spontaneous and informal or regularly scheduled such as with the offenders Caseworker. Any staff can have a One-on-One Counseling session with offenders as necessary. Facility staff are available twenty-four hours a day to provide counseling upon the offender's request or as appropriate including routine and crisis management. Offenders in need of specialized counseling beyond the capabilities of our staff are referred to the appropriate providers.

Life Path Inventory - offenders present a life history summary to their group during the Challenge/Wilderness Endeavors to their peer group and staff who may ask questions and explore patterns during the presentation. This provides offenders an opportunity to share past history as they view it and focuses on relationships, identifies specific events that lead to criminal or dysfunctional behavior and what the outcomes of those behaviors and decisions were. The completed Life Path Inventory is used by the offender to help develop his/her Personal Relapse Prevention plan as well as identify behaviors that will be barriers to their success upon reentry into their community.

Independent Reflection Time (IRT): Each day residents are given a journaling assignment to work on alone in their tent or away from the group. The journaling assignment is related to the Daily Theme and IRT last forty-five minutes. The residents then process what they wrote with the group in Circle that evening.



### Program Philosophy

The quantity and quality of staff involvement is critical and essential to implementing and maintaining the objectives of our relationship-based community, and each resident individually. Providing for the emotional and physical safety of the residents is the primary objective and responsibility of all staff. This responsibility is best accomplished when staff are trained and competent in the delivery of program services and dedicated to maintaining an empathetic, respectful and supportive environment which provides residents with opportunities to grow and develop positive attitudes and skills.

The role of the staff is to teach, facilitate, and model the principles and practices associated with our relationship based community and program components. They must set limits on harmful and inappropriate behavior through the use of appropriate and (whenever possible) restorative interventions and avoid unfair responses. Personal "issues" must not interfere with the delivery of program services. Residents must be treated with respect and dignity at all times even (and especially) when the behavior of the individual is unacceptable. Staff must be able to recognize their biases and manage them in a manner that does not interfere with delivery of appropriate services. Staff must strive to develop meaningful relationships with residents which build trust yet maintain appropriate boundaries as authority figures. Staff must be supportive and directive in their interaction with residents while at the same time establishing appropriate boundaries.

We believe that essential to maintaining the conditions of a positive culture within the group is the need for the staff to be part of the group dynamic, not just an observer or monitor of the group dynamic. When functioning properly, our group culture will focus on identifying and resolving problems and issues through restorative processes that promote restoration and inclusion of all group members and staff. Residents will feel safe and supported in their journey to create real life change and personal growth.

All staff must act within the principles, practices, and guidelines offered within the context of the relationship based community and the Five Guiding Principles and a restorative philosophy. This is particularly true when disagreements occur on a course of action or other issue related to the implementation of the program. The norm is for issues to be resolved using the circle process which give all those involved a voice in the outcome.

### Program Protocols

The protocol for delivery of program services and accomplishment of program goals is based on principles and practices associated with: Restorative Justice, Cognitive/Behavioral Skill Development, and Relapse Prevention. Services are delivered within the context of the Five Guiding Principles and a Relationship Based Community.

The roles responsibilities of the resident in accomplishing program objectives are to memorize and understand each of the Five Guiding Principles (FGP) and how they relate to their responsibilities as a community member, how they can be incorporated into their Case Plan and how they can be used to enhance the successful reentry into their home community. All offenders are expected to live by and follow the FGP while in the program.

Deanne Kruse  
Corrections Supervisor  
Thistledeu Adventure Programs

**Wilderness Endeavors (Boys)**

Wilderness Endeavors Programs are year-round 21-day courses for juveniles, 13 to 17 years of age. The purpose is to provide the youth with a very safe but challenging environment in which to discover and develop tools for change and personal growth. The course includes intensive adventure activities and wilderness travel. The youth earns 60-hours credit each for Physical Education, Science, English and Health; these hours are applicable toward their high school graduation requirements.

By placing a small group of ten youth in an emotionally and physically demanding program, Wilderness Endeavors will help each youth to reach beyond his preconceived limitations.

For many of these youth, being placed in high adventure and wilderness activities takes them out of their "comfort zone" and will create the mental and physical focus essential for personal growth. Wilderness Endeavors empowers youth with confidence, independence and perseverance.

Deanne Kruse  
Corrections Supervisor  
Thistledean Adventure Programs

## CHECK-IN

### Purpose:

To give students a chance to connect or “check-in” with how they are feeling and verbally express that to others. To give staff and students an opportunity find out how others in their group are feeling and why.

### Method:

Check-in is a personal rating between 1 and 10 about how you are doing/feeling. “1” would represent having a very bad day, feeling miserable etc... “10” would represent a fantastic day where everything seems to be going right. A brief explanation of the rating is also given.

There are some basic guidelines that will promote a meaningful and effective check-in.

1. Students should sit in a circle.
2. Begin the check-in with a moment of silence, an opening reading following the moment of silence is also helpful.
3. Use a talking piece. Using the same talking piece each time is a good idea.
4. Ask who would like to start.
5. Give a time frame for the check-in – “this check-in covers the time since your last check-in” “this check-in covers from the time you went to bed last night until now”
6. If a student’s number does not correspond with his comments, you should call this to his attention.
7. Staff should base their number on how THEY are feeling and not how the group is doing. It is also important to model positive attitudes even if things are not going well for you.
8. Watch for “follow the leader syndrome”. If a number of students say the same number with similar comments, you should address the fact that it doesn’t seem like they are being honest.
9. Be strict about the circle guidelines.
10. Be consistent. The more consistent we are with the check-ins, the more honest and open the process will be come.

### Outcomes:

1. Student will be open and honest with their group members.
2. Student will become familiar and comfortable with the circle process.
3. Student will learn to identify and verbally express how they are feeling to others.

### Outcome Measures:

1. Student’s number and comments are accurate, original and descriptive.
2. Student consistently follows circle guidelines.
3. Student is willing to bring up issues that may be affecting the group.

## GUIDELINES FOR A PRODUCTIVE CIRCLE

- ✓ CIRCLES ARE ALL ABOUT RESPECTING YOURSELF AND OTHER PEOPLE AND THEIR POINTS OF VIEW.
- ✓ CIRCLES ARE USUALLY OPENED WITH A MOMENT OF SILENCE AND THEN AN OPENING READING.
- ✓ WE SIT IN A CIRCLE SO THAT EVERYONE CAN BOTH HEAR AND SEE THOSE WHO ARE SPEAKING.
- ✓ A TALKING PIECE IS USED TO ENSURE THAT EACH MEMBER OF THE CIRCLE HAS A VOICE. ONLY THE PERSON WITH THE TALKING PIECE CAN SPEAK.
- ✓ IF YOU HAVE THE TALKING PIECE WE ASK THAT YOU SPEAK FROM THE HEART AND WITH RESPECT.
- ✓ IF YOU DO NOT HAVE THE TALKING PIECE WE ASK THAT YOU LISTEN WITH RESPECT.
- ✓ WHEN YOU COME TO CIRCLE BE PREPARED TO STAY IN CIRCLE.
- ✓ YOU ARE ENCOURAGED TO SPEAK WHEN YOU HAVE THE TALKING PIECE, BUT YOU MAY PASS IF YOU HAVE NOTHING TO SAY.
- ✓ A CIRCLE IS OFTEN CLOSED WITH A "FREE PASS" AND THEN A CLOSING READING.



## Casework Plan

Caseworkers are the overseers of student behavior. We are a liaison between the facility, families, outside agencies and other interested parties, i.e. school teachers and Guardian ad Litem. Regular contact with these people/agencies will not only help us to meet the needs of the student, but will help MCF-Togo establish a strong base in the community. We are also support staff within the facility. We provide information to the different program areas and assist Teachers, C.O.s, Challenge staff, and the Camp Nurse to motivate the youth toward a positive change.

### I.

#### Intake

The first 5-10 days are important in identifying needs of the student and to alert staff of potential problems while building rapport and establishing trust. Completion of the intake packet (within 72 hrs.) can accomplish much of this, but communication with parents, P.O. or SW is also helpful. Some examples of important issues could be; meds, peer relations (youth's lack of social skills, gang affiliation etc.), past placements, mental health/abuse issues, bed wetting... A phone call home to their parent can help alleviate some adjustment problems. Read the base file and any accompanying information.

**Impress upon the youth that MCF-Togo is a learning environment and not a correctional consequence.** Encourage questions and try to make staff members allies and not adversaries. A youth who will come to us with problems and questions will benefit from our program.

During this time the school is completing initial testing that will establish a cognitive level and identify any mental health concerns through the use of the MAYSI. It is important to touch base with the teacher aides to find out what is going on these areas. You will be notified of the education staffing. Try to attend. It gives you a better picture of the youth's educational needs.

You should be using the student check-off list in the student's electronic file as you accomplish each objective.

### II.

#### YLSI/CMI

You should be familiar with the youth's base file by now. An interview with the student using the YLSI questionnaire should be used until you have completed a minimum of 50 YLSI's. Even then it is helpful in gathering information and scoring the youth correctly. Even though information might be sketchy or inaccurate a YLSI must always use the youth as a source of information. An interview with the youth's parent and P.O/SW is necessary to check for accuracy. When interviewing parents ask about the youth's behavior at home, respect for the rules, what discipline consists of? Ask about friends good/bad influences, drug use, how the youth might be different on meds as opposed to off them, ask about school attendance, behavior and achievement. Students withhold information and some parents try to minimize their son's involvement. Some parents are also a great source of information. When talking

with P.O./SW ask about Community Service/restitution owed criminal history, behavior in past placements, possible future placements, mental health issues as well as the same questions asked of the parent .The YLSI recommends three sources of information.

Once all the necessary information has been gathered and the YLSI has been scored a case plan to address the youth's critical needs should be written. These are easily identified through the 'high' score areas on the YLSI. Education, increasing their cognitive level, friends and drug use always seem to rise to the top.

Once the case plan is completed you should monitor their progress toward goals on a weekly basis.

### **III.**

#### **General Casework**

You should touch base with the youth on a daily basis just to see how it is going. Attend morning check-ins and read the log before beginning your day. You should meet with the youth on a weekly basis to discuss progress toward goals, to discuss bi-weekly scores and identify any peer related problems, family problems etc. Note taking on your conversations help you remember what you talked about and will help when it comes time to do a mid point staffing. Bi-weekly updates should be provided to parents and outside agencies. Many P.O.s prefer e-mail updates as opposed to phone calls.

### **IV.**

#### **Midpoint staffing**

Notice of a midpoint staffing will be mailed out about two weeks prior to the staffing. The staffing will occur during the student's last week in the program just prior to entering the Challenge phase. Co-ordinate times and dates with the secretary to ensure they meet with your schedule. If a PO/SW can attend staffing that is always best, however most prefer a phone conference. The purpose of the staffing is to report progress toward goals, highlight achievements like scores, top 20%, GED and also report on negative achievements like minus points, ricks or reviews, establish an aftercare plan (w/goals), and determine a youth's placement after he leaves MCF-Togo.

## Thistledew Camp celebrates 50 years

By Britta Arendt | Posted: Friday, August 26, 2005 12:00 am

Approximately 100 people from all over the northland visited Thistledew Camp on Thursday in celebration of the facility's 50th anniversary. Former Thistledew employees and superintendents, county case workers and commissioners, probation agents, correctional officers and others, the visitors were invited to tour the facility and learn how Thistledew has changed and expanded since 1955.

Thistledew Camp was initially established as a correctional work camp for young men ages 18-25 who ventured north into the thick pine forests of George Washington State Forest in Togo, Minn., to work off their last year of incarceration. According to Thistledew Correctional Security and Caseworker Lynn Heaton, these men were worked very hard with strenuous jobs such as cutting, chopping and clearing trees.

Today, Thistledew has become one of the most unique correctional facilities in Minnesota with programs for both juvenile and adult offenders who come from all corners of the state. When the Minnesota Department of Corrections found it no longer cost effective to keep the work program running, Thistledew was to be phased out in 1973. But the staff at Thistledew would not accept that and came up with a special treatment program called the Challenge Program.

Erling Hegg, father of Thistledew's current superintendent David Hegg, had a dream "a program to challenge young offenders by intentionally putting them in a stressful situation and not letting them quit. Utilizing the peaceful, secluded wilderness that surrounds Thistledew, Hegg's idea for helping youth strengthen their self-confidence by taking them out of their comfort zone became integrated into the facility's three-week and three-month treatment programs. The DOC approved the Challenge Program but would not fund it. So Thistledew began to contract with Minnesota counties on a per diem basis.

The teenage males enrolled in the three-month Challenge Program spend their last three weeks at Thistledew on the Wilderness High Adventure program, while the juvenile males and females in the three-week Endeavors Program spend the majority of their time in the woods. The first week is for training when the youth learn how to pack the right gear, set up a tent, start a fire and cook in the wilderness. They learn team-building skills and gain trust themselves as well as their team members through a low and high ropes course, rock-climbing and canoeing.

The last 12 days of the Wilderness High Adventure are spent in the woods starting with a 24-hour solo camp at an isolated campsite. Thistledew staff members check on them, but campers are not allowed to leave their campsite.

"It prepares them for what's to come," said Heaton who has worked at Thistledew for 15 years.

After their solo, the campers get ready for a six-day group exploration. In the summer, they may take canoe trips to Voyageurs National Park. In the fall and spring they may take hiking trips to places like Superior Hiking Trail on the North Shore, and in the winter they head out on back-country skis pulling sleds with supplies through the deep woods of Thistledeew's backyard. Each night of the trek, the group works on cognitive skills training and processing around the campfire.

"The trek finishes up on Sunday which is the last night they will spend together as a group before going out on a four-day, four-night solo," Heaton explained.

The campers are given water and food which they must ration throughout the four days. They must learn to survive on their own, with only themselves as company.

"The solo camp is a very good example of intentional stress," added Heaton. "You would think that kids from Minnesota, especially from northern Minnesota, would have experience in the woods, but they can still get out of their comfort zone. It instills confidence, in that, they don't have to go along with the crowd. They learn that they are stronger than they thought and there are positive things in life they can do on their own."

Heaton explained that Hegg first developed the Challenge Program when he read about the United States maritime supply ships that were bombed by German U-ships in the war "the youngest U.S. soldiers would perish while the older soldiers would survive because they had been through hard times and could withstand more."

Mark Gordon is the current Challenge Program director who has helped the program evolve with a 15-week lesson plan with cognitive skills programming developed by Thistledeew staff members. The youth attend school from 8 a.m. to noon every week-day and follow-up sessions on topics such as problem solving, gratitude, making amends, being part of a community and understanding other personalities. During the evenings and on weekends, Thistledeew offers recreational activities such as baseball, basketball and weight-lifting, field trips off campus for good behavior and more.

"We try to offer things to get them out of the dorm because there's that saying that "Idle hands are the devil's workshop,"" said Heaton.

The Thistledeew compound features a full-size gymnasium, outdoor recreation area with baseball field, basketball courts and rock-climbing tower, two lakes for fishing, hiking trails, a woodshop and weight room, library and computer room. Although the youth are encouraged to utilize Thistledeew's many activities, Heaton believes some of the best lessons they learn comes from living in the dorm in close quarters on bunks where they have to respect others' space.

"They learn consideration and tolerance," said Heaton.

There is no detention cell at Thistledeew, instead the caseworkers solve behavior problems by sitting down to talk to with the youth.

"We have a staff secure facility here because we keep an eye on them at all times," explained Heaton. "Very rarely do we have a problem and then we take a common sense approach. Most of them just want someone to talk to them."

All youth who graduate from Thistledew's programs are given follow-up aftercare by staff who even assist them with the transition back to their families, communities and schools. Currently there are 68 employees at Thistledew serving a little more than 70 clients including the adult women offenders.

The new women's program at Thistledew admits offenders from Shakopee Women's Prison who want to reduce their sentences by enrolling in an intensive, boot-camp treatment program. These women stay at Thistledew for six months where they go through a very rigorous physical training program as well as cognitive skills training. Currently, nearly 100 percent of the women enrolled in the Thistledew program have methamphetamine-related offenses. Since the program started in January 2004, 51 women have completed the program with only one repeat offender.

For more information about Thistledew's programs, visit [www.thistledewcamp.com](http://www.thistledewcamp.com).

**MCF-Togo, Thistledeew Programs****OFFICE  
MEMORANDUM**

DATE: May 30, 2014

TO: Office of Research and Sponsored Programs  
St. Cloud State University - Institutional Review Board

FROM: Gino Anselmo, Superintendent  
MCF – Togo/Thistledeew Programs 

SUBJECT: MCF-Togo/Thistledeew Programs' Archival Information

Anne Chelin-Anderson has authorization to access Thistledeew Programs' archives and historical records/documents, all of which are public information.

## Appendix C: IRB Approval



### Institutional Review Board (IRB)

Administrative Services 210

Website: [stcloudstate.edu/osp](http://stcloudstate.edu/osp) Email: [osp@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:osp@stcloudstate.edu)

Phone: 320-308-4932

Name: Anne Chelin-Anderson

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Holyoke, MN 55749

Email: [chan0603@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:chan0603@stcloudstate.edu)

USA

### IRB Application Determination

Exempt

6/17/2014

#### Co-Investigators

Advisor: Frances Kayona

**Project Title:** MCF: Togo-Thistledeew Camp: A historical examination of a specialized juvenile residential correction program

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed your application to conduct research involving human subjects. We are pleased to inform you that your project has been APPROVED in full accordance with federal regulations. Please note the following important information concerning IRB projects:

- The principal investigator assumes the responsibilities for the protection of human subjects in this project. Any adverse events must be reported to the IRB as soon as possible (ex. research related injuries, harmful outcomes, significant withdrawal of subject population, etc.).
- For expedited or full board review, the principal investigator must submit a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated on this letter to report conclusion of the research or request an extension.
- Exempt reviews only require the submission of a Continuing Review/Final Report form in advance of the expiration date indicated in this letter if an extension of time is needed.
- Approved consent forms display the official IRB stamp which documents approval and expiration dates. If a renewal is requested and approved, new consent forms will be officially stamped and reflect the new approval and expiration dates.
- The principal investigator must seek approval for any changes to the study (ex. research design, consent process, survey/interview instruments, funding source, etc.). The IRB reserves the right to review the research at any time.

Good luck on your research. If you require further assistance, please contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at 320-308-4932 or email [lidonnay@stcloudstate.edu](mailto:lidonnay@stcloudstate.edu). All correspondence should include your SCSU IRB number as indicated on this letter.

#### For the Institutional Review Board:

Linda Donnay

IRB Administrator

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs

#### For St. Cloud State University:

Patricia Hughes

Interim Associate Provost for Research

Dean of Graduate Studies

SCSUIRB#:

1317 - 1603

Approval Date:

OFFICE USE ONLY

6/17/2014