

FOCUS ON YOUTH



ADVENTURE CAMPING A HIT WITH YOUTH AT RISK

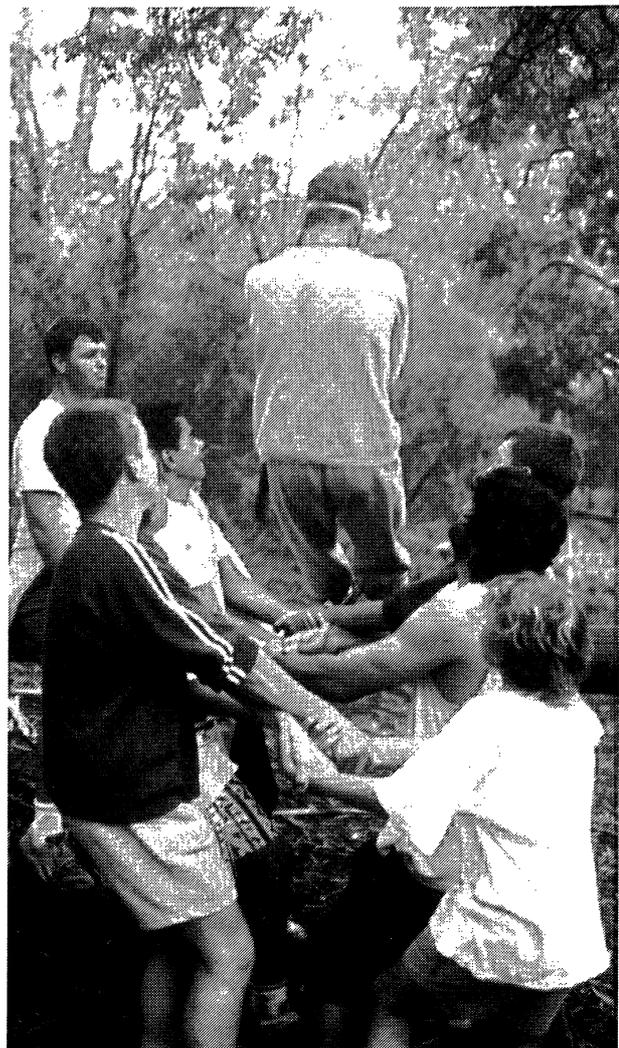
Parents, Government representatives and local church groups are praising a Community Consultative Committee initiative at Engadine, a Southern Sydney suburb, which is helping to steer "problem youth" in the right direction. Known as 'Camp Challenge', the programme is a co-operative effort of the local church, the community, the police and the Anglican Youth Department - Sydney.

When the Committee was asked what they felt was the greatest problem facing the district's youth, without exception they agreed that vandalism and boredom posed the greatest problems.

Acknowledging the failure of traditional "disciplinary" methods of dealing with many of these young people, the Committee has set up 'Camp Challenge', a three-part programme, designed to build confidence and character.

Conducted in single gender units with a maximum of eight people in each, the programme begins with a six to ten day camp run by the Anglican Youth Department. This is followed by a half day per week workshop for the next eight weeks. The programme co-ordinates with follow-up weekend. It is aimed at providing a challenge experience in a safe environment where 'young people at risk' can look at themselves in their relationship with others as they evaluate their futures.

Adventure activities include abseiling, rock climbing, archery, rafting, self-defence, survival skills and a 25km bush walk from Otford to the Chaldercot base camp in Sydney Royal National Park. The basic idea



**A Camp Challenge "Fall Guy"
Trust Exercise**

behind this part of the programme is that the physical exertion of a mountain climb or bush walk can produce character as well as perspiration.

These adventure activities build trust and mean that participants must learn to rely on each other. This is a considerable challenge given the low self-esteem and self-awareness that participants have before they share the adventure experience.

On a social level the challenge is to examine caring relationships in the temporary community.

Engadine Police Officer, Amanda Parker, 24, who has been involved in many camping activities, said she tried to gain participant's trust and friendship by joining in with the young people.

To date, four groups have completed the programme which is described as one of the best of its kind by representatives from N.S.W. Department of Community Services. Inspector Terry Andrews, Patrol Commander, said Camp Challenge was developed by the Committee when it recognised that problems with the area's relatively large youth population were increasing.

"Like many other areas in Sydney, boredom is one of the driving forces behind local crime. Although about 20 per cent of the Sutherland Shire's youth live here (in the Engadine area), there is little in the way of entertainment for them".

While the programme is "sold" to the participants on the basis of "leadership development" those selected are often "starting to go off the rails". "They are identified, for example, as truants, disruptive in class or unresponsive to discipline", Inspector Andrews said.

"By the end of the programme, the changes are enormously heartening. In fact, we recently had grandparents of one participant travel all the way out from North Sydney just to say thank-you".

The Camp Challenge programme caters for young people aged between 11 and 15 with participants chosen by teachers at their high schools. For more information on how the programme operates please contact the Anglican Youth Department Port Hacking Centres, Phone: (02) 525-2599.

*Andrew Guile,
Marketing & Promotions Manager
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