



Health, Education, and Social Services Committee
Alaska State Legislature
House of Representatives
Representative Peggy Wilson - Chair

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HESS Hears Testimony on Crossings Program

(JUNEAU) – Staff from Crossings Wilderness Expeditions for Youth (CWEY) recently testified before the House Health, Education, and Social Services (HESS) Committee. Co-founders of CWEY Steve Prysunka and Mark Walker were on hand to testify, and Preston Cline who works with the program participated via teleconference.

The Crossings program is a therapeutic wilderness program designed for rural youth 13-18 years of age who have mental health issues. It gives them an opportunity to participate in group therapeutic and skill building experiences in a wilderness setting. The program helps participants understand the difference between good and bad choices, improve communication skills, work cooperatively within a group, learn conflict resolution and anger management, and set life goals. CWEY helps youth develop a sense of responsibility, self-confidence, compassion, self-reliance, and impulse control.

Representative Peggy Wilson (R-Wrangell), Chair of the HESS Committee, invited the Crossings staff to testify. “I visited the program personally. I was there the first day that a group arrived, and also for the last day when they graduated. I was amazed by the attitude change that took place in the students. The first day, they were eyeing one another by the end, you could tell they had learned teamwork and develop friendships.”

Wilson went on to say, “I heard one boy testify that after he completed the program he looked at his family situation differently. He had learned the tools needed to channel his frustrations and anger in a positive way. He couldn’t believe how much better he gets along with his family. I applaud a program that can have that effect on a young person’s life.”

In addition to keeping Alaskan youth in state for services and treatment, the program also saves the state Medicaid dollars that would otherwise go to out-of-state treatment facilities.

“We were thrilled to have the opportunity to share the difference Crossings is making in the lives of Alaskan youth and their families. We are excited about our Alaska-group program that keeps our kids from being shipped out-of-state for treatment, and we’re thrilled by the Representatives’ responses to our presentation. It has spurred us on to enhance the program further, which means more resources for the treatment of Alaska’s young people,” Prysunka said.

The CWEY program is offered through the Wrangell Community Services Agency. For further program information, contact Mark Walker or Steve Prysunka at (907) 874-2373.

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