

2013 National Dropout Prevention Network
Crystal Star Awards of Excellence



Crystal Star Awards of Excellence Program Winners

Overcoming Obstacles Life Skills Program

New York, NY



Accepted by:

Ms. Erin Capone, Executive Director

Overcoming Obstacles was created by the Community for Education Foundation, an organization dedicated to reforming America's educational system through social-emotional learning, and was designed to ensure that educators can teach students the skills necessary to achieving mastery of the core social-emotional competencies: self-management, self-awareness, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. Overcoming Obstacles has been in operation for 21 years and helps educators teach abstract concepts like goal setting and time management through engaging activities, role playing, group discussions, and service-learning at the middle school and high school levels. Through the support of its sponsors, the program is offered at no cost to school districts.

Teachers who use Overcoming Obstacles report better attendance rates, improved school cultures, increases in student employability, and better college readiness. Students note a decrease in bullying and an improved sense of self-esteem as a result of learning the skills taught through the program. Short-term indicators of success include improved academic performance, reductions in school violence, and increased attendance rates while long-term indicators include increased graduation rates, college and career preparedness, and general life satisfaction.

New Directions Alternative Education Center

Manassas, VA



Accepted by:

Mr. Robert Eichorn, Principal

Ms. Laura Szupinka, Special Ed./Mathematics Teacher
Dr. Marie Sobers, Instructional Coach (Ret.)

New Directions opened in 2004 as a placement for high school students who had been expelled, long-term suspended, or unsuccessful in their base schools. Over the years, New Directions has transformed into a program of choice, serving students with behavioral and academic challenges as well as those who thrive in a nontraditional setting. The program offers small classes with flexible schedules, challenging curriculum, and extracurricular activities in a supportive environment. Through outstanding visions, New Directions has reshaped school and community to meet the needs of at-risk and disenfranchised youth. They have developed multiple dropout recovery programs, have a host of intervention strategies in place, and support all schools in establishing effective prevention programs.

During the last several years the school's efforts have enabled well over 1,000 at-risk students to graduate from high school. The school continues to expand its vision by providing students and teachers with leadership opportunities, recognizing stakeholders for their achievements, and encouraging the school community to build capacity in others. The implementation of the vision has resulted in on-time graduation rates which exceeded 90% during the last three consecutive years. Collaboration with Prince William County Public Schools has also led to an academic scholarship program implemented by New Directions which has graduated 765 socio-economically disadvantaged students during the last five years.

Crystal Star Awards of Excellence Individual Winners

Dr. Karen Cooper-Haber

Columbia, SC



Dr. Karen Cooper-Haber is a tireless and exemplary leader who is creative in her approach to providing programs that work for students at risk of dropping out. She is the Coordinator of Family Intervention Services in Richland School District Two, one of the largest school districts in South Carolina. In this position she created Building Bridges to Success, a program aimed at helping students at risk of failure by focusing on family, school, and community as solutions to the dropout problem. Her program draws upon her experience and expertise in individual and family counseling and employs the 15 strategies for dropout prevention advocated by the NDPC. It includes the following components: school-community collaboration, family engagement, mentoring, after-school opportunities, and service-learning.

Dr. Cooper-Haber's work in the field of dropout prevention dates back four decades, and she has been an active member of the National Dropout Prevention Network for six years. She recently presented some of her current work on the NDPC/N *Solutions to the Dropout Crisis* radio webcast. Cooper-Haber has also worked with the South Carolina EEDA At-Risk Student Committee. Recently she is one of only 24 people who have been invited to present at a special symposium to be held by Oxford University in England. Her expertise in counseling, which includes individual, family, and multifamily groups, has supported the healing of many families and restored effective communication and cohesion. Students who successfully complete these intervention services avoid expulsion and develop avenues to get back on track towards graduation.

Dr. Malvine Richard

Wilmington, DE

Dr. Malvine Richard is the supervisor of Nontraditional Programs and School Discipline in Delaware's Christina School district. She has 33 years of experience in dropout prevention. She was instrumental in the design, implementation, and establishment of the Sarah Pyle Academy for Academic Intensity, which is designed as a two-year program in which students earn credits in an accelerated manner. The school holds the philosophy of "Failure Is Not an Option." The student population is made up of pupils who have for various reasons been marginalized in their traditional schools. The school offers innovative learning solutions such as distance-learning courses, optional summer programs, dual-enrollment programs, homebound instruction, and home visits from intervention specialists.

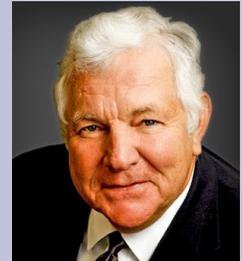


All but two courses are taught on an individualized instruction basis, and teachers are required to meet with each student to develop their personalized learning plan. Sarah Pyle Academy was recently recognized by the U.S. Department of Education as one of 16 schools in the nation with exemplary practices for dropout recovery. The changes she has helped implement within the Christina School District are systematic and thorough, and designed to serve kids long into the future. Through her hard work and dedication to at-risk youth, Dr. Richard has been a catalyst of change, and is able to solicit and deliver resources to very high-need individuals and families with discretion and empathy.

Crystal Star Awards of Excellence

Dr. William Bennett

Lifetime Achievement for National Impact



Over the course of his professional life, in education, government and the private sector, Dr. Bennett has been a champion for education and at-risk youth. He is an award winning professor in academia, having taught at Boston University, the University of Texas, and Harvard. He is a three-time confirmed executive in the Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush administrations including holding two cabinet-level positions, Secretary of Education under Ronald Reagan and the Nation's first Drug Czar under the first President Bush. He is the recipient of more than 30 honorary degrees and author of more than 24 books, including two New York Times Number One best sellers and two of the most successful books of the 1990s. His three volume set of the history of the United States, *America: The Last Best Hope*, has been widely praised. The volumes have been adopted for school use in the State of Indiana and the City of New York, and are currently being adopted by other school systems around the country and digitalized for distribution.

As the host of the number seven ranked nationally syndicated radio show, *Morning in America*, Dr. Bennett provides information, clarity, and a platform for discussion for education and current issues. In his various roles, Dr. Bennett is perceived—even by his adversaries—as a man of strong, reasoned convictions who speaks candidly, eloquently, and honestly about some of the most important issues of our time. Although a well-known Republican, Dr. Bennett often has crossed party lines in order to pursue important common purposes. He has worked closely with Democratic leaders to fight the decline of popular culture and to end worldwide religious persecution.

Thanks to his government positions, writings and speeches, and thousands of media appearances, William Bennett has extraordinary influence on America's political and social landscape.



Mr. John Peters

Distinguished Leadership and Service

National Dropout Prevention Center/Network, Clemson, SC

After a 25 year career with the United States Air Force, John Peters began a second career with the National Dropout Prevention Center/Network at Clemson University in 1991. In his 22 years with the Center/Network, John has provided leadership in the area of member services, fiscal management, and conferences. In 1997, he assumed leadership of conference operations and has worked with leaders and planning committees across the U.S. to provide opportunities for professional development for more than 20,000 individuals. His attention to detail and follow-through, warm personality, and unique ability to build mutually beneficial relationships has made a strong contribution to the National Dropout Prevention Network. Through those who have been a part of the opportunities John has organized, the lives of many families and young people across the country have been impacted.

In 2011, John received the Abernathy/Cox One Clemson Award from the Clemson Joint City/University Advisory Board for his role in the construction of the Clemson Community Care building and his work with the city to implement a new "utility billing donation program" that allows residents to make a donation for Clemson Community Care through their monthly water bills. He has also provided leadership for Clemson's adult chapter of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes for more than 20 years.

Recently, John has moved to a part-time, but important role with the conference team. We look forward to his continued service in the years to come.