

## "PARTNERS MADE A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE"

On June 5th, Lindsey graduated from Emily Griffith High School where she received the Outstanding High School Student award. She was awarded two college scholarships, and is attending the Community College of Denver beginning this fall.

"Through my involvement with Partners," states Lindsey, "I've learned that girls are powerful and there are consequences of making choices. I know how to smile, respect myself and others, and have developed a strong desire to serve in my community."

Karen, a Partners' program coordinator, notes that Partners was able to guide Lindsey through some tough decisions and help her develop strong, positive decision-making skills. From the start," explains Karen, "she knew she was in school to learn. The potential in Lindsey was immediately evident."

"I started in Karen's younger group," says Lindsey, "and was matched with a mentor for three years. We did a lot together, and it helped me see life from other perspectives."

Lindsey took a break from group for a short time, coming back in 8th grade. "This time it was a dual role for

her," notes Karen. "She was being trained to become a peer leader while participating as a member of the group. She was also able to give me her opinions on other girls in group, especially the younger ones. Sharing with her peers and learning how you can succeed, even coming from different backgrounds, is good. And, she sat on a panel regarding transitional youth as the youngest member. She aced it in front of an audience of over 200 people!"

"Partners is like a 'helping hand', says Lindsey. "So many kids benefit from group and move into good places because of this type of support and real-life learning experiences. I know I was lucky to have this opportunity. Groups were a relief for me and a way to release issues. It's a fun experience, and in the end you are going to be grateful that you did it. Partners is serving our community and is a positive in many kids' lives."

"I'm happy for Lindsey, but I'm going to miss her tremendously," says Karen. "It's taken perseverance and hard work on her part to accomplish so much."



Karen and Lindsey

## "TODAY LIFE IS PRETTY GOOD"



Marlon & Ron

"My first contact with Marlon," says Ron, GRASP staff in Aurora, "was a year ago. Marlon was involved in gangs and had pending cases. I was amazed he was capable of doing all the things on his record. My first job was to help him understand the court rules and what he was facing.

It was important to keep him out of adult procedures. First I shared my story with him and that got him to open-up and tell some of his story. Despite it all, I felt he could change, but the key was his wanting to do it."

"At first I didn't want to be in group," state Marlon. "I did it just to get people off my back. First couple of times I didn't like it, but once I started talking to people and listening to each person's problems and struggles, I wanted to go."

"Knowing Ron comes from a personal background of gangs helps," says Marlon. "We talked about all sorts of

stuff and knowing it was confidential was important. I think of him as a good friend, an adult I could, and can, trust. He gives good advice. He's helped me focus on getting my GED and why education is important. It will help me get better jobs and better pay."

"One of the first priorities," explains Ron, "was to talk about safety issues. He was going to run into gang members and needed to avoid situations where something bad might happen. It's tricky, but we've worked out solid scenarios."

"Today life is pretty good," states Marlon. "Group is good. If you actually go it motivates you to want to change. I definitely recommend it. I work to pay bills and restitution, and some for personal use. Probation is letting me put school on hold till I get my restitution paid. But I'm working with Ron to get my GED classes done. I want a good future with a nice house, family - all of it. I know it's going to take time and I need to stay focused."

"If he stays focused on what he wants for the future, he will make all his dreams come true," says Ron. "He's really a pretty good guy."