



Dymitri Powell traverses a wire stretched between two trees, using ropes tied higher to each tree for support, as fellow participants in the Midcourse Correction Challenge Camp stand by to catch him should he fall. GILLIS BENEDICT/DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

Hartland teen taps Internet to go overseas

By Wayne Peal
Daily Press & Argus

Tim Howes would like to go to Europe this summer as part of a student ambassador program designed to promote world peace.

But money doesn't grow on trees.

So, the 14-year-old Hartland Township resident is utilizing a nontraditional funding source: the Internet.

Howes, who attends Hartland Middle School at Ore Creek, is crowd-funding his overseas trip through the website Go Fund Me.

Thus far, he's raised \$225 toward his \$5,000 goal, and he's looking to spread the word.

"It's a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," he said of the People to People program that will send him to Austria, France, Italy and Switzerland to learn about European culture while representing his home country.

His family is fully behind him.

"I've been reaching out through my LinkedIn page as well," said his father, Bryan Howes. "We want him to have as much support as possible."

Next month, the family plans to hold a road rally and dinner to help out with fundraising.

The road rally is set for noon April 5 at Ore Creek, with admission to be \$15 per person or \$50 for a team of four.

"It's going to be unusual in that we will be asking people to take pictures of the objects they have to find," Tim Howes said.

An A student, the eighth-grader is active in several

school and community activities. He is treasurer for the Hartland Teen Center and a member of his school's Science Olympiad team. He also plays alto saxophone in school bands and participates in swing dancing.

"It's a lot of fun," he said. To learn more about the road rally, call 517-667-4254.

To make an online donation, visit <http://www.gofundme.com/68lbeq>.

Created through the efforts of former President Dwight Eisenhower in 1956, the People to People program is run by Ambassadors Group Inc.



Tim Howes

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Charter elementary preparing to open

By Christopher Behnan
Daily Press & Argus

The tentatively named IXL Academy will be Livingston County's second charter elementary school when it opens as early as this fall.

IXL Academy will start out as a K-5 building, but officials hope to add an additional grade each subsequent year until it serves students in kindergarten through high school.

The school is an outgrowth of the private IXL Learning Center child-care programs. Its charter was approved through Central Michigan University in December.

A location for the school in the county is still being finalized, but it will open next school year or in fall 2015.

An open-enrollment period hasn't been established.

Charter schools receive the same per-pupil state dollars allocated to

K-12 public schools and claim to offer more personal instruction.

Demand for new school debated

Courtney Buchanan, director of the IXL Learning Center in Hamburg Township, said IXL Academy will allow parents happy with IXL's child-care centers — also located in Genoa and Green Oak townships, Birmingham and Northville — to make a smooth transition into the new school.

She said IXL is "super supportive" of local public schools, but that some parents are unhappy with public elementary schools and want choices to best suit their children's learning needs.

IXL is a play on the phrase "I excel."

"We do have these successful learning centers, and we are very close with our families here. They have always come back to us and said, 'We

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Correcting lives

Camp provides at-risk youths with a new path

By Lisa Roose-Church
Daily Press & Argus

Lena Lawrence is a typical teen, but she had a problem.

"I was hanging out with the wrong people and disrespecting my parents," she said.

The 14-year-old from Howell said her behavior was so unruly that her parents packed her suitcase, told her to get in the car and drove her northeast to Otisville to attend Midcourse Correction Challenge Camp, a weekend boot camp for at-risk children as young as 11.

"I knew how it was going to go down," Lawrence said. "My sister came here before ... and my dad was a sergeant here for a little bit."

However, after the weekend camp, she gained a better understanding of her behavior and how it affected her friendships, her parents and herself.

It so turned her attitude around



Ty Weinburger, 10, of Highland Township announces that he has finished tying a double figure-8 knot. GILLIS BENEDICT/DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

that she now voluntary returns to the camp as part of the Honor Company, whose members serve as mentors to younger campers.

Humble beginnings

The camp began in 1991 when then-Probate Judge Susan Reck questioned why Livingston County did not have a juvenile boot camp program.

Col. Richard Wood, an ordained minister, was asked to lead the boot camp, but he wanted the approach to be one of positive reinforcements rather than the yelling often associated with officers and military recruits.

The first camp had eight court-ordered male participants from juvenile court and lasted 28 hours.

"I just fell in love with it," Wood said. "Judge Reck met with the kids after the camp, and they loved it."

Wood's friend, who was a Ranger in the U.S. Army, offered to teach Wood and the camp staff how to incorporate a military-style

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INSIDE ST. PATRICK'S FUN ON THE HORIZON IN PINCKNEY



Venues, brokers split on scalping law

By David Eggert
Associated Press

LANSING — Repealing Michigan's rarely enforced ban against



The state could soon lift a rarely enforced ban against

Camp

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component in an effort to help keep the youths in line.

Wood said he initially was intimidated by the style, but then he saw how well and how quickly the kids snapped to attention. As a result, he adopted the military organization and components, such as marching, and the camp was extended to a full weekend due to its success.

The program initially operated in Ocoola Township but has since moved to Covenant Hills Camp and Retreat on Farrand Road, off M-52 in Otisville in Genesee County. It has expanded from court-ordered juvenile offenders from Eaton, Shiawasee and Livingston counties to include misbehaving children sent there by their parents for unruly or similar behavior.

"I didn't want to combine the private sector kids with the kids from the court because I didn't want to taint the more innocent kids with the wrong information," Wood said. "I struggled with that, until finally we realized we are the directors and we can set up the rules."

One of those rules is no free talking. While communication is encouraged in the exercises the youths participate in, talking is limited to the task at hand — not school gossip or similar chatter.

Today, an average of 30 youths attend on any given camp weekend.

The goal, Wood said, is to help the youths learn basic principles that apply to family life or school life.

The tasks

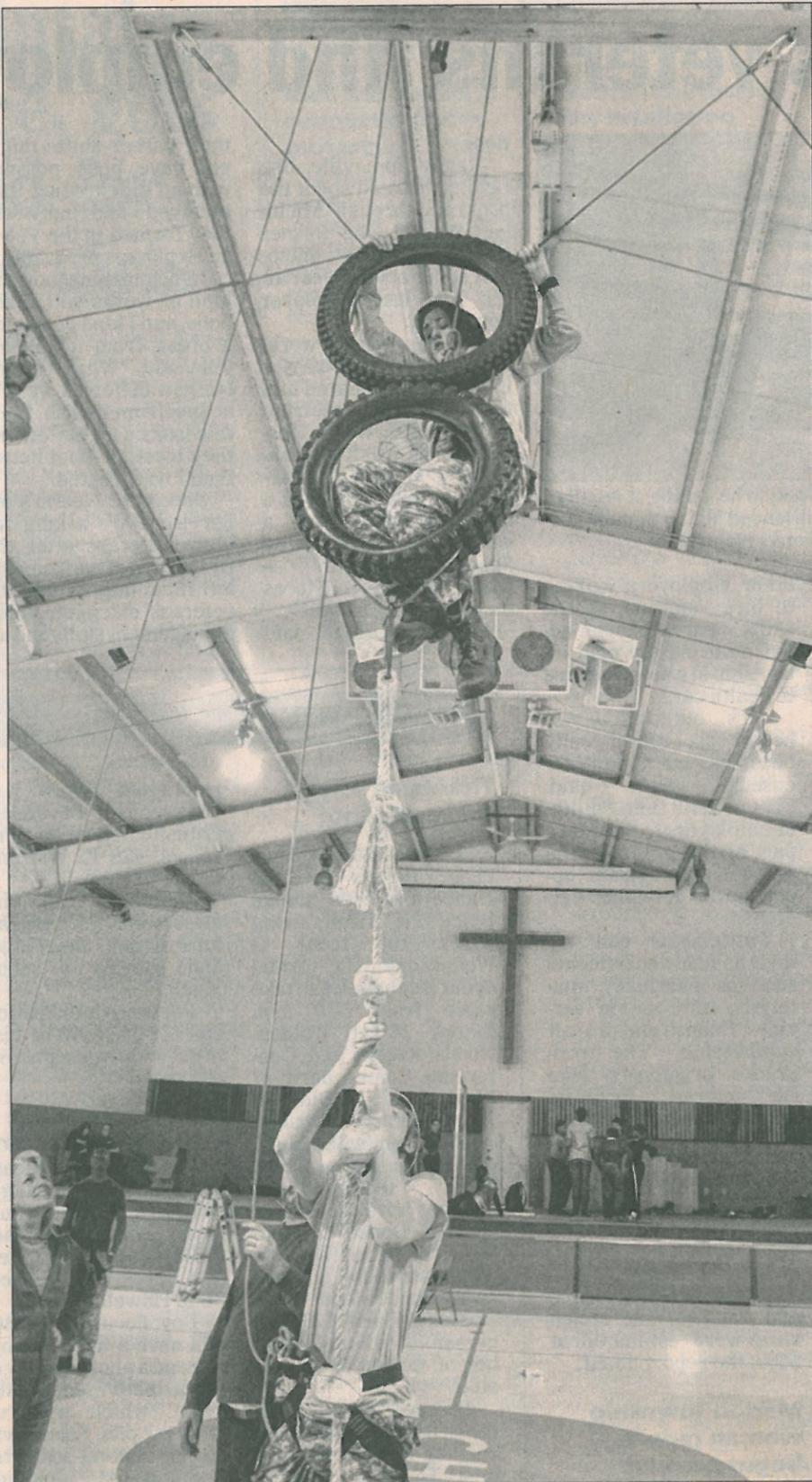
The weekend begins with check-in, which can be an eye-opening experience for some campers.

Tyler Eslinger was about 12 when his mother drove him to camp without telling him it was a boot camp. He said it was well-deserved because he was hanging out with the wrong crowd and being disrespectful to his parents, which initially landed him in a boys home.

Eslinger, now a 19-year-old concert pianist, blew off the boys home, and his mother looked for another option. She found Midcourse Correction, which included a military component that was attractive for her son, who had an affinity for the military.

Eslinger said his first impression of the camp was a man dressed in camouflage who opened the back door of the family vehicle.

"He says, 'Get out of the car! You're on our time now!' I looked at my



Lena Lawrence of Howell, a member of the Honor Company at the Midcourse Correction Challenge Camp, climbs a vertical obstacle course with the objective of getting into a canoe suspended from the ceiling above the beam shown at the top of the photo. GILLIS BENEDICT/DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

mom, and she just smiled," the California native said. "I was wearing a 'Oohrah' shirt that said it's an Army thing. The Marine drill sergeants laughed at me."

"Oohrah" is a battle cry commonly associated with the Marine Corps. The Army's cry is typically "hooyah."

Eslinger and other youths like him began their boot camp on a Friday with a video and a discussion about life inside juvenile detention.

Jason Porta, commander of a recent boot camp weekend, said that portion is considered the "wake-up call" for the youths to see where their lives could head if they continue on their current path.

"We do luggage searches, similar to if you arrive

at jail," Porta said. "We teach them the calisthenics they'll be doing on the weekend. If they make a mistake or violate the rules, they do a set of five to 10 calisthenics and then they have to restart the event."

The events include challenges — high-ropes courses, marching and work projects. Each challenge encourages communication and teamwork. It also includes a discussion specifically geared toward a trait, such as honesty or integrity.

It was clearly evident that some youths have a lot to learn about themselves and their behavior.

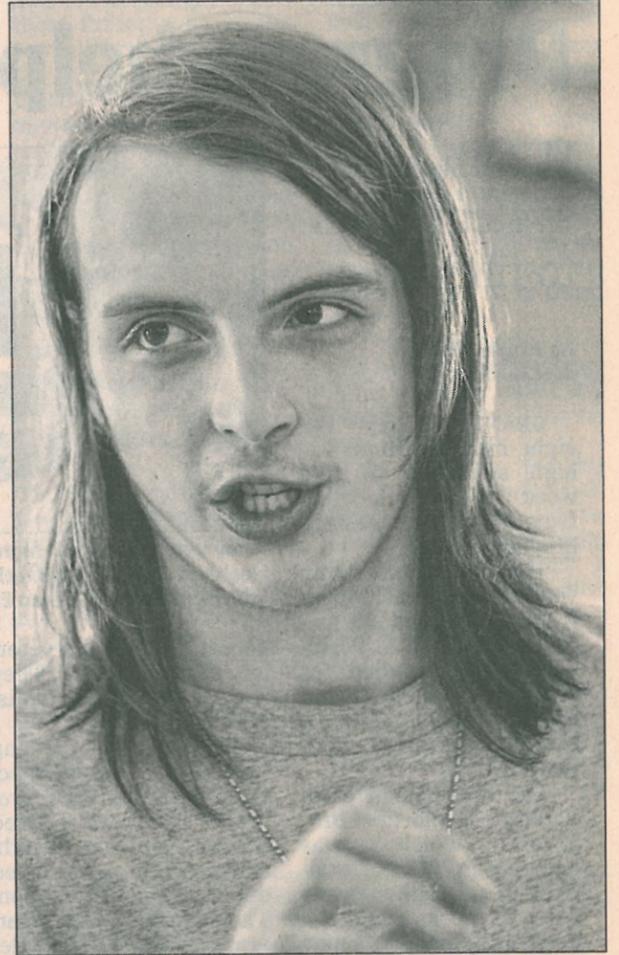
On a recent weekend, one male about 12 years old bawled as he tried to climb a rock wall. He was convinced he could not

make the climb and ring the bell.

"My momma would not want me to do this," he cried as his team members and staff encouraged him to keep trying.

In another area, a group of 10 youths tried to figure out how to move a child through a "spiderweb" — a large web made of rope. The rules say no one can touch the web; each person must go through a hole, and the hole can only be used once.

The bottom holes were simple as one of the team members crawled through, but the higher holes presented a problem. The kids tried standing on another person's back, but that didn't work. In the end, three or four kids would lift one child who was lying flat and



Tyler Eslinger talks about what participating in the Midcourse Correction Challenge Camp program means to him. GILLIS BENEDICT/DAILY PRESS & ARGUS

then feed that person through the hole to the other side, where other team members waited to catch the person.

Each time a student made it safely through, there was a small celebration and a heightened determination to make it again. When they failed, all of the students dropped and did 10 pushups.

"Everything we do here is a reward system," Porta said. "Even if it's just the aspect when you make a mistake and do calisthenics. It's consequences to your actions, something some of them aren't given at home."

Eslinger, a tall, scrawny kid who talks fast and openly, remembers when he made a mistake at camp and the lesson he learned.

"I learned discipline," he said as he ate his nacho lunch provided by the camp. "I had to hug a tree for a long time. They picked me up and told me to hug that tree, and if you let go, you have to do 40 pushups. I was never able to do 20 pushups, so I was terrified."

Following each task, the camp counselors — parents whose backgrounds are as varied as the campers — lead a discussion on the life lesson learned. Those lessons range from the importance of communicating with a parent to the impact a decision has on one's family as well as one's self.

Does it work?

Porta and Wood agree that the program is not a "cure-all" for a child's

negative behavior.

However, Porta said the camp has an 85 percent success rate. He attributes that to the youths who discover they can take steps in a positive direction.

"We can't make them change, but we can persuade them," he said. "Ultimately, it's in their court."

Eslinger said he initially had no desire to return to the camp once he successfully completed the program about seven years ago. Yet, as he grew up and began working as a concert pianist, he found himself with free time and wanting to give back.

As a result, Eslinger returned to the camp a weekend in February to begin the steps necessary to become a member of the Honor Company.

"I preach the wise sayings all the time," he said, referring to the phrases the campers learn. His favorite: "As a dog returns to vomit, a fool repeats his follies."

"It pertains to me," he said. "I was always constantly repeating mistakes. I never accepted the consequences. It was stupid. When I got out of here, I quit skipping school and getting into trouble. You can't get anywhere without school."

Lawrence offered this advice to other teens: "You can get through (the camp), and it's for the better. You're here to turn yourself around."

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Charter

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really wish that you guys were able to continue what you've done for our kids in preschool through the elementary schools," Buchanan said.

IXL Academy is expected to initially have about 125 slots and will

address a "waiting list" at Charyl Stockwell Academy Elementary School in Hartland Township, the county's only existing elementary charter, Buchanan said.

Charyl Stockwell often has a waiting list at this time of year because the program's open-enrollment period for the following school year is so early, said Heddly Worden.

Charyl Stockwell's admissions coordinator.

Worden said the earlier enrollment period allows Charyl Stockwell to gauge demand for the following school year, and that seats are usually open by fall to accommodate the waiting list.

"More than likely we'll be able to accommodate at the elementary," Worden said.

Dan Danosky, superintendent of the Livingston Educational Service Agency, said there is no demonstrated demand for a new elementary charter in the county. LESA is the county's intermediate school district.

Danosky said he was an "impartial observer" at Charyl Stockwell's recent lottery for available student seats and didn't see

open a private school. I really wasn't interested in that because we really want to be able to provide for everybody, not just people who can afford it," she said.

"It was really about providing choice," Moss added.

Ongoing debate over resources

Opponents of charter

Moorehouse, spokesman for the Michigan Association of Public School Academies, an advocacy group for charter schools.

Moorehouse said the school will help prevent a "one-size-fits-all box" for local elementary-school children.

"Every child in Livingston County deserves a quality education in a quality school whether