



New York State
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February 4, 2010

New York Magazine
Adam Moss, Editor in Chief
New York Media
75 Varick Street
New York, NY 10013

Dear Mr. Moss:

Your magazine had an opportunity to offer readers something new. Instead, reporter Jennifer Gonnerman took the easy route dragging out the same old, tired story the commissioner of the state Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) has been feeding the media for years (The Lost Boys of Tryon, Jan. 24).

What's wrong is the fact Ms. Gonnerman disregarded the positive news at Tryon Residential Center. She spent a significant amount of time with teachers, youth counselors and other professionals listening to them boast about the youths almost as if they were their own. She read thank you notes from previous residents whose lives were turned around. She saw construction projects the kids worked on and heard from many of the youths themselves, as they bragged about their accomplishments while residents at Tryon.

Ms. Gonnerman not only let down your readers by denying them a fair and balanced look at New York's juvenile justice system, more importantly, she let down the youths. She added insult to injury to troubled youths who put their trust in her as a reporter, only to be crushed as they read through her story waiting for the 'good stuff'.

Unfortunately there is plenty of 'bad stuff' as well. Many of these youths committed serious crimes, including robbery and assault, against innocent and unsuspecting victims. Perhaps Ms. Gonnerman should have interviewed some of the crime victims before deciding the "lost boys of Tryon" were being treated unfairly.

The New York State Public Employees Federation (PEF) proudly represents the professional staff at OCFS facilities. For years, we have submitted recommendations to the commissioner and governor on ways to improve the system to create a more positive environment and outcome for these youths. Yet the commissioner continues to push her own personal agenda of emptying out facilities and rushing youths into community programs that are not adequately able to treat the complex behavioral and social needs typical of juvenile offenders.

We realize exploiting a 12-year-old boy at a juvenile facility sells magazines, but good and positive stories also need to be told.

Sincerely,

Kenneth Brynien
President