

THE PROVIDER

Vol. 30 - No. 1

The Newspaper of the Providers' Council

January 2009

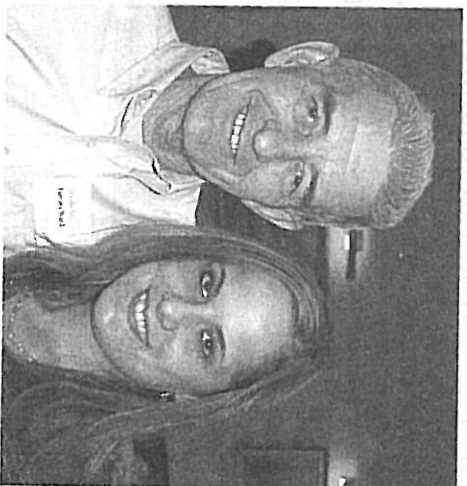
Ward helps young people overcome addictions

There aren't many people who have the kind of credibility that Tommy Ward has with the kids in Somerville, Cambridge and Arlington. But CASPAR's Senior Community Outreach Specialist has spent years earning that credibility. CASPAR, Inc. (Cambridge and Somerville Program for Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Rehabilitation) is a community-based nonprofit that provides a continuum of prevention, intervention and treatment services to individuals and families whose lives are affected by substance abuse disorders. The need for these services is growing among young people. And Tommy Ward is considered the Pied Piper of at-risk teens and young adults in need.

Tommy's job at CASPAR for the last six years has been to connect with vulnerable youth and bridge the gap between the community and treatment. He does that by going to young people in need - running prevention groups in schools and in the court systems, organizing youth development programs like community service projects, or activities that engage the kids physically.

Tommy understands that part of recovery is physical. Exercise helps kids improve their body images and can help them make better choices about other things as well. And it's another incentive to stay clean. You can't jog with Tommy at 8:00 on a Saturday morning if you've been partying the night before.

Mary Kay Tuohy, CASPAR's program director for Youth Services and Outpatient Counseling, says that Tommy is totally committed to the kids. "He knows their world. Tommy was an addict and an inmate many years ago. He understands highly dysfunctional families where there are few, if any, positive role models but plenty of neglect, abuse and criticism. Tommy offers the kids encouragement



Tommy Ward works with local area youths and helps them to bridge the gap between the community and treatment. He does this through a number of avenues, including exercise regimens where he takes young people jogging.

without judgments. He is there for them 24/7 and they know that. I gave up a long time ago telling Tommy not to give out his cell phone number."

Working with CASPAR counselors, Tommy talks with roughly 150 kids each week. A lot of his time is spent with kids in crisis. Using heartfelt straight talk, Tommy is often able to intervene on a client's behalf and tell "the rest of the story" to a police officer, judge or school administrator. He has talked hundreds of kids out of dropping out of school and just as many teachers and court officials into giving someone a second chance.

Tommy Ward will quickly tell anyone who asks that he loves the work he does. "Making a difference in some kid's life when they are vulnerable and headed down the wrong path. What could be better?"