



TIDINGS

Newsletter of the Penikese Island School

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Penikese Island School:

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Save the Dates:

Summer Visitors Trips

Sunday, July 22, 2007
Sunday, September 9, 2007

Contact Suzanne Currier:
508-548-7276 x 208.

Penikese Island School was chosen for inclusion in the anniversary alumni section of the 2006 Massachusetts Catalogue for Philanthropy based on this essay of growth and change for one of our young students.

Going Forth



The horizons edge, the flying sea-crow,
the fragrance of salt marsh and shore mud:
these become part of that child who went forth every day
and who now goes, and will always go forth every day.

— Walt Whitman

In his classic poem, “There Was a Child Went Forth Every Day,” it seems Walt Whitman understood the effects of environmental influence (both natural and social) on the development of children. So, too, does the staff of the Penikese Island School. Our school is the last resort for troubled teenage boys. Ned was no exception. During high school, Ned was removed from his home—literally kidnapped in the darkness of the night, and taken across the country to a substance abuse treatment program in Utah. Once there, Ned got into even more trouble, landing himself in a local jail with an assault charge. His options were to serve more time in the Commonwealth’s juvenile justice system or spend some time on Penikese Island.

Like many of our boys, Ned was angry, guarded and suspicious of the staff. As Whitman so profoundly penned, Ned had, “the doubts of the day-time and the doubts of the night-time.” As a rule, children who are institutionalized for committing acts of violence have learned that adults will not protect them; they have experienced years of being on their own. Therefore, a critical element of rehabilitation is to promote trust in adult authority. Penikese Island School is a highly controlled natural environment where our students

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- Penikese’s Spring 2007 Wish List
- “Catching a Lesson” — A tribute to the teachings of Dave “Pops” Masch
- “On the Bubble” by Toby T. Lineaweaver

Spring 2007 Wish List

Popular magazine subscriptions can be used as a teaching tool for different reader levels and can also help our staff create common bonds of interest with our students. The following subscriptions were requested by our staff but are not in our budget to obtain. If you, or anyone you know, are able to help us fulfill our staff request please contact Wendy Denton at 508-548-7276 x206. (Response to our last wish list was so strong we cannot say thank you enough.)

- *Men's Health*
- *On The Water*
- *Sports Illustrated*
- *Outside Magazine*
- *New England Farm Journals*
- *ESPN Magazine*

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feel safe and thus able to relinquish their defensive guard. Only then can delinquent boys redirect their energies from hyper-vigilance to learning and personal transformation. [Once safety and security are established, the boys engage in activities that promote psychological and social development.](#) They must be motivated to contribute and to learn, with a strong sense of hope for the future.



Within a few weeks, Ned began to actively participate in the Island program. He attended school six days a week, receiving credits toward his high school diploma. He learned to prepare meals and to share the daily chores of the rustic Island existence. Since there is no electricity on the Island, Ned enjoyed reading by the light of a kerosene lantern; he especially enjoyed the works of Walt Whitman. Indeed, he began to relinquish his doubts of the night-time and to look forward to a future that seemed brighter.

Nine months later, when Ned left Penikese Island, he enrolled in a community college. In one thank you letter he told us how he was commuting to work and had secured an apartment in Boston. "So far, so good," he wrote, but he still had "a lot to learn." Recently, Ned graduated from a university in the Northeast, with his bachelor's degree. With one ticket left for the graduation ceremony, Ned asked an Island shift leader to be there. Choked up, our shift leader wonders aloud what to bring him for a gift. We assure him that he has already given Ned the gift of himself.

— Suzanne Currier

Free and open to the public.

Monday, March 12, 2007

Citizens for Juvenile Justice invites you to a forum on Juvenile Culpability. Learn what recent scientific studies tell us about how juveniles differ from adults and join a discussion about policy implications for the juvenile justice system. For more info log on to cfjj@cfjj.org or call 617-338-1050.



A great big **thank you** to Eastern Bank! Penikese Executive Director, Toby T. Lineaweaver, accepts a \$10,000.00 check from Charlie Ritch, Regional President and Jean Jones, Vice President and Falmouth Branch Manager. The money was awarded in support of our Aftercare Program on behalf of the Eastern Bank Charitable Foundation. Many, many thanks to our community-banking partner.



Catching a Lesson

For every teacher/pupil relationship there are teaching moments when the opportunity must be seized to combine an event that is happening at that precise time with a defining life lesson. Most parents, counselors, teachers, managers all have a story of those moments when it happened to them or when they were able to guide someone in that moment themselves. I remember the first time my Dad taught me to fish. It was on a wooden bridge over a deep stream full of jumbled rocks. Other people were fishing there and everyone seemed relaxed and friendly. The fishing pole was taller than me, felt heavy to my little arms, and the balance was so awkward. After being shown the basics, I waited and waited and waited.

I vividly remember the violent tug on the line and how the entire balance of the pole changed as I held on for dear life trying to think what to do. What had my father told me? The fish was not happy and had chosen to stand his ground and fight me. I yelled for my father over and over to come and help me. I tried to crank the cranky thing (as I called it then) and bring the line back onto the reel but I couldn't get a full revolution with all the pulling and bouncing. The struggle seemed to go on forever and eventually the line broke and the fish won his freedom. I was confused as to why my father did not help me and "let me" lose the fish, but despite the defeat I instantly wanted to try again. Patience and perseverance were words I remember hearing that day. The misery of disappointment and later the sheer pride of accomplishment were feelings I felt that day.

For 29 years, Dave "POPS" Masch worked for Penikese as a professional father figure, teacher, counselor and cook. He reckons to have taught hundreds of kids to catch and cook fish and he has aptly chosen to honor

the very fish he caught, and fisherman he taught, by compiling a cookbook full of recipes, sketches and memories called *Cooking the Catch*. The cookbook is published by *On The Water* magazine where Pops is a regular contributor. The cookbook can be bought and signed by calling Pops directly at 508-563-3704 or through the publisher at www.onthewater.com, 800-614-3000. One of my favorite recipes is on page 184 for fish chips.

Of course we all know that Pops taught more than just fishing and cooking here at Penikese. Just like my father did on my memorable first fishing trip, Pops

knew how to seize moments and guide our young students to their own discoveries, the kind of mentoring we strive to keep alive at Penikese.

— Patty Peal

Codfish Balls (for 4) reprinted from *Cooking the Catch*, page 174

A frugal Yankee classic that is often eaten with black beans.

- 1 cup shredded salt cod (desalted)
- 2 cups mashed potatoes
- 1 egg (beaten)
- 1 TBS butter
- Salt and Pepper to taste

Mash all ingredients together, form golf size balls, and fry them in hot oil or lard until golden brown. Drain on paper towels and eat.



On the Bubble

Balancing power & control with connection

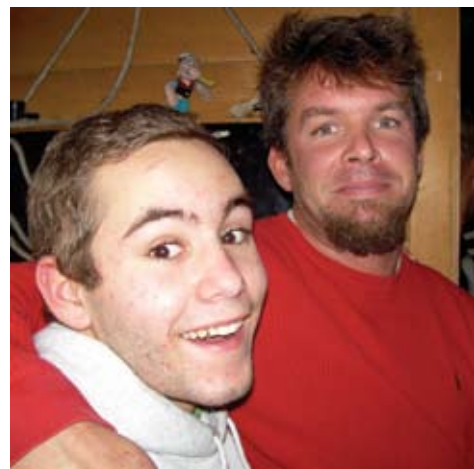
The most important thing that makes Penikese *Penikese* instead of some garden-variety program is not, as some would assume, just the school's beautiful island setting. We might describe the difference by saying something important-sounding like "Penikese strives to promote lasting internal change by emphasizing genuine connections and mutual student-staff relationships over behavioral control and external conformity."

For today, let's just simply say that Penikese strives to do treatment with our students rather than to them.

Easily said, but the Penikese Ideal is difficult to achieve and to maintain. No matter how evolved and well intentioned, we humans love our safety and control, and when it comes to dealing with the complexities of troublesome children, the black-white perspective of "what kids need these days" affords a self-assuring simplicity that seemingly promises a lot less bother.

But, oh, does the authoritarian approach kill connections and, hence, effective treatment. On Penikese, the slightest hint of my-way-or-the-highway or I-know-what's-best-for-you, and suddenly you are holding one very dead phone in your hands. Dial tone!

We all know this, yet we still fall short, even seesawing back and forth between the ideal and something less almost every day. Admit it, think of the times we parked the kids in front of the boob tube to catch a needed break or, in spite of swearing a childhood oath that we would never say those dreaded words as



parents, the day comes when we are purple-faced and screaming, "Because I said so, dammit!"

The challenge of maintaining the Ideal of kid-focused parenting at home and treatment on Penikese is no different except by degrees. Playing the authority card might seem the logical way to go but usually results only in scorched earth and pyrrhic victory that, at best, reinforces our students' limited strategies for conflict that brought them to us in the first place. The power struggle is behavioral terra firma for all adolescents, especially on Penikese.

As we say to the island staff, it is more difficult to explain what to do in times of conflict and peril than what not to do. The Ideal demands a certain blend of experience, training, cleverness and a sense of humor. It also demands constant renewal, strong self-care, and clinical supervision. It is an art form of a kind, and losing a seasoned practitioner is a serious blow to the quality of life and treatment on the island.

To be successful and effective on Penikese, at some point staff must strategically cede some of their power to the students, especially during crisis and conflict, times when we want to the least. As difficult as this can be, we take some comfort in knowing that just keeping the fragility of our best practices in mind actually helps us maintain them a bit better, and that's the best any of us can hope for with the daunting challenges of parenting and Penikese. Even in our best moments, we are always on the bubble.

— Toby T. Lineaweaver

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