

# YC HELPING THE HURTING

A Publication of Youth Challenge of Connecticut, Inc.

Spring 2007

## “THE BEST IS YET TO COME!”



**Raúl González, D.Min**  
Executive Director

*Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous: the LORD's right hand has done mighty things!* (Psalm 118:5 NIV)

Dear Friends,

Thank you again for your support in 2007. This year includes many challenges—**Together with you we will see the miracles happen!** At the Youth Challenge 37<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebration this year, students, alumni, family members, and supporters heard the resounding proclamation: “The best is yet to come!”

**First, we must keep the current programs open. Why? We are reaching people.** We see their lives changing for the better. Addicts and alcoholics are finding what at one time seemed hopelessly out of reach to them: drug free lives. Families who once despaired of ever seeing fathers, mothers, sons and daughters free from the death grip of addiction are enjoying the return of these family members with newfound purpose and determination, ready to serve their family, community, and the One who set them free: The Lord Jesus “Christ”! The word of God declares, “So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.”(NIV) (See enclosed testimonies for some inspirational stories.)

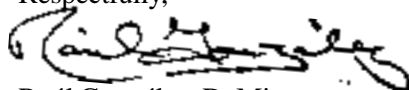
**Outreach efforts to families and the incarcerated are ongoing.** We see men, women and youth on the streets and in jail. The residential homes, with your help, must continue strong to meet the urgent need of these individuals to break the cycle of recidivism: addiction, crime, incarceration, repeat... repeat... These problems must be confronted and healed at the source. Of course there are many needs, but addressing the aching spiritual need at the heart is an absolute must for people to experience change that remains. This year's keynote speaker, Chaplain Lt. Col. John Melendez, shared his own life journey out of addiction, homelessness and hopelessness—he found a new life in Christ, strength to rise above obstacles and frustrations; he found purpose and meaning, family, education and career.

**Helped, he now helps others.** If God could do it in his life, the chaplain shared, surely he can do it in the lives of others. People without hope can find hope as he did, further their own education as he did, reunite with their families, find purpose in their lives, and see for themselves, as the song proclaims, “The Best is Yet to Come”

**The opportunity to develop a much needed home for adolescents is at hand.** We need your help and prayers. As you prosper this year, consider helping someone who is finding their way to a new life, perhaps for the first time. The need is great. The time is now. Thank you! With God's help, and together with you,

**“The Best is Yet to Come!”**

Respectfully,



Raúl González, D. Min.  
Executive Director

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[www.youthchallenge.org](http://www.youthchallenge.org)

# Youth Challenge 37<sup>th</sup> Annual Alumni Homecoming Benefit Banquet



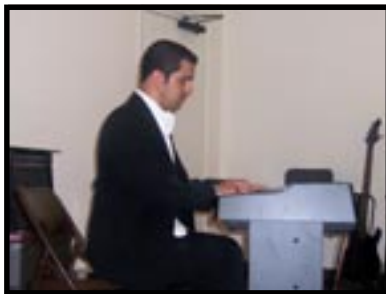
Hartford Mayor, The Hon. Eddie Perez, presents Bishop Raul, Lady Willie and Rev. Richard Larson, Board Chairman with a proclamation



Bishop Raul Gonzalez and Connecticut State Representative Doug McCrory



Dr. Paul Echtenkamp - Men's Home Director, Bishop Raul Gonzalez - Executive Director, Rev. Marva Downes - Mission for Women Director and Rev. Tyrone Glaspie - Men's Home - 2nd Phase Director



Adlan Cruz, Concert Pianist



Bishop Raul, Pastor Jacob Castillo- Director of Nuevo Reto Guatemala, CA and Keynote Speaker Chaplain Lt. Col. John Melendez, (Ret.)



YC Students and Alumni



YC Students and Alumni



My name is Jorge. I came through a lot of adversity growing up: my father's drug habits, my parent's divorce, then my mother getting wrapped up into drugs, then

my father, mother and brother eventually all getting incarcerated. This forced me to grow up rather quickly. By the time I was thirteen I got involved with the wrong crowd and started to sell drugs. By the time I was fifteen I could not handle it any more. I would fight with my mother because of her habits and my brother and sisters were now growing up and witnessing this mess. I left home. I became an emancipated minor, and that is when life got really out of control. I started drinking alcohol and smoking marijuana. I quit school and felt like giving up on life. I did not care about anything or anyone. There were times when I would be high and I would cry out to God, "Why me? Why my family? Why? Why? Why?" My whole world was falling apart. I got really depressed and started drinking and smoking heavier. I started a family of my own at a young age. I wanted to give them better than I had at their age. I tried to do things in my own strength. What I thought I could do on my own did not work. I ended up drinking myself into a whole lot of trouble. I thank God for the beautiful, patient, caring God-fearing wife he blessed me with, who cared enough to stick by me through my mess. When I was at the end of my rope I was ready for God's help, and I came to Youth Challenge. Here I am almost ten months standing clean, delivered, restored with my family, and going forward in the Lord. I plan to complete the program and continue to draw strength from the Lord so that my children have a father and a future, and so that the rest of my family may know there is hope and that they can be delivered, healed, and restored just I have been through Christ Jesus, my Lord and Savior!



Hello, my name is Cameron. I came to Youth Challenge as a chronic alcoholic and heroin abuser. I come from a family of a father and mother who were drug addicts, one on heroin and the other alcohol. Both died from their addiction and this

caused a lot of bitterness and hurt in my heart, which was part of the reason I turned to drugs and alcohol. I was in and out of programs most of my life. I know that the programs did their best to help me, but I needed more to fill the emptiness I wanted my parents to fill. I ended up hating my parents for leaving me alone in a world that I became afraid of dealing with for lack of understanding that you should get from your parents. My life seemed to follow their life toward destruction, but God had another plan for me. I came to Youth Challenge after a friend told me that Jesus loves me — all I really wanted was to be loved and have peace in my life. While being in Youth Challenge I learned that I needed to forgive myself, but also to forgive those that I harbored hate for, especially my parents. How could I ask God to forgive me when I still hadn't forgiven? God has done great things in my life, He helped me to get a bachelor's degree, restored my family, blessed me with a beautiful and supportive wife, Sharon. I am now a licensed minister. I am a deacon at Glory Chapel International Cathedral and I work as the Intake Supervisor at Youth Challenge which I have dedicated my life to. Now I am able to give back to the community in a way that is really needed by sharing the love and hope that God has shown me through Youth Challenge. I just want to give all the glory and honor to my Lord Jesus Christ. If it wasn't for Him I don't know where I would be today. Because of Him I am where I am today, so this is for Him. I want to thank my wife, son, daughters and family that stood by me. I want to thank each of you for your love and your help when I was in need and just being there for me. Bishop, Lady, and Dr. Paul, there are not enough words to express the love that I have for you.

*(Continued on next page)*

I just thank God for you, Bishop, because every time I look at you I just think of my father and I know he would be so proud to have you to step in the place that you did in my life, I just want to thank you with all my heart. With all my heart, Thank You!

Youth Challenge  
Alumni Association  
presents the  
Youth Challenge  
Alumni of the Year Award



**The Rev. Cameron Littman, Sr.**

## Don't be brain dead!

### Kids and Marijuana

Marijuana is the most widely used illicit drug among American youths who use drugs. Approximately 60% use only marijuana. In 2001 about two thirds (67%) of new marijuana users were under the age of 18. The number of eighth graders who tried marijuana doubled between 1991 and 2001 from 1 in 10 to 1 in 5.

**Effects on the brain and mental health**  
Prolonged use of marijuana leads to some of the same changes in the brain as cocaine, heroin and alcohol .

### Prevention

Parents remain the most important influence on children when it comes to drugs. Two-thirds of youth ages 13-17 say losing their parent's respect is one of the main reasons they don't smoke marijuana or use other drugs. It's important for parents to send a clear message, as parents who express strong disapproval of drug use and who do not use any substances themselves decreases the likelihood that their child will use marijuana.

CITED FROM OFFICE OF NATIONAL DRUG CONTROL POLICY AND  
NATIONAL YOUTH ANTI-DRUG MEDIA CAMPAIGN

### UPCOMING EVENTS :

- *Youth Challenge Open House* • **Thursday, May 17, 2007 • 6:00pm 19 May St. Htfd, CT**
- *Youth Challenge International Annual Convention* • **Hartford, CT • July 11-13, 2007**
- *Youth Challenge Ministries Annual 4th of July Festival* • **YC Bible Training Center, Moosup, CT • Wednesday, July 4, 2007 • All day!**
- *Youth Challenge Summer Street Outreach* • **May -- September 2007**  
**Call (860) 728-5199 for specific dates!**
- *Youth Challenge Week in Connecticut* • **September 2-8, 2007**
- *Youth Challenge Annual Walk-a-Thon* • **Sat. September 8, 2007 10am**  
*Join us in our 10 Km walk against drug abuse!*  
*15-17-19 May Street, Hartford, CT*  
*Food and Fellowship to follow !*
- *Youth Challenge Graduation Banquet* • **Plainfield Town Hall**  
**Saturday, October 13, 2007 • 6:00pm**
- *Youth Challenge Annual Alumni Service* • **Friday, November 23, 2007**

Youth Challenge's  
ANNUAL



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