
Major Themes Emerging from the Case Studies¹

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The programs described in the 38 case studies in this volume evolved in response to local community circumstances, and each was molded by constraints and opportunities afforded by local administrative practices. However, several key themes such as the stimuli underlying program initiation, program objectives, the need for collaborative efforts, and the degree of involvement of participants in program planning, among other issues, emerged across the various local situations. These commonalities are reviewed in this chapter.

The themes emerging from the case studies complement, and were frequently consistent with, the results of a recent national survey of 661 park and recreation agencies concerning the services they offer for at-risk youth (Espericueta-Schultz, Crompton & Witt, 1995). Data from this survey are periodically inserted in this chapter since they provide a generalizable context for some of the insights and specifics provided through the case studies. On the other hand, the presentations provide a richness and depth of information that could not be captured in a survey.

Stimuli for Launching At-Risk Programs

The national survey revealed that targeting separate programs to at-risk youth is a relatively recent

occurrence. Only 28% of agencies that offered these programs launched them before 1989. Another 31% of agencies initiated these programs between 1989 and 1991, while the remaining 41% started targeted programs after 1991. The recent expansion of programs that target at-risk youth has been stimulated by several factors, one of which is an increase in gang membership. For example, the number of gangs in Fort Worth increased from 77 to 211 between 1987 and 1992, while gang membership rose from 1,316 to 3,448. In the national survey, 57% of agencies which targeted programs for at-risk youth indicated that gangs were perceived to be a problem by residents in their jurisdictions.

This national pattern was reflected in the case studies. With only a few exceptions, the case studies reveal that most communities launched targeted services in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Many factors contributed to the emergence of these programs, but four major stimuli were identified as being particularly prominent. They were:

- (1) changed demographics;
- (2) emergence of negative youth behaviors in smaller communities;
- (3) growth in the number of latchkey children; and
- (4) increased high-visibility violent incidents.

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Changed Demographics

The demographics of many major cities, particularly the inner-city areas, significantly changed during the 1980s. The proportion of African Americans, Hispanics, and, in some cities, immigrants, increased. For example, since 1980 the Black population of North Miami has grown 377%, primarily as a result of the immigration of Caribbean peoples. In many instances, the age distribution of recent migrants to the inner cities was younger than that of the general population. Typically, inner cities have had high rates of unemployment and a larger percentage of families living below the poverty level. During the late 1980s and early 1990s, many cities reported substantial increases in drug use among youth and violent crime committed by and to youth; school dropout rates accelerated, not only among high school students, but also among middle school students; and rates of teen pregnancy increased. These factors galvanized local residents and political forces to demand solutions to these spiraling societal problems.

Emergence of Negative Youth Behaviors in Smaller Communities

Many of these same factors, which were thought previously to be confined to “big cities,” began to appear in suburban and smaller communities in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

- In both Boulder, Colorado, and Columbus, Mississippi, growing concerns about high poverty levels and unemployment, high drug use and gang activity, and lack of meaningful activities for Housing Authority residents led to the development of recreation and drug education programs at these sites in 1991. A Federal program sponsored by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) was initiated that year which made the development of these types of programs possible.
- In Scottsdale, Arizona, there was a 44% increase in juvenile crime between 1989 and 1994.

Growth in the Number of Latchkey Children

Problems associated with a lack of adult supervision at home were prevalent in communities of all sizes due to the growing number of two-wage earner families and the number of single-parent households. Many localities have developed after-school and summer camp programs in response to the need for affordable, supervised out-of-school programs for

children, with some communities also beginning to develop programs for middle and high school students as well.

- Longview and Kelso, Washington, initiated after-school programs in 1992 in response to concerns about the high number of distress calls received by the police from children who were “home alone” after school.
- A 1993 NBC Dateline segment about latchkey children featured a Tucson, Arizona, single mother who was forced to leave her children home alone while she worked a minimum wage job. Along with concerns about gang activity and youth violence, the story spurred the expansion of after-school and summer program efforts which had been initiated in 1989.
- In 1992, North Miami, Florida, developed after-school programs for children and youth ages 8 to 15 in response to concerns from business owners about problems in the downtown area. When school recessed in the afternoon, teenage students swarmed into thoroughfares, businesses and shops to hang out, wait for rides, and visit. The business community was disrupted, and many citizens were afraid to go into the district because of the large teenage presence.
- In 1993, Houston, Texas, implemented an extensive after-school program because of concerns expressed by children about gangs, drugs and lack of things to do after school.
- Summer day camp programs were launched in 1989 in Oklahoma City for children 8 to 13 years of age as a substitute for the typical drop-in summer playground program. The Parks and Recreation Department recognized that more structured prevention and intervention activities were needed for youth living in high crime, poverty, and gang member areas of the city.

Increased High Visibility Violent Incidents

The late 1980s witnessed unprecedented levels of violence involving young people, due in part to increased gang activity and the highly competitive illegal narcotics market. In many communities dramatic events such as drive-by shootings moved the communities to implement targeted intervention and prevention strategies.

- Although Cincinnati, Ohio, had already established a comprehensive citywide program to address at-risk youth problems, in 1993 the city expanded program efforts in the Winton Hills community as a result of an FBI drug raid and a shooting in the neighborhood.

- In Fort Worth, Texas, a 1991 drive-by shooting after a Sunday church service led to the mobilization of at-risk youth and gang intervention efforts.
- Commerce, California, had been dealing with gangs in the community since 1982, but a drive-by shooting in 1989 intensified and expanded prevention and intervention efforts.

Task Forces

These stimuli served as a catalyst which galvanized political leaders “to do something.” Actions had to be more than putting additional police officers on the street because, as the Fort Worth Police Chief stated, “We can’t arrest our way out of social problems.” The Mayor of Fort Worth offered a trenchant analogy: “I compare it to smoking and the progress we’ve made with lung cancer. We didn’t get there because we perfected surgery. We got there because we educated people into prevention.”

The case studies indicate, in most instances, that “something” was establishment of a task force whose typical charge was to solicit broad community input to identify all dimensions of the problem and its magnitude, recommend actions to alleviate the problem, and coordinate and mobilize community resources so these actions could be undertaken efficiently and effectively. The national survey indicated that 71% of agencies that targeted at-risk youth had established a communitywide task force.

Task force action plans usually embrace prevention, designed to lower the number of children and youth engaging in undesirable behaviors in the future, and intervention, intended to change the attitudes, behavior, and “life course” of individuals causing problems.

- In 1991, the Mayor of Cincinnati, Ohio, formed a Youth Steering Committee, comprised of the Directors of a number of municipal departments including the Recreation Commission, to deal with youth problems stemming from “historical disenfranchisement, poverty, discrimination, inadequate education and skill levels, damaged self-esteem, and thwarted aspirations.” The development of a comprehensive approach to youth services, “Back on the Block,” was the result.
- In Anaheim, California, gangs began to be recognized as a problem in the early 1980s. However, a 1984 report indicated that the city’s efforts were only marginally effective in dealing with the problems of gang violence and drug use. Project S.A.Y (Save-A-Youth) was created in

1986 and expanded in 1991 to address those problems.

In many of the case study communities, task forces remained in place after formulating their recommendations and were charged with coordinating and overseeing subsequent service delivery. Task forces are perceived to be an effective mechanism for coordinating the actions of overlapping jurisdictions, mandates, programs, and resources.

Prevention Versus Intervention

Most of the case studies stress prevention rather than intervention. This is consistent with findings of the national survey which indicated that 67% and 21% of the total resources invested by recreation and park departments were targeted at “potential at-risk youth” and “at-risk youth,” respectively. Only 10% and 2% of these resources were committed to programs impacting “juvenile delinquents” and “chronic delinquents,” respectively.

With limited resources recreation and park agencies have to make choices. Prevention programs seek to pro-actively change the behavior of at-risk individuals, rather than undertake reactionary efforts after children have dropped out of school, started using drugs, become pregnant or become involved with the legal system. These programs may be more feasible to implement than intervention programs, which frequently require resources and expertise beyond those available to many recreation and park systems.

Program Mission and Objectives

In general, the case studies demonstrate congruence between program objectives and the problems and issues that stimulated development of programs. However, some of the objectives were too vague to be operationally useful for guiding specific program design and delivery decisions, even though they expressed laudable sentiments and platitudes.

The lack of clear objectives is consistent with findings from the national survey and highlights a key limitation of at-risk youth programs. The lack of specific objectives written in an operational format leads to the inference that many agencies have not identified specific standards by which to evaluate the success of their programs. Properly formulated objectives help form the basis for program design. Structured, attainable objectives offer an incentive for improvement, if they are properly communicated and understood by staff, and specific and written

objectives enable personnel and taxpayers to conclude that programs are successful. A good example of specific objectives are those used by the Sunnyvale, California, Recreation and Parks Department. They include:

- (1) increase middle school performance by coordinating educational, health and social services to students and community members. The results will (a) increase student performance by 5% on standardized achievement tests; (b) reduce absences by 20%; (c) reduce disciplinary referrals by 10%, and (d) increase parent contacts by 10%.
- (2) provide rehabilitation, predelinquency, neighborhood education, leisure services, youth employment and neighborhood volunteer services. This will reduce the FBI Crime Rate by 5% and help maintain an annual juvenile offender recidivism rate of 4% or less.

Objectives of the case study programs are specified at a macro or societal level and at a micro or individual level. The investment of public funds is usually justified by a desire to ameliorate societal problems such as violent crime, drug and alcohol abuse, the percentage of school dropouts, youth involvement in unsafe sexual activity, and the number of children born to unmarried teenage mothers. For example, Anaheim's Project S.A.Y. has an overall objective "to assist youth with gang and drug involvement to reach adulthood as productive law-abiding citizens."

Attainment of these societal objectives, however, is achieved through inducing social-psychological and behavioral changes in individuals. The Anaheim program, therefore, has a series of specific behavioral change objectives such as reducing school absenteeism/truancy and decreasing the incidence of failing grades plus a series of social-psychological objectives related to increasing self-esteem, self-confidence, and cultural pride.

Another example of the relationship between the societal and individual youth objectives is provided by the Oakland Summer Performing Arts Day Camp which targets children and youth ages 6 to 16. The societal objective is:

to provide an affordable, accessible, high-quality creative arts experience in a safe and nurturing environment to occupy Oakland-area children's available time with positive, constructive alternatives to prevent crime and delinquency.

At the individual level the objective is:

to foster and nurture appreciation for all forms of creative expression, and by doing so, emphasize the importance of each child's vision and voice and improve his or her self-esteem.

Moving Beyond the Front Gate

The case studies repeatedly demonstrate that to reach at-risk youth effectively, it is necessary to move beyond the boundaries of an agency's facilities. For example:

- The Phoenix At-Risk Youth Division views itself as a mobile outreach service providing recreational, educational, social, and cultural programs for teens at outreach sites such as malls, schools, and park sites at which there was no regular programming. One manifestation of this philosophy is the Mobile Unit Partnership developed in collaboration with the Girl Scouts. Each week a renovated "bookmobile" serves approximately 1,000 youth.

- Rather than expecting those engaged in an unhealthy or alternative lifestyle to participate in traditional recreation programs and services, Olympia, Washington, utilized two counselors to meet with these high-risk youth one-on-one in the downtown area. Their charge was to identify and develop relationships with these youth and ultimately to connect them to appropriate public healthcare, job opportunities, education, recreation, and other social services. These counselors also develop training programs for recreation and police department staff which address the changing issues and needs of troubled youth.

The important role of outreach leaders is reinforced by several of the case studies. For example, in Anaheim, program leaders are trained in conflict resolution, are bilingual, college educated, and come from backgrounds similar to those of the clients they serve. In addition to their education and training, they are described as being sensitive and understanding as well as savvy and street-smart.

Returning to Our Roots: Moving Beyond Fun and Games

These case study presentations demonstrate that at least some park and recreation agencies have moved

beyond a “fun and games” philosophy to one in which recreation programs serve as vehicles for an agency’s objectives for serving at-risk youth (Tice & Tindall, 1994). Thus, Seattle Park and Recreation Department’s (PAR) at-risk youth staff do not talk about recreation. Rather they talk of the “recreation” of human lives. Many examples are presented where the definition of what constitutes a recreation program has been broadened considerably, such as:

- YO! Hott Shotts is a job training program organized by Seattle PAR. It is intended to inspire at-risk youth to take an interest in business and entrepreneurial self-direction. Seattle includes specifications in their concession contracts which require concessionaires to hire and train at-risk youth.
- Teen Teamworks is a summer employment program for 200 at-risk youth which has been operated by the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board since 1986. Its mission is to offer a positive park maintenance work experience, recreational opportunities, and educational sessions to unemployed youth ages 14-18.
- Midnight Basketball in Kansas City, Missouri, includes a required educational component in which participants are exposed to opportunities for personal development, motivational training, entrepreneurial skills, job interviewing skills, antidrug and other health programs. Basketball is an attractive hook used to achieve broader educational and entrepreneurial goals for youth.
- Phoenix, Arizona, and Commerce, California, park and recreation departments offer a tattoo removal program. Youth who have been persuaded to leave gangs find tattoo insignia make it difficult to find employment, avoid fights in school, and convince peers they have left a gang.

The types of services now being offered are in some ways reminiscent of those which were prominent in the 1950s and 1960s. Jim Colley, Director of the Phoenix Parks, Recreation, and Libraries Department reminds us that during that period, “We did mobile recreation centers, school campus lunchtime programs, after-school programs, teen councils, gang out-reach programs and so on, but we then we got away from this type of approach to services.”

The case studies also indicate that many agencies are returning to the mission and objectives that spurred the launching of the public recreation movement in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Public recreation services emerged in response to negative social conditions in major cities. There was a

humanistic concern for the welfare of those who found themselves with few resources, places to recreate, and/or skills to undertake recreational activities. Comments made by Jane Addams in 1893 are reminiscent of those made by commentators today:

The social organism has broken down through large districts of our great cities. Many of the people living there are very poor, the majority of them without leisure or energy for anything but the gain of subsistence. They move often from one wretched lodging to another. They live for the moment side-by-side, many of them without knowledge of each other, without fellowship, without local tradition or public spirit, without social organization of any kind. Practically nothing is done to remedy this. The people who might do it, who have the social tact and training, the large houses, and the traditions and custom of hospitality, live in other parts of the city. The clubhouses, libraries, galleries, and semipublic conveniences for social life are also blocks away. (Addams, [1893]1960, p. 4)

In response to this situation, Addams established Hull House, a settlement house in Chicago, which was in many respects the precursor of the modern recreation center. Facilities such as the Columbia Neighborhood Center being developed in Sunnyvale, California, are reminiscent of Addams’ philosophy and a reaffirmation of the importance of a holistic approach to serving at-risk youth.

Program Leadership

Leadership is perhaps the most important element in determining the positive impact of a program, since it shapes what participants derive from their experience. The types of programs described in the case studies move recreation professionals into a different mode of operation and require different leadership skills than those possessed by many park and recreation professionals in the past. The Director of Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department, Jim Colley, observed:

My staff say we are becoming counselors and social workers. That’s fine, I believe we should be. We have always done this, but there is much more emphasis on it now than there has been in a couple of decades. My philosophy is that if a young man comes in on drugs or a young woman comes in who is pregnant, we have to help. Young women come to my female staff and say ‘I’m pregnant, will you come home with me and help me talk to my mom.’ They are scared, so of

course we help. We respond as best we can to whatever they need. I would not have a problem with my Department being called a Department of Community Services. Our job is to make young people whole in any way we can, and offering wholesome recreation activities is only one aspect of that. It's a way of reaching them and gives us an opportunity to help them straighten out other parts of their lives.

Many cities are thus making major investments in creating full-time, adult leadership positions based on the principle that the single most important factor in reaching healthy adulthood is a positive relationship with a caring adult. The motivation for utilizing nontraditional sources of leadership in some of the cities was the realization that departments were losing touch with their clients and that in some cases employees hired during a different era cannot relate to the type of direct service responsibilities that need to be undertaken today.

To address this problem, some departments (e.g., Seattle and Fort Worth) have hired former gang members to provide primary leadership. They are role models with whom the youth identify. They have lived in an environment where there are gangs and have experienced what it feels like to be in a gang, and what it feels like to get out of a gang. This policy has aroused controversy since some residents challenge the appropriateness of placing former gang members in positions where they can influence others, and of rewarding them with employment opportunities.

Former athletes are also a good source of potential role models, likely to have the respect of at-risk youth. Thus, when North Miami launched its after-school program in the city's middle school, a former Miami Dolphin football player was hired to direct the daily activities. This added a considerable amount of credibility to the program in the minds of the students.

In Columbus, Mississippi, residents of the housing projects were trained to provide leadership for on-site recreation programs. Similarly, Cincinnati hires at-risk youth from the neighborhood in which a swimming pool is located to work at the facility, and the Kansas City Night Hoops program trains participants to become basketball referees.

Many of the after-school programs utilize teachers to provide activity leadership since many of the activities involve a learning component and have learning goals built into the program. This creates a reimbursement conundrum because teachers typically are compensated at their professional salary rate for these additional duties, while recreation leaders doing similar work typically receive \$5 to \$7 per hour. This disparity, combined with the emotional intensity

of the work and the difficult nature of the clientele, often results in high staff turnover. The Seattle Parks and Recreation Department has responded to this dilemma by paying their at-risk youth program leaders \$10.50 to \$15.00 per hour. Ultimately, however, it is the depth of commitment of program leaders which secures a program's longevity and success:

Dealing with these kids is more than a job. These leaders have to be extraordinarily dedicated. You can't pay for that or buy it. It has to be in their hearts. They don't count hours, they'll spend weekends, nights, whatever-they are always there when the kids need them. (Jim Colley, Director, Phoenix Parks, Recreation and Library Department)

Local Champions

Over a decade ago, Peters and Waterman (1982) reported that a primary characteristic of excellent companies was their ability to innovate and be responsive to the changing external environment. Frequently this innovation occurred because there was a "champion" - a dedicated individual or small group who believed in an idea, regarded it as a personal crusade, advocated it to others, and bullheadedly persisted until it came to fruition. Similarly, the case studies reveal the profound influence of individuals or small groups who have championed the launching of at-risk programs:

- Internationally renowned tennis players Arthur Ashe and Butch Buchholz were instrumental in the genesis of Metro Dade County's Good Life Mentoring Project. Ashe and Buchholz were concerned that many school-age children in their home community were not being exposed to the opportunities they had experienced in their youth. They involved others to refine and develop their ideas and to launch the program.
- A Youth-In-Action program was launched and has been operating under the leadership of a parent volunteer for ten years in Hanover, New Hampshire. This visionary parent saw the need for high-school-age young people to use free time in a constructive manner to benefit themselves and their community. The vehicle for achieving this goal was the creation of volunteer opportunities. This program was subsequently adopted by the Lebanon, New Hampshire, Recreation Department.

Collaborations with Other Agencies and Organizations

In a number of communities the guiding principle and philosophy of program approaches is rooted in the old African proverb, "It takes a whole village to raise a child." Charles Jordon, Director of Portland, Oregon, Parks and Recreation, has observed that:

While retaining our uniqueness and autonomy, we in the field of recreation, who share the same values and goals, can accomplish more by working together than we can on our own. This is the chance for us to demonstrate the full value of who we are and what we can do....[S]ociety needs help with its youth, and we have a piece of the solution.

To encourage this cooperation, the Portland Parks and Recreation Department organized a series of Youth Summits which bring together all organizations in the community involved in serving at-risk youth. This facilitates pooling resources and coordinating program efforts.

A contributing factor to the success that the programs described in this volume have achieved is the strong collaborative arrangements they have developed to launch, operate, and finance programs with participants and their parents, other municipal agencies, voluntary sector agencies, foundations, and businesses. Examples of collaborations include:

- The Summer Performing Arts Program is planned in partnership with the Oakland, California, Public School District, the Office of the Mayor, prominent members of the local arts community (e.g., Michael Morgan, Director of the Oakland Symphony), Laney Community College, and the Office of Parks and Recreation/Cultural Arts Division. Additional implementation partners include the Federal Lunch Program, Summer Youth Employment Training Program (SYETP), Studio One Teen Club teaching assistants, community members, and parent volunteers.
- The Community Services, Police, and Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services Departments cooperate in Olympia, Washington, to provide a street outreach program targeted at troubled, runaway, and homeless youth.
- The recreation program at the Public Housing sites in Boulder, Colorado, is a cooperative effort between the Housing Authority of Boulder, Boulder Parks and Recreation Department, the YMCA, Salvation Army, various church groups, Boy/Girl Scouts, Sierra Club, Rural Transportation District, and a variety of volunteers

from the community.

- The after-school programs in Corpus Christi, Texas; Sunnyvale, California; North Miami, Florida; and Tucson, Arizona, are coordinated or operated in partnership with their local school districts.
- The Good Life Mentor Program in Metropolitan Dade County, Florida, involves the Greater Miami Chamber of Commerce, the public schools, the parks and recreation department, the Miami Police, a local university, the YMCA, and a variety of professional sport organizations.

The case studies are also reflective of a national trend regarding collaborative efforts. The national survey data indicated that 97% of agencies offering programs targeted at at-risk youth worked directly with nonprofit organizations or other government agencies. The most frequent collaborations were with education agencies (85%), law enforcement agencies or officials (79%), youth serving organizations such as YMCAs or Boys and Girls Clubs (66%), and adult service organizations such as Lions or Elks (54%). Few park and recreation agencies serving at-risk youth have the capacity, or perceive the necessity, to operate alone without substantial involvement with other social service organizations.

Program Security

A primary requirement of all at-risk youth programs is the guaranteed safety of participants. Safety issues often present an additional obstacle in areas of high crime and gang activity, where members of rival gangs may be interacting in recreational and social activities, and nongang members may need to be protected from the actions of gang members.

Some communities have resorted to metal detectors and hand wands to screen youth as they enter a facility. Others are considering the use of ID cards with card readers to check participants in and out of program sites. These procedures would also enable attendance patterns to be monitored and would provide useful data for program evaluations.

Most of the reported programs note the involvement and input of police departments through the utilization of on-duty or off-duty police officers at program sites as security guards. This relationship breaks down existing barriers of suspicion and distrust and gives the police the opportunity to better know individual young people. In addition, the juxtaposition of police and recreation staff working together may lead to enhanced appreciation by police for the contributions made by recreation staff in alleviating at-risk youth problems.

Youth Involvement

In addition to addressing larger societal needs, programs must be relevant and interesting in order to attract young people, many of whom have been exposed to the “action” and “excitement” of illicit activities. “It’s not fun to be a good kid,” observed one gang leader after joining a recreation program. After being on both sides of drive-by shootings and engaging in all kinds of illegal activities, such young people require challenging, high-skills programs to keep their interest. According to one parks and recreation director,

We didn’t respond to the needs of these youth very well for many years. We did traditional programs -for example, we always had to have a Maypole dance on May 1, irrespective of whether anyone came. The youth wanted more exciting programs, but we weren’t responsive to their needs. We told them what they needed. We never asked them what they wanted.

Similarly, the director of another park and recreation department said:

Often, the programs aren’t exciting enough because the staff aren’t excited enough. They don’t know what teenagers want, so the teenagers don’t come to our programs. When we establish steering committees, task forces, and programs we have to involve teenage leadership or the youth we want to attract won’t show up.

In short, young people are tired of adults making decisions that effect them regardless of their interest and input. Empowerment is an important theme that runs through these case studies. Empowerment enables youth to take ownership and responsibility for their recreational and social activities.

Teen councils are one widely used empowerment method:

- In Montreal, Canada, teenagers are fully involved in conceiving, developing, and implementing programs which respond to their needs and expectations. Rather than proposing a schedule of activities based on a conventional program, teenagers are assisted in their efforts to develop and carry out activities which they have proposed. A key principle in the Montreal Youth 2000 program is that efforts should be by and for teens. Thus emphasis is placed on young people’s capacities to take initiative, on their organizational and managerial abilities, and on their creativity.
- The Youth Recreation Council in Rockford,

Illinois, has promoted projects that enabled teens to take major responsibility for planning and carrying out projects designed to meet their needs. Teens planned, helped design, build, and program “The Gateway” teen playground, a high-quality, custom-designed, supervised play structure which offers a unique community experience for teens.

- Phoenix has 25 teen councils throughout the city. They meet weekly or bimonthly to plan activities, trips, special events, educational and community service programs with professional recreation staff. Teen council members advise recreation staff on these issues. The local councils are complemented by a citywide Youth Advisory Board which plans an annual teen conference. The day long program of youth planned workshops brings together teen councils from across the city.

Communication and Marketing

Faced with the inefficiencies of using traditional promotional materials such as brochures, many agencies have developed innovative media strategies to communicate with at-risk youth and their families. The most successful rely on young people themselves to develop and disseminate messages. Direct mail newsletters or cable television shows created for and by teens give youth a medium to discuss current issues affecting their lives while promoting relevant recreation-based programs and services:

- Wuzz-Up Teens is the name chosen by Phoenix youth for a quarterly newsletter and cable television program targeted at teens.
- 9teen Talk is a 30-minute television talk show on which Seattle teens express their opinions on issues that generally affect their lives, but about which they often feel powerless. Youth are involved in the “behind the scenes” production of the show.

For most recreation programs, word-of-mouth information transmitted by existing participants appears to be the most effective form of communication. Special circumstances necessitate unique, client-responsive approaches, as observed by a program manager in Olympia, Washington, whose program targets homeless and “street” youth:

Street youth typically do not have access to the traditional forms of program marketing such as the print, television, or radio media. Postings in public places usually go unnoticed. Yet, many of these displaced youth have a finely refined network of communicating with each other on the

street. As a result, most know how, when, and where to connect with one of our street workers.

In Indianapolis, Indiana, recreation personnel have gone door-to-door in target neighborhoods to promote the summer camp program. Similarly, Madison, Wisconsin, employs two regular part-time outreach workers who identify needy families through school social workers and other sources, then call or go door-to-door with fee waiver, transportation, and other information.

Resource Support

Because many at-risk youth programs target clientele in economically distressed areas, services often need to be offered either free of charge or at a nominal fee. These programs need substantial resource support which may come from either local government sources or external sources, such as state and federal grant programs, or private entities.

The golden years of tax-supported funding for local park and recreation agencies were from 1984 to 1991 (Crompton & McGregor, 1993). In contrast, the most recent era of downsizing and “reinventing government” has been characterized by a shortage of resources, a political climate which has emphasized law enforcement and incarceration, and a reluctance to invest in preventive actions. Many of the case studies reveal that at-risk youth programs, many of which started since 1989, receive minimal government investment and must rely heavily on external funds.

The limitations and danger of this strategy were pointed out by David Fisher, Executive Director of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. He suggested that agencies might actually be contributing to the problems of youth by building expectations through short-term, one-shot recreation programs, then failing to follow-through with long-term, ongoing services:

We will undertake a disservice to our clients, who already are beset by part-time parents and part-time education, by offering part-time programs. To be effective, programs must be consistent, constant, and sustainable. Otherwise I believe we simply feed the loop of failing to fulfill our promises.

Fisher called on each agency to develop a strategy for program continuance. He noted that the current federal strategy of avoiding hard decisions by providing block grants to states, which in turn are avoiding difficult decisions by making block grants to counties, eventually leaves the hard decisions

about priorities and responsibilities at the local level:

Unfortunately, while the ‘control’ for making decisions will be local, this system of allocating money will leave less funds to allocate at the local level. To avoid creating false expectations, we will need to make the hard decisions now about what we can realistically support in the future; we will need to build political alliances that will provide the advocacy and support base for programs; we will need to build ownership of programs among political and consumer constituencies; and we will need to find long-term corporate support. More importantly, we will need city government to invest local tax dollars on a continuing basis to support programs. We can be creative in our financing, but it will take long-term commitments and continuing support if we are to build sustainable programs.

In some communities, obtaining general fund support has not been possible, due to the reluctance to increase taxes. However, elected officials have been persuaded to create dedicated funds for these programs by imposing a surcharge on other recreation users, especially golfers:

- Portland, Oregon, has initiated an added fee of 50¢ for each round of golf played at one of the city-owned golf courses. An additional fee is also charged to nonresidents (\$2 per round). Together these fees bring in close to \$1 million per year which goes into a Parks and Youth Trust Fund.
- Phoenix generates \$150,000 per year for at-risk youth programs through a 25¢ surcharge on each round of golf.

External Sources of Resources

Federal and state grants were the initial funding source for several of the programs described in the case studies:

- The Drug Elimination/Youth Sports Program* of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development has been used by Boulder, Colorado, and Columbia, Mississippi, to establish recreation-drug prevention programs in public housing.
- Urban Park and Recreation Recovery Act (UPARR)* funds administered by the Department of the Interior gave the funding impetus for Tacoma, Washington’s, Youth Outdoor Adventures program. It continues with support from a variety of public and private entities.
- Crime reduction funds from the Arizona Supreme

Court funded staff and programming as part of Phoenix's City Streets initiative.

In order to be competitive for these grant funds, some agencies have invested in staff specialists. For example, the Phoenix At-Risk Youth Division hired a full-time grants researcher and coordinator in 1994. In the first full year, the Division submitted 25 applications for funds, of which 15 were successful. This process yielded almost \$1 million in additional resources. To support this grant application work, a resource library of data and statistical findings related to youth was developed.

These grant resources, however, are short term, and the prevailing political climate in Washington, DC, and in state capitals suggests that such opportunities will decline in the future. Hence, other local public or private sector support for continuation of these programs will be essential.

The case studies demonstrate that support from local sources, particularly the business community, voluntary organizations and foundations is possible. For example:

- Advanced Micro Devices contributed \$1 million towards the cost of constructing the Columbia Service Center in Sunnyvale, California.
- Along with funding received from local service clubs and at least one other foundation, the Longview and Kelso, Washington, after-school programs sought and received a substantial three-year funding commitment from the Weyerhaeuser Company Foundation. The three-year commitment was crucial to the program's success because it provided funding for a time period sufficient for the program to demonstrate its viability.
- In Seattle, Washington, the Ackerley Youth Foundation was formed by the owners of the SuperSonics basketball team in 1993 to support Seattle's at-risk youth programs. The foundation donated five vans to community centers; funded ten new teen leader positions, refurbished basketball courts, and facilitated the involvement of professional basketball players in educational programs.

External funding sources may be necessary to initiate programs, or to provide matching resources for them, but local government has to accept long-term responsibility for the continuance of these programs when they have been shown to be effective, if they are to be successful. This pattern has been used extensively in Oakland, California:

The Oakland Summer Performing Arts Day Camp received its initial funding from the Mayor's Office with some private monies used to supplement these city funds. After demonstrating success, the City Council was approached for funding for future years.

In the national survey, 86% of the park and recreation agency respondents reported that the business community contributed resources to their at-risk youth programs. Voluntary organizations (85%) and foundations (46%) were also major resource contributors. The type of assistance received from these entities consisted of monetary donations (91%), volunteering of personnel (75%), equipment donations (56%), and provision of organizational leadership or expertise (53%).

Observations on Future Funding Sources

Future resources for at-risk youth programs may come from three sources: redirecting resources from other recreational programs, additional appropriations from legislative bodies, or additional reliance on external partners. The first option is, of course, likely to be resisted by the users of existing programs, and perhaps also by staff who may perceive a loss of personal power. Lowering service standards for existing client groups frequently leads to political protest. Opposition from staff to changes in emphases may occur since the changes may threaten an individual's status, area of expertise, or self-confidence. For example:

In Montreal, some employees were very negative about hiring 'youth specialists,' and the assumption of responsibilities by partners which had traditionally been the employees' domain. They saw it as representing a loss of their personal power since they were no longer the sole front-line experts. They resented their loss of hierarchical control, as partners became involved.

Reallocation of resources is likely to occur only when a program's life cycle nears its end and when turnover of staff occurs. This is likely to be a gradual process.

Reluctance to raise tax rates means that if any additional appropriations are made, they are likely to be small, especially in major cities where the tax base is declining. In order to justify tax increases for at-risk youth services to their constituents, legislators have to be provided with evidence that these programs are effective. Hence the current interest in developing evaluation measures which provide this evidence.

Evaluation of Program Outcomes

Evaluating the extent to which programs have reached their goals is crucial to their continued funding. Local elected officials often require indicators of a program's success before investing public tax dollars in its continuation. Systematic evaluation procedures, unfortunately, have not been instituted by most agencies.

In a follow-up to the national survey of 120 agencies offering at-risk youth programs, approximately 30% of the sample indicated that they undertook no evaluation of their programs (Witt, Garteiser, & Crompton, 1995). The remaining respondents were categorized along a continuum of data sophistication. Thirteen percent of the agencies used mainly participation data, the least sophisticated form of evaluation; approximately 14% undertook some effort to collect testimonials or case studies; 19% used surveys to obtain participant, parent or other stakeholders' input about program quality or outcome; 20% used or planned to use crime statistics as an indicator of program impact; and only 4% had undertaken any form of evaluation utilizing a pre/post study of changes in such indicators as school grades, test scores, leisure-related attitudes or behavior. These data suggest increased efforts are needed by recreation and park agencies to build evaluation procedures into their program development efforts.

For the programs presented in this volume, evaluation methods cover the full spectrum of approaches described above. Unfortunately, few of the programs are utilizing methods beyond testimonials from participants, parents, program leaders, or other stakeholders. For example, the programs in Boulder, Colorado; Calgary, Alberta; and Tucson, Arizona, offered compelling testimonial evidence from participants, program leaders, parents and/or other stakeholders about the positive impact of their programs on participants.

In a few cases, postprogram surveys have been undertaken. For example, Longview and Kelso, Washington, and Tucson, Arizona, provided data from postprogram surveys, designed to elicit information about program quality and outcomes.

Finally, in a few cases, systematic procedures had been used to determine-through school, police or other data sources-the impact of at-risk programs. For example:

- Cincinnati, Ohio, reported a 31% decrease in crime incidents in the first six months after the Winton Hills prevention programs began.
- Commerce, California, compared gang-related assaults in their city with neighboring East Los

Angeles to demonstrate program effectiveness. In East Los Angeles there were 140 gang-related assaults and 11 homicides in 1993, compared to seven gang-related assaults and zero homicides in Commerce.

- Kansas City, Missouri, reported a 25% decrease in the rate of juvenile apprehensions compared to the previous year in the areas abutting centers in which midnight basketball programs were offered.
- In Fort Worth, Texas, crime statistics supplied by the Police Department indicated in a one-mile radius of the community centers where midnight basketball was provided, crime dropped 28%. At five other community centers where these programs did not exist, crime rose an average of 39%.

Four agencies reported undertaking some form of formal evaluation using pre/post evaluation methodologies. For example:

- Raleigh, North Carolina, used the Self-Concept Attitudinal (SCAT) Inventory to compare children ages 6-12 who participated in their structured summer leisure education program, with children who used other playground sites but did not participate in the leisure education program. Results indicated significant improvement in scores for children participating in the more structured leisure education program, while participants in the traditional playground programs did not show as much improvement in their SCAT scores.
- University of Wisconsin researchers have undertaken several studies of the after-school programs sponsored by the Madison School-Community Recreation Department. Results showed a greater positive impact on school grades and conduct ratings associated with children in structured after-school programs, compared to others who were in self-care or less-structured programs. The differences may be attributable to children in the Madison programs spending more time in enrichment activities and sharing more activities with adults and peers.
- Impact evaluation of the Northern Fly-In Sports Camps program in Manitoba, Canada, has indicated a decrease in crime rate in communities where the sports camps are offered. Results also showed the program has had a positive effect on participants' levels of happiness, enjoyment, interest, perceptions of leisure and feelings about the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.
- Anaheim, California, tracks the progress of youth involved in their gang and drug intervention program. The tracking system allows leaders to

determine the long-term impact of intervention efforts. In addition, Anaheim conducts nine different types of surveys to evaluate different components of the program.

Achieving meaningful evaluations of at-risk youth programs may be a difficult. As Reco Bemby, Seattle's teen program coordinator, noted:

Part of the problem of doing a cost-benefit evaluation analysis of the program is that you cannot measure what didn't happen. We save lives, but how can you measure a shooting that didn't occur because the kid was in this program?

One way of doing this may be to place a cost on each of the crimes (and the costs of prosecuting and incarcerating guilty individuals associated with them) and document the dollars saved by any drop in crime rates which appear to be related to the program.

Concluding Comments

The human services view of recreation and parks as practiced in many urban communities places the recreation and park movement at a crossroads. One path travels down the narrow road of traditionally defined, segmented activities based on economic values; the other path leads to a multidisciplinary community services approach that places recreation, parks and amenities in the center of the urban policy debate. (Foley & Pick, 1995, p. 70)

The case studies provide evidence that many recreation and park agencies are returning to the roots of the profession by investing more resources in providing programs for at-risk children and youth. The service priorities of responsive recreation and park agencies are shaped by external forces which they cannot control, but to which they must adapt. In the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, the external political forces directed that an agency's primary concern should be to increase efficiency or to "do more with less." This was accomplished by reducing an agency's tax subsidy, while maintaining or expanding its range of offerings. This resulted in focusing on target markets with the ability and willingness to pay prices high enough to cover most service costs, and reducing resources invested in high-subsidy programs.

Since 1988, political forces have continued to stress reducing tax subsidies, but this has been accompanied by a priority emphasis "to do something about" juvenile crime and delinquency. Explosive, high-profile incidents involving young people have

grown exponentially in recent years, and each horrific event directs more political attention to this issue. Recreation programs have been viewed by some as a means through which these problems may be addressed.

Despite being labeled by some critics as "wasteful social spending" and "pork," recreation programs have been embraced as one means to address problems associated with high-risk youth. Smith (1991) noted the cost benefits in her report to the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development:

The provision of community recreation services is a good investment. Participation in organized recreation provides for the constructive use of free time and develops skills for the management of discretionary time and thereby reduces the need for, and the costs of, providing other governmental and social services that deal with the management of antisocial behaviors after they occur. (p. ii-iii)

Repositioning, however, takes time. Agencies that have focused for a decade or more on middle-class target markets cannot immediately reorient staff and resources to serving at-risk youth. Unfortunately today's youth, indeed society, cannot wait. We therefore present the following profiles of successful park and recreation programs and strategies with the ultimate hope that they can be replicated to benefit communities of all sizes, demographic composition, and needs across the country.

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