

Challenge to Change

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Overview

"Poss Homes was the worst housing development in Chattanooga. They were ready to plow Poss under, it was so bad."—Gloria Carter, former official of Regional Housing and Urban Development Chattanooga, Tennessee.

"That area of South Omaha has the second highest crime rate in the city. To live in the bricks is a disgrace."—Tom Richards, Juvenile Justice Officer, Sarpy County Court, Nebraska.

"They say in North Birmingham a kid knows how to cross the street by herself when she is two years old. Kids grow up real quick in North Birmingham."—Frank Clayton, Program Director, Girls Club of North Birmingham, Alabama.

From January 1978 through December 1980, Girls Clubs of America (GCA) and affiliates in seven cities across the country undertook a major project to reach out to serve new communities and girls—especially girls whose backgrounds and learned behavior place them at risk of involvement in the juvenile justice system. Without special attention and new opportunities, the difficult life situations of these girls may result in juvenile offense, unplanned pregnancy or alcohol and drug abuse. Such girls do not ordinarily come to a Girls Club. They are not award winners; most do not achieve in school or volunteer for community service. These are girls who rarely participate in programs or activities that might enable them to develop more positive views of themselves and their futures. Yet these are the girls who most need the skills, knowledge and emotional supports that can be found at a Girls Club.

This is a report concerning the seven Girls Clubs that took a serious look at the needs of girls at risk and set about finding the right people and programs to address these needs. Of the seven Clubs, each in its own way learned to help these girls develop a new sense of personal worth and the belief that life can be filled not only with problems but also with choices and possibilities.

Allentown, Pennsylvania
Birmingham, Alabama
Chattanooga, Tennessee
Lynn, Massachusetts
Omaha, Nebraska
Santa Barbara, California
Worcester, Massachusetts

The Girls Club in each of the seven cities cited above participated in the Girls Clubs of America's Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Project (JDPP). In most of these cities, the Girls Club was the only agency serving girls who were at risk on a non-crisis basis. JDPP was funded through the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), Law Enforcement Assistance Administration (LEAA) of the U.S. Department of Justice with grants totaling more than one million dollars over a three-year period. These grants enabled the Clubs to increase the quality and variety of their programs and to extend services to individuals and communities previously unserved.

JDPP was the first major federally funded project undertaken by Girls Clubs of America. It was also the most comprehensive program jointly developed by the national organization and affiliate Clubs. As a national organization, GCA has encouraged Clubs to develop programming that addresses the unique needs of each community. In keeping with this policy of decentralization, the seven Clubs developed their programs autonomously. Although approaches varied according to local needs and each Club's capacities, certain common achievements of the project are clear:

Girls JDPP served more than 2,000 girls in the first two years.

Girls came from communities characterized by high unemployment, poor family stability, widespread crime, truancy, significant school dropout rates and a high incidence of teenage pregnancy. Previously, there had been a noticeable lack of service to girls in these communities.

Programs Outreach strategies were developed to attract girls who were apathetic, rebellious or already involved in the juvenile justice system. Outreach included the use of mobile units, street work and formal linkages with schools, probation departments and local housing authorities.

Clubs served girls at risk by developing special programs to address their specific needs.

Clubs increased their capacity to serve girls at risk by maintaining successful JDPP programs beyond the grant period and revising ongoing planning, programming and evaluation procedures to insure high quality programs.

Successful JDPP programs and activities became models for other Clubs to replicate in their communities.

Program ideas for pre-teens were a natural outgrowth of JDPP efforts to reach older teenagers.

Clubs began rigorous record keeping for their programs, which provided necessary documentation of their successes, ideas and direction for future programs and continuity of service among age groups.

Clubs The executive director and board members of JDPP Clubs expanded their roles to include advocacy of girls' issues and collaboration with other community organizations on behalf of girls.

To meet the increased demands of their work with JDPP, staff received in-service training and other educational opportunities and staff salaries were raised to competitive levels.

Community Clubs expanded ties with social service and political networks within their communities, collaborating to increase and improve services to girls.

Communities gained new confidence in Girls Clubs to provide intelligent and sensitive services to girls.

Girls at Risk in Today's Society

In the 1980s, statistics indicate a pressing need for services for girls. Arrest rates for girls are rising twice as fast as those for boys. More than half the estimated one million runaways each year are girls, mostly 11 to 14 years old. Almost 25 percent of all girls drop out before completing high school. Pregnancy is the most frequently cited reason. Unemployment rates for minority teenage women are officially recorded at 38 percent and unofficially believed to be 40 to 50 percent, the highest for any group in the nation.

It is clear that the shifting mores, expectations and economic and family responsibilities of today's society have had a major impact on girls and young women. Although new opportunities open broad possibilities for growth and achievement, they also create new living and working conditions for which most girls are seriously unprepared. The capacity of many girls to adjust to the changes brought about through social reforms of the past decade is further complicated by backgrounds that include family breakdown or economic and educational poverty.

Future Realities As a juvenile court lawyer in Omaha explained, "We see a lot of 13 to 15-year-olds who are sexually and chemically active and who come from alienated, chaotic homes. These girls are concrete thinkers who have no way to understand what's happening to them. They can't conceptualize about their futures and they can't articulate their fears."

There has been little clarifying research on the current social development of young women. In ways that no one has fully defined, the clash between traditional sex-role expectations and changing socioeconomic realities contributes to the widespread confusion in girls about their personal worth and abilities. Present-day sexual freedom for girls conflicts with the lack of sexuality education and the complex responsibilities of child rearing. The expectation that women will continue to be emotionally and economically dependent on others, which is reflected in career counseling practices and women's low salaries, conflicts with this country's high divorce rates and the need for most women to support themselves and their families for much of their adult lives. If a woman is married, she can expect to work an average of 25 years; if she is single, 45 years. Today, more than 44 million women are in the labor force—nearly 43 percent of all workers. Two-thirds of these women earn less than \$10,000 a year; only 9.7 percent earn more than \$15,000.

Girls' Needs Go Unrecognized Most social service agencies have not been able to adapt fully to the changing needs of today's girls.

Public recreational facilities are dominated by programs and activities for boys, often to the exclusion of girls. Programs that do exist for girls frequently do not address the full range of their needs and capabilities. In a housing project in Omaha, girls physically fought boys for the use of the gym before authorities would grant them this "privilege." Career counseling in most schools still directs girls into low paying clerical or service positions. Many school systems avoid sex education as a matter of policy, and where it is offered, it is often treated, as many girls remarked, as "plumbing" in biology class.

Until recently, major funding sources, including corporations and foundations, have financed girls' services at one-third to one-fourth the level of boys' services. Some small improvement in this situation is now being noted. However, in one community, a fund raiser who had successfully obtained gifts and grants for other organizations reported to the Girls Club: "You have a problem. During my round of potential contributors, I encountered the following responses: 'Girls belong at home with their mothers.' 'I support boys' activities, I do not have money for girls.' 'The schools are the place for girls to learn and play.'"

JDPP required that participating Girls Clubs work toward a leadership position in their communities and address the negative attitudes toward developing programs and services for girls.

Programs for Girls at Risk Working with girls of multiple needs from a variety of backgrounds is hardly new to Girls Clubs. The Clubs have always served girls in low-income urban areas. Today, 47 percent of the membership nationwide are from minority groups; 85 percent of the members come from families with annual incomes of \$10,000 or less.

In the 1970s, Girls Clubs of America specifically committed itself to a leading role as an advocate for the rights of girls of all backgrounds and abilities. The number of girls reached by Girls Club programs jumped from 130,000 in 1972 to 220,000 in 1978. Staff and programs increased in numbers and sophistication and the organization's influence expanded through a widening network of associations and collaborations.

Nevertheless, in launching the Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Project, Girls Clubs set out on uncharted waters. Neither academicians nor field practitioners offer sufficient guidelines in programming for girls, especially for girls whose behavior places them at risk of involvement

in the juvenile justice system. Clubs needed to develop programs that would "reduce the incidence of delinquents' acts," in the words of Jeanette L. Weaver, Program Manager, Delinquency Prevention Technical Assistance Program of the Westinghouse National Issues Center. These programs would have to "attempt to create a social situation likely to limit engagement in delinquent behavior, to affect in a complementary manner other situations in which the participants are involved, and to overcome past experience that may have contributed to delinquent behavior." But enduring economic and social conditions and the daily fabric of the lives of teenage girls are potent adversaries.

The three years of JDPP involved much trial and error. Clubs continually evaluated their progress. In the end, the Clubs learned to identify and overcome many problems, but no one claimed to have found the answers. Martha Bernstein, the National Project Director for GCA, observed, "To come up with the right answers you first have to determine what the right questions are. At this initial stage of developing delinquency prevention programs, it is significant that Girls Clubs have become recognized as one of the few experts on the many questions concerning the human services systems for girls and young women."



The First Year

The specific events and achievements described in the following narrative in no way represent the full undertakings of the seven Clubs participating in the JDPP. They serve to illustrate the general history of the project and the issues that were raised for the individual Girls Clubs and the National Organization.

Starting Out Like the national organization, the seven individual Clubs involved in JDPP were at a point of growth when they received OJJDP/LEAA funding. Each Club saw the grant as a means to do quickly what it had hoped to do over a longer period of time. Because the seven Clubs represent a cross section of the national organization, it is instructive to take a brief look at the position of each Club at the

time the grants were received.

In Allentown, the Girls Club operated out of a creaky old building in an area referred to as "the wards," where 30 percent of the families received Aid to Families with Dependent Children. The game room, filled with cheerful posters and children's artwork tacked on brightly painted walls, provided a sharp contrast to the gray feeling of the neighborhood outside. The Club had been experiencing a quiet but steady growth for several years, although its stringent financial situation remained the same and its achievements went unnoticed by the community. The Club's executive director, the only fulltime staff member, saw the OJJDP/LEAA grant as an opportunity to hire more fulltime staff, to upgrade the quality of the programs and to reach out actively to unserved adolescent girls.

An old, established Club in Birmingham was finding that its large, well-equipped main facility was becoming a financial burden as the Club reached out to girls in other parts of the community. It was hoped that the funds could start a new Girls Club branch in North Birmingham.

The Girls Club of Chattanooga was a poor Club with an imaginative staff who worked out of a tiny office in an awkward, though lovable, old house. Through its mobile unit the Club had identified the Poss Homes Housing Development as an area in desperate need of programs for girls. It was hoped the grant would provide the resources to establish a Girls Club branch in Poss Homes—an area previously avoided by other private service agencies.

The Girls Club of Lynn existed in a city that had never recovered from the loss of its financial base in the 1930s when its main industry fell on hard times. Community resources in Lynn were scarce for all youth programs but especially for girls. As the only building-based agency serving girls in the area, the Club saw the OJJDP/LEAA grant as a means to develop solid programming in the area of career awareness.

Founded in 1975, the Girls Club of Omaha was located in the city's highest risk neighborhood. The Club operated out of one unit that was insufficiently equipped for the numbers of girls requiring services.

The Club sought the OJJDP/LEAA grant to expand and establish a second unit in a similarly high-risk neighborhood across town.

In Santa Barbara, the Girls Club was a pleasant, moderate size, cinder block facility filled with warm California sunlight. For an outsider, the full extent of the poverty of the members was difficult to detect. The majority of the girls came from low-income, single-parent families, however, and lived in small houses that usually accommodated more than one family. The closing of nearby schools in the early 1970s made the Club inaccessible to many potential members. The Club's executive director sought the OJJDP/LEAA funds to enlarge the Club's impact in the community through outreach programs that would bring girls from the most disadvantaged neighborhoods in Santa Barbara to the Club's facility.

The Worcester Club was one of the original Girls Clubs. Founded in the mid-nineteenth century and has a long, proud record of award-winning members. There was a growing awareness that many members were dropping out of the Club as they approached adolescence; often they were girls in the most need. The grant was sought to develop in-depth programming for girls at this critical time of their lives.

Growing Pains and Successes All seven Clubs looked forward to the benefits of new funding, but few anticipated the complications that accompany a federal grant. As implementation of the grant got underway, the Clubs encountered a progression of stumbling blocks which cut across differences in Club size, capabilities and wealth. Overall, Clubs found the needs of girls at risk to be greater and more complex than had been anticipated. In some Clubs, fights between new members became a daily occurrence. Those members included some older girls for whom a knife was a standard accessory. For them, verbal abuse was an integral part of casual conversation. Compliments and encouragement from the staff were often met with suspicion. When a softball team was formed by the Omaha club, the girls refused to pick up each other's fly balls during practice.

It was clear that if programming efforts were going to be successful, staff energy had to be directed toward developing trust among Club members. In addition, it was found that staff needed more than just good instincts and the desire to help in order to address the full range of members' emotional and practical needs. Program directors needed administrative skills and solid knowledge of human development.

Programs developed during the first year provided the momentum and experience needed to continue with the goals of the project.

- In Allentown, teens had the opportunity during the summer to shadow professionals in job areas that interested them. Participants in the program included the Evening Chronicle, Merrill Lynch Stocks and Bonds and the Allentown School of Cosmetology. The Club built enrollment in the program with a newsletter, a network of teenagers calling other teenagers and contact with the guidance counselor of a nearby junior high school.

- In Birmingham, through the use of a mobile unit, classes in arts and crafts, swimming, personal hygiene and first aid were offered to girls in a variety of locations. The Club soon recognized the difficulty of maintaining a stable population of participants without a permanent location; space was later acquired in a school in North Birmingham.

- In Chattanooga, at the Poss Homes Housing Development, staff actively worked with girls on developing alternative problem-solving strategies in lieu of fights and verbal abuse. Classes in education for adulthood addressing topics such as parenthood were introduced with considerable support from the parents of participating members.

- In Lynn, following a summer program that concentrated on recreational activities such as hiking, overnight trips and bake sales, fall programming began with a series of regularly scheduled workshops that focused on health issues. A program on nutrition led to the formation of a supper club where teenagers planned, purchased and prepared healthy, low-budget meals.

- In Omaha, staff energies were directed

toward building initial cooperation among teenagers through traditional activities such as softball, arts and crafts and homemaking skills classes.

- In Santa Barbara, a summer program was offered to economically disadvantaged youth and new teenage members participated in the already existing JIFFY Program (Jobs in the Future for You).

- In Worcester, the outdoor and indoor self-challenge program offered girls the opportunity to set and meet new goals in activities like cross-country skiing as well as in career and leadership classes.

The visibility and prestige of each Club were immediately heightened. For the first time, a small Club like Allentown received enthusiastic visits from United Way and other service agencies. Community organizations sought Girls Clubs' endorsements in grant proposals of their own. The Clubs' boards and executive directors began to experience the extra clout that comes with significant funding.

Program Reassessment For all the Clubs, the first year brought some successes as well as a greater awareness of the problems before them. The Clubs knew that if they were to meet the goals of the JDPP fully, they would have to make some fundamental changes in their operations. Programs needed to be revised, reporting procedures needed to be improved, staff qualifications needed to be upgraded, and staff turnover needed to be reduced. In most cases, these changes required more funds.

Some monies could be reallocated for more efficient use, but inevitably, new funds were required. The boards and executive directors of the Clubs began to take a fresh, optimistic look at the future of their clubs and their own capabilities for leadership. They became more aware of their potential to provide girls with important skills and opportunities.



The Hard Work of the Final Two Years

In meeting JDPP's goal in the final two years of OJJDP/LEAA funding, most Clubs made major adjustments to upgrade their programs. Changes occurred in four significant areas: **Planning and Outreach** Clubs had to reassess girls' needs for specific types of programming and reconsider who the at-risk girls in their communities really were. Clubs then had to determine how best to involve them in the JDPP programs.

Program Design Because most new members were teenagers, programs had to be developed to address their special needs, including sexuality education and planning for future career options. In addition, staff had to learn how active a role to play in motivating teenage members without alienating them. Programs for pre-teenage girls also emerged during this time, providing greater program continuity for girls of all ages. Successful programs and activities became models in their communities.

Staff Development Both the national organization and the individual Clubs quickly found that skilled and motivated staff members were the key to successful programs. Increased staff training and competitive salaries were needed to keep staff attrition rates at a minimum.

Community Collaboration and Networking The need for funding beyond the LEAA grant period, coupled with an imperative for increased political activity by Club administration, led to significant changes in the duties of the

executive director and board members. Time spent away from the Club gave the executive director a new perspective on the role of the Club in the community and a new awareness of the importance of being a visible and active advocate for girls.

Planning and Outreach The first requirement for launching a successful program was careful preparation. Clubs that planned thoughtfully had fewer start-up problems. An assessment of community needs helped Clubs pinpoint target populations and determine program approaches.

Prior to 1978, two major needs assessments had been carried out in Santa Barbara by the South Coast Coordinating Council and the County of Santa Barbara to identify major areas of youth need. Thus, the Santa Barbara Girls Club was knowledgeable on the subject of "delinquency prevention" and was concerned about programming in this area before the advent of the JDPP program. The Santa Barbara Club began its program with a working concept of "at-risk" girls that emphasized the importance of early detection of behavior patterns that might lead to delinquency.

In Chattanooga, the Girls Club effectively used a mobile unit to explore a neighborhood's needs. The Club sent a van to the Poss Homes area several times a week for months before deciding to establish a branch there. While offering some basic Club services, the van's staff obtained firsthand information about the community from girls, parents and other residents. When a permanent branch was opened, the neighborhood was well informed about the Girls Club's services and staff members were familiar with specific local needs.

By starting with guidelines that defined its target population, the Santa Barbara Club was able to exceed its initial goal of serving 200 girls. The Chattanooga Club's efforts initially attracted more than 500 girls, a figure well above the Club's expectations.

Effective outreach was a central concern of JDPP. In order to attract girls who did not see themselves as members of a Girls Club, staff had to preserve their dedication to project ideals and remain sensitive to the emotional needs of sometimes hostile and apathetic girls. They had to be imaginative and flexible if they were to create programs that were truly relevant to girls at risk. As one executive director observed, "You need your sharpest people in outreach, the ones who are enthusiastic about kids and the programs and who are not afraid of the neighborhood."

work sites and opportunities for job shadowing were offered in the areas of police work, modeling, medical and legal work and the operation of an airport. As additional incentive, teenagers earned points for attending these sessions, which they could use to obtain a People Factory T-shirt.

In the "Career Exploration Cycle" at Lynn, goals included making teenagers aware of traditional and nontraditional jobs, increasing awareness of skills and attitudes that influence vocational choices and instruction on the use of vocational resource material to enable teenagers to pursue career-related information independently. Interest surveys, discussions of women in the workforce, and employee/employer relations, trips to the library and work sites, speakers, films and shadow job placements filled out the curriculum.

The Birmingham Club took a more individualized approach to problems in career planning. A one-to-one dialogue with Club members gave the staff a springboard from which to explore issues related to career options. The "Seek Out Careers Club" gave participating members the opportunities to visit a variety of work sites, practice the job application process, exchange career ideas with speakers and attend an all-day career workshop.

Stressing the importance of leadership capabilities, the Chattanooga Club integrated neighborhood youth corp workers, manpower workers and volunteer teenagers into programs with other teenage members. A stipend offered for their work within the Club helped orient teenage workers and the teenage members to the idea of payment for work. Furthermore, representatives from the community's business sector spoke with teenagers about career opportunities, careful planning and decision-making for job futures. The value of remaining in school for greater career options was stressed.

A realistic assessment of members' needs vis-à-vis future career options indicated a lack of basic life skills among members of Omaha's "Career Awareness Program" (CAP). CAP, enlarged through participation of girls from the South Omaha Branch, was developed originally to provide teenagers with training in areas such as getting around the city, filling out job applications, balancing checkbooks, personal hygiene and interpersonal communications. through informal sessions within the Club and

intern career placements in work situations throughout the city, participants were involved in the program over a concentrated ten week period followed by weekly meetings. CAP graduates are now successfully involved in the Club's day-care program.

The "Hocus Focus" career/leadership program in Worcester began with eight weeks of training within the Club. Upon completion, members worked for five weeks as volunteers at the Club or at another human services agency in the community. Two weeks were then spent analyzing the experience with individual teenagers. Plans were also made for the next five-week job period. Teenagers could continue indefinitely through this program, each time taking on more responsibility becoming eligible for a stipend after two years of participation.

Much of the real work and success of JDPP were accomplished in programs like these and the sexuality education sequences. The effectiveness of such programs was predicated on teens' motivation to participate.

Staff's Role in Programming for Teenagers

As all Clubs learned, it is difficult to program for today's adolescent girls: many of the approaches developed to help boys do not seem to appeal to girls. "We've got to take a second look at the situation for girls," said Frank Clayton, Project Director in North Birmingham, a man long experienced in youth programs for both sexes. "There's so much more we don't know about girls."

Several Clubs started their programs for teenagers by providing a drop-in facility where teenagers could sit around, talk with staff about their concerns and plan activities they wanted to do. Often, a special room was set aside to provide teenagers with privacy from the younger children and encourage their sense of "ownership" in the Club. It was soon evident that this approach was inadequate. Greater structure was needed to motivate girls to be more active Club participants.

Without staff intervention, the girls repeated familiar forms of social interaction, forming cliques that mocked or threatened others who wanted to join the Club. "They bad-mouthed us at school to keep the other kids away," said Barb Terry, Associate Unit Director of South Omaha. The teenagers also developed a "you owe me" attitude toward the staff. In several Clubs, girls told staff bluntly, "You're here to serve us. If we don't come here, you're out

of a job." Countering this attitude with facts about the purpose and financing of Girls Clubs did not address the real problem.

"You felt you did so much to get them into the building in the first place, you hated to take the chance of losing them," staff members at several Clubs explained. Reluctantly, however, the staff began to set limits. Some girls had to be challenged directly: "If you interrupt classes, if you threaten other kids, you cannot come here anymore. This is not acceptable behavior." Sometimes these girls changed quickly; sometimes they left in a huff only to drift back gradually over the next few months.

For the more passive girls who were in the majority, the new approach often came as a relief. "After we started setting limits, we had more kids, not fewer," reported a staff member of one Club. Many of the teenagers whom these Clubs were trying to serve came from chaotic environments where family members were alcoholic, on drugs or in jail. These girls needed to have structure created for them; they needed to be helped to realize their own interests and abilities. "You have to work hard just to get them to dream," explained Phyllis Shea, a Teen Director at Worcester.

While retaining a drop-in element for flexibility, Clubs began to design specific courses. They ranged from traditional cooking, arts and crafts and sports, to group discussions on sexuality education and sexual feelings, seminars on drug abuse and alcoholism, trips to local courts and police stations, courses in family affairs and personal development and a variety of approaches to career exploration and job training.

Despite the variety of these programs, certain elements recurred that seemed critical to their success. Activities had to meet girls at their own levels of ambition and understanding. Only then could they tackle new challenges. It was a tricky balance. Too great a challenge was threatening; too small a challenge was boring. It required great sensitivity and enormous inventiveness.

In Santa Barbara, for example, a career education class was well attended, but the level of the girls' involvement seemed uninspired. They seemed to enjoy what they were learning but could not connect it with their own lives. One day, the class visited a department store to see the kinds of clothing they should wear for work. The girls stood around in their jeans and T-shirts giggling nervously until a staff

person suggested they try on some of the clothes. As they stood before the mirror in new dresses or suits, the shock of recognition was expressed in awed silence. That could be me! I could really look like that. For a moment, at least, they felt the pull of new possibility in their lives.

Even a traditional activity such as cooking provided new challenges. One Club took girls to an Indian restaurant and members of another Club learned to prepare a gourmet meal of soul food. Such experiences lifted these girls out of their narrow environments, enabling them to discover something new in the world as well as to take pride in something of their own. The goal was not merely educational, it was also motivational—to make them want to do it and to help them believe they could do it while changing their perception of themselves as helpless failures.

In keeping with this goal, girls were required to sign up in advance and commit themselves to completing the full cycle of some programs. Consistent participation helped staff plan program content and utilize the group dynamic to increase the girls' learning and sense of involvement. More important than staff convenience, however, was the sense of responsibility that this approach engendered in the girls. "They need a sense of responsibility in order to live and prosper and be successful in their lives," said Margaret Smith, Project Director at Chattanooga. "The numbers of teenage pregnancies and child abuse cases that I have seen are partially the result of a girl's inability to take responsibility for what happens to her. We've got to break that cycle."

Shared Decision-Making Ironically, in many Clubs, as staff began to play a more assertive role with the Girls, the "self-structured way"* and other forms of shared decision-making became easier to apply. As self-confidence and trust slowly replaced fearfulness and passivity, girls were able to engage in constructive decision-making. Where at first they sat around complaining glumly, the girls later began to respond to the staff's prodding with ideas for activities and events. These ideas usually required refinement, with considerable contribution from staff, to move the girls out of usual habits and provide new elements

*A complete description of this program can be found in GCA's publication "Girls as Decision-Makers."

of interest. The final decisions, however, were arrived at jointly. With a central voice in the planning process, girls took more responsibility for how activities turned out.

Sharing decision-making with teenagers was a difficult but essential aspect of JDPP and most Clubs are still struggling with it. It requires extreme patience and skill, but it is absolutely the key to achieving the fundamental goals of building self-esteem and helping girls realize that they can control their own lives.

Programs for Pre-Teens In several Clubs, a happy bonus for hard work with teenagers was the emergence of programs for pre-teens—girls from about age 10 to 13. Traditionally, these girls grow bored and restless in the programs for younger age groups, and yet their needs are not the same as those of older teenagers.

"The older girls are hard to motivate. The pre-teens have to be calmed," said Jean Miller, Worcester Project Director. The "Bridge Program" (bridging the gap between younger and older girls) began at Worcester when pre-teens were sent to the teen room because they were disrupting other activities and could not find anything else they wanted to do. Miller continued, "The pre-teens start facing a lot of new experiences but they aren't being challenged to take the extra step and think about what is happening to themselves."

The range of maturity is particularly great in these early adolescent years: many girls are already experimenting with alcohol, drugs and sex by the time they reach age 12. "A metamorphosis has taken place in the last generation," explained Marge Cutting, Worcester's Executive Director. "The commencement of adolescence is around 10-years-old, thus creating a new population we have to deal with."

Like teenagers, pre-teens need a lot of individual attention. But they have not yet settled into the hardened defenses shown by many of the older girls. They are easier to motivate and easier to develop programs for. One director puts it vividly, "With teenagers you have to work hard just to make them feel safe. But pre-teens...if I had a shot at a sixth grader, in three years that kid could be doing fantastic things. The kind of growth they can accomplish at this age is enormous."

Building Program Continuity Some staff and board members saw the emergence of pre-teen programming as the first step toward

real program continuity—developing the capacity of the Clubs to meet the changing needs of girls from ages 6 to 18. Ideally, this means being able to address the unique needs of each age group without excluding others. It means providing career preparation and sexuality education for 8-year-olds as well as for 14-year-olds as a regular aspect of Club activities. It means integrating high risk youth into the regular membership and enhancing the growth and development of achievers and nonachievers alike. It means continually evaluating individual members' needs and skills and providing activities to challenge their abilities.

No Club fully achieved this ideal, but several dealt with parts of it. Allentown was able to integrate teens into the Club without slighting the needs of the younger girls. Santa Barbara integrated high-risk girls into the general membership. Omaha chose to deal with sexuality education as part of a larger health program for each Club member. Worcester stressed informal counseling and close staff attention to individual development.

It was a measure of their increasing professionalism that most of the Girls Clubs participating in JDPP became discontent with short-term goals and reliance on outside consultants. Clubs grew to appreciate the need for extended programming efforts that included intervention at an earlier time in girls' lives, closer work with older teenagers to help them use skills and knowledge acquired through Club experiences and an emphasis on helping girls develop into more active decision-makers in the areas of career and family planning.

In an effort to strengthen programming efforts, some Clubs tried to create greater integration between the Club activities and the material taught in school courses. Other Clubs placed a new emphasis on informal counseling and developmental group work.

Model Programs and Activities Successful JDPP programs became models for other Clubs and community agencies providing intervention on behalf of girls. For example, the successful sexuality education program in the Poss Homes Housing Development in Chattanooga opened the way for the school system in that community to introduce a similar program in the classroom.

It was important to demonstrate that programs could be developed for girls who appeared

to the community to be beyond the point of preventive intervention. In the third year of JDPP, Santa Barbara developed "Teens in Progress" (TIP), an alternative to the school suspension program to be offered at one of the city's schools. This program began to deal with the problem of girls' loss of educational opportunity, rather than merely perpetuating it through suspension.

Collaborative relations with other agencies were also crucial. In Lynn, the Girls Club was the prime organizer of the North Shore Girls Service Providers, a multi-agency advocacy group for girls.

For JDPP to succeed, active promotion of community awareness of girls' needs was required. Clubs initiated that effort through major opinion and policy forums, and the mass media. Collaboration with service organizations like the Junior League, the Rotary Club and various political task forces on youth was essential. Because so little has been done on behalf of girls in most communities, the Girls Clubs often found themselves breaking new ground. A well trained and highly motivated staff emerged as the key to success for every Club, for every program.

Staff Development It is clear that it takes a special kind of person to work creatively with girls who are at risk. Persistence, patience and imagination are needed to break through their defensive apathy and hostility. "It's hard to find people who have the honest, open approach necessary for working with these girls," one project director declared. "It took two years to build this staff. Just because someone is familiar with Girls Clubs doesn't mean she can work with this group of kids."

Building a competent staff was perhaps the most serious problem the Clubs faced. Clubs found they had underestimated the quality of skills necessary to carry out their project goals. Staff members needed not only the usual program skills, but also a natural empathy for girls who are defensive, fearful and unable to believe in their own abilities.

"After you've made that initial breakthrough, after you've built the necessary trust—which is very hard work—you still have to ask yourself: Where do we go from here?" explained Eleanor Wigginton, Executive Director of Chattanooga. "That's when you need people with professional training. You need people who are knowledgeable about education, health and social development, people who can work

with other professionals as equals."

Other Clubs also realized this and began looking for people with advanced training in child development, psychology and social work. In addition, certain staff positions such as program director and unit director required management skills in staff administration, budgeting and reporting procedures.

Reporting procedures, in particular, became a major concern. Girls Club staff who were unaccustomed to the level of documentation required were initially resentful of the time it took away from program planning. Careful reporting, however, is an important aid to program continuity.

The Executive Director of Santa Barbara believes, "The only way to have a stable, well-trained staff is to have a decently paid staff." This means offering salaries comparable to those of other public and private social service agencies. To do this, some Clubs dipped into general Club funds or rewrote their second-year JDPP proposals to provide better salaries for the project's personnel. Clubs recognized the significance of competitive salaries for their organization as a whole. "You can't keep a dynamite direct service person with low pay and low status," said Nancy Bartels, Executive Director of Girls Club of Lynn. "You have to professionalize the position. To do this, you have to restructure, use people where they can work best and reward them. And you need a stronger career ladder for women who want to move up. If people can move up they are likely to stay longer and provide greater program continuity."

Bartels restructured the staff in Lynn by eliminating the position of associate director and using salary and accompanying benefits to create two full-time positions at a middle-administrative level where staff were sorely needed. She further coordinated the training and experience of all staff positions with a consistent pay scale. "There didn't seem to be any pattern between what staff were expected to do and what they were paid," she said.

The Omaha board's personnel committee developed a comprehensive salary plan with a primary goal of staff stability. The plan detailed salaries, benefits, and vacations, including vacations for part-time staff. "Part-time people are a necessary part of the team. We can't afford to think of part-time as temporary," explained William Martin,

the committee's chair.

In several Clubs, restructuring staff salaries and benefits included increasing training opportunities. In Worcester, consultants were brought in several times a year to provide new program ideas. Staff meetings were viewed as training opportunities with in-depth problem-solving discussions. In Santa Barbara, the Club joined with CETA in sponsoring workshops for direct service personnel. In Lynn, middle-level personnel were given eight hours a month for voluntary training or education in addition to training mandated by the Club director. Staff members were also allowed \$100 a year for subsidized training and educational workshops.

Both the Lynn and Omaha Clubs stressed the need for career ladders. Staff at many Clubs confirmed the need. "A lot of us are very committed to the Girls Club movement and to the issues affecting women and girls," they said repeatedly. The speakers were young women themselves, looking for opportunities, and they were eager to stay. As one executive director noted, "We need to prepare staff as well as kids for the 1980s."

Community Collaboration and Networking

Staff reorganization was a major factor in expanding the capacity of the Clubs to serve a wider range of girls and their needs. Equally important in building a Club's capacity were the efforts of staff members, board members, and particularly the executive directors, to develop ties with other agencies in the community. For example, collaboration with local doctors' and nurses' associations and the public health department enabled the Girls Club of Omaha to develop a comprehensive health program for girls.

The Girls Club in Birmingham collaborated with the community school system. Ultimately, the Club was provided with space in a school. Previously, this community offered no other resources for girls.

Through cooperative efforts like these, Clubs achieved maximum use of their limited funds, increased community awareness of the needs of girls and built a network of people and agencies who were able to help.

"You get support by getting out and doing," said Eleanor Wiggington of Chattanooga. "Identify something that needs to be done that has a maximum possibility of success. Do some solid homework. Know what the problems are. Then you can go to others and say, 'Join us and share in this success.'" This was more easily done in some cities than in others. In all cases, however, the bulk of this responsibility rested on the executive director.

The Expanding Role of the Executive Director "Networking has to be done by the executive director," said Mindy Bingham, Executive Director of the Girls Club of Santa Barbara. "Other staff can't network for power with the people who can say 'yes'."

The most effective executive directors began to stress the political aspect of their roles. They developed broad community contacts and joined professional and political leadership groups. They were perceived as peers by their own boards and by top officials of other agencies.

At the same time, they had to be in close touch with their own Clubs and be familiar with the daily delivery of services—its triumphs and frustrations. It was not surprising that the executive director set the climate for each Club. If she was aloof and uninvolved, the program muddled along. If her main interest was counseling, the program had an emphasis on counseling. If she stressed participatory decision-making, the Club's atmosphere was more open and involved girls at higher and higher levels of decision-making.

Nevertheless, given the pressures and financial benefits of the Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Project, even the most program-oriented executives relinquished much of the grind of daily program management. The JDPP money provided them with extra staff for these tasks, while the imperatives of the grant demanded that they emphasize the political aspect of their role. From this new perspective, they could better measure the weaknesses and the strengths of their own organizations in relation to other community agencies. They also gained a clearer vision of the potential that Girls Clubs have as the only organization in most communities that directly addresses the critical needs of girls on a daily basis. As one director noted, "We're the only thing going for girls around here. It's imperative that we use every ounce of clout we can muster. I think we can do a lot more now than we have in the past."

Redefining Board Roles Where board members understood and supported the goals of the Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Project, there was no question about continued support of programs for girls at risk. Where board members had entered JDPP reluctantly, an aloof attitude prevailed, one that seemed to challenge the executive director and the staff to "prove themselves and the worth of the program."

In some Clubs, it was difficult for the executive directors to get board members involved beyond attending general meetings. At other Clubs, board members were too involved in the daily details of the Club. "There is a thin line between responsibility and meddling," reasoned William Martin, board member in Omaha. "You have to give your chief executive the latitude to run the Club."

Some boards evolved during a time when no particular thought was given to their composition. As a result, such boards often lack talents in key areas. As a Club's increasing growth makes new demands on the board, the board's composition becomes important. "You need three kinds of people on a board," explained Mindy Bingham of Santa Barbara. "Resource people who are the technicians—an attorney, a school psychologist, a public accountant—people who can provide professional help free. Second, you need the power people, the ones you can ask and get 'yes' right away. People with the money and political contacts who can pick up the phone in the morning and get you into someone's office that afternoon. Finally, you need person-power, people who have the time and energy to do a lot of the nitty gritty work."

Although each Club and each community are different, there was a consensus about categories of board members. In forming a carefully constructed board at the relatively new Omaha Club, full representation from the community was sought. The Club looked for local business people, church leaders and parents of members to round out the board. In multi-ethnic communities, a fully representative board plays an essential role in establishing credibility for the Club in dealing with community problems and in identifying real needs.



Consolidating the Gains

The experience of the Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Project altered the seven participating Clubs' vision of what is needed for girls in the future and how Girls Clubs can address girls' needs. Staff and board members became familiar with the complex needs of girls who are at risk, and they learned that their Clubs could gear up in a short time to serve many of these girls. By the end of the three-year grant period, most Clubs felt the time had come "to consolidate their gains before expanding further." This meant many things, including stabilizing programs and staff. A basic issue was the need for more money.

The transfusion of money provided by the OJJDP/LEAA grant had propelled the Clubs to attain, in less than three years, goals that otherwise would have taken much longer to achieve. To maintain this momentum when the grant period ended, the Clubs had to reexamine their financial situations thoroughly. Money was needed to continue to upgrade staff salaries to competitive levels. Money was also needed to meet the rising costs of building maintenance and, in some cases, to substantially improve basic facilities. The little Club in Allentown, charming as it was, could scarcely serve one more girl.

Impressed with Girls Clubs' achievements in recent years, local United Ways sharply increased their allocation to the Clubs. In Chattanooga, United Fund money rose from \$48,000 in 1976 to \$141,000 in 1980. In Omaha, United Way increased its Girls Clubs funding by 64 percent in 1977, 32 percent in 1978 and 14 percent in 1979. In addition, executive directors, staff members and board members had become creative at pursuing grants from other federal, state and local sources, which were private as well as public. This was all necessary, but no one believed it was enough to match the Clubs' new ambitions.

"We need solid funding for programs," said Marian Vitagliano, Teen Director at the Lynn Girls Club. "Currently, the full-time staff are paid from three different sources. It makes the paperwork tremendous."

New Outlook on Funding Many Clubs have traditionally operated on a crisis basis. The end of each fiscal year produces a scramble for increasingly scarce funds.

"We can't afford management by crisis anymore," said Laurie Roberts, Board President of the Girls Club of Chattanooga. "We need to concentrate on future planning for girls."

Long-range financial planning for many Clubs means developing a substantial endowment as a secure base against fluctuating funding sources. In Omaha, Executive Director Mary Heng weighed the availability of future funds against projected needs and found, "Even if we stay where we are, with no new growth in programs, there will be a problem meeting our expenses."

In the present economic situation, Heng found government funding more likely to decline than increase and community funds from United Way and individual contributors too small to cover the gap. "We have to do something besides rely on traditional resources to keep up with growth costs and catch up with staff salaries," she explained. "I asked another agency for a model of a healthy financial statement and found that a large percentage of that statement was endowment."

Armed with this analysis, Heng presented the case to her board, which embarked on a fund-raising campaign to build a \$2.5 million endowment in three years. In addition, the Board Development Committee began investigating the potential of a sustaining membership drive to utilize the national community of professional women as a resource for annual contributions for operating expenses.

"It's much harder to get money for girls than for boys," explained Linda Bedwell, President of the Omaha Board. "There's no old-girl network. We must learn how to get women to give to girls on a regular basis."

The ability of Clubs to raise major funds differs according to each community. A diverse, civic-minded community like Omaha offers numerous possibilities. A poor city like Lynn is far more limited. Chattanooga, where the same few wealthy elite are repeatedly approached for contributions, presents another situation. In the final analysis, however, the key to a Club's financial potential depends on the talents and commitment of the members of its board.

A balanced and active board offers more than just needed talents for a Club's operations. It provides valuable links to important parts of the community that need to be made more aware of girls' needs. "We are such an infant agency," said Board President Linda Bedwell, "We need to increase our visibility and reputation and let people know what we're doing and why."

The potential is great. "It's so easy to drop by a corporation and talk about Girls Clubs," said one Birmingham board member. "Nothing is better than one-to-one, talking about Girls Clubs informally."

"Until recently, women have been shy about promoting what we do," said Eleanor Wiggington of Chattanooga. "If we're going to really serve the needs of girls, we have to get out and hustle. We have to maximize everything we do."

The Work Continues At the end of the three years, most Clubs felt they had made maximum use of the Juvenile Delinquency Prevention Project grant. All Clubs made substantive changes that measurably expanded their capacities to serve more girls who had greater needs. The grant gave the Clubs a new prominence in their communities and enlarged their ambitions.

Thoughtful board members and staff agree on the need to ask themselves regularly: What produces the best results? Are we reaching the girls who need help most? Is our approach productive over a long period of time? Is the quality of our programming on a par with other organizations? Does it insure continuing growth? Are staff and funding limitations causing us to lose sight of essential goals?

With these questions in mind the seven Girls Clubs have established a framework from which to address the problems of the girls they serve and to assess their own effectiveness. The work that lies ahead will be difficult. Problems with funding, with staff recruitment and training, with fostering community support—all will persist. Through their participation in the LEAA/JDPP grant, the seven Girls Clubs can approach the challenges ahead with a new measure of confidence and expertise.

Girls Clubs of America Delinquency
Prevention Project
Director: Martha D. Bernstein
Associate Director: Peggy Thomas

Seven Participating Girls Clubs:

Girls' Club of Allentown, Inc.
Executive Director: Loraine Niess

Girls' Club, Inc. of Birmingham
Executive Director: Nell Metz

Girls' Clubs of Chattanooga, Inc.
Executive Director: Elinor Wiggington

Girls' Club of Lynn, Inc.
Executive Director: Nancy Bartels

Girls' Club of Omaha
Executive Director: Mary Heng

Girls' Club of Santa Barbara, Inc.
Executive Director: Mindy Bingham

Worcester Girls' Club, Inc.
Executive Director: Marjorie Cutting



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