

Young people who are empowered to serve discover their own capacities for determining positive outcomes in their lives.

UPDATE

A new twist on an old adage: children raise the village

According to the proverbial “Jug/Mug” theory of education, teachers are large vessels of knowledge (jugs) whose job it is to fill students — the small, empty receptacles (mugs) — with everything that students need to know to survive and thrive in the world beyond public education. Students are viewed as inert objects that must be acted upon; educators are the active, dominant forces that succeed only if their wisdom is indeed successfully “transferred” from jug to mugs.

Often, communities address youth-related problems using an approach similar to the jug/mug theory. Whether addressing problems of truancy, crime, violence, drug abuse, gang activity, teen pregnancy or the myriad other issues associated with youth, adults often ask, “What are we to do with (or to) today’s young people?” Programs that result from such an approach often are imposed on youths and their families, attempting to make youths accountable for their misdeeds and perhaps even their misfortune without empowering these youths with the skills and experiences to become socially responsible citizens.

In the following essay, authors John P. Kretzmann and Paul H. Schmitz suggest that we reverse the components in a familiar adage and address children as valuable contributors to our communities, empowering them, in effect, to help “raise the village.” The authors’ thoughts provide valuable insights into the issue of youth community service. Their words also cause us to reconsider how we address youth who are outside of the educational mainstream. Providing opportunities to serve others and to design and

implement solutions to problems helps young people discover their own capacities for determining positive outcomes in their lives.

It takes a child to raise a whole village

Children and villages. Villages and children. In recent years, lots of people have been rethinking their relationships to each other. The cliched rendition, usually attributed to African origins and now almost a mantra, has obviously struck a responsive chord. It *does* take a whole village — not just parents, schools, or child-care and child-development professionals — to raise our kids. The invitation for a broader commitment to our young people is clearly welcome and long overdue.

But the cliché is incomplete at best. It still leaves a set of assumptions about young people that we believe are historically unprecedented and powerfully destructive. In the cliché, people (adults) in villages act to “raise” young people. Young folks are the objects of the action, never the subjects. They are passive and useless. They are defined as deficient — of knowledge, of skills, of any useful capacities — and relegated with their cohorts to the filling stations we call schools. The assumption is that, magically, at age 18 or 21, young people will emerge from their years of being filled, and re-enter the community as full and useful contributors.

The formula is a disaster. Not only has it produced a generation of young people who think of themselves as useless, but it also has isolated that generation from productive interaction with older generations. It has relegated more than a third of our citizens to inaction or worse and has deprived our youth of the experience necessary for fulfilling their roles as citizens and contributors to the community. Our villages suffer when we fail to empower all members of our society, but especially when we fail those who represent our nation’s future.

Clearly, as individuals and as communities, we need to re-examine how we view young people and their role in our society. Rather than passive vessels to be filled during the first 18 years of life, children can be key members of our community. Whether ‘A’ students or dropouts, all-star ath-

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letes or suburban skateboarders, young people can help raise our villages when they are seen as individuals with skills and capacities, with ideas and enthusiasm. For our villages to be whole, our young people must be valued.

Young people who contribute to raising our villages come in a range of ages —from young kids of six to young adults of 26. These are not young people who fit media stereotypes — they are anything but apathetic, uncaring, dumb, violent, and lost. They are, in fact, gifted, skilled, and resourceful. And they are ready to contribute their gifts to all of our communities.

Recently, a coalition of Wisconsin foundations, including The Johnson Foundation, convened focus groups of young people and adults who “serve” young people. Not surprisingly, the survey found that perceptions diverged. On one hand, the adults worried about all of the needs and problems that young people had and how adults could remedy them. The young folks, on the other hand, focused on their desire to contribute, to do more. They expressed strong yearning for purpose, for meaning, for ways to be useful to the wider community, especially in non-patronizing, intergenerational efforts. These values far outstripped their yearning for material things — the stereotype most often associated with youth desires.

There is a disconnect here between what adults perceive young people need and what young people really want. We have fallen into the habit of expecting too little of our young people when, all the while, they want to shake off pessimism and contribute their gifts and talents. Communities abound with opportunities for young people to contribute, but their participation is too often marginalized and tokenized. Young people have the gifts and talents to raise their villages. They lack only the confidence of their villages in them to do it.

What to do? Fortunately for all of us, young people themselves are taking the initiative to redefine their relationships with the rest of the village. In community after community, young people are reasserting their identity as subjects and actors, as people with a broad range of capacities and resources to contribute to the well-being of their villages.

Contrary to media stories that state again and again how

apathetic youth are, young people have been organizing themselves as contributors to our communities. They have started groups such as Public Allies, Youth on Board, the Youth Volunteer Corps, Campus Opportunity Outreach League, Funds for the Community’s Future, GreenCorps, City Year, Teach for America, *Who Cares* magazine, and many others — all national organizations run by young adults.

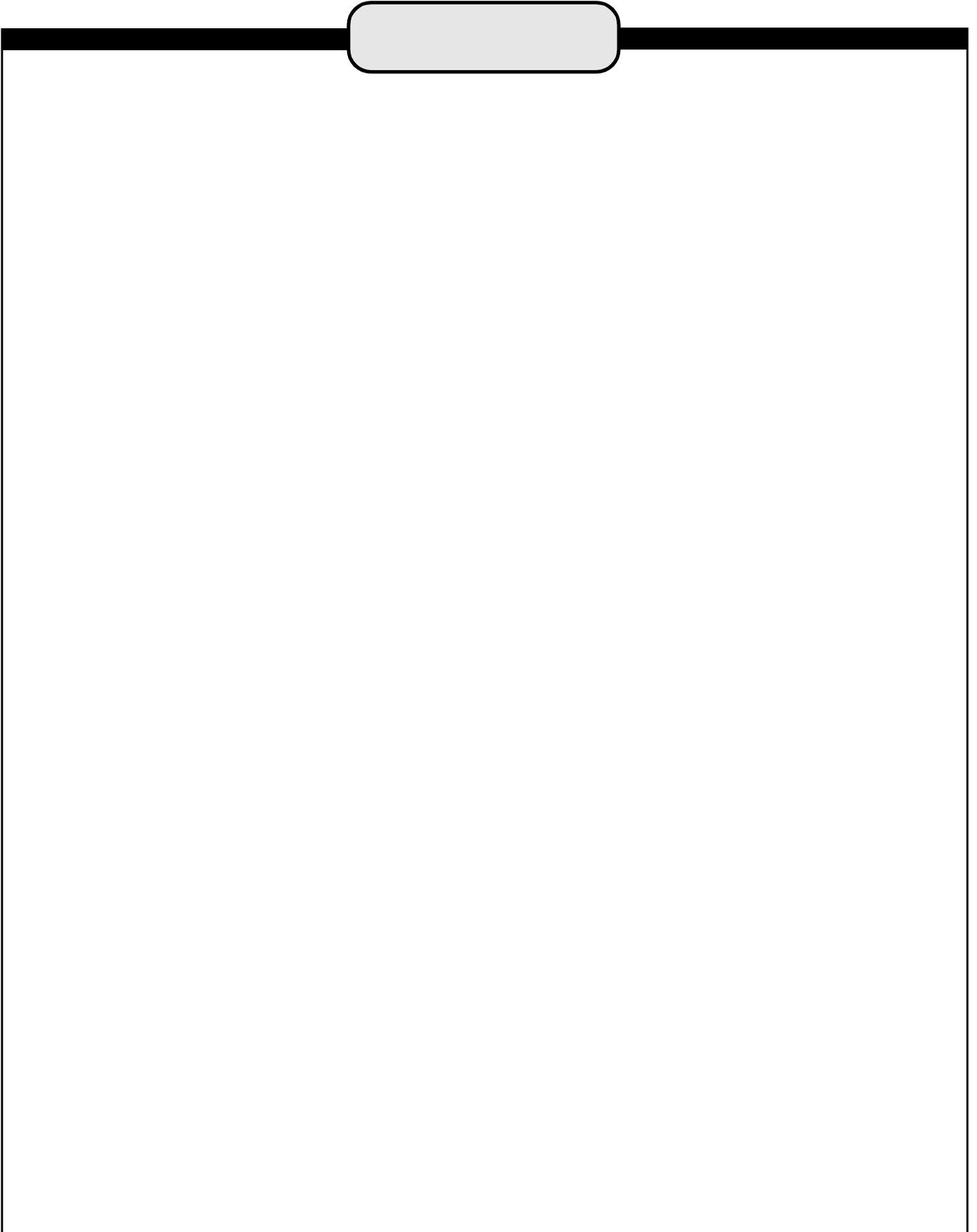
Public Allies, an organization founded at a Wingspread conference four years ago, places young leaders from diverse backgrounds, “Allies,” in community service apprenticeships in six cities throughout the United States. The Allies work full-time, four days a week taking on specific challenges with significant responsibilities at nonprofit organizations, schools, and government agencies. On the fifth day each week, the Allies come together for leadership and professional training and to design and implement team-service projects to improve

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the community. Public Allies empowers young people to empower others — to raise villages.

Here are sketches of four young people who have helped to raise their villages:

- Angel was released from a five-year prison sentence at the age of 21. He began reading while in prison and began college soon after his release. He also began volunteering at a local youth center that was surrounded by gang activity. He began building relationships with children in the neighborhood, showing them the choices they had and the consequences of their actions. Today, Angel is a part-time student who works with first-time juvenile offenders through a county government initiative, helping them to find their talents and to pursue them.
- Dan grew up in a well-to-do suburb and began attending a private college. During a summer break, he was struck by a news story about discrimination against kids with HIV. The next summer, he worked with a few friends to start a summer camp for HIV-infected and affected children. During the rest of the year, Dan served as a health educator at a Boys & Girls Club. Dan is currently working to start a new program to provide community service



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opportunities and leadership training for teenagers infected and affected by the HIV virus.

- Carmella was a recipient of multiple social services while growing up. One of them, the foster care system, placed her at a boarding school, which dropped her off at the Salvation Army at the age of 18. Homeless, and with no family, Carmella began volunteering at her homeless shelter, while finishing her high-school diploma. Carmella's courage and tenacity led her to become a board member of a grass-roots advocacy organization; to be the first woman selected for the city's midnight basketball league; and to be adopted by the volunteer director of a homeless advocacy group. As an Ally, Carmella organized a youth council in the housing development where she played basketball. The council suggested to city leaders ways in which the housing development could be improved for residents. The young people also created a video about their lives in the development. Carmella is now finishing college and continuing to work full-time with young people.
- Leif decided upon college graduation to contribute his skills and talents to his community. He was asked to create an economic development arm of a neighborhood group in one of the city's poorest neighborhoods. Leif began optimistically and in 10 months initiated a job placement program that helped 60 residents into the work force, created a thriving business association, and organized two neighborhood service days. For three months, he and a team of Public Allies identified neighborhood residents' capacities, and then mobilized more than 250 volunteers — most of them neighborhood residents — for the service days. These local people, with their children, came out to rehab homes, clean vacant lots, change storm windows and screens for the elderly, plant community gardens, and perform other neighborhood improvement tasks during neighborhood service days. Leif now works for Public Allies, leading a team of Allies working on economic and neighborhood development.

In each case, these young people contribute to the community by helping others — especially other young people — discover their capacities and contribute. But involving young people is not just a “good” thing for them, keeping them busy doing “good” things. These young people and those they touch are learning what it means to be members of a village, to be citizens. They are invigorating the life of this nation and creating a foundation of leadership that is essential for the future of our democracy.

These are not isolated stories. We know of hundreds of

young people like Angel, Dan, Carmella, and Leif. In fact, so many young people want to contribute that many facilitating organizations are hard-pressed to meet the demand.

We can meet the demand if we begin to change our relationships with our children. It is now incumbent upon every local community to reopen itself to the gifts of its young people.

In fact, some communities have begun by constructing “opportunity inventories,” extensive listings of all the ways in which young people already contribute and the additional opportunities awaiting them. As part of these inventories, young people are invited to the table and asked about opportunities they see to contribute their gifts and talents.

This is but one method of sending the message clearly and concretely to all of the young people in our villages: “Our village desperately *needs* you; without your contributions, we cannot be whole.”

* * *

Youth programs in action

Young people not only want to be involved in the life of their community, they *already are* involved, through many groups/organizations begun by young people. Following is a brief resource list of groups founded or run by youth.

City Year

11 Stillings Street
Boston, MA 02210
617/451-0699

City Year engages young people ages 17 to 23 years from diverse backgrounds to work in teams to provide paid community service for one year. In exchange these young people receive extensive civic and leadership training. City Year has more than 600 corps members in seven cities around the country.

Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative

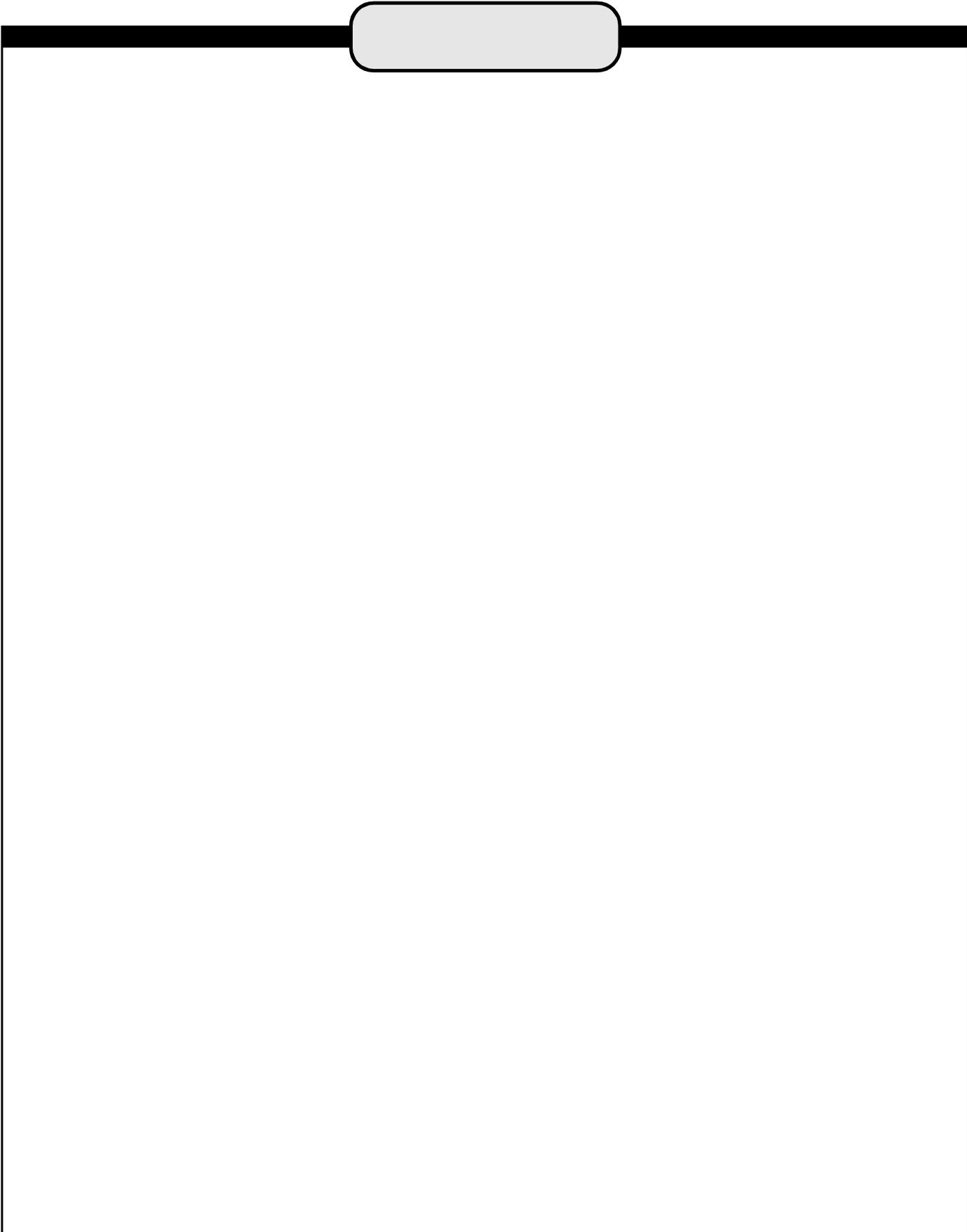
513 Dudley Street
Roxbury, MA 02119
617/442-9670

Through its youth group, called Nubian Roots, DSNI involves young people in community planning and development work.

Public Allies

1511 K Street NW
Washington, DC 20005
202/638-3300

Public Allies places young leaders from diverse backgrounds in community service apprenticeships in six cities



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across the United States. The young people work, taking on specific challenges with significant responsibilities at non-profit organizations, schools, and government agencies.

Strive Incorporated/Teen Forum

1737 N. Palmer, Suite 200
Milwaukee, WI 53202
414/374-3511

This organization involves high-school seniors who produce, anchor and report for a weekly TV news magazine on the local ABC affiliate. The organization also provides young writers with opportunities to edit sections and write for local newspapers, and it provides summer-long financial training workshops for teens.

Who Cares?

1511 K Street NW
Washington, DC 20005
202/638-3300

This magazine chronicles the youth-service movement and includes a resource directory of innovative youth-led and youth-involved programs around the country.

Youth as Resources

1700 K Street NW
Washington, DC 20005
202/466-6272

This program, which can be run by community organizations, foundation or coalitions, encourages youth involvement by awarding small grants to youth-run community projects. Proposals for the grants are reviewed by an advisory board comprised of both youth and adults.

Youth Enterprises Network

c/o Bethel New Life
367 N. Karlov
Chicago, IL 60624
312/826-5540

Youth Enterprises Network involves high-school students on the west side of Chicago in starting businesses and creating jobs in a community with high unemployment.

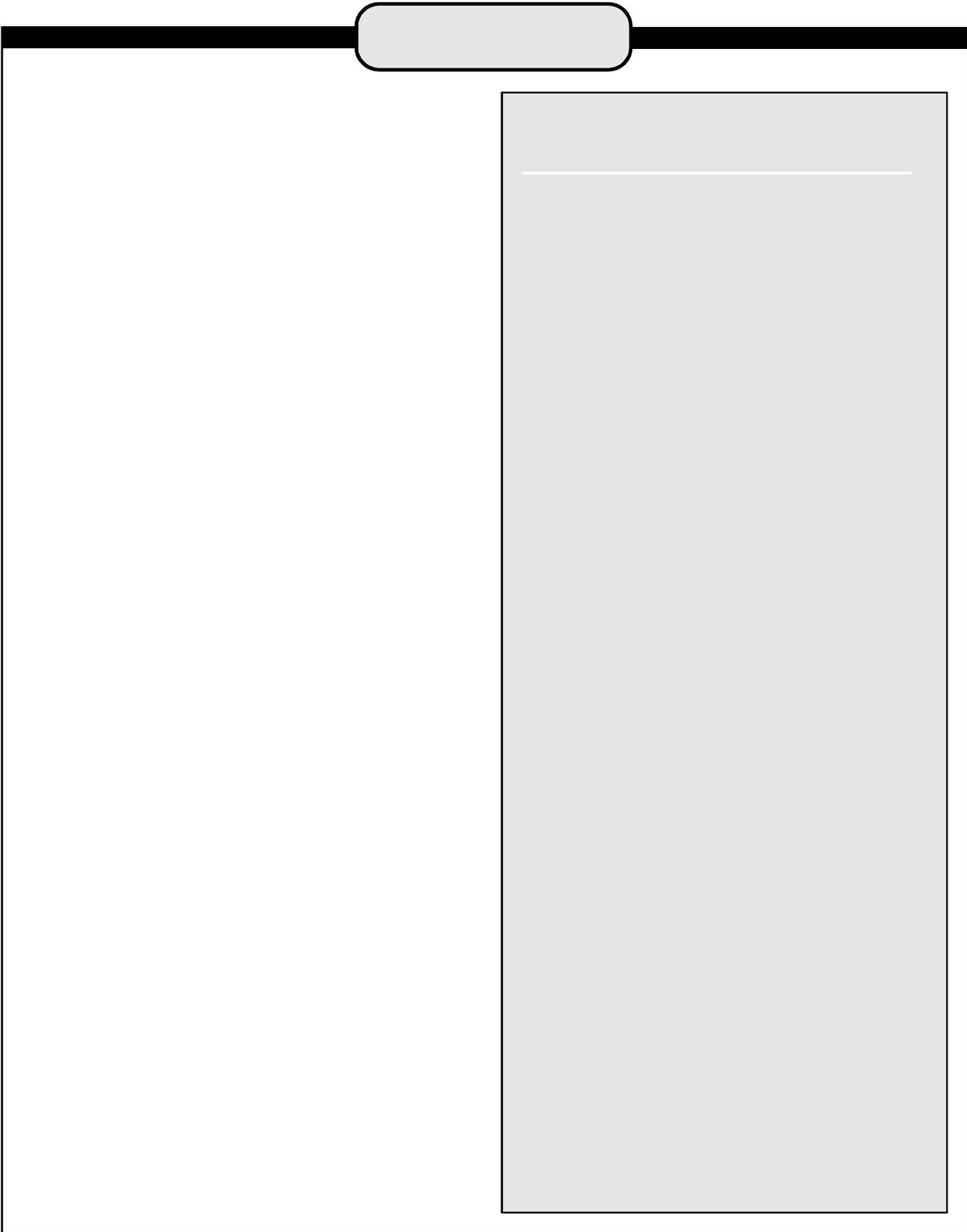
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“10 Commandments” for involving young people in community building

1. Always start with the gifts, talents, knowledge, and skills of young people — never with their needs and problems.
2. Always lift up the unique individual, never the category to which the young person belongs. It is “Frank, who sings so well” or “Maria, the great soccer player,” never the “at-risk youth” or the “pregnant teen.”
3. Share the conviction that: (a) Every community is filled with useful opportunities for young people to contribute to the community; and (b) There is no community institution or association that can't find a useful role for young people.
4. Try to distinguish between real community building work, and games or fakes — because young people know the difference.
5. Fight — in every way you can — age segregation. Work to overcome the isolation of young people.
6. Start to get away from the principle of aggregation of people by their emptiness. Don't put everyone who can't read together in the same room. It makes no sense.
7. Move as quickly as possible beyond youth “advisory boards” or councils, especially those boards with only one young person on them.
8. Cultivate many opportunities for young people to teach and to lead.
9. Reward and celebrate every creative effort, every contribution made by young people. Young people can help take the lead here.
10. In every way possible, amplify this message to young people: *We need you!* Our community cannot be strong and complete without you.

By John P. Kretzmann



STRATEGIES/PROGRAMS

Mat-Su Alternative: Successful school-to- work transitions

We have all heard of the northern lights, but these days perhaps some of that glow is reflected from the Matanuska-Susitna Valley north of Anchorage, where Mat-Su Alternative School (MSAS) is located in Wasilla, Alaska. Judged to be one of the top alternative schools in the nation, Mat-Su is a community partnership success story. The school has worked closely since its inception in 1988 with businesses and agencies to provide at-risk youth with the academic and vocational skills needed for them to transition successfully from school to work.

Students at MSAS must be 16 years old, behind their class on graduation and be a dropout from the previous semester. Five local high schools refer students to Mat-Su. Among the student body are teen parents, adjudicated youth, special education students and self-supporting students. Girls who are pregnant or who have babies can enroll at any age. According to principal Peter Burchell, "When you come to this school, childhood stops, adulthood starts."

Some would argue that a population such as that which Mat-Su serves does not want to "get its act together," that establishing a special school for such youth encourages truancy and failure. Those arguments fade in the face of the accomplishments of MSAS. Over 200 former dropouts have graduated from the school since the days when five students nobody else wanted moved into one end of a portable classroom in the Wasilla High School parking lot. In June, 1995, students and staff moved to a 20,000 square foot newly converted garage large enough to handle 200 students and featuring three integrated learning systems, use of the Internet and interactive television communication.

Mat-Su is a Tier I school for acceptance of graduates into the military. Graduates have gone on to colleges and vocational schools and have earned places on the Dean's List at the University of Alaska. Students continue their employment after graduation.

Honors and acclaim have come to both school and staff. Mat-Su has been chosen as one of five sites in the nation to take part in a three-year study to identify characteristics of successful alternative schools for adjudicated youth.

The school and community work together to help at-risk students begin adulthood. MSAS networks with 150 business owners to provide job sites. School staff and students often meet with such groups as the local Chamber of Commerce, Rotary, Lions, Moose and Elks to solicit volunteers and job placement support for the school. In an area with an unemployment rate of 17.9 percent, Mat-Su students have 100 percent job placement.

Fifty-nine local and state agencies provide such services as shelter, food, clothing, medical help, psychological help, job placement, utilities, career information and financial planning. The school maintains on site a food bank, clothing bank, a case manager for teen parents, a full-time nurse for all students, a toy check-out library and, since 1990, a day care center, which also serves as a lab for teen parents.

Classes are offered 12 months a year. The school is open from 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. daily. Student schedules are coordinated with their work schedules. Students may earn high school credits via computerized integrated learning systems, individualized studies, small classes and cooperative work experience. Unique requirements are successful completion of Life Skills/Parenting and World of Work curricula.

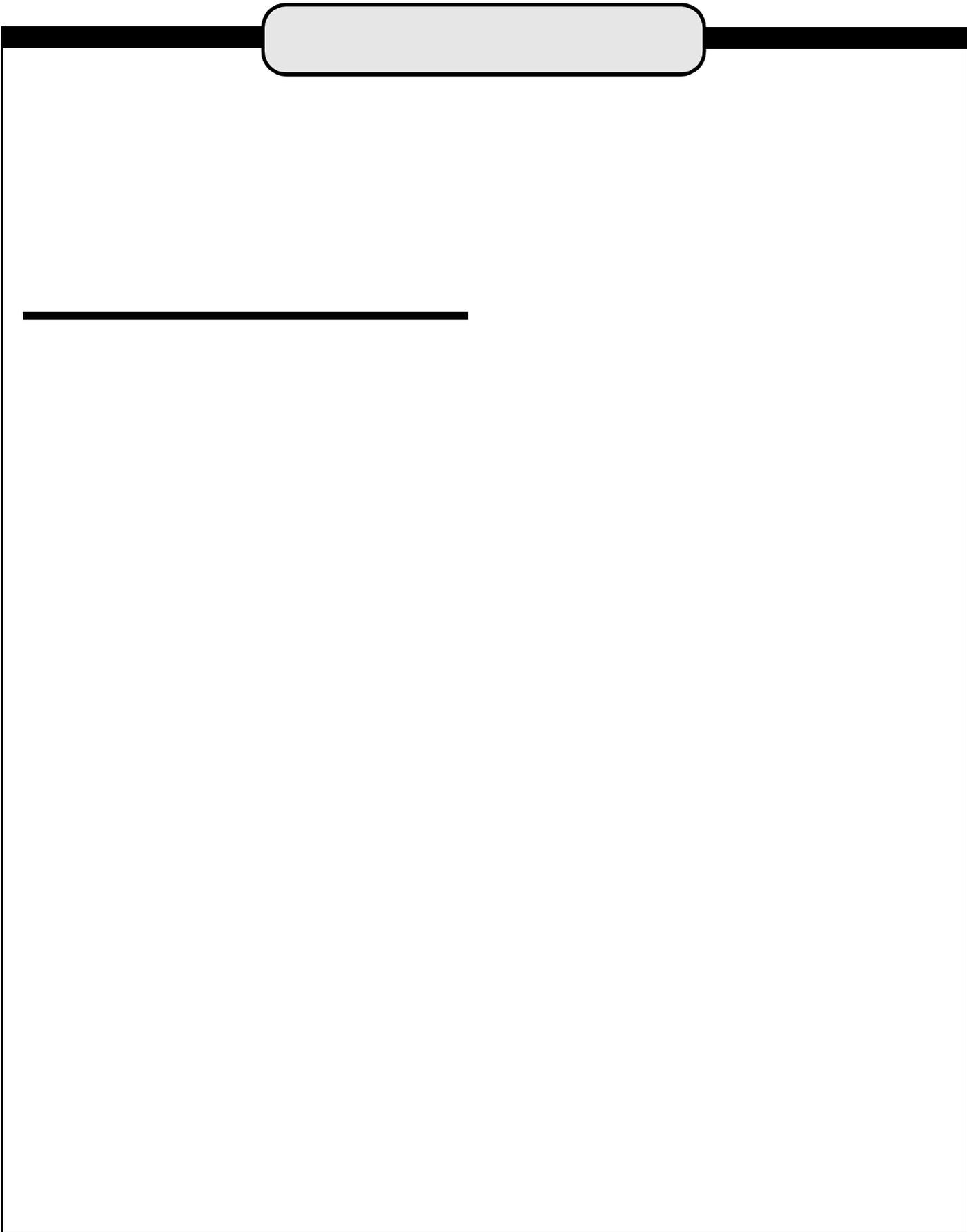
All students are required to complete district graduation requirements. In addition, they must complete Job Training Partnership Act pre-employment skills and work 15-20 hours a week on a job site. Students are assessed extensively using various interest and aptitude tests to help identify post-high school careers and opportunities.

Mat-Su's original 15-year plan is eight months ahead of schedule. A new program targeting at-risk middle school youth began in September 1995. Future plans are to build a community education center and to expand service to include troubled youth in grades K - 6, pre-schoolers and their families who are referred to Mat-Su for schooling and counseling because of abusive/dysfunctional conditions in their lives.

MSAS has effected an outreach effort through serving as an example and by sharing information. Twelve other districts have followed the MSAS model in starting alternative schools over the last six years. Burchell states, "Our motto is 'A school that works.' Our goal is to help all of those who want to help themselves."

One student heard about MSAS from friends and enrolled last January. He states, "The teachers here actually care, and they actually work closely with the students ... another thing at this school; it teaches you to work with others. In the real world, nobody can work alone."

Information about Mat-Su was supplied by principal Peter Burchell, Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District, 1775 W. Parks Hwy., Wasilla, AK 99654, 907/373-7775.



STRATEGIES/PROGRAMS

LACEY: Redefining success for students in distress

The Learning Alternative Center for Expelled Youth (LACEY) is a school for students who have been expelled from comprehensive schools in the Dallas Independent School District for committing serious violations of school policy or state law. LACEY allows a “U-turn” for students who have been going in the wrong direction and who have made unwise choices.

LACEY works collaboratively with other community organizations to provide social, psychological and educational services to expelled youth. Organizations/agencies involved in the planning and implementation of the program include the Office of the Governor, Dallas Crime Commission, Dallas Police Department, Dallas County Juvenile Department, Dallas Independent School District, Office of the Mayor, Texas Probation Commission, Texas Youth Commission, McKinney Job Corps and the Private Industry Council of Dallas.

At LACEY, a limited number of students from seventh grade to twelfth grade receive continued education and supervision during their expulsion period. When LACEY students finish their terms of expulsion, which could last a year for a weapons offense, they return to their neighborhood schools. Instruction is provided in the core academic areas, including math, science, language arts and social studies. Students are also introduced to a social-developmental curriculum to help them meet many of their psychosocial needs. Along with teaching basic courses, the staff at LACEY has experimented with parenting forums, etiquette seminars and drama productions.

One such drama production was presented in May 1994. Students, calling themselves the Second Chance Production Company, were given the opportunity to write and perform what the students called a “real-life drama.” The script evolved from the students’ own experiences and memories of life on the streets. Through this production, students were able to explore the issues of their personal lives and express their anger in a constructive forum.

Although students come to LACEY on the heels of committing an expellable offense, the majority of LACEY

students need a second chance at more than just academic achievement. Many do not have adequate supervision at home. Many are so accustomed to challenging authority that they do not know how to follow rules. Many have committed crimes outside of school that are much more severe than those for which they were expelled. More than one-third of the students have some family member who is or has been incarcerated. Many students who attend LACEY admittedly abuse drugs and alcohol and are active gang members. Most need constant, positive reinforcement because negative reinforcement no longer works for them.

LACEY has been described as a no-nonsense school — one in which a “tough love” philosophy prevails. Student attendance and performance are monitored daily by the staff. Each day, one class period is set aside for students to discuss their personal successes and deficiencies for the day. In addition to stressing academic achievement, the school emphasizes and evaluates students’ adaptation to and acceptance of daily social activities. Much of the school’s focus is on pro-social skills development, including learning to manage anger and resolve conflicts peacefully.

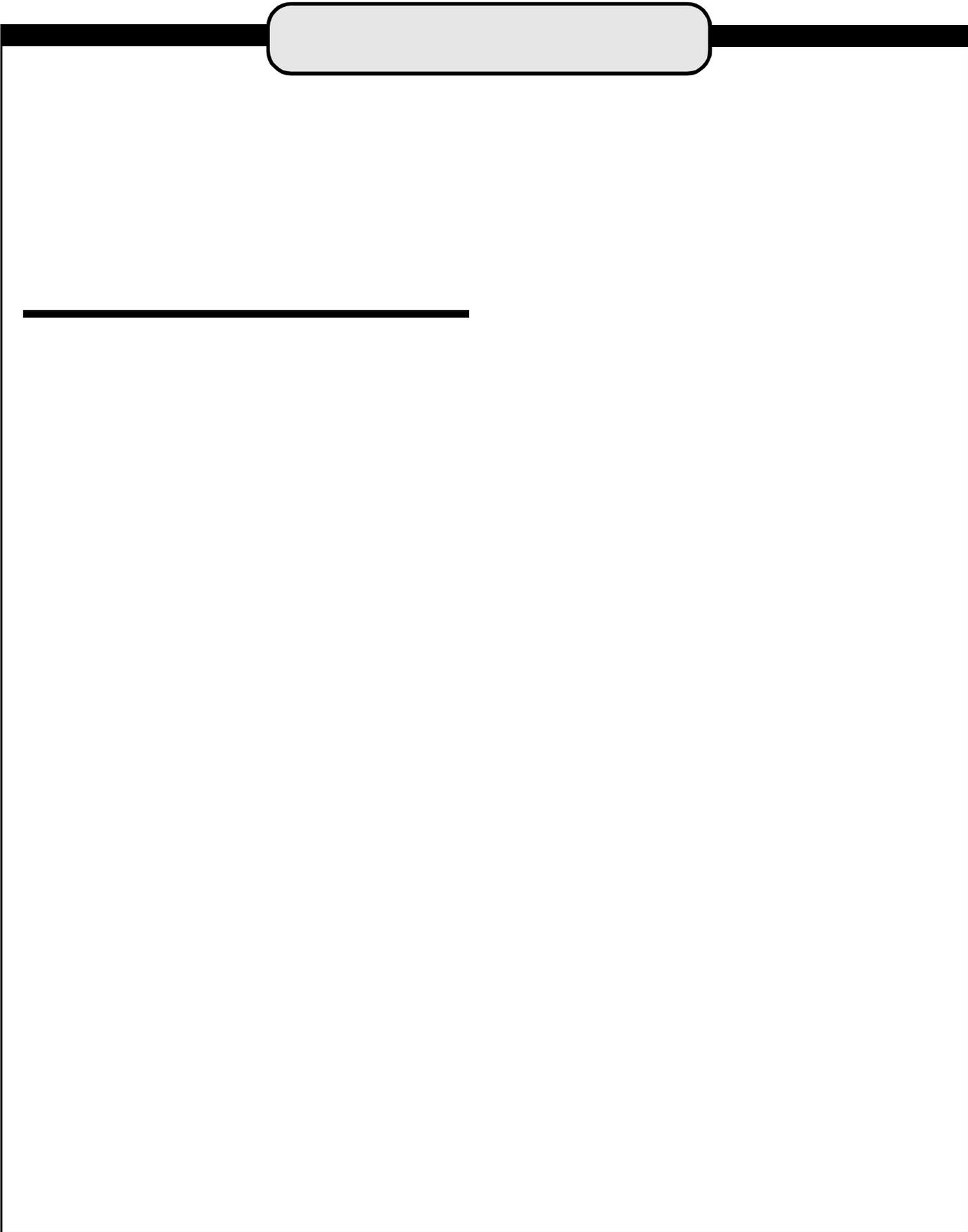
LACEY students must pass through metal detectors before entering school each day. They are not permitted to drive to the school. Dallas Area Rapid Transit passes are issued for morning transportation and the school district supplies afternoon transportation. A Dallas police officer and a state probation officer are assigned full time to the school.

Among LACEY goals and objectives are:

- to provide expelled students instruction in the core academic areas as well as in job-related skills;
- to increase parental involvement in student’s lives;
- to lead students to assume responsibility for their actions and decisions;
- to maintain an effective follow-up program to monitor each student’s transition from LACEY to his/her home school;
- to ensure that supportive community resources are available to students and their families; and
- to create within students a sense of responsibility for their community.

As Henry Ford once stated, “Failure is the opportunity to begin again more intelligently.” LACEY provides troubled students the opportunity to begin again in a compassionate and disciplined environment.

Information about the LACEY program was supplied by principal Richard Davis, Learning Alternative Center for Expelled Youth, 2910 South Beckley, Dallas, TX 75225, 214/943-9174.



STRATEGIES/PROGRAMS

Collective solutions for collective problems

All too often an expelled student has nothing to do during his/her enforced time away from school. This lack of structure actively discourages any motivation for productivity on the student's part. Lack of motivation, in turn, can lead to an "I-don't care" attitude that begins as adolescent bravado but ends as the self-protective armor of one who has become just another dropout statistic.

In Beloit, Wisconsin, most expelled students do not enroll in another school in a nearby school district. Consequently, while expelled students are no longer a threat to former schoolmates during school hours, these young persons with much spare time can become a very real problem to their "neighbors" within the community.

The Beloit Education Center addresses the difficulties that expulsion can bring to a community. Representatives from education, law enforcement, public and private social service organizations, business and religious groups as well as concerned individuals have formed a partnership to benefit both the community as a whole and individuals expelled from area schools. B.E.C. is designed to help expelled students remain productive, contributing members of society during the expulsion period.

For the student expelled for one semester, a year or, in a few cases, two years, the time can seem an eternity. Unresolved anger — towards teachers or school in general or towards the community — can make that student want to strike back. Although expulsion may be justified, a teenager needs firm adult guidance to help him/her face the consequences of the actions that led to expulsion. S/he needs some place to turn, if s/he wants help.

The B.E.C. is completely *voluntary* — attendance is not required and students are not automatically enrolled or "expected" after their expulsions. If a student chooses to attend B.E.C., s/he must sign a contract agreeing to abide by the rules of the center and to respect the directives of the case manager. A minimum of two counseling sessions and 20 hours of community service must be completed (and verified) before any educational instruction takes place.

If an expelled student chooses the B.E.C. option, s/he is

eligible to receive the following:

- counseling support services for help with personal or social problems;
- placement in a support group that addresses specific areas of difficulty, i.e., substance abuse or anger control;
- tutoring in school subjects; and
- confidential health counseling regarding alcohol or other drug use, sexually transmitted diseases or AIDS.

Other benefits include daily interaction with positive adult role models, social interaction with other students and a place to "hang out" that is supervised by adults.

The case manager is the key to the success of the B.E.C. S/he meets with each expelled person to explain the program and offerings. For those who decide to enroll, the case manager assesses individual needs and designs a unique, personalized program. Community agencies and organizations provide for these interpersonal needs through various types of counseling and support groups, job and skills assessments, psychological assessments, probation supervision and related self-help programming. It is the case manager who contacts each agency and arranges for the type and times of service delivery. The case manager may even help tutor the student if scheduling and time permit.

It is important to note that B.E.C. is not a program of the School District of Beloit. Rather it is a collaborative and unified attempt to develop a program from the heart of the community that addresses the expelled student's functioning within his/her community during the time that s/he is out of school. Those who promote the B.E.C. concept affirm both the school district's right and duty to expel students who endanger the general welfare of others in the educational setting.

B.E.C. is completely volunteer-run. Members of the community commit themselves to tutoring and counseling young people with the proverbial third strike against them. Some volunteers even take groups from B.E.C. on field trips to broaden their perspectives about what it means to be a part of a community. Youths visit places such as the police department and City Hall and learn about the positive aspects of these places.

Through the Beloit Education Center, the community has demonstrated a collective willingness to rehabilitate youth whose actions have placed them outside the educational mainstream. B.E.C. gives expelled students one more chance or, more accurately, one last chance.

Information about B.E.C. was supplied by Captain Charles A. Tubbs, Beloit Police Department, 608/364-6800, and David Luebke, school psychologist, and Fran Fruzen, AODA supervisor, Beloit Public Schools, 608/364-6000.



NSSC REPORT

Research on risk and protective factors suggests prevention principles

As school districts and communities collaborate to prevent crime, violence and substance abuse on school campuses, the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention in its *Guide for Implementing the Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders* offers a list of seven principles that should govern prevention planning and programming.

- Prevention efforts must address known risk factors for crime, violence and substance abuse.
- Prevention efforts must clearly connect program activities with risk reduction.
- Prevention programs should communicate consistent, healthy beliefs and clear standards and encourage bonding.
- Risk reduction activities should address risks at or before the time they become predictive of later problems.
- Interventions should reach individuals and communities exposed to multiple risk factors.
- Since multiple risks in multiple domains predict serious crime, violence and substance abuse, a range of coordinated prevention approaches should be used that address

key risk factors across the domains of community, family, school, individual and peer group.

- Prevention programs must reach and be accepted by the diverse racial, cultural and socioeconomic groups in a community.

OJJDP's *Guide for Implementing the Comprehensive Strategy for Serious, Violent, and Chronic Juvenile Offenders* is available by contacting Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse, P.O. Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20849-6000; 800/638-8736.

A call for information

NSSC is in the process of planning future programs in regions near Boston, Detroit, Atlanta and Los Angeles. School-community collaborative partnerships that focus on truancy prevention or truancy reduction, dropout prevention or dropout retrieval, suspended and/or expelled students, adjudicated youth re-entering the school system after incarceration, or students fearful of attending school are of particular interest to event planners. Fax or mail information about your successful program to National School Safety Center, 4165 Thousand Oaks Blvd., Suite 290, Westlake Village, CA 91362; FAX 805/373-9277.

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