

Well-trained and well-supervised community mentors who listen and offer friendship, regular contact and resources can make a difference.

School Safety

UPDATE

Pairing juvenile offenders with volunteer advocates

Two hundred twenty cases, sixteen crowded Detroit courtrooms — it's a normal day at Wayne County Probate Court Juvenile Division. The halls of this center for juvenile justice are filled with juvenile respondents, their families and defense attorneys. Had the 10- to 17-year-olds summoned this day all shown up, the courthouse might well be filled beyond capacity. Some of the youth here will be adjudicated today; others will be back another day for trial or disposition. All are missing another day from school, yet they do not really seem to mind. It is not surprising; most are doing poorly in school anyway. It would appear that school performance goes hand in hand with juvenile delinquency.

Twelve-year-old John is one whose destiny will be determined today. His appearance in court was guaranteed; he has been locked up in a county detention facility since his arrest 17 days ago. He has formally been accused of a number of offenses, including motor vehicle felony, unlawful driving away, school truancy and incorrigibility. John is escorted into the courtroom by a deputy sheriff. He wears a deceptive mask of confident indifference as he takes a seat to the left of his court-appointed defense attorney. His mother, with a look of hopelessness, makes her way from a seat in the back of the courtroom, instructed to sit to the right of her son's attorney.

There is no acknowledgment of presence between John and his mother. The lack of eye contact is immediately obvious. One can only guess at the magnitude of difficulties that have resulted from the charges against him. Regardless of this hearing's outcome, the problems facing John and his family will most likely not be resolved today by the court.

Five minutes earlier, John met his lawyer for the first time. She advised him to accept the prosecutor's plea offer: admitting guilt to the offense of unlawful driving away in exchange for dropping the other charges and a recommendation of a sentence to probation. John and his mother agreed. The attorney communicates to the referee presiding over this pre-trial hearing that John will accept the plea offer.

The referee delivers a rather long discourse on defendant rights. John states for the record that he understands, though his comprehension seems feigned. His demeanor reveals that he really has little or no clue about what is occurring. John is sworn in and takes the witness stand. He is instructed to give his explanation of stealing the car. After John's guilt has been established for the record, the referee allows him to resume sitting with his attorney.

Appropriately, the referee admonishes John for his offense, scolds him for not going to school and explains to him the definition of "incorrigible," telling John to stay out of further trouble. To reinforce his admonition, the referee renders the customary sentence of probation for a term to be determined by a probation officer (usually about six months). Statistics support the probability that this will not be John's last visit to juvenile court.

To this point, John's story is similar to many repeated daily in Detroit's juvenile court, and the proceedings in this court are replicated in such courts in hundreds of major cities nationwide. However, because John has been selected by the referee as one of the kids who might benefit from a mentoring experience, he is given the additional probation condition of participation in Detroit's Partners Against Crime (PAC) one-to-one mentoring program. With this seemingly small addition to the court order, John's life direction may have been altered. Through compliance, John has a good chance to lead a life devoid of repeated trips into the labyrinth constituting the juvenile and criminal justice systems.

PAC's mentoring concept is one solution to the huge problem of repeat juvenile crime that plagues urban centers across the nation. The PAC program takes an adjudicated young offender and matches him/her with a community volunteer who has been screened and trained. The PAC volunteer mentors a youth a minimum of one hour per week. The mentor's

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role is to support the youth in his/her various endeavors, not to try explicitly to change the youth's behavior or character. Over a period of time and with persistence, a close friendship can emerge based on mutual esteem. Herein lies the key to this program's success: it is through friendship that desired attitudinal changes can occur.

Young offenders sentenced to participate are first affected by the program through efforts of a PAC courtroom volunteer. These volunteers are specially trained to meet with the parent and child at the time of sentencing. In John's case, the volunteer has been an observer in the courtroom in which John was sentenced. It is now this person's responsibility to help John and his mother begin the PAC journey. Initially, uncertainty and suspicion on the parent's part can sometimes lead to the child's failure to participate. Therefore, the PAC volunteer's goal is to approach the parent and child immediately after the hearing to help them formulate a positive opinion of PAC.

Like most direct service agencies, PAC enrollment includes completing paperwork, usually done during intake. For the program to be successful, it is essential that a distinction be made at intake between the generally negative court experience and the upcoming mentoring experience. Today the volunteer explains the program and overcomes initial resistance.

A little over a week later, John, his mother and four younger siblings arrive at the PAC office; they are over two hours late. They are greeted cheerfully, and the necessary paperwork is completed in an empathetic, conversational manner. Forty-five minutes later, any concern John's mother had relating to his involvement in the program has been dispelled, and John actually seems eager to get on with whatever he has imagined to be "meeting his mentor."

Fletcher, John's selected mentor, has been chosen primarily because his residence is near John's home. Even though Fletcher is experiencing normal mentor pre-match anxiety, he exhibits a confidence that is a byproduct of thorough training. After reviewing the PAC court file, he is now ready to be introduced to John and his mother. It has been a week and a day since John was adjudicated, and he is still weeks away from direct court involvement via a meeting with his probation officer. Today's introduction to Fletcher is going to stand

out as the most significant in John's juvenile justice system experience, and perhaps in his life.

Fletcher's training has taught him to immediately establish an alliance with the parent. PAC experience has shown that many of the PAC mentoring relationships that fail do so in part because the parent chooses to make the child unavailable. In fact, most of this first meeting will focus not on John, but on his family. Fletcher further shifts focus away from the court encounter while making it clear that John should be at home and ready for their next scheduled meeting.

Fletcher is a member of a PAC chapter that was established at his church — a satellite PAC program. Though the

chapter operates under PAC guidelines, it remains autonomous, with unique methods of supporting PAC-trained mentors and their matches. Some of the on-going meetings between mentors and mentees will blend into activities already existing within the chapter. Fletcher and the other mentors within this chapter have undergone thorough screening, which includes a criminal

history check and completion of PAC's training series for justice system mentors.

All PAC volunteers inherently possess the number one PAC mentor requirement, the ability to become a friend. It is, however, through PAC training that the volunteers become well-versed in the five characteristics PAC has determined to be pillars for successful justice system mentors. The degree to which mentors possess or learn these characteristics and successfully implement them relates directly to their degree of mentoring proficiency.

The central and keystone pillar is friendship. Volunteer mentors build friendships during the weekly meetings. Often just sitting and talking with a juvenile for a long period of time is difficult. Building a friendship with a young person almost always needs to include an activity: visiting each other at a PAC chapter; going for a walk; attending movies or sports events; window-shopping; playing a game; or having a soft drink and a hamburger. When mentors show that they care, that they are willing to give freely of their experience and that they accept their mentees "as they are," friendship is inevitable.

The second pillar is that successful mentors meet regu-

The Partners Against Crime program (PAC) was established in 1991 by Volunteers in Prevention, Probation and Prison, Inc. (VIP³). VIP³ encourages and supports a nationwide network of community-based volunteer programs operating within the criminal justice system. In addition to providing service to the court and citizens of Detroit, operating a volunteer program enables VIP³ to remain closely aligned with the programs and the needs of volunteer programs it seeks to foster and support. PAC and VIP³ share administrative offices in Detroit. For more information, contact the PAC office at 163 Madison Ave., Suite 120, Detroit, MI 48226; 313/964-1110.

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larly with their mentees. It has been said that good intentions are no substitute for good results. All volunteers enter PAC with expectations of good things that will come out of their match to a juvenile offender, but without the one-to-one contact, there will be little or no effect. Through necessity, most people rely heavily on the telephone to communicate, even with close friends and family. It is doubtful, though, that close personal mentoring friendships have ever resulted from anything other than meeting face-to-face with consistency and continuity.

The third pillar is to listen. Listen attentively indefinitely, and then listen some more is a reasonable approach for PAC mentors. The most frequent need among young people today is for someone willing to listen to them. Each mentee needs to know that someone outside of his/her own immediate family or peer group really cares. PAC volunteers begin establishing helping friendships by being good listeners.

The fourth pillar is tapping resources. The ability of juvenile offenders to fit into normal community life and to grow and mature into productive citizens is often due to mentors who help smooth the way into a complex society for juveniles and their families. Volunteers often possess experience and knowledge of networks that they appropriately make available to their mentees. Once needs are identified, volunteers look into all possible areas that might benefit clients by meeting those needs. Volunteers often meet very basic needs, such as providing food for mentees and their families. Finding resources can mean getting a child involved in a recreation program, making arrangements for a tutor or helping mentees advance through the maze of applying for college financial aid. Persistent mentors almost always find a way of filling mentees' needs through personal or community resources.

The last pillar is reporting. Certainly one of the least popular tasks among PAC volunteers is that of reporting. Often volunteers initially perceive no relation between paperwork and successful mentoring. Unquestionably, the object of mentoring is time spent directly with the mentee: listening, becoming a friend, helping to solve problems and finding resources when needed. So why is it important to complete a written report each month? The reports are essential to relieving each mentee of his/her most compelling problem — being under court jurisdiction. Volunteers can accurately report to the supervising probation officer, the referee or the judge that the probationer is in fact complying with the court's condition related to PAC. Without such accountability, the court has no official way of verifying each match's compliance. To be truly successful, PAC volunteers must spend the time required each month to complete reports.

After six weeks of meetings, Fletcher is finally able to initiate discussion with John about his school attendance and performance. At first it is evident that John does not want to

communicate on the subject, but Fletcher gently presses. What he finds out is that other kids, his mother and evidently John, too, think that John is just a "dumb kid." Fletcher knows this is not true.

Knowing that the mother's interest has been virtually nonexistent, Fletcher writes personal letters to each of John's teachers. In the letters he explains that he is a court-appointed mentor who is going to take a personal interest in John's future scholastic achievements. He includes a copy of the authorization to release information form, signed by John's mother at the PAC intake.

At their next meeting, John is beaming. He announces with some pride that each of his teachers has mentioned receiving a letter from his friend Fletcher. In subsequent contact with the teachers and the school, Fletcher finds that John's attendance has improved dramatically. Although his academic performance still has ample room for improvement, John has begun to exhibit interest in his schoolwork. Fletcher's sincere display of attention and John's perception of that interest has resulted in a huge boost in John's self-esteem. The friendship between John and Fletcher has fortuitously strengthened their bond. Perhaps John won't be going back to juvenile court after all.

Mentoring is touted as one of the most cost-effective solutions to juvenile crime and recidivism. In 1995, Wayne State University conducted an impact evaluation of the Partners Against Crime program. The evaluation findings indicate that recidivism was 38 percent lower for PAC clients compared to the control group and more than 50 percent lower for PAC clients than for probationers who refused to participate in PAC.¹

The results of the PAC program for Detroit continue to be impressive. Young boys and girls who might otherwise see a probation officer once or twice during probation now see a mentor an average of 50 hours during the same time period. Kids that appeared to be caught in the juvenile justice system spiral have new hope. They are improving in school, they are better able to cope with their family situations, and they are staying out of trouble. Individuals from the community taking the time to demonstrate that they truly care makes the difference.

Endnotes

1. Martin, D., A. Kusow and A. Thomson, "Impact Evaluation of Partners Against Crime (PAC) in Detroit, Michigan," (Detroit: Wayne State University, Center for Urban Studies, College of Urban, Labor and Metropolitan Affairs, 1995): 21.

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‘Youth Advocates’ offers wraparound services to youth

“Strength-based” and “wraparound services” are precepts that guide Youth Advocate Programs, Inc. (YAP) as it provides a mix of highly individualized in-home and community-based services to pre-delinquent, delinquent, child welfare and mental health populations in five states: New York, New Jersey, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas and most recently, Washington, D.C.

Wraparound intervention evolved from the de-institutionalization movement begun more than 20 years ago. The YAP, Inc. model reflects the influence of that movement and the experience of its leaders, notably Thomas L. Jeffers, founder and president of the nonprofit parent firm headquartered in Harrisburg, Penn. Wraparound intervention in effect shifts power from agencies to families and communities. Thus even juveniles labeled as hard-core offenders can be safely and effectively served outside of correctional facilities with the cooperation of the juvenile court, probation officials and YAP.

Key elements of wraparound intervention are: strength-based assessments, individualized service plans, community linkages and flexible funds for ancillary goods and services. As an alternative to residential placement, wraparound is a feasible means of reducing overcrowding in governmental facilities and shifting from residential/institutional budget line items to community budget line items. For example, In Orange County, New York, the wraparound process began with a pilot program to return a group of 10 youth from costly residential placements to their homes and communities. Working with the youth and their families, YAP saved the county approximately \$600,000 during the first year.

YAP hires as advocates working men and women who live in the same communities as their youthful “clients”; advocates may even be related to the family. Each advocate’s background is screened, and as part of the hiring process, potential advocates are assessed as to interests that may help match them with a given youth. YAP trains its part- and full-time advocates to work from whatever strengths a youth or family may have, exercising their extensive training in developing strength-based techniques and pulling together family members and friends as a support system for the youth. For

example, an advocate may encourage a mother to describe what her son or daughter is good at — as well as areas in which s/he needs help.

Tarrant County Advocate Program

Since its inception in 1975, YAP has been providing community-based alternatives to residential placement. The Youth Advocate Support Center in Harrisburg, Penn., is co-directed by Thomas Jeffers and Paul DeMuro, an independent youth services consultant with an extensive background in juvenile justice and child welfare. The Support Center assembles teams of seasoned human service professionals for each project.

Two of the advocates programs operate in Tarrant County, Texas. Both programs serve young people from two Fort Worth neighborhoods plagued by gangs, drugs and crime. According to Jeffers, “‘Taking back’ our streets is inextricably linked with ‘taking back’ our children. Juvenile offenders are not created in a vacuum, nor are they likely to be ‘cured’ in the contrived environments of correctional facilities.”

TCAP

“It’s hard to learn when you don’t feel safe, and when you’re so behind in school [an average of two to three years], it’s easier to ‘act out’ than to focus on the business of learning,” reports Greg Harris, director of the Tarrant County Advocate Program (TCAP), which serves the east and south areas of Fort Worth. A former TCAP youth advocate before becoming director, Harris was born and reared in Stop Six on Fort Worth’s east side. He understands the community and sees its positive aspects, along with its trouble spots.

TCAP serves an area whose population is predominantly African American, secondarily Hispanic and features a smattering of Anglo clients. The office is across the street from Texas Wesleyan University. Churches play an important part in the lives of area residents, even among the youth congregating on street corners.

Mildred White, area resident and mother of a 17-year-old, enters the office to briefly touch base with Harris. She facilitates “Colors,” TCAP’s parent support social action program. She evidences a ‘gangbusters’ smile and hearty chuckles as she describes some of her encounters with neighborhood youth whom she regularly befriends and counsels. “A lot of what I do is not my business, but I just do it anyway,” she confesses, eager to direct the energies of youngsters just hanging out. An ex-Marine, she served 20 years in the military, many of them as an M.P., but her heart and her work are in the Poly/Southside area.

In the community and of the community, White typifies the kinds of community advocates employed by TCAP; she knows firsthand that parents are tired and fed up with seeing that their children can’t find part-time jobs and thereby stay off the

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streets and be meaningfully occupied after school hours. "It's hard to step away from friends," White acknowledges, "but I always tell a kid when he turns his life around, 'You're a real hero.'"

TCAP's Supportive Work Program helps youth assigned to TCAP to find jobs, such as assisting in retirement homes and working in bicycle repair shops. The program also helps youth find transitional work with potential for long-term employment.

Harris lists the characteristics and tasks typically required of advocates:

- *Nonjudgmental attitude*: Be open to the youngster and to really hearing about the individual's strengths as well as his/her weaknesses.
- *Confidence in the community*: Be familiar with the youth's neighborhood, its strengths and pluses.
- *Determination to help, to work cooperatively to solve problems*: Some kids don't want attention, but persistence is the key to effective helping. ("If a kid's acting up in school, the advocate will sit in classes all day if necessary to ensure that the kid remains on task.")
- *Ability to empower*: Advocates are not lawyers, but advocates — informing parents of the rights they and their children have, training them to use community services, providing needed encouragement at critical times, helping to build self-esteem and confidence.

"I see potential in these kids; some of these guys are smarter than I ever wanted to be," Harris concludes. "These kids grow on you; they're like little brothers and sisters, and it's their little victories that keep you going."

TCAP-North

Belinda Gonzalez Hampton, a veteran 12-year probation officer, is the full-time director of TCAP-North, located on North Main Street on Fort Worth's historic North Side, former site of the stockyards and two competing cattle industry meat-processing giants. Assisted by Chuck Phillips, a 30-hour per week program coordinator and part-time student, and Connie Vasquez, a full-time administrative manager, Hampton supervises between 15 and 20 advocates, each a degreed professional who has undergone extensive background checks and advocate training. Each typically is paid about \$7 per hour and works part-time as an advocate, assigned to three to four youth and living in the same area, one of nine areas that broadly

constitute the north and west portions of this city of approximately 450,000.

As of July 15, 1996, youth referrals by age ranged from age 10 through 17, with 15- and 16-year-olds constituting roughly half of the clients served: 59 percent Hispanic; 32 percent African-American; and 18 percent Anglo-American. Most clients are boys.

Sometimes facing resistance from their assigned youth, advocates typically then merely begin working with the parents and siblings, starting small, gaining trust and gradually letting the approach and program sell itself, involving the youth in his/her court-mandated probation assignment.

However, TCAP-North has experienced many success stories. For example, Sebastian Munoz (pictured left with his boss Gus Garcia) is a former gang member turned college student. Advocates at TCAP-North and supportive local employers such as Garcia have stuck with him during his efforts to turn his life around. In addition, eight youths this year have raised their grades, completed their GEDs and gained employment: Gabriel was hired permanently by Supported Work Em-

ployer Pueblo Real Estate; Ismael will serve as an interpreter/clerk in a law office, and he plans to begin junior college in the fall. Johnathon raised his grades with his advocate's help, as did Jabar and Adrian, the latter making the honor roll. Furthermore, Johnathon's mother and Jabar's father each were helped by advocates respectively to pass an exam to prepare for work and to find a job.

"We go in humbly as 'customer service reps,' building on the kid's strengths," Hampton states. "Yet we're not missionaries; each kid is responsible for his/her own 'harvest.' We work with each kid, person-to-person, recognizing the differences in people's lives. Basically the approach is to look the kid in the eye and be straight with him/her: 'I can't want this more than you.'"

For information about Youth Advocate Programs, Inc., please contact Thomas Jeffers, 2007 North Third Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102; phone 717/232-7580; fax 717/233-2879. Greg Harris can be reached at Tarrant County Advocate Program, 2826 East Rosedale, Fort Worth, TX 76104; phone 817/535-2588; fax 817/536-4473. Belinda Gonzalez Hampton can be contacted at Tarrant County Advocate Program-North, 2235 N. Main Street Fort Worth, TX 76101; phone 817/625-4185; fax 817/625-4187.

Ranked first in Florida, PACE serves at-risk girls

PACE (Practical, Academic, and Cultural Education) Center for Girls, Inc., a nonprofit, nonresidential, gender-specific community- and state-based program, provides comprehensive education and therapeutic prevention and intervention services to troubled adolescent girls. To improve the quality of life for at-risk girls, PACE enables young women to complete their educations, build self-esteem and develop personal, social and family relationship skills. An emphasis on responsible decision-making additionally fosters productive citizenship.

PACE is the first and only prevention and early intervention program of its kind in the state of Florida that offers a continuum of services designed to meet the special needs of at-risk girls between the ages of 12 and 18.

With a board of five community volunteers dedicated to making changes in the juvenile justice system, PACE was established as an alternative to institutionalization or incarceration. In 1985 with only \$100 in a bank account and a donated room at a local church in Jacksonville, PACE opened its doors to 10 girls referred by the courts. Based on the success of the Jacksonville center and at the request of juvenile court judges, PACE was replicated in Bradenton, Orlando, Fort Lauderdale, Miami, Tallahassee and Pensacola.

In fiscal years 1994 and 1995, PACE received funding from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention at the U.S. Department of Justice to expand its level of services, develop and implement an intensive aftercare program, and develop a statewide comprehensive staff training and quality assurance component. New programs in Volusia-Flagler counties and Belle Glade opened in August 1996. Centers in the Florida Keys and Pinellas County opened in January of 1997. PACE's success has prompted the governor and the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice to support comprehensive program expansion. They have committed to funding PACE centers in all 15 Florida juvenile justice districts by 1998.

Although education is at the core of the PACE program, its strength is its holistic approach. This is demonstrated by the organization's attention to life management skills, counseling, community service, aftercare and placement services.

The program is tailored to meet individual needs and is open eight hours a day with staff and counselors on call 24 hours a day, seven days a week. PACE serves approximately 1,620 girls and their extended family members annually through its day program and aftercare services. There is no charge for the students to attend the centers.

The PACE program addresses the problems encountered by young women who have been labeled as status offenders, dependents or juvenile delinquents. PACE targets teen-age girls who for various reasons have experienced minimal success in the public school system. All of the girls enrolled in PACE have either dropped out or have been identified as potential school dropouts. The majority are victims of severely dysfunctional families and as a result often suffer from emotional disturbances. These young women have in common histories of abuse, neglect and poverty.

Abuse is one of the most common problems faced by the young women who attend PACE. A profile of over 1,500 students enrolled in the program included these disturbing statistics:

- 60 percent have been sexually and/or physically abused;
- 65 percent report alcohol and drug use;
- 61 percent are status offenders (runaways, truants, ungovernables);
- 75 percent live at poverty levels; and
- 45 percent live with a single head of household.

Students are referred to PACE by juvenile court judges, personnel and counselors from Florida's Department of Education, Department of Juvenile Justice and Department of Children and Families, mental health treatment programs, concerned parents and self-referrals.

Because of myriad social and emotional issues, these students experience extreme difficulty adjusting to a regular school environment. Despite the multiplicity of problems, these disenfranchised girls respond positively in a caring, therapeutic environment. The needs addressed by the program include increasing academic functioning and improving self-esteem. Young women enrolled in PACE have made remarkable improvements in academics — including better attendance, grades and motivation — thus reducing their chances of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system.

Preparing troubled girls to live happy, successful adult lives is one of the main goals of PACE. Its purpose is to intervene and prevent high school dropouts, juvenile delinquency, teen pregnancy, drug and alcohol addiction, and welfare dependency. To achieve this end, PACE provides the following services:

Education: Education is the core of the program and the key to bringing many of the girls out of broken homes, poverty and low self-esteem. PACE is a fully accredited high school

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program that includes remedial studies, high school credit and college preparation courses. The staff/student ratio is 1-10. While enrolled in the program, each girl must pursue the completion of a high school diploma. Even after graduation, PACE encourages the girls to continue their education by offering a scholarship fund to assist with the expenses of higher education.

Life management: The curriculum also features a life skills component that includes career development, independent living skills training, cultural appreciation, health care, physical education, and art and drama classes designed to educate, motivate and build self-esteem. SMARTGIRLS (Students Making a Right Turn), a gender-sensitive program designed specifically for the needs of PACE students, consists of four modules on healthy choices:

- *SMARTTALK* teaches the importance of using correct language in varying situations;
- *Inclusive Cultural Education (ICE)* focuses on the appreciation of cultural differences;
- *Nine to Five on Flex-Time* provides career awareness and teaches the necessary steps to secure employment; and
- *Save Our Sisters (SOS)* centers around healthy lifestyle choices regarding sexual activity, nutrition and drugs.

Counseling: PACE provides individual, group and family counseling to all students. Often the success of each girl is dependent upon the involvement of her family. Although the staff strives to improve the commitment of families to their daughters, it is not always possible. Some of the students are living in out-of-home placements or live with families that are very dysfunctional. Program outcomes show that early intervention by PACE helps to keep girls' family units intact. Each student is assigned a primary advisor who is on call 24 hours a day to deal with any crisis. Close communications and availability of staff to students are key in defusing many teen-age crisis situations.

Community Service: In addition to academics and counseling, PACE students are required to participate in at least two different community service projects while enrolled in the program. The projects were initially a way to repay the community for its support; however, the projects proved to be much more important. The enhancement of self-esteem and the promotion of self-worth are integrally related to the pride and involvement in one's community. Community service projects allow the girls a unique opportunity to see themselves as capable individuals who are able contribute positively to

their society. Suddenly they are needed, and their efforts are appreciated and loved by others. Additionally the girls are exposed to people who are less fortunate than themselves, which causes them to spend less time dwelling on their own problems. Some of the community projects include serving lunch to the elderly, working with disabled and abused children, helping with abandoned animals and working in homeless shelters.

Aftercare/Placement: PACE has developed a comprehensive three-year placement and aftercare evaluation component for all students regardless of whether they have successfully completed the daily program. Contacts are made 30, 60, 90 and 180 days after leaving PACE and every six months thereafter to ensure that the girls continue with their education and employment.

Although the average length of stay in the program is six months, the program is based upon the individual's needs, thus length of stay may vary. Girls are eligible for "graduation" after they have successfully completed their individual treatment plans. These plans typically include the completion of two community service projects, maintenance of a 92 percent attendance rate, demonstration of improved academic functioning by receiving a high school diploma or advancing a minimum of one grade level and re-enrolling in their regional school, and the completion of the life management courses.

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A recent statewide evaluation gave PACE the highest quality rating of all Florida Department of Juvenile Justice programs. The department's comprehensive program quality assurance review examined 490 juvenile justice agencies that provide services to juvenile offenders. PACE Centers for Girls, Inc. was rated No. 1 in the state for the second year in a row. PACE received the most "superior" rating of all types of services. Additionally, each local PACE center was rated No. 1 in its local juvenile justice district. Peer reviewers of both state and federal juvenile justice programs have indicated that PACE is the most consistently successful program funded by Florida's Department of Juvenile Justice.

For more information, contact state director LaWanda Ravoira, DPA, PACE Center for Girls, 100 North Laura St., Jacksonville, FL 32202; phone 904/358-0555; fax 904/358-0660; e-mail brough@jaxnet.com. Visit PACE/Jacksonville's Web site on the Internet at <http://users.southeast.net/~brough/pace.html>.

NSSC REPORT

Two new resources made available by OJJDP

Reaching Out to Youth Out of the Education Mainstream and *Truancy: First Step to a Lifetime of Problems* are the first of a series of Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Bulletins focusing on strategies in the Youth Out of the Education Mainstream (YOEM) initiative. YOEM is a joint effort of the OJJDP and the Safe and Drug-Free Schools Program, U.S. Department of Education, to address the needs of youth who attend school irregularly because they are afraid or intimidated, truant, suspended or expelled, school dropouts, or in need of help transitioning back into mainstream schools from juvenile detention and correctional settings. (NSSC is partner in the YOEM Initiative.)

This nation cannot afford to lose the potential of any of its people. The long-term financial and social costs associated with school failure cannot go unheeded. *Reaching Out to Youth Out of the Education Mainstream* describes the initiative aimed at reducing the number of juveniles who leave school prematurely and who are at risk of delinquency because they no longer attend school. The YOEM initiative seeks to raise public awareness of the problem and of the need

for programs to help at-risk youth continue their education and become contributing members of society.

YOEM fosters a new way of doing business — the business of educating, enforcing the law, providing social services and supports, and even of being a parent. The present system often fragments services to children and families or burdens schools with the task of remedying social ills. YOEM will help communities work together more effectively and efficiently to address these issues. It is designed to empower local community partnerships with ideas and strategies that have shown promise.

Classroom absentee rates in our cities are as high as 30 percent. Challenged by this problem's mounting social and economic burden, communities are fighting back. *Truancy: First Step to a Lifetime of Problems* describes seven promising community programs that are reducing truancy and juvenile delinquency by enlisting and coordinating a broad array of local resources.

The complete text of both *Reaching Out to Youth Out of the Education Mainstream* and *Truancy: First Step to a Lifetime of Problems* are available on-line by accessing the OJJDP home page at <http://www.ncjrs.org/ojjhome.htm> or by contacting the Juvenile Justice Clearinghouse, P.O. Box 6000, Rockville, MD 20849-6000, 1-800/638-8736.

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