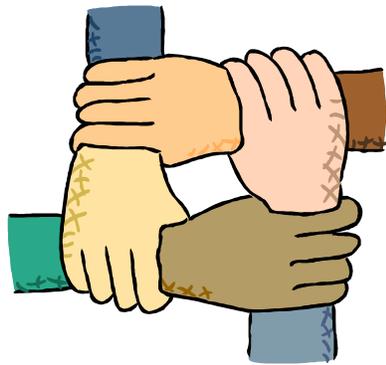




COMMUNITY CASE STUDIES

SKORNICKA SEMINAR FOR COMMUNITIES
TEAMING UP ON YOUTH VIOLENCE



MAY 3-4, 2002



LA FOLLETTE SCHOOL OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN—MADISON



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Program Overview

Dennis Dresang

Youth violence in various forms challenge communities and individuals throughout Wisconsin. Youth violence includes both assaults on others as well as self-destructive behavior and suicide. In most Wisconsin communities, alcohol and other drug abuse is the most common form of youth violence.

Some violence is associated with gangs. Some of the gangs that operate in the state are part of corporate organizations headquartered in Chicago and Los Angeles. Others are ethnically based or are independent groups of anti-social young people unique to a particular community.

Young people engage in violent behavior for a variety of reasons. For some, it is not even a conscious decision, but rather simply following friends, neighbors, and relatives. In most communities in our state, boredom is the most common reason that young people join gangs and/or abuse drugs and alcohol. For some, risky behavior and gangs offer an opportunity for belonging, excitement, and employment, albeit in ways that involve dangerous and illegal activities.

Since the mid-1990s, police and school officials have acted promptly and harshly with youth gangs. “Zero tolerance” policies have been relatively effective in eliminating graffiti, signs, colors, and other manifestations of gangs. Young people seem to approach forming or joining gangs less frivolously. Corporate gangs are less visible, but remain active in trafficking drugs. In contrast, alcohol and drug abuse among young people is getting significantly worse than it had been even a few years ago.

Dealing with the causes and effects of youth violence requires the resources and cooperation of a number of actors in the community who are usually pursuing separate and distinct objectives. However, governance is fragmented between school districts, municipalities, police departments, family service agencies, recreation programs, churches, and businesses. Among these, there is no obvious single entity that is responsible for the issues of youth violence.

To enhance the abilities of communities to meet the challenges of youth violence, the La Follette School of Public Affairs at the University of Wisconsin–Madison has provided a program known as “Teaming Up on Youth Violence.”

History of the Program

The Wisconsin Legislature established the Robert M. La Follette School of Public Affairs in 1984 with a multifaceted mission—to engage in instruction, research, and outreach. The School fulfills this mission by offering a master’s degree in public policy; by encouraging scholarly research on numerous issues that have public policy implications; and by offering numerous enrichment and training opportunities to policymakers at all levels of government. The School’s Center for State, Local, and Tribal Governance has contributed to that commitment by establishing an annual program geared toward assisting Wisconsin communities in addressing the issue of gangs and youth violence.

The program on youth violence is the centerpiece of the Skornicka Seminars at La Follette, initiated with support from Joel Skornicka to improve local governance in the state. Joel Skornicka is a former mayor of Madison and assistant to UW chancellors.

The seminar is a forum in which community leaders can come together, learn about the latest developments in the field, share ideas and experiences, and develop action steps to improve their approach toward prevention and deterrence of gang activity and youth violence. Since the program's inception in 1994, 33 communities from throughout the state have accepted the invitation to participate in the program. In 2002 an additional five—Baraboo, the Ho-Chunk Nation, Metcalfe Park in Milwaukee, New Berlin and Viroqua—are participating.

Purpose of Case Studies

The case studies here were written to share the experiences of communities and to prepare participants in the program to become engaged in problem-solving discussions. In the past, attending communities have been invited to the conference without significant prior contact from La Follette. Often, community leaders would meet for the first time at the conference and were confronted with issues of which they were previously unaware. While productive in helping to establish the linkages necessary to develop holistic community approaches, the La Follette School felt that improvements could be made to prepare participants better.

Because of the work of students in a graduate seminar at La Follette, beginning in 1999, seminar participants now have the benefit of case studies completed on their respective communities. Students worked in teams to identify the current state of community gang and youth violence problems, to analyze root causes of those problems, and to outline the existing community responses and resources.

Students interviewed a cross-section of community leaders seeking their perception of the problems, the existing community responses to those problems, and areas in need of further attention. Interviewees included school principals, police officers, nonprofit leaders, community businesspersons, social workers and religious leaders, among others. Discussions with young people were important to get a sense of their views of opportunities and issues in their communities. Research also included the examination of relevant documents and news accounts.

It is important to reiterate that the case studies are to inform the community of observations made by impartial investigators reporting the results of interviews and research. It is not meant to judge community work on the problem, only to provide the group with a common base for analysis, further probing, and development of action steps. The challenge for program participants is to use one another to address the general issues outlined in the case study, clarify their validity, and develop action steps to improve the community approach to gangs and youth violence.

Each community is, of course, unique. Each case study reflects the richness and uniqueness of the communities. We do not follow a common outline or way of presenting the material. This way, the specifics of the nature of youth violence issues and the character of each community can be clear. The analyses of the communities are, however, informed by some common, basic concepts: suppression, prevention, and intervention.

Community Programs: Suppression, Prevention and Intervention

Suppression refers to efforts to end existing violence or other anti-social behavior. The most visible and obvious example of suppression is police work. This is activity that is sophisticated, skilled, and professional. The La Follette program on youth violence does not focus on suppression, but instead works primarily on prevention and intervention. This is a choice that reflects our understanding of how La Follette is, and is not, best able to contribute to local governance efforts,

and is in no way intended to diminish the importance of suppression. The effective apprehension of criminals is essential for safety in a community and to promote personal responsibility among individuals.

Prevention programs include those providing general services and opportunities that meet the needs that young people might otherwise fill through involvement in gangs and violence. Prevention in large part is about an environment that is safe, healthy, and stimulating for everyone, whether or not they might be inclined to engage in anti-social or self-destructive behaviors. The general accessibility of prevention programs can frustrate those who would like to focus on those most at risk rather than others who probably would not join a gang or be destructive. The dilemma, of course, is that it is not always clear who is really at risk. Profiles of individuals who might be at risk are far from perfect. Some of the most notable instances of violent, anti-social individuals come from intact, educated, and relatively affluent families. Despite the frustration sometimes associated with judging the results of prevention programs, they are valuable for those times when they actually have diverted a particular person from illegal and unhealthy activity. They are also valuable for their general contribution to health and safety in a community.

A key benefit of intervention programs is that they are clearly targeted to individuals who need assistance. An intervention program is for a victim or perpetrator of violence, someone apprehended for drug trafficking, an individual who failed in a suicide attempt, or a girl who is pregnant. The challenge is to understand the factors that led to the trouble and to find attractive and effective alternatives, but unlike prevention programs, here there is no guessing about who needs the program.

Communities need a combination of suppression, prevention, and intervention programs. A balanced approach is a mixed approach, and the mix needs to be community specific. A given community might, for example, establish or expand a prevention program that gets as many youth as possible into sports and community service activities as arenas for meeting needs for peer relationships, personal growth, and alternatives to “boredom.” Intervention programs like alternative schools, mentoring, and counseling then might target those who demonstrate that they cannot or will not be reached by prevention programs. An arrest may identify someone who needs intervention services. Suppression and intervention are sometimes interactive in attempts to help some individuals.

The case studies included in this collection offer initial assessments of community prevention and intervention efforts. Discussion of the prevention-intervention mix, in light of the issues facing a particular community, may be a useful beginning toward the design of ways in which the challenges of youth violence might be addressed.

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Milwaukee's Metcalfe Park: It Takes a Community to Build a Village

Larry Dulek, La Verne Shelton, and Erik Tempelis

In February 2002, our team set out to learn about Metcalfe Park. We quickly got a lesson in what life in Metcalfe Park can be like for youth. Hoping to make a connection with school administrators at Washington High School, our team arrived and found the school in emotional disarray because of the murder, the night before, of sixteen-year old student Joseph A. "Dink" Johnson. He had been killed after a highly publicized basketball game between Washington High School and Vincent High School. Reportedly, the motive was retaliation--after a minor traffic incident. School officials had restored a semblance of security and order on the school grounds. But, intense horror and grief lay just below the surface.

Johnson was an African American teenager; and male African American teenagers in Milwaukee have the highest mortality of any demographic group. According to the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel, he was also "a son, a boyfriend, and a father." Though family and friends mourned and asked why, such incidents are all too frequent in inner city Milwaukee. Gang violence has also occurred more recently. During the last week of March, for example, authorities arrested sixteen members of the Ghetto Boys, an alleged drug-dealing operation that has been connected to turf war killings on Milwaukee's north side for the last decade.

I. Area Profile

General Appearance. The Metcalfe Park neighborhood, located in northwest Milwaukee, is roughly bounded by Locust Street on the north, 27th Street on the east, Washington Park and W. Brown Street on the south, and 38th Street on the west. Statistics noted are from the Strategic Plan published by the Metcalfe Park Residents Association (MPRA). MPRA is the coordinating agency for the Neighborhood Strategic Planning Area 8 (NSP Area 8).

In the early 1990s it was designated an Enterprise Zone by the federal government, which means that it is supposed to be "development friendly." But according to Larry Moore of MPRA, properties still tend to be well below city code standards. He also reported that development in the area came to a standstill in 1993, largely because of local political battles.

A significant proportion of the housing is less than 40 years old, while many residences have been built in the last 10 years. Largely because most owners of the properties do not live in them and because properties tend to be better maintained if owners live in their own homes, much of the housing appears to be run down.

Open spaces appear frequently where older housing has been torn down. The open spaces are not landscaped nor are there plans afoot to make them so. Many shops on a major east-west street, North Avenue, are boarded and unoccupied.

Demographics. Before the "urban renewal" programs of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the area was populated mostly by people of German Jewish descent. Currently, however, 89.9 percent of the population is African American, and the remainder is a mixture (proportions unknown) of Latinos, Asian Americans, and whites.

The population of the neighborhood now approaches 5,000 residents, about half of those being youth under 18. With a youth population of about 52 percent of the total population, this statistic is markedly different from the city average of 27 percent youth. Moreover, the percentage of population under 35 is 78.3 percent of the total adult population--again a profile that is different from Milwaukee at large.

Economics. The high proportion of youth in the population is in itself likely to skew income statistics. With a median household income of approximately \$14,962, with per capita income at about \$3,106, Metcalfe Park is, according to Moore, "the poorest neighborhood in Milwaukee."

Community. Racial imbalance and poverty would not, in themselves, predict a lack of community or a sense of physical danger since, as late as the mid-twentieth century, poor communities of African Americans were often extremely close-knit and experienced less violent crime than they currently do. What has changed is that the community is increasingly transient: About 60 percent of the people move each year. Such a pattern hinders the building of close ties among neighbors. According to the police officers we interviewed, adult residents now seldom interact in positive ways with each other. Further, they are not organized to make requests for their share of city resources.

Other factors that work against community vitality include:

- A 73 percent decrease in high school graduation rates from 1990 to 1999; now only 34 percent of residents have completed high school. This means that most residents of Metcalfe Park do not have the skills to obtain legitimate work that will support them.
- Although crimes of property damage and theft have decreased steadily since the early 1990s, crimes of serious violence have risen during the past five years. In the summer of 2001, a rash of drug-related homicides occurred. Such patterns of violence have created a climate of fear in the area.
- Most industrial employers south of Keefe Avenue have closed their facilities. The unemployment rate is greater than 14 percent. This and substandard education contribute to the transience rate as residents move in and out of insecure, low wage employment and default on rent payments.
- With very few commercial establishments in the neighborhood, residents tend to spend what money they have elsewhere, although Jewel Osco has recently opened a new, large grocery store and shopping center at 35th and North Avenue. Those residents able to maintain a reasonable standard of living are not able to reinvest in their neighborhood and may, because of this, seek to leave it, as it becomes less and less desirable. School Board representative Charlene Hardin reports that the area north of North Avenue used to be "the good area" aspired to by African American families. Now that area, most of our study site, is generally in decline.

II. Violence Patterns

- The people we interviewed unanimously expressed the belief that, though under-age alcohol use is an issue in Metcalfe Park, the abuse of street drugs is very prominent. Further, the crime resulting from use and sale of controlled or illegal substances is a major issue. Almost all gang activity and violent crime in Metcalfe Park is directly connected to drug trafficking. Also, most violent crime in the area is perpetrated by youth or young adults, rather than by older adults. Many older African American males are in Wisconsin jails and prisons.
- According to the district police officers we interviewed, a youth gang problem in the traditional sense does not exist. Typical symbols of gang allegiance are not found; and loyalties to drug dealers vary so widely that when a youth is in a drug ring, another family member might be in a different drug ring. Drug dealers create small local gangs, such as the Ghetto Boys referred to above. Killing occurs when these dealers dispute each other's turf. According to Gary Graika of the South Side Neighborhood Center, before 1995, the pattern of gang activity in Metcalfe Park was more similar to what it still is in South Milwaukee, with regional or national gangs engaged in wars and "tit for tat" violence. The major gang among African Americans was at that time the Black Gangster Disciples, a national gang that has since split into three gangs-Black Disciples, Gangster Disciples, and Black Gangsters. Most of the local members of these gangs have "matured out" or have been incarcerated.
- In addition to the longer-standing Ghetto Boys, the notable local drug-dealing gangs, according to Graika, are the Murder Mob, which emerged last year-and, allegedly, accounted for fifteen murders last summer-and Brothers of the Struggle, which surfaced in 1998.
- Though the north side gangs tend to be mono racial, their activities do not appear to be racially motivated. The feature of gangs that makes long-term prevention of violence most difficult is that gangs are a commercial venture. The "ante" is high, and violence reportedly erupts (as in the Washington High School incident) for trivial, interpersonal reasons.

III A. Needs of Youth

Because of conversations with our sources, we infer that basic needs of youth in Metcalfe Park are not different from those of youth in other neighborhoods. Youth in Metcalfe Park need a sense of safety and security, a sense of belonging and connection to people they care about, self-esteem and a sense of self-efficacy, and the hope of actualizing a calling or role that contributes significantly to the well-being of the groups (family, gang, clan, or community) with which they are affiliated.

Our sources have generally agreed that these needs would be best realized by

- a stable family of origin that can serve as a positive model for the families they themselves will produce,
- a decent home in a safe and attractive neighborhood in whose safety and attractiveness they want to invest,

- the chance for a good education in schools where they feel welcomed by teachers and other students and feel respected by teachers, administrators, and other school employees,
- safe and welcoming places to go after school and incentives to go to the places that are available,
- training in citizenship and positive role models among older youth and adults,
- and hope for a future after high school and an opportunity to train for a career that will make them employable at a sufficient salary or wage to support themselves adequately.

The high school students we interviewed at Mary Ryan Boys and Girls Clubs agreed that a safe place of their own was essential. They argued that if safe, attractive centers are not available, kids might resort to the streets as a place to hang out. Then, they will be at risk of committing crimes or being victims of crimes..

Our teen contacts also agreed that hope could often be fostered by having positive experiences out of the Milwaukee area. Such experiences often enable kids to get "out of the box" of failure that their neighborhoods present to them, according to one student. School programs that offer such opportunities enhance their own potential for fulfilling student needs.

Though some progress has been made in recent years, many of the basic needs of youth in Metcalfe Park are not met. Further, the lack of positive adult role models results in a moral deprivation.

III B. Needs of Families

Parental support is essential to the upbringing of children. Milwaukee Public School Board member Charlene Hardin and others have noted that the materialism that is extreme and rampant in the United States makes this support difficult in many communities: Both parents often feel they must work to attain the "required" standard of living, and they become, effectively, absentee parents who have little time to guide, support, love, and interact with their offspring. In Metcalfe Park, these obstacles to providing a supportive family are exacerbated by poverty and additional forms of moral deprivation.

Economic stability and a decent home in a safe neighborhood are needs of families that are not satisfied in Metcalfe Park. Wisconsin Works (W-2) may have created a sense of economic independence for a very small number and a sense of self-efficacy and responsibility that makes crime unnecessary, but the majority of families in Metcalfe Park still tend to subsist at incomes close to or below the poverty line. Most residents are unable to afford adequate housing. Over 90 percent of homes are investment-owned rental properties with absentee landlords. Most families that have prospered economically have left the community for a more stable and affluent residential community.

Adequate health and dental care is also often not accessible to residents of Metcalfe Park, according to those with whom we spoke. The adult population is undereducated, in comparison with the population of metropolitan Milwaukee as a whole. To subsist, Metcalfe Park residents often resort to questionable or even illegal entrepreneurial activities, ranging from trading on the local black market for goods, to prostitution, to dealing drugs. Being "on paper" or having a criminal history is a factor that makes what originally might have been an adequate education less adequate. Poor education detracts from a parent's ability to obtain and keep employment. In addi-

tion, as Charlene Hardin testifies, inadequate education and substandard employment can lead to parents being viewed as negative models by their children. Although some adults do create a positive image for their kids, others implicitly advise children to "do as I say, not as I do," only to be surprised that children quickly recognize the double standard and do as they do and not as they say.

These cycles of deprivation can be replaced by a cycle of independence, if resources are better used, according to Hardin. Larry Moore resonates with Hardin here. He points to the cycle of independence:

Live in a good house => live in a good neighborhood => go to a good school =>
get a good education => get a good job => live in a good house

Such a cycle may be sustainable, but only once a family is securely within it, Moore says.

III C. Schools

In several ways, Metcalfe Park's educational institutions have both succeeded and failed in fulfilling their mission of educating community children.

Communities such as Metcalfe Park, which consists mainly of African American residents, remain frustrated that Wisconsin continues to have the worst African American graduation rate in the nation. In addition, several of our sources cited a report estimating a 40 percent dropout rate in the Milwaukee Public School System. Truancy is high, with one particular school approaching a student absentee rate of 80 percent. To be sure, these recorded estimates may be misleadingly high because a large percentage of MPS students attend more than one school over the course of one year because their family moves. But the failures stand out in the minds of many area residents, some of whom are staunch school choice activists.

Among the success stories is Metcalfe Park's Clarke Street School, which consistently ranks among the state's most proficient on fourth grade standardized math and reading test scores.

According to Moore, a more common perception held by older youth is that "if I go to school for twelve years and won't be guaranteed a job, then why should I go to school?" Their adult role models in the neighborhood have lost out in the struggle for material wealth. In our interviews of the teens at Mary Ryan Boys and Girls Club, we attempted to assess what factors have improved their situations. The kids cited some of the factors we have noted, such as having involved and capable parents and having experiences that broaden their perspectives. But several students who had chosen to go to schools out of their neighborhoods opened an area we had not explicitly encountered before. What happens when an achieving young man passes an entrance exam for and then enters one of the better Milwaukee area schools? According to three of our youthful contacts, they perceived that the teachers in this superior school do not respect them. We doubted that the kids were unworthy of respect and feel that the situation should be investigated.

III D. Neighborhoods

A healthy neighborhood is safe and fosters a sense of pride among its residents. Those who own property in it also live in it rather than in a "better" neighborhood elsewhere. There are jobs close by for residents so that the work they do benefits their community. There are viable businesses in the area so that the money residents spend also stays in the community. The norm among its

residents is that they stay there for an extended period of time. There is a sense of permanency for all community institutions-shops, schools, businesses, parks, public gathering places, and homes.

Communication is encouraged and fostered in a healthy neighborhood. Community service resources are integrated rather than competing. The neighbors sometimes work on joint projects and they sometimes recreate together. There is a place for meetings for adults as well as children in the neighborhood. There is an organ for communication in the neighborhood that reports positive achievements of residents and groups. Also, by helping in the publication of a community newspaper, older youth can have an opportunity to learn and satisfy some of their own needs while serving their community.

Most of these prerequisites for a healthy community are not present in Metcalfe Park. All of them were cited by several of our contacts. (It should be noted that many affluent neighborhoods, also, are not healthy, except for their economic condition. The lack of community that the nonsatisfaction of these system needs represents is a macrosystemic norm.)

The question again arises of how to break the cycle. For example, the fact that most buildings are not up to city codes has consequences beyond the general appearance of neglect in the neighborhoods. Even when residents have enough job security to buy their own home, they cannot obtain loans, or private loans cannot be matched by the city under the development grants because the property is in bad condition. As renters, residents are generally not interested in investing in the properties and making needed repairs. And, absentee landlords generally avoid making repairs because they are not interested in how sound the property is but only in whether it looks good enough on the surface to attract a renter who can afford the rent. The properties deteriorate even further, and the cycle continues.

Models for development that circumvent this cycle were developed during the 1970s in a variety of cities and could also be applied in Metcalfe Park. But unless the residents are able to get secure jobs that support a mortgage in whatever minimal way the development grant requires, they will not be able to keep up with their payments. *Attention to any need must be accompanied by attention to needs at other system levels.* Suffering and want must be alleviated. But pouring in money and time without organized attention to other needs is like putting water into a sieve. Our team believes that the best locus for this organization is the neighborhood itself. People such as Larry Moore have political skills and are in touch with neighbors' needs. Such leadership can be instrumental in organizing the residents for a change process for the neighborhood that also involves changing themselves.

IV. Overarching Institutions

Our findings at a local level immediately confirmed that institutionalized poverty and racism are deeply rooted in Milwaukee. A symptom of this is the class, racial, and education-level homogeneity of our research area. The racial segregation has increased more than in any other U.S. city during the past decade, according to a Milwaukee Journal Sentinel Article. Attempts in the 1990s to "diversify" Milwaukee led to the implementation of unsuccessful programs costing millions of dollars. One of those programs was busing children to schools all over the city. The effort failed, according to Larry Moore, "Kids become victims of a system and it causes them harm." We

believe that the systemic racism that underlies and perpetuates these problems must be addressed, if other efforts are to bear fruit.

V. Resources

The primary resource of Metcalfe Park is its people.

Many residents truly care about their neighbors, care about the welfare of the community, and are organizing into block groups to fight crime at its roots. Also, some of the youth in the Reach program serve as valuable agents of change in the area by identifying kids whose environments put them "at risk" and encouraging their participation in various organized efforts. The youth-on-youth recruitment efforts make the programs more attractive to such youth and help remedy the lack of awareness of after-school activities among youth. (According to one report participation levels may be as low as 10 - 12 per cent, possibly owing to a lack of alignment between available activities and student interest, as well as some lack of awareness.)

The Milwaukee Public School System (MPS) is largely responsible for educating the children of Milwaukee's Metcalfe Park neighborhood. Approximately 2,200 school-aged children account for over half the community's population. For grades K-8, most of the children attend the neighborhood schools of Ralph Metcalfe School, 38th Street School, or Clarke Street School. These feed into Washington High School and North Division High School, among others.

MPS has been markedly successful in ensuring the security and protection of community children who attend school regularly while they are in school, although this is largely at the cost of enforcing rules that, according to Charlene Hardin, create a prison-like environment. School policy demands regular searches of persons and their belongings before they enter school property. Nevertheless, the presence of weapons and, to some degree, drugs in and around the school has been curtailed. Anecdotal evidence gathered at the Boys and Girls Club indicated that "about half" of the kids in MPS schools (and even many of the teachers, some said) regularly have and use drugs on school grounds. If true, we have reason to believe that "search and seize" policies have not unduly constrained personal liberties within schools. The ways in which schools secure children is a subject on which we might gain clarity at the "Gangs and Youth Violence" conference.

MPS has a large volume of special programs such as the Hang Tough program and the Ropes program. The latter, especially, which has a "Challenge by Choice" philosophy, is an excellent way for youth having access to it to enhance self-esteem, as well as to learn team-building and acquire safety-awareness skills. Many of these programs are listed on the MPS website

Numerous other MPS activities, such as the Community Learning Centers (CLCs), Pick Council for dropouts, child care services for teen parents, and after-school activities including athletics, music and student council, offer options. The CLCs, which also offer programs for parents and families and other community residents within an eight- to twelve-block radius of each site, and whose programs include counseling and support from trained workers, seem to have proven their effectiveness. We emphatically urge that this program be continued and that the funding for the 19 programs that will expire this year be renewed.

Several programs reinforce the value and benefits of education. For example, the Howard Fuller Education Foundation directed by Tony A. Kearney Sr. connects youth with adult mentors who can both guide and model positive attitudes. Along similar lines, some community groups connect parents and families with programs that reinforce more socially responsible and account-

able parenting methods. Activities of these kinds are invaluable in serving the needs of youth and should be continued, in our opinion.

In the Metcalfe Park area, the two branches of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Milwaukee (sponsored by the United Way), the Mary Ryan club and the Roger and Leona Fitzsimmonds club, offer after-school programs and a host of other activities for youth. The grounds of these facilities are as safe as the schools'.

The YWCA offers childcare, family services, community development, and youth programs. Youth are given the opportunity to develop and practice social skills like making choices, resisting peer pressure, and refraining from use of alcohol and drugs. Recreational programs provide physical activities while teaching team-building skills, anger management, and peace skills.

The churches of the region are outstanding assets to the community. They offer after-school programs (nine in the Metcalfe park area), such as the one we visited at Mercy Memorial Church, run by Pastor Harold Moore. These communicate, through the adults that model them, messages of hope and peace in an environment where, as we witnessed, the youth are respected. However, according to Ron Johnson, the recruitment and enrollment supervisor for the Martin Luther King Jr. Center, youth participation in such programs is especially challenging to achieve because it generally demands an active recruitment strategy and parental support in the enrollment process.

Some families take an active role in the education and upbringing of their children. Many of the kids present at Mary Ryan could attribute their current resilience to this factor. But for the many youth left to themselves because their parents must contend with multiple health and welfare issues, these other community resources are essential. Reflecting on the number of after-school activities in their childhood, community residents contend that today's Metcalfe Park youth have far more after-school opportunities to choose from than they once did. (During our researches, we visited Safe and Sound, The Reach Program, The Metcalfe Park Residents Association, Grace Baptist Church, the Community Justice Center, YWCA, and both the Boys and Girls Clubs.)

As funding for necessary services is increasingly left to the private sector, Milwaukee has experienced a fierce competition among agencies vying for the same limited public funds and resources. Among some individuals dedicated to "the struggle," the "burn-out syndrome" often appears as their time at work is continually taken away from their direct service in order to beg, borrow, or co-opt funds from their equally stressed neighbors.

The bewildering variety of social services in the area is often staffed by incredibly dedicated individuals who work in a variety of capacities. They have two things in common: (1) the agencies are understaffed and their staff is underpaid; and (2) they have a common mission, "to save lives," as Ron Johnson of the Reach program points out.

Our talks with police officers in the district enlightened us about the law enforcement perspective, which seemed to share this common philosophy and dedication to life-saving efforts. They expressed the belief that patrolling the neighborhoods by foot is an optimistic way of saying: "Lives are worth saving in whatever ways we can do it." Efforts such as neighborhood clean-ups, patrolling with citizens in cooperative ventures, forming associations, and holding block parties with no alcohol are among the projects they promote.

The major problem that has emerged in our research on these resources is the lack of coordination between programs. The Safe and Sound program (a program of the U.S. Department of

Justice), which underwrites a total of 89 "safe places" in Milwaukee, including MPS's CLCs, the Boys and Girls Clubs in Metcalfe Park, and other after-school sites, is the most proactive in the area in providing a unifying force. In designated HIDTAs (High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas) across the nation, Safe and Sound has developed as a collaborative effort to measurably reduce violent, drug-related crimes while also reducing the demand for guns and drugs among youth. Milwaukee has several such neighborhoods. In the city, 10,000 youths between the ages of 10 and 18 are reached during high crime hours. The program focuses on prevention by providing alternatives to engaging in crime.

The resources we have described work to reduce violence and crime and provide safe places where kids can hang out. A clear example of this was found in some statistics from the Safe and Sound Program: In the first year of its operation it showed a crime reduction of 29 per cent and last year (2001) a crime reduction of per cent in the targeted areas.

Programs providing safety are well organized and are effective for those whom they reach. But our overall recommendation is that a "weed and seed program" be conducted in order to unify efforts, reduce duplication and waste, and strengthen the programs that are now serving the twofold function of preventing youth violence and helping to build coalitions among service agencies.

Safe and Sound has the resources to foster the needed partnering efforts among (1) law enforcement, (2) community agencies, (3) youth development organizations, and (4) community residents and has begun to do so in its activity with the Community Partners Program. The organization receives approximately one-third of its funding from the U.S. government. We recommend that the role of this agency as community organizers be sustained and even increased with additional funding. Further, the CLCs that provide a community resource for adults as well as students should be maintained or enlarged.

VI. An Action Plan

What is needed most, according to Larry Moore, is to build human resources, to train people to work jobs where they can earn enough money to purchase a home and gain stability in their lives and get into the cycle of independence. Fortunately, the model of System Recovery gives an answer: Start where you are, take one step at a time, and keep going.

A second key point is the following: If people in the area were involved more in planning and development, funding for improvements would be better used. For example, no leaders in the area were even invited to the Boys and Girls Club opening. The Boys and Girls Club keeps those kids who use it regularly off the streets and out of trouble. But the youth have not been more than superficially involved in details of program planning. Perhaps a wider spectrum of youth would find it attractive if they were consulted.

In general, according to Moore, local talent is not used when people are employed for functions in Metcalfe. For example, Moore told us, white musicians are employed when black musicians are available. This practice of importing resources may lead the local residents to seek alternative, illegal employment.

A third key point is that, if the suggestions we propose are to provide sustainable change, the systemic issues of racism and entrenched poverty must be addressed in Milwaukee, as well as at the state and national levels,

We propose the following action plan:

- Continue individual youth development efforts (for all youth in the area, not just those deemed "at risk") that have already been successful-in particular, the CLCs should have their contracts renewed .
- Existing Boys and Girls Clubs and other after-school facilities should explore ways of partnering with each other and with the current MSP Community Learning Centers to expand their operations for adult education and other services.
- Explore the possibility of developing centralized, one-stop, daytime facilities as information and referral centers for social services (including social welfare and housing) and medical services. These might be organized around existing community centers.
- A centralized facility could also provide meeting space for residents. Intensive partnering among social and educational services might help to minimize the competition that currently exists.
- Explore ways of involving citizens in the area in efforts to reverse the two-decade long trend in reduced federal social service funding. Models (such as Safe and Sound) that are federally funded and locally administered, should be expanded.
- As Moore suggested, enable partnering between unions and social service providers in order to help area adults get jobs that have adequate pay.
- Support adult education efforts that can allow families to be more self-sustaining.
- Organize citizen lobbying of federal policymakers, so that funding to demonstrate the effectiveness of such programs as Safe and Sound can be secured and the programs made more viable from the policymakers' perspective.
- Develop citizen-lobbying efforts that also affect changes at local and state levels, as awareness and participation in neighborhood concerns are enhanced..
- Encourage area residents, especially youth, to participate in all phases of the action plan.
- Publish a newspaper that tracks positive achievements in the area.
- Hold town meetings to encourage people to start talking together about what concerns all of them. Area faith groups can be engaged for this sort of participatory learning.
- Consider ways to control street drugs that do not make violence a necessary part of their existence in the neighborhood.
- Increase pride in the neighborhood by organizing cleanup and fix-up campaigns Specific efforts might involve exploring (1) ways of financing and sustaining home ownership, (2) ways of financing and sustaining neighborhood resident-owned and -operated shops and business, and (3) ways of creating and operating places to house community meetings and community activities.
- In cooperation with neighborhood agencies and associations, encourage local officials to enforce policies regarding services such as garbage pick-up and housing inspection.
- Consider applying existing models for changing stereotypes and values among educators, youth, and other citizens in Milwaukee, so that systemic racism and entrenched poverty can be addressed.

Conclusion

The focus group of community stakeholders will detail an action plan that reflects their combined perspectives. The research team, after talking with these stakeholders individually, has recommended an overall goal that focuses on satisfying the basic needs of the youth in Metcalfe Park: that they achieve a sense of personal safety, of belonging, of self-esteem and self-efficacy, and that they have better choices in the future roles they can play in their community. We have seen that, although youth in mainstream America often expect to have such needs satisfied, many youth in Metcalfe Park do not. Although some individual youths have other, more personal, reasons for engaging in drug trafficking and the violent gang activity that accompanies it, we think that many youth are drawn to gang activity because their hopes for their future have been dampened in the many ways described in this report.

Our proposed action plan focuses primarily on prevention efforts. As the folktale says, "It takes a whole village to raise a child." But the village itself must be in reasonable health if the child is to thrive. If the needs of youth are to be satisfied, the adults with whom the youths interact and the institutions that create opportunities for only some youth in this country must change. If the youth are to be salvaged, parents, teachers, and other adults on whom youth depend, need to improve their interactions with youth. Community leaders must emphasize education and continue efforts that increase neighborhood pride. Finally, and most importantly, youth themselves need to be active and equal participants in designing plans for change.

In the research for this report we found that drug trafficking is seen by many youth as the best of a bad lot of career choices available to them. We believe that the best strategy for preventing violence is to make drug trafficking a choice that is less attractive than more traditional choices. We find that a wide variety of participants need to work to accomplish this.

It would seem that this country is wealthy enough to explore and undertake widespread changes and that it is morally obligated to satisfy the needs of its youth if it can do so.

PEOPLE INTERVIEWED

Aundra Dawson and La Tunya Peavy 3rd District Police officers, who also serve as Community Service Liaisons

Charlene Hardin, school board representative for District 4

Deborah Schigur, Safe and Sound program manager

Harold Moore, pastor, Memorial Baptist Church

Gary Graika, director, South Side Neighborhood Center

Larry Moore, director, Metcalfe Park Residents Association

Tony A. Kearney Sr., chief operating officer, Dr. Howard Fuller Educational Foundation and assistant dean, Milwaukee Area Technical College

Mary Ryan Boys and Girls Club.

Richard Weiderhold, South Side Neighborhood Center

A Community Responds to Youth Violence: the New Berlin Story

Daria Hall, Andre Jacque, and Hilary Murrish

Located fifteen miles west of Milwaukee in Waukesha County, New Berlin is home to 38,220 residents. According to city officials, these residents are drawn by New Berlin's close proximity to metropolitan, suburban, and rural areas and the recreational, social, cultural, and business opportunities afforded by this location. The city motto touts New Berlin as "city living with a touch of country."

New Berlin's population is predominantly Caucasian - 95.8 percent of the city's residents are white. Approximately 0.4 percent are African American. American Indian or Alaskan natives comprise 0.2 percent of the population, and 2.3 percent are Asian. The remaining 1.6 percent are Hispanic or Latino. Interviews uncovered no reports of outright discrimination or hostility towards New Berlin's small minority community. Some, however, claim that this lack of diversity has bred a community that is intolerant of differences.

A majority of children in New Berlin live in two-parent families. Only 3 percent of households in the area are headed by a single female. The median household income in 1990 was \$49,400, compared with Wisconsin's median income of \$29,400. This affluence translates into a high quality of life for most residents. There is, however, a reported gulf between the "haves" and the "have-nots" in the community. Those lacking financial resources find the constant comparison to their well-off neighbors and their inability to participate in the community's affluent lifestyle to be stressful and demeaning.

The New Berlin School District is composed of seven elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools. A middle school and high school are combined in one building, with one on each side of town. Due to location, New Berlin West serves the more rural and working class segments of the city's population while Eisenhower, the newer of the two, has a more affluent student body. Schools in the district report a number of indicators of academic success. The majority of students go on to post-secondary institutions (over 80% of the graduating class of one high school) and student attendance rates top 97 percent.

Youth report an overall level of satisfaction with life in New Berlin, with safety being identified as one of the primary benefits. They complain, however, that there is nothing for them to do. The city has been referred to by some as "New Boring." For entertainment, youths see movies, go bowling, shop, play sports, and hang out at local restaurants. These activities, however, quickly "get old."

The community has not always enjoyed its current level of safety. In 1991, the police reported a rise in gang-related graffiti and tagging in the community. By 1993, gang activity had

become a serious concern, with police officers reporting one drive-by shooting, a number of weapons violations, and several threats of violence. One police officer commented that gang-related activity blossomed because "kids were awestruck by the lifestyle." The officer explained that youths were not as interested in the violent aspect of gang life as they were with the clothes and other fashions associated with gangs. The importance of the threat that gangs posed, however, should not be underestimated. At a community in-service about gangs which drew over 1,400 parents, several members of the Latin Kings penetrated the building and were apprehended backstage brandishing their weapons. In response, the police department increased security measures at public events such as athletic events, patrolled perceived problem areas such as the industrial park more heavily, and engaged in community education programs. By 1994, gang activity had visibly declined and by 1996 had virtually disappeared. Police officers report that gang-affiliated individuals are still in the community, mainly young adults who work third shift in the industrial park. These individuals, however, do not spend time in New Berlin other than when they are at work. Today, community members do not report being concerned about gangs. Other youth issues, however, are prevalent.

Interviews with school administrators, counselors, students, members of the New Berlin Police Department, elected officials, community members, and representatives of the Waukesha County Juvenile Justice Department and Department of Health and Human Services revealed three major issues affecting youth in New Berlin: alcohol and drug abuse, self-mutilation, and bullying and harassment.

Drug and Alcohol Abuse

By all accounts, it would be difficult to find a seventh grader in New Berlin who has not had some exposure to drugs or alcohol. Underage drinking in New Berlin is so common as to be unremarkable, as is smoking marijuana. Interviewees also report the use of ecstasy, LSD, cocaine, and chlorocetin, an ingredient common in over-the-counter cold medicine which students have termed "skittles" because of cold pills' resemblance to the candy.

Drinking begins in middle school, with many adolescents' first experience with alcohol facilitated by parents. While most students in this age range have tried alcohol, many report cost or lack of a place to drink without parental supervision as a deterrent to drinking regularly. Those who do drink regularly, according to a group of middle-school students, are students "with issues." These issues include family problems or depression. Such issues also precipitate drug use at this age. The students who drink and use drugs in middle school often are not the most popular students. They engage in this behavior not to be rebellious but to escape reality, according to some of the students we talked to. Students expressed concern about their classmates with drug or alcohol problems but all agreed that it was not their place to lecture and that, ultimately, such behavior was "their choice."

The alcohol and drug situation changes in high school as students gain more independence and, significantly, their driver's license. Drinking and drug use become more widespread and are seen largely as a reaction to the lack of other activities available to young people in the area. Few students reported feeling direct pressure to engage in drinking or drug use, but many expressed the sentiment that since all of their classmates are doing it, they would be left with nothing to do should they decide not to drink or use drugs. The prevailing attitude among students can be

summed up in this statement from one high school student, "There's nothing else to do, and it's fun, so why not?"

Some students bring drugs or alcohol to school or school-related functions or will show up at activities already high or drunk. Large drinking parties attracting members of many different social circles are common. A refrain heard often in interviews was that there are no longer any social boundaries as far as drinking and drug use. These behaviors cut across all groups.

Students in both middle school and high school report no difficulty in obtaining any kind of drug or alcohol. Alcohol is often purchased by an of-age friend or sibling or with a fake ID. Less often, it is the parents themselves who are supplying the alcohol. Drugs may come from neighboring Milwaukee, but the police report that many are supplied by drug dealers operating in New Berlin.

While many argue that poverty stimulates alcohol and drug use, New Berlin has experienced a different phenomenon. The city's affluence may be a cause of underage drinking and drug use. According to one high school administrator, the amount of drug use in a school is a function of the amount of money available to the students. Students report that fines imposed for alcohol and drug violations do not serve as a strong deterrent to those students for whom money is not an object. Likewise, in families where both parents work, as is the case for many families in the area, students often find themselves alone and unsupervised for many hours in the afternoon. A frequently expressed sentiment is that parents are "too busy making money" to know or care what their children are involved in.

Where parents are aware, or are made aware, of their children's behavior, many do not perceive it to be a serious problem. Alcohol in particular is excluded from consideration as a dangerous drug. As mentioned earlier, some parents will endorse and even facilitate the behavior. Others will defend or make excuses for their children if they are caught. One high school administrator relayed a situation in which a number of varsity athletes were caught drinking. The parents were less upset with their children's behavior than by the fact that, according to school policies, they were not allowed to compete in a championship game.

While these trends are disturbing in and of themselves, it is important to note the perceived connection between drinking and drug use and other forms of behavior that are destructive to either the individual involved or the community as a whole. Waukesha County Juvenile Justice Ralph Ramirez estimates that 95 percent of all other youth offenses, such as theft and truancy, are accompanied by substance abuse. New Berlin Mayor Ted Wysocki identified a "Devil's Triangle" of drugs, violence, and gangs.

School Policies

In response to drug and alcohol abuse on the part of its students, the New Berlin School District has instituted an athletic code which states that any student who receives a ticket for drinking or is caught at a party where drinking is involved is suspended from participation in an extracurricular activity, athletic or otherwise, for a pre-determined length of time. The first offense results in a suspension for 20 percent of the activity and the second offense, a suspension for 50 percent of the activity. The third time that a student receives a ticket for drinking, he or she is sus-

pended completely from the activity. The New Berlin Police Department cooperates with the school district by informing school administrators when they issue tickets or bust parties.

According to one group of high school students, the athletic code is a more effective deterrent to drinking than tickets or fines. Over half of the students at one high school are involved in some extracurricular activity, and the desire to remain involved causes some students to think twice before drinking at a party or even attending a party at which they know alcohol will be available.

A high school counselor, however, expressed concern about the athletic code, viewing it as a partial acceptance of drinking on the part of the school district. The way the code is written, he explained, a student who is simply at the party, but not drinking, is in violation. Such students, however, are not punished. The counselor believes that the athletic code is a deterrent for a few students, but not many. He noted that many athletes are finding ways around the code. Some athletes who are suspended for part of their season play a different sport to serve their suspension rather than being suspended for the sport that they are actually interested in playing. As soon as they have served their suspension, they quit the second sport. The counselor suggested that students who break the athletic code should be suspended for the entire season rather than a portion of the season.

Along with this athletic code, one high school utilizes an instant drug testing service in the area. When school officials suspect that a student is using drugs, they ask the student whether he or she would be willing to take a drug test. According to one school administrator, the test is almost never necessary. When asked, students who are using usually confess. Parents are then contacted, and the group works together to establish frequency of use and determine an appropriate course of action, be it treatment, counseling, or something else. It should be noted, however, that the only way in which students can be forced into treatment is if they've been expelled from the school and are attempting to re-enroll.

Waukesha County also sponsors a Fast Cash program, in which students who report the presence of drugs or alcohol on school grounds receive \$50 in cash. School administrators report that participation rates in this program have been high.

DARE

New Berlin is one of the many communities to utilize the Drug Abuse Resistance and Education (DARE) program. DARE is a 17-week long program in which a police officer visits the classroom one day per week for 45 minutes. Students are educated about the different types of drugs, their effects, and ways to avoid them. In New Berlin, the DARE curriculum is taught to students in the fifth and seventh grades by members of the police force who have been trained as DARE officers.

DARE officers stress that the program is about more than drugs alone. They also address self-esteem, peer pressure, and positive alternatives to drug use. Officers try to make DARE an active and cooperative learning activity. Students are encouraged to ask questions and relay personal experience with drugs using the "Someone I know..." format. Consequences are an important part of the DARE curriculum. The officers try to teach students to think about options and weigh the consequences of their actions before participating in an activity.

Opinions on the value of the program differ. Overall, students say that DARE is ineffective. A group of middle school students reported that the program had some deterrent value when it was

presented in fifth grade, which, according to them, is the time right before they are first introduced to drugs. Repeating the program in seventh grade, however, is, according to these students, "a waste of a study hall." One group of high school students commented that the officers tell students the good things about drugs and that this makes some students wonder why they should not use them. Another group joked that DARE stands for "Drugs Are Really Expensive" or "Drugs Are Really Excellent." These students argued that the program was childish and would be more effective if the officers showed "more graphic things."

On the other hand, school administrators and the police force think DARE is a wonderful program with benefits beyond deterrence. This group stressed the importance of the relationship that is established between officers and students. One officer commented that DARE is helpful because it gives students a "lifelong connection" with the police officers. The officer continued, "DARE is not the end-all or save-all, but it helps. Kids pull from the curriculum what they need at that point." In the words of a middle school counselor, "The biggest benefits of the DARE program are the relationship between officers and kids and police visibility. These are benefits that are not counted in most evaluations. Kids are so blessed to have this relationship with police officers."

This relationship-building function is one of the reasons that DARE proponents continue to support the program in the face of recent large-scale reports questioning the effectiveness of the program in terms of reducing drug use. A high school administrator reported being "heartbroken to find out that DARE does not work" but maintained the program's value in the relationships it builds. In the view of one police officer, "DARE is a positive tool that is getting hard knocks. It is hard to measure who it will effect and how." Others challenged the applicability of the reports' findings. In the words of a middle school counselor, "The statistics may be getting more challenging, but then again, so are the kids."

Challenges to DARE hit home recently when Waukesha County released a negative evaluation of the program. Based on the evaluation, county funding for the program has been cut. New Berlin Mayor Ted Wysocki, however, is a strong believer in DARE and has committed \$25,000-\$28,000 of the city's funds to continue the program. Mayor Wysocki admits that the research poses legitimate questions about the program and that it may be difficult to justify funding DARE to taxpayers in light of the county's evaluation. However, he believes that the evaluation missed several important benefits of the program, including interaction between students and officers and what he termed "law enlightenment," which refers to showing kids why we have laws rather than simply that we have laws. Moreover, he believes that the program, while not deterring all drug use, stops experimentation in its early stages.

Considering New Berlin's significant investment of resources in the DARE program, it is important to examine carefully the questions being posed about the program's effectiveness by researchers and, more importantly, by the students who have been through the program. If, as seems to be the case, the true value of the program is in the relationships it builds between students and police officers, perhaps this is a goal that could be reached more efficiently and effectively through a program designed specifically to build relationships, rather than indirectly through a drug prevention program. If, however, officials are in fact committed to the deterrence of drug use, the reasons that DARE has not been successful in this effort must be examined before the district continues the program. Students expressed the belief that DARE is ineffective in terms of deterrence because it does not sufficiently stress the negative consequences of drug use, be they physical, psychological, social, or financial, or that these consequences are not presented in a sufficiently

graphic manner. If this is true, the DARE officers' discussion of consequences is clearly insufficient and should be addressed in a different way. In sum, officials must identify what the specific goal of the DARE program is-relationship-building, deterrence, or otherwise-and direct their energies toward restructuring the program to meet that goal.

Drug Search

In the fall of 2001, the police and school joined together to search one of the area high schools for drugs. The decision to do so was made by the school's principal and the police officer assigned to the school in response to concerns about students bringing drugs into the school.

On the day of the search, students were informed that they were going to practice a "Code Red" drill. Code Red is the signal that there is an intruder in the school and the students should remain in their classrooms. A few minutes into the drill, it was announced that dogs would be searching the building for drugs. Only administrators were made aware of the plan so as to keep the element of surprise. Dogs reacted to four or five lockers, but nothing was found when they were opened. One administrator assumed that a coat or another object in the lockers smelled so strongly of marijuana that it caused the dog to identify those lockers as holding drugs. Eight students were arrested for possession of paraphernalia or small quantities of marijuana in their cars. These students received an automatic five-day suspension and a preliminary expulsion hearing and were recommended for counseling.

Reactions to the drug search were mixed. Some students saw it as a necessary action, while others saw it as an invasion of privacy. This concern about privacy was reiterated by the three or four parents who called the school to complain. Some questioned the way the search was run, expressing concern that from now on when students hear the Code Red announcement, they will think that it is another drug search and will run to their lockers or cars instead of staying in the classroom. Some students also questioned the effectiveness of the search. One group of students commented that bringing in the drug-sniffing dogs was not effective because the people who were caught were the same people who are caught every year. Students also believe that the suspension those students received was not punishment but a vacation from school.

One school staff member suggested that the drug search did not catch as many students as it should have and questioned the reliability of one of the dogs that was used. The staff member was confident that there were drugs in lockers in one of the hallways and that the dog missed them.

Overall, school and police officials said that the search has had a deterrent effect, and they have considered the possibility of holding additional drug searches in the future.

Students' nonchalant attitudes about drug and alcohol use, attitudes that are likely reinforced by parental behaviors, indicate that many do not perceive these behaviors as offenses to be taken seriously, or ones that will result in any serious consequences. It appears that students are getting mixed signals from adults in the community. While they are told that drinking and drug use are illegal behaviors, they continue to engage in them with seeming impunity. Those programs that do have some deterrent effect are those that carry the threat of immediate consequences, such as suspension from a sports team. Caution must be taken, however, to ensure that consequences are real and universally applied. Where, for example, students are able to "outsmart" the system by temporarily joining another team to serve their suspension, or where a drug search fails to locate

the drugs they've brought to school, students are likely to be emboldened. Not only have they been able to get away with their actions, but they have circumvented the efforts of school and police officials aimed directly at deterring these actions. Future efforts to reduce drinking and drug use should be based on the concept of assured consequences. The only way to get students to stop using drugs and alcohol is to give them a concrete answer to the question posed earlier, "Why not?"

Self-Mutilation

Self-mutilation, or self-injury, is the act of inflicting bodily harm to oneself that is severe enough to cause tissue damage. Once thought to be a form of suicidal ideation, this behavior is now recognized in its own right. The most prevalent form of self-mutilation is what is commonly known as cutting. Cutters will take a knife, razor blade, broken glass, or other sharp object and cut themselves, often on the arms and legs. Other forms of self-mutilation include burning, scratching, and headbanging. Again, this behavior is not intended to be lethal, but to cause pain and bleeding, scarring, or other physical marks. The pain is meant to alter the individual's mood or psychological state and is often used to relieve some sort of distress. Those who engage in self-mutilation often do so repeatedly, signifying that the behavior becomes a tool or habit. They almost always act alone.

Self-mutilation, particularly cutting, is a widely recognized problem for New Berlin youths and has been on the rise in recent years. It is most common among females, although those involved in the schools do report seeing some cases of male cutting. It starts as early as middle school. A middle school counselor reports being aware of six or seven cutters in her school and estimates that there are probably just as many that she isn't aware of. All students interviewed report knowing a friend, classmate, or sibling who is or has been involved in cutting. As with drinking and drug use, cutting is a behavior that cuts across all social groups.

A group of high-school-aged cutters identified the following six reasons for engaging in this behavior: to (1) seek relief from feelings or to cope with feelings, 2) establish control, 3) physically express pain, 4) self-nurture, 5) self-punish, and 6) feel euphoria. Other reasons identified by counselors and social workers include anger with parents or friends, depression, loss or separation, and a lack of attention. Many of the females who cut have issues with male dependency, and there is some correlation between cutting and anorexia or bulimia. Others are engaged in experimentation, reporting that they "wanted to know what it felt like." In the words of one middle-school student who reports knowing three cutters, "There is no reason. They do it just because."

Whatever the reason, school and police officials treat this behavior seriously. When a cutter comes to them for help, or is reported by a family member, friend, or teacher, they immediately engage in a suicide risk assessment for that individual. The parents and a physician are then contacted. In most cases, parents are unaware of their child's behavior as cutters will often go to great lengths to hide their scars. Some parents resist seeking or accepting help. This may be because they do not view cutting as a serious problem, as in the case of one parent who, when contacted about their child's cutting informed a school counselor that both of the child's older siblings had cut as well and both "grew out of it," so this child would too. Other parents may be in denial, may view such assistance as an intrusion, or may be suffering from their own troubles and unable to respond sufficiently to those of their children. The health insurance system may prove daunting for some parents. Recognizing this, counselors offer to help them negotiate the system by identifying which

services will be covered and what providers they can choose from. Should the parents refuse treatment, the police can take custody of the child for a more complete psychiatric evaluation.

Following the initial crisis intervention, counselors and social workers make an effort to follow up with cutters to deter future cutting. One high school has instituted a series of voluntary self-help groups, one of which is for self-mutilation. These groups meet once a week for eight weeks during which time students attempt to work through their problems. They identify reasons and discuss alternatives. Teachers attend in-service programs in which they learn what signs to look for and how to help a student who is engaging in self-mutilation.

Students not involved in cutting express concern for and a desire to help those who engage in it. They admit the difficulty and stress, though, of being in the company of a distraught peer.

It is important to recognize and address cutting as something more than a physical behavior. While the physical aspect is cause for concern in that there is always the possibility that a cutter will accidentally cut too deep or hit an artery, or that the cuts will get infected, the real issue is that cutting is clearly a physical manifestation of emotional or psychological disturbance. Cuts heal, and an individual may, in fact, "grow out" of cutting, but if left untreated these emotional and psychological issues may develop into more severe mental health problems and may precipitate further behavior that is self-destructive or destructive to those around the individual. Thus programs directed toward cutting must treat stopping the physical act of cutting as only the first step. The reason or reasons must be identified and treated. The self-help groups in New Berlin appear to be a positive step in this direction. Efforts should be made to follow-up with participants at the end of the eight weeks and provide continued services to those students who believe themselves in need of further attention or are so deemed by the group's facilitators. Moreover, efforts must be made to ensure that those cutters not interested in participating in these groups receive comparable services in a setting in which they are more comfortable.

Bullying and Harassment

Of particular concern to those involved in the middle schools is the frequency and intensity with which students bully and harass one another. In the words of one counselor, this behavior is "relentless." Middle-school students are, by all accounts, intolerant of differences and put a high premium on "coolness." Students who do not fit in are subject to name-calling, social exclusion, intimidation, and threats. Students relate incidents in which a group will decide to gang up on an individual and at a designated time flood the person's Instant Messenger in-box with insulting or threatening messages. In the previous school year, a group of boys created a Web page on which they listed all of the girls in the school they considered to be "prudes." It is common to hear students calling one another "gay," "fags," and "retards."

Both students and counselors expressed the view that students who engage in this behavior do so to fit in or to deflect attention away from themselves. Some students said that those who were bullied or harassed most likely deserved it and that the behavior should not be taken seriously. The counselors strongly disagreed, noting the damaging effects to self-esteem and alienation that can result. Tolerance of bullying and harassing, they said, can lead to tolerance of physical violence, such as fighting or sexual assault. Counselors are constantly on the look-out for such behavior and ask teachers to be as well. They express frustration with the widespread sentiment that "kids will be

kids" expressed by both school staff members and parents. On the national scale, attention has been focused on this behavior since the school shootings in Columbine, Colorado, the perpetrators of which were said to be victims of bullying and harassment by the more popular students in the school. In the wake of this tragedy, a number of states have proposed or implemented anti-bullying legislation.

In New Berlin, response to this behavior has been at the school level. Two academic departments in one of the schools charge students 25 cents every time they insult another student. One school has instituted a peer mediation program. Sign-up sheets are posted in every classroom so that students can refer one another. Teachers can also refer students as they see the need. Students, however, expressed the view that when participation is not voluntary they are less likely to cooperate and benefit from the program, particularly when it is seen as a form of punishment. In addition, both schools have had assemblies devoted to the issue.

Like drinking and drug use, bullying and harassment is viewed by many, both students and adults, as not being a "real" problem. Thus, efforts to sanction the behavior after it has occurred are insufficient. Students, parents, and school staff must be educated about the harmful and lasting effects of bullying and harassment. Events such as the all-school assemblies represent a positive step in this direction.

Other Issues

In addition to drug and alcohol abuse, cutting, and bullying, some additional concerns were mentioned by interviewees.

Stress

A number of individuals mentioned the amount of stress students are under. A student help group devoted to stress identified the following causes: relationships (with peers, parents, and others), money, academics, admission to college, time, work, the future, drugs, sports and other activities, health, and expectations. This stress is both internal and external. In the words of one counselor, "They are pulled in too many directions and all believe they have to have it all." The stress can be particularly acute for those students whose families lack financial resources as they compare themselves to their more affluent peers. Many students have part-time jobs in order to buy cars, cell phones, clothes, and other objects.

September 11 was identified as another source of stress. Students are concerned about the possibility of such an event happening in New Berlin. A number of parents in the area are employed by Midwest Express Airlines, which brought the events closer to home for some. In addition, the downturn in the economy has meant the some students have parents who have lost a job or are at risk of losing one.

One counselor expressed fears that this rise in stress could translate into a rise in violence or suicide. In response, she has made an effort to make herself more available to students and has organized a number of student activities designed to relieve stress, including an impromptu kite-flying session during the school day, skiing trips, and a number of dances. In the student help group mentioned above, students are advised to prioritize their commitments and learn relaxation techniques such as yoga.

School Structure

Both Eisenhower and New Berlin West are combined middle and high schools. This structure is seen as problematic by school officials in that it exposes students to issues such as drinking and drugs at a very young age. One school official claimed that the set-up gives "little kids big ideas." Likewise, it robs the younger students of some of their youth as they attempt to emulate the actions of the older students and makes for a particularly stressful transition from elementary to middle school. A school administrator admitted to finding it difficult to "walk the line between involving the middle school students in the community and sheltering them from inappropriate things." Some students, on the other hand, expressed support for the set-up, both because it makes the transition from middle to high school less stressful and because they are able to take more advanced classes.

Proposals have been made to put all middle school students in one of the buildings and all high school students in the other. There is, however, fierce opposition to this proposal from the athletics programs, both because the number of students who would be able to participate would be reduced and because the schools would lose their primary rivals.

School-Wide Responses

In addition to programs aimed at specific behaviors, such as DARE, the schools have instituted a number of programs aimed broadly at supporting students and fostering positive relationships.

Student Assistance Programs

The Student Assistance Programs (SAPs) alluded to earlier in reference to self-mutilation and stress management are available to students to help them address a variety of particular problems. SAPs are facilitated by two adults, such as a school counselor and a police social worker. In the middle school, there is a group on relationships. This group addresses relationships between parents and children as well as with friends and significant others. Several groups are offered for the high school students addressing relationships as well as divorce, family problems, loss or separation, and alcohol and other drug abuse.

As mentioned, these groups meet one class period a week for eight weeks. At the beginning of the quarter, students sign up for groups in which they are interested. Then a counselor follows up with each of the students to make sure they are serious about participating in the group rather than just wanting to get out of class. A police social worker estimates that between 100 and 150 seventh through twelfth graders participate in these groups.

One counselor who serves as a facilitator reports that students are very willing to be in the SAP groups and have a genuine interest in working through their problems. She commented, however, that in some of the groups the students were choosing not to change despite being offered mechanisms for doing so. After challenging participants with this observation, she has observed a significant positive change in their behavior. There is also a concern about the self-selection into these programs. Those students who are in need of the most help may not be choosing to participate. Forcing students to participate, however, could be counterproductive.

Police Involvement

In recent years, the New Berlin Police Department has taken a very active role in the schools. Prior to 1997, police officers were present in school only when needed. In 1997, the police department shifted to having part-time School Resource Officers (SROs) in the schools. These officers spent half of the day in the schools, but still had regular caseloads. Now SRO's are assigned to the schools full-time. School officials report that this full-time placement has precipitated a substantial drop in fighting in the school. One officer believes that this drop has occurred because the students know that there is a police officer in the school and that there will be consequences for their actions. For example, the officers are able to write \$286 tickets on the scene for those students involved in a fight.

Police officers are present at all school activities, from athletic events to dances. They attempt to make themselves available to students and engage in positive interactions. School officials hope that this involvement will make students comfortable with police officers and authority figures in general. When youth are comfortable with the officers, they may be more willing to share information about things that are happening to them, their friends, or in the community.

There has been a mixed response to the SRO's on the part of the students. In one case, a female student felt comfortable enough with her school's SRO to admit that she had a drug abuse problem and ask for help. Others, however, expressed the sentiment that police officers are in the school only because "the New Berlin police have nothing else to do." In their words, "only the bad kids know the SRO's" and "all they do is tow your car."

These in-school programs reflect a commitment on the part of the schools and the police department to take an active role in the lives of the New Berlin youth. Officials express the belief that "if you reach out to them, kids will listen." There is also an emphasis on establishing trust with students, which is viewed as a crucial first step if they are to accept help. School and police officials take pride in their joint efforts and express a willingness to expand these efforts as they see fit. They are, for example, willing to tailor-make new programs to address emerging issues.

Efforts on the part of police officers and school officials to serve as confidants, advisers, and trusted authority figures become particularly important where these roles are not filled by parents or other family members, as often appears to be the case in New Berlin. It is worth repeating that many students believe that their parents are too busy with work commitments to take an active interest in their lives. When asked whom they go to when they need advice, support, or assistance, very few students mentioned their parents. School and police officials recognize this and are attempting to bridge this gap in the short term and narrow it in the long term. A police officer identified a triad consisting of schools, police, and parents, all of whom must participate fully in youth programs in order to ensure their success. Evidence suggests that the schools and the police are doing so. The next step is to bolster parental participation.

Parent Education Programs

All those involved agree that parental education is necessary in addressing youth issues. There is widespread concern that parents do not appreciate the issues and pressures their children are facing. A middle school counselor believes that "parents don't have any idea who their children are. They love their children, but their culture is so different from that of their children that it's dif-

difficult to understand them." This difference can foster a sense of frustration on the part of the parents and a sense of isolation and not belonging on the part of children that can eventually lead to destructive behavior.

To address this, the schools and the police department have attempted to institute parental education seminars. At the middle school level, these seminars cover issues such as parenting and adolescence. At the high school level, they address issues such as drinking and drug use. These programs have strong precedent. One counselor reports having had to turn parents away from a parenting seminar that lasted two hours a week for eight weeks before it was ended a number of years ago when the facilitators were no longer able to maintain the time commitment involved. Participation in the current programs, however, has been lackluster. At a highly publicized drug and alcohol abuse seminar held recently at one of the high schools, only six parents attended. One counselor reported that parents are afraid of the stigma attached to having a child with drug or alcohol problems. The fear of being recognized by a friend, neighbor, or co-worker is enough to keep them away from such programs. Similar programs at Waukesha Memorial Hospital have had higher turnout, possibly because of the lower probability of being recognized. This lack of participation has been a source of significant frustration for school officials. As one school official put it, "I hope the parents never say 'Why didn't the school do anything?' We did, and no one came."

Community Responses

Outside of the schools, New Berlin has in place a number of programs which address teen issues.

Youth Advisory Board

The Youth Advisory Board was started two years ago by former New Berlin Mayor Jim Gatzke, who brought the idea back from a U.S. Conference of Mayors meeting. New Berlin's Youth Advisory Board is made up of 14 students, two from each aldermanic district, ranging in age from sixth through twelfth grade. The Youth Advisory Board serves to give input and recommendations to the Common Council.

According to two teens involved with the Youth Advisory Board, the city does not know what the teens want. The board serves to inform the Common Council and the mayor about teen wants, needs, and ideas. It has dealt with issues ranging from investing money in city parks to renovating the library into a Teen Center. Not all issues that the Youth Advisory Board addresses are youth-specific. City officials want youth input on issues that will affect the city as a whole. In addition to its work with the mayor and Common Council, the Youth Advisory Board has liaisons to the police department, library, and parks and recreation departments.

In exchange for articulating the opinions of young people in the area on particular issues, the students involved in the Youth Advisory Board gain government experience. The mayor expressed a particular interest in giving members of the board experience in defending the use of tax money for desired projects.

Beyond advising city officials on the teens' point of view, the Youth Advisory Board works to provide services directly to teens. For example, in response to the claim that there is nothing for teens to do in New Berlin, the board has put together a Youth Yellow Pages. The Youth Yellow Pages list a variety of activities available to teens in

New Berlin and the surrounding areas, including shopping malls, movie theaters, bowling alleys, recreation centers, concert venues, and the like.

High school students who are not involved in the Youth Advisory Board have a somewhat critical view of the board. One group of students commented that the board is a joke. One student said, "The Youth Advisory Board tries to organize activities, but no one goes because they assume it will be boring." The students explained that if one person in their group of friends decides not to go to the event, then no one in the group will go. Another reason that students choose not to attend Youth Advisory Board events is that they would prefer to drink. Given this response, the resources of the board might best be used on efforts to make community resources more attractive to teens rather than attempting to organize board-sponsored events, which would likely be poorly attended.

Teen Center

As mentioned above, one of the projects that the Youth Advisory Board has been working on is the creation of a teen center. The idea behind the teen center is to give teens fun and constructive things to do. Two members of the Youth Advisory Board suggested that the center could have ping pong, pool, darts, basketball, and possibly skateboarding facilities, as well as house dances. It could also offer classes of interest to teens, such as CPR lessons from the Red Cross.

The teen center is one of many suggestions from the community about how to use the space that will become available when the city builds a new library. Along with competition for the site, the Youth Advisory Board is also struggling with funding issues. It is unclear how much the teen center would cost or where the money would come from.

While the youth in New Berlin overwhelmingly report wanting things to do, response to the idea of a teen center has been mixed. Some students have reacted positively to the idea of having a place to congregate and hang out, particularly if there would be no cost involved. Others, however, believe that such a facility would be a waste. Teens, they argue, would not utilize it because they are averse to the idea of adult supervision, and they doubt that entire groups of friends could be persuaded to attend. Even the middle school students, whom proponents believe would be the primary users of the center, expressed doubts about its necessity. They prefer to hang out at a friend's house with a select group.

One police officer offered an alternative to spending large amounts of money on the teen center. The youth in New Berlin, he said, do not want a place to go necessarily, but they do want low-cost things to do. Instead of "trying to reinvent the wheel" with a teen center, the officer suggests that the city work with the resources that are already available, such as reducing the cost of bowling and movies for teens.

Currently the YMCA in nearby Greenfield has a teen center that is similar to one that New Berlin is considering. The center, which is available to members and non-members on a pay-as-you-go basis, offers computers with Internet access, a pool table, ping pong, foosball, board games, a stereo, big screen television, and a DVD player. They also have a collapsible indoor skate park which is set up every Friday and Saturday night. The youth programs director estimates that the skate park draws a crowd of 40-50 each night, mainly boys in their early to mid teens.

The YMCA also offers a one-on-one mentoring program for middle school students and a Girl's Night Out program, which attracts about 60 sixth through eighth grade girls to service and

volunteer programs, along with other activities. All of the YMCA's youth programs are advised by its own Teen Advisory Council.

New Berlin students are aware that these facilities exist. Many students, however, are under the impression that they are available only to YMCA members. Others, particularly those without access to a car, stated that the YMCA is too far away for them. The youth programs director is aware of these issues and is attempting to address them by making information about the programs more available through the schools and by attempting to get the YMCA placed on the after-school bus routes. These efforts could be assisted by the New Berlin Youth Advisory Board. Given the similarities between the YMCA's Teen Center and the center being proposed in New Berlin, it would seem that a duplication of services could be avoided if such efforts are made to make the YMCA's center more attractive to New Berlin teens. Based on students' reports of demand for a teen center, we believe that one facility in the area would be sufficient. In such a cooperative situation, the YMCA's facilities would be fully utilized and the Youth Advisory Board's goals would be met at a significantly lower cost.

Midnight Basketball

Midnight Basketball is a program run by the New Berlin Police Department which offers an open gym to high school youth on Friday nights. The program was originally held after varsity basketball games and was funded by an automobile traffic safety grant to reduce drunk driving.

In its first year, Midnight Basketball took place 10 times. Students were receptive and in its second year, the program was held every Friday night during the second semester. The grant money ran out in the third year. Because of the positive response, however, the school district continued the program, which is still sponsored by the police department.

Approximately 120 youth participate in the program, which is about 10 percent of the high school population in the city. A majority of the Midnight Basketball sessions are held at New Berlin West High School. According to police officers that are involved with the program, West's administration is generally more receptive to the program and willing to make its facilities available. Usually only the students who attend the school where Midnight Basketball is held go to the program.

It is difficult to determine whether Midnight Basketball is effective at reducing underage drinking and driving, although encouraging signs have emerged. The police report that they have not had to bust a drinking party on nights that Midnight Basketball is held. No underage drinking deaths have occurred since Midnight Basketball started. Despite these apparent successes and the high level of turnout, those involved with the program express concern that it will be discontinued for lack of money.

Teen Court

Teen Court is an innovative program in New Berlin for first-time violators of municipal ordinances. Rather than paying a fine or going to the regular court, these offenders have the option of going through a court system run almost entirely by their peers.

The program originated from a mock trial presentation by a group from Menomonee Falls in 1999. Following the presentation, New Berlin examined the feasibility of instituting a similar program in New Berlin. The community received a \$12,000 grant for the program's first year.

Approximately 25 teens volunteer to be part of Teen Court as attorneys, bailiffs, clerks, and

jurors. Participants receive training and guidance from local attorneys and law enforcement officers. A volunteer from the community serves as the judge.

In order to participate in Teen Court, the offender must admit guilt. Common violations include theft, disorderly conduct, destruction of property, loitering, and tobacco and curfew violations. Teen Court follows standard courtroom procedures. Opening statements are made by the attorneys; the defendant and any other witnesses testify and are cross-examined; closing statements are made; and the jury determines the sentence. Jurors are given a standard sentencing guide but are encouraged to use their own judgment as well. Sentences include community service, a letter of apology or an essay stating why what the teen did was wrong, or restitution. Each defendant must serve jury duty twice. The average sentence in Teen Court is 20 hours of community service and two jury duties. When compared to the sentences teens would receive had they had their case decided outside of Teen Court, the harshness varies in response to the jury's perception of the severity of the offense. For example, a jury of teens is likely to treat a curfew violation lightly while they would treat theft from a school locker more seriously. Because the jury is composed at least partly of former Teen Court defendants, it is likely that jurors display a degree of sympathy for defendants, which might lessen the prescribed sentence. If the teen successfully completes the sentence, the charges are dropped.

Recidivism has declined—from 19 percent to 5 percent—since Teen Court began. Several theories may explain this decline in the recidivism rate. One is the notion that peer sanction may carry more weight than having being punished by adults. A second idea is that the program requires youth to be accountable for their actions. The teens have to admit their guilt and follow through with their sentence in order to have charges dropped. So far there has been a 100 percent compliance rate in Teen Court, with more than 50 teens sentenced. The compliance rate for municipal court is 75 percent. More than three-quarters (78 percent) of those who are eligible choose to go through Teen Court.

Parents of defendants are universally supportive of and positive about teen court. Teens in the community have a different view. Expressing an opinion similar to the one they held regarding the Youth Advisory Board, one group of high school students viewed Teen Court as a joke. Another group of high school students commented that Teen Court makes it easy on students, making them more likely to commit offenses. Perhaps these negative views of the program would be assuaged were students to know about the decline in recidivism and the increasing compliance with sentences. It is also possible that stricter sentencing guidelines would motivate youths to take the court more seriously. It is important, however, that the guidelines not become prescriptive. Otherwise Teen Court would lose the benefit of peer sanction and would become the same as the regular court system.

As with Midnight Basketball, the Teen Court program may be subject to budgetary pressures. A number of those involved agree that youth issues are not a funding priority in the city. Absent the violent crime and gang activity that other communities face, some may not recognize the need to address the issues that do exist or may have a feeling of immunity to the more visible problems. In the words of one police officer, "If it's not perceived as being broken, why try to fix it?" It should be noted that this view is not shared by Mayor Wysocki, who believes that "youth issues are paramount to quality-of-life issues" and that there is a "continual recognition on the part of the community of how important the youth are."

Institutional Responses

Where youths are charged with offenses and do not qualify for or choose to participate in Teen Court, they are placed in the Waukesha County Juvenile Court System. This system often sees cases involving property damage, disorderly conduct, and possession of marijuana.

After being referred in juvenile intake, youths are screened by social workers from the Waukesha County Department of Health and Human Services. These social workers make recommendations to the judge on how to dispose of the case. The judges have three options. The first and least restrictive is a deferred prosecution agreement. In this case, the petition is withdrawn and the proceedings halted. The case is then handled informally. The second option is a consent decree, in which the petition is filed but put on hold before the delinquency finding. The third and most restrictive option is a formal delinquency finding. In this case, formal rules of supervision are established, which may include restitution, mandatory counseling or participation in self-help groups, random drug screening or other appropriate action. Social workers use a delinquency risk assessment scale in order to determine what is an appropriate recommendation. This scale includes indicators of the likelihood of re-offending, such as the seriousness of the offense, the youth's age, prior offenses, behavior in school, instances of drug or alcohol abuse, an acceptance of responsibility, and the types of services the youth has access to. It is important to note, however, that this scale is not prescriptive. Social workers are encouraged to use their own discretion and judgment when making recommendation.

Both the County Circuit Juvenile Court judge and the director of the Adolescent Services Division of Health and Human Services stress the influence that family has on the youths they see and the importance of getting family involved when the child commits an offense. According to the Adolescent Services director, "The kids who come to use have gotten into trouble for a reason. We want to work with the family to discover what is causing this behavior." Social workers work to help families view their son or daughter's behavior in a broader context. This family involvement must be ongoing. "If families are interested in having kids not break the law, we need to help them to stay involved in the process." The director added that it is important to recognize that many of these youths have had few positive experiences with adults in their lives. Thus gaining their trust is important. Their goals are both to hold the offenders accountable for their actions and to help them be successful in life.

The themes of establishing positive relationships and involving families expressed by county representatives are identical to those expressed by the schools and police department. This would indicate that more cooperation and joint ventures between the two groups would be desirable, resulting in more effective youth programs and less duplication of services.

Conclusion

New Berlin is not alone in the issues that it is facing. Alcohol and drug abuse is a problem in communities throughout the state. A simple Internet search on the term self-mutilation reveals that this has become a widespread behavior among young people. Likewise, one would be hard-pressed to find a teenager who has not been involved in or been the victim of bullying and harassment.

That these behaviors are commonplace, however, does not detract from the need for com-

munities to address them. The innovative programs that it has implemented, such as Teen Court and the Youth Advisory Board, demonstrate New Berlin's recognition of the importance of addressing youth issues. The high degree of cooperation between the schools and the police department, as evidenced by the extensive use of school resource officers, the jointly-run Student Assistance Programs, and the continued commitment to the Midnight Basketball program reflects the belief that youth issues must be tackled from different angles and by different institutions within the community. Efforts to educate and involve parents represent the crucial next step in this community-wide approach.

We sincerely hope that the commitment and dedication to the youth of New Berlin that we have seen demonstrated time and time again by school officials, members of the police department, community members, and representatives of both the city and the county will continue, particularly as budgetary pressures necessitate painful choices throughout the state.

We would like to thank all those who have so graciously shared their time and ideas with us. Their openness and enthusiasm have made this project a pleasure to work on. We hope that this effort will prove as rewarding to New Berlin as it has been to us.

Youth, Parents and Community: Building a Bridge of Respect in Viroqua

by Adam Signatur, Rachel Walker, and Kelly Wheeler

Nestled into the rolling fields of southwestern Wisconsin, Viroqua is the largest town in Vernon County with just over 4000 people. The population of the entire county, which covers 795 square miles south of La Crosse, was 28,056 according to the most recent U.S. Census. With 13 percent of its residents living below the poverty line, Vernon County has the highest overall poverty rate in Wisconsin (U.S. Census, Quick Facts, 2000); 19.6 percent of the children in the county live in poverty compared to a child poverty rate of 14.3 percent for the state. Residents of Vernon County earn a median household income of \$29,853, almost \$10,000 less than the state median income. The high rate of poverty is implicated in most of the challenges facing Viroqua, including domestic violence, alcohol and substance abuse, and child abuse.

Main Street

Viroqua is one of 30 Main Street cities in the state of Wisconsin. The Main Street program is a source of federal funding for revitalization and economic development. Viroqua applied for the Main Street program in 1989 and is the smallest community in Wisconsin with Main Street status. This entitles the Viroqua Chamber, a private, nonprofit organization, to free technical assistance in organization, economic development, town promotion and tourism, and beautification of its structures and other properties. The work that the community has done is clearly visible on Main Street where several unique shops and restaurants do business. The Temple Theater is currently undergoing renovation by volunteers from the community and more than 176 volunteers recently painted a large mural near the Western Wisconsin Technical College. The Chamber is currently working with the business community to fill a vacant building on Main Street. Main Street is clean, tidy, and busy with both car and pedestrian traffic.

Viroqua Schools

According to a guidance counselor at one of the local schools, one of Viroqua's assets is the diversity of schooling opportunities it offers, especially considering its small size. There are two elementary schools. Liberty Pole serves children from around Vernon County, and City Elementary School serves only Viroqua children. The public middle school currently enrolls approximately 350 children in grades K-4. The public high school is on the same grounds as both the city elementary and public middle schools. Almost 500 students are in grades 9-12. Two alternative programs exist for public high school students. One, a charter school initiative, provides students with extensive opportunities for independent study. Another, called Better Futures, targets a small number of students from around Vernon County who, because of a variety of risk factors, are in need of a change in school environment.

In addition to the public schools, the Pleasant Ridge Waldorf School teaches grades K-8 following the education philosophy of Rudolf Steiner. There is also a small Waldorf-inspired high school, the Youth Initiative High School. These two schools are private and therefore charge tuition, but Chamber of Commerce staff reported that financial aid is available. According to the Chamber of Commerce, no one is turned away for inability to pay. Finally, there is a non-denominational private school for grades K-12 called the Cornerstone Christian Academy. The Western Wisconsin Technical College, headquartered in La Crosse, operates a campus in Viroqua. It offers business, human services, general education, and industrial-technologies courses. For juniors and seniors in academic good standing, the school offers courses for both college and high school credit. The technical college also offers youth who attend the Waldorf school or the alternative school the opportunity to pursue their High School Equivalency Diploma.

The Local Economy

The heavily agricultural economy has taken a severe hit recently, especially because of the lawsuits and negative publicity concerning tobacco. Growing tobacco used to provide for a comfortable living in some areas of Wisconsin, but now it is increasingly difficult to sustain such a farm. “Tobacco Days” used to bring the town together to pack tobacco, enjoy special foods and entertainment, and go on carnival rides. Now that “Tobacco Days” are a thing of the past, the sense of community has suffered greatly, according to state officials representing the Viroqua area. Chamber of Commerce staff said that some farmers are turning to organic farming as well as cultivating grapes in order to make a living.

Some of the main employers include two nursing homes, the schools, and the local hospital. The nursing homes and the hospital each employ roughly 300 people. There is also a fertilizer plant, a Nelson Mufflers plant, and a local industrial park, which offers jobs in packing and distributing products for sale at retail outlets. In 1986, Wal-Mart built a large store just on the edge of town. This had a negative impact on Main Street shops, and seven stores closed down after the retail giant opened for business. The efforts of the Viroqua Chamber to provide technical assistance to new businesses and to lead revitalization efforts in town has helped the area recover from that shock.

While the Viroqua Chamber and area business are making significant efforts to provide employment opportunities in the area, youth that we talked to were not optimistic about job prospects and career opportunities in Viroqua. Most of them reported wanting to leave the area after high school. Youth also revealed that high school dropouts and high school graduates who have been unable to find a job hang around Viroqua causing trouble. The lack of employment opportunities may be leading these individuals to engage in selling drugs or to offer to buy alcohol for underage drinkers, for a small “fee.”

Poverty

Poverty in Viroqua “looks” very different from poverty in more urban areas. Families are often isolated on farms far from the center of town. The heart of the community, Main Street and the downtown, appears free of the typical signs of poverty—people asking for money, boarded up storefronts, abandoned buildings, blighted structures, and run-down housing units. Those living in the center of town may be unaware that families living on the outskirts are engaged in daily struggles to eat, clothe, and shelter themselves. The isolation experienced by poor families exacerbates their struggle, since accessing available resources is difficult for them.

Most observers believe that poverty plays a role in domestic violence, child abuse, alcoholism, substance abuse, low parental involvement, and other factors affecting youth violence. Each of these problems is a key element of this case study. It is possible that parents engaged in a constant battle to make ends meet take out their anger, frustration, depression, and fear on each other and on their children. This, in turn, can lead to higher rates of violence and substance abuse among young people. The emotional wounds sustained by growing up in such an environment can come to manifest themselves in depression and withdrawal, violence, and a disdain for authority and rules.

Challenges Facing Viroqua

The challenges facing Viroqua in the area of youth violence are complex and multidimensional. All of them have causes and display symptoms that reach beyond Viroqua to larger cultural and economic issues. Nevertheless, adults working with youth and the youth themselves identified the following concrete challenges that they perceive in the community.

Adult Influences on Youth

The picture painted by youth and community members revealed that adult involvement in the lives of the youth is a matter of great importance. The challenge that Viroqua faces is fostering positive and meaningful relationships between young people and adults, including parents and teachers. Discussion with community teens revealed that they want to know that adults are paying attention to their needs and that adults can be sought out when assistance is needed. Parents are important role models to their own children and to the children's peers. If the parents engage in behavior that is not appropriate and they condone the inappropriate actions of their children, the community as a whole is greatly affected. Everyone, from a local pastor, to a teacher, a guidance counselor, a police officer, and a social worker, stressed that the community at large, specifically a large proportion of the parents, tolerate underage drinking and drug abuse.

The generational element to the substance abuse problem deserves attention. Last year, a young man was killed in a car accident driving from his own high school graduation party, hosted by his parents who had served alcohol during the evening. Many in the community, including high school students, frequently commented that it is commonplace for youth to consume alcohol in the presence of their parents. Also, young people said that parents frequently allow the youth to have access to the alcohol in the home and even purchase alcohol for their teenage sons and daughters. This places great liability on to the adults. The rationale seems to be that if they drink with their kids at home, or allow their kids and their friends to drink at home, the kids won't be out on the streets getting into trouble. In the 1999 Vernon County Youth Report, the children of parents who expressed disapproval of the teen drinking were three times less likely to use alcohol in the past month (p. 4). The survey also found that 19 percent of the youth drank at the residence of another teen with that teen's parent's permission (p. 28). Parents are often coping with their own addiction problems and may not be capable of helping their children, or they simply may not realize that by ignoring the behavior and in fact making it possible for the teenagers to obtain alcohol, that they are in essence approving of the behavior. Social workers and teachers in the area cite difficulty in teaching kids the dangers of alcohol and other drugs when the kids' parents and grandparents use those substances. The most significant barrier to fighting the problems is that young people argue that if their parents do it, why shouldn't they?

Parents sometimes want to be their children's friends, not their parents. That is the opinion of teachers, police officers, and social workers, as well as some high school students. It is also one element of the problem with tolerance of underage drinking and truancy. Two students at the high school declared that parents should be parents because parents being friends with their kid doesn't work. They cited the need for structure and help in making good decisions. A teacher who works with the special education program at the high school says, "We are trying so hard to give kids what we didn't have, that we have forgotten to give them what we did have." Materialism and a sense of entitlement to one's own television, car, and bedroom are rampant among area young people, according to various community members. The effects of the materialism may cause parents in Viroqua to become reluctant to get involved in their kids' lives in ways other than giving them things. Also, individuals within a household are often isolated from the rest of the family, especially when watching television, which seems to hinder the development of interpersonal skills. Many parents understandably do not want to admit they have some problems dealing with their teenage sons and daughters. School officials, police, and human service workers describe parents as reluctant to ask for help or to take responsibility for their child's actions.

One of the biggest obstacles faced by the community is getting parents involved in the lives of youth. Repeatedly, different community members expressed their distress over the lack of parental involvement. The monthly meetings held by the Vernon County Partnership Council, a group of human services workers, law enforcement personnel, and school administrators, are rarely attended by parents even though they are actively invited to join. At most, one or two parents show up. A local church invites parents to join in conversation and fellowship while their children attend confirmation classes. Four out of 35 parents accepted the offer. A high school teacher declared that if something does not change with parenting skills and involvement in the community, a crisis will occur.

Students expressed their frustration that it is hard to seek out adults for help who have a genuine interest in the lives and issues of young people. They want to know that their voices are heard and are acted upon, not just considered. Some students said that they are often asked for their opinions but that their feedback is often ignored without explanation. One student said very clearly, "We are expected to act like adults but we are treated like children." The point that the teenagers want adults to understand is that they feel that young people will only engage with the adults to the extent that the adults involve themselves in the life of the youth. The concern was that many students would approach teachers and other school personnel with their concerns more often if they felt that those adults would take some action. They want to be heard, not just listened to. The youth expressed the desire for adults to be actively involved in their lives. The students expressed that they thought this was especially needed for their peers whose parents were not showing active interest or involvement. The words of one student sum this up: "I just want to know that there is somewhere to go if I need to."

School Environment

Teachers and administrators in Viroqua schools work hard to provide youth with an environment that keeps them safe and equips them to deal with the difficulties of growing up. Our conversations with students, however, reveal certain important areas where the schools might do more to respond to the needs of youth in Viroqua. Youth spend a large portion of their time in school and draw many of their influences and impressions of the larger world from their experiences there. Therefore, the role of schools in creating a safe, peaceful, and productive environment for kids is crucial. But schools also have limited control over what goes on beyond school grounds

and outside of school hours. Therefore, it is also up to schools to provide kids with the tools and education that they need to relate constructively with the outside world.

Perhaps surprisingly, Viroqua high school students directly expressed the importance of consistent and structured authority in the schools. Particularly, they seemed to agree that a recent lack of continuity in the high school administration was a strong reason why the school had failed to properly address certain problems. Among the problems mentioned were the failure of the school to focus attention on difficult issues such as suicide and sexual activity, the existence of an unaccepting and negative peer environment, the unavailability of adults in the school to respond directly to individual student concerns, teacher burnout, preferential treatment by teachers, and lack of student input in school affairs. Youth also expressed the desire to see school administrators at more activities to convey the message that events in which students participate are important to the school and to the community. A former principal was spoken of very highly because he made a point of attending most athletic events. Now, according to the students, the principal is only there if it is a championship game. It is certainly possible that certain student concerns are overstated and do not represent a balanced perspective of what goes on within the school environment, but the concerns are definitely important as a reflection of how students experience school and as a context in which to view the efforts of adults.

Two of the most striking comments were that youth often viewed their school environment as being negative overall and that youth felt powerless to change the situation. Students noted that teasing and harassment, including sexual harassment, were frequent and in large part defined the social interactions among their peers. They also indicated that students were very socially segregated according to family background, athletic talent, and academic ability. They reported that there is no overall camaraderie among classmates. One student who had recently moved to Viroqua commented that his new high school was significantly different from his old one in this regard. His situation enabled him to make direct comparisons between different school environments. He was also able to describe the difficulty students have with being able to find an adult in the school to confide in and to look to for help. These challenges were new to him, as at his old school, guidance counselors were readily available to engage in conversation with students.

Students expressed a definite pessimism about changing their school environment, mostly because they believed that teachers and administrators were unresponsive to their input and unavailable to them on an individual basis. They felt that teachers were often complicit in creating a negative peer environment by treating students with good family names or athletic talent preferentially. They also expressed the opinion that many teachers were burned out and simply not willing to tackle any difficult issues. One student commented that too many resources focus on unimportant disciplinary measures such as enforcing a dress code at the expense of preventing harassment and curbing drug and alcohol abuse during school hours. Finally, students did not feel that there were adequate forums for discussing difficult issues, either on an individual basis or in groups. For example, when asked if they thought it would do any good to report harassment among students, they responded that most students did not have the self-esteem to assert their concerns and, even if they did, action on the part of the school was unlikely. Furthermore, they reported that sexual activity and suicide were significant problems among their peers, but these issues tended to be avoided by school personnel. One example of this was relayed in a story about a high school student who intentionally drove into a semi-truck a few years ago. The suicidal motives were clear to the students, but the teachers and administrators dismissed it as an accidental death and did not facilitate a dialogue with concerned students.

Despite these complaints, students reported feeling completely safe from physical violence within the schools. Viroqua public schools have taken several measures to create a safe environment. First, they have put in place a zero tolerance policy concerning drugs, guns, and any signs of gang activity on school grounds. Schools cooperate with law enforcement officials in order to remain informed and up-to-date about various warning signs, such as gang-related graffiti and clothing and in order to make use of police enforcement resources, such as drug-sniffing dogs. The schools also attempt to hold kids responsible for their behavior outside of school by implementing statewide regulations concerning eligibility for athletics and other school activities. Alcohol and drug offenses can result in kids being suspended or banned from participating in school activities. Viroqua schools further address the conditions surrounding youth violence through education programs, by addressing family and mental health issues, and by combating truancy. Often, the positive aspects of these efforts go unnoticed by students.

One of the most important successes in the area of youth violence issues in Viroqua has been the level of collaboration between schools and other agencies that deal with youth. Most adults in Viroqua mentioned as a community strength the willingness to cooperate and share information among these organizations. For example, schools and police share information and by doing so have been very successful in tracking and addressing potential gang activity. Agencies generally have a cooperative attitude, which can often lead to information sharing and the kinds of referrals that meet the needs of individual youths. The district attorney, county judge, Human Services intake worker, and youth liaison police officer meet monthly with school officials to discuss the needs of youth in Viroqua.

Violence

Violence is broadly defined for the purposes of this discussion. It includes acts against self, such as suicide and self-mutilation, as well as acts directed toward others. School personnel state that over the past couple of years, the suicide rate has been very low within the teen population. Youth reported, however, that thinking about suicide is very common among their peers. Eating disorders and the incidents of violence in the form of cutting and are concerns as well. One school official suggested that the eating disorders and cutting were linked to a “groupthink” mentality. While both boys and girls engaged in cutting, the incidents were few. Girls were more likely to have an eating disorder, particularly bulimia.

The same staff member also stated a concern for youth safety related to harassing or teasing behaviors by peers. Examples of young male teens walking up and touching young females without consent were described by students. This could be classically defined as sexual assault. The police department stated that incidents of sexual assault among teens are more often reported than in the past. This is not, they believe, because it occurs more but because young people are more aware of what sexual assault is and how to report it.

Violence against others seems to stem from individual conflicts and not group retaliation. School personnel reported that fights rarely occur on school property. The police department reported that teen disputes do occur and that typically the disputes are verbal. Some incidents of physical altercations have been reported. A couple of incidents that involved weapons were also reported. The typical weapon has been a knife. Police and the school officials fear that the violence will increase in intensity in the near future. As a result of Viroqua’s rural setting where a large percentage of individuals hunt, guns are readily available to the youth. Several community members mentioned this concern.

The police department noted an increase in violence among young females and that the impetus is often a dispute regarding a young male. Viroqua females are more often resorting to physical violence than in the past and are more likely to use weapons in their disputes. According to both school and police officials, it was rare to see females involved in physical fights before about two years ago.

Underage Drinking and Substance Abuse

Alcohol and drug use is a major concern for the community. School personnel, the police department, the religious community, and treatment providers discussed the issue of chemical use on numerous occasions. The concern is that substance use leads to other of the major problems for the youth in the community.

School officials, students, police, and treatment providers have also expressed concern that alcohol and marijuana do make it to the school grounds. It appears as though it is primarily for personal use but it is also possible that it is being sold on the premises during the school day. One high school student estimated that roughly 30 percent of students in her school do drugs during the school day. These kids pressure their peers to try marijuana, and many kids talk about smoking pot even if they don't actually do it—in order to be left alone.

The Vernon County Youth Survey Report from 1999 was administered to students in seventh to twelfth grade in Hillsboro, Westby, Kickapoo, LaFarge, and De Soto. Viroqua youth were not surveyed, but the results do provide a good estimate of behavior patterns in Viroqua since the demographics of the other communities are very similar. This report stated that 32 percent of the county's teens used alcohol at least once a month (p. 20). A study conducted by Wisconsin's Department of Public Instruction showed that 33 percent of sophomores and 43 percent of seniors in high school are problem drinkers and/or drug users. This same study stated that teens in rural and small communities have easy access to alcohol and other drugs (1991). Of the 1,403 young people surveyed, 70 percent reported they have easy or very easy access to alcohol (p. 4). Thirty-four percent of the teens stated that at least once a month they had ridden in a vehicle with a teen driver who had been drinking. The survey reported that 42 percent drank at parties (p. 28). Marijuana use by the teens was reported to be 14 percent for at least monthly use (p. 21).

Truancy

According to school personnel, the truancy rate at the high school is around 94 percent. Truancy is such a dilemma that the school is asking for the parents' cooperation in allowing police officers to enter their homes in some of the most severe cases and bring the youth to school. The school has also forwarded cases to the District Attorney for prosecution. According to school staff, this has helped enforce the attendance regulations mandated by the Department of Public Instruction.

The parental tolerance issue is an important element of the truancy problem. According to a high school teacher, the truancy rate in Viroqua is comparable to what is found in big cities like Milwaukee. The truancy problem that high school staff and the police department deal with is made worse by those parents who don't take responsibility for making sure their children attend school. When truancy becomes chronic, some parents have withdrawn their child from school rather than deal with complaints and requests from teachers to address the problem. These parents declare that they will home school their children. The State Department of Public Instruction does not require any formal monitoring procedures for home schooling. The situation is especially troubling because many parents do not have high educational attainment themselves. Area social work-

ers and high school teachers are extremely doubtful that these kids are doing anything more at home than watching television and playing video games.

“There’s Nothing To Do Here”

As with almost any community, many people in Viroqua report a lack of “things to do” and “places to go” for youth. In conversations with youth themselves, such concerns were confirmed. The usual prescription for idle, loitering teens who might be dabbling in risky behavior is to provide them with more activities to occupy their time and divert their interests toward constructive social interactions. But young people in any community almost always complain about having nothing to do, regardless of the number and quality of structured activities that are available to them. Certainly, part of the process of growing up involves, in some sense, rejecting structured, conventional activities in favor of more informal pursuits such as “hanging out.” In particular, teens seem to want a place where they can socialize in an informal setting. Among the possibilities mentioned were a pool hall, an underage dance club, or perhaps an open gym.

As recent history demonstrates, informal settings for youth are not easy to provide. In recent years, several attempts have been made in Viroqua to establish a teen center as a place for youth to spend time. These attempts all failed because they were unsuccessful at balancing two goals: being a constructive place for youth and being a place where most teens would want to spend time. One center was too lax, allowing kids to show up drunk and not enforcing rules, while others simply failed to attract the interest of many youth. The challenge seems to be not about providing kids with ever more options, but about serving the entire youth population, especially those kids who aren’t inclined to participate in anything. When asked about the history of teen centers in Viroqua, high school students mentioned that they don’t want more programs that focus on keeping kids away from drugs and alcohol. They want something different.

Among the many options available to youth in Viroqua are school activities, city recreation programs, civic involvement opportunities, church groups, and mentoring programs. School activities cater to a variety of interests, including athletics, drama, band, student council, and Future Farmers of America. Beyond school, the Viroqua Parks and Recreation Department offers a wide range of team sports, recreational instruction, and outdoor activities. A community hockey arena provides large numbers of Viroqua youth, both boys and girls, with structured hockey leagues. Civic involvement opportunities include groups such as 4H, volunteering at the hospital, or participating in community events such as the annual Youth Fest. Viroqua’s many churches provide youth groups, fellowship, worship, and moral guidance. Mentoring opportunities are available through such organizations as the Rotary Club and several area banks. All of these structured opportunities provide various levels of personal development and constructive contact with adults and the larger community.

Viroqua is fortunate to have a community of adults who are dedicated to providing activities for youth. The Parks and Recreation program has steadily grown in the past six years in response to widespread interest in the various offerings and a genuine opportunity to serve youth. Total youth enrollment in the various programs is around 3,000 (including duplicate enrollments in different programs), and the Parks and Recreation director estimates that close to 90 percent of kids participate at some time in the program’s offerings. A further example of the community generously responding to needs and opportunities for recreation is a donation made recently by a resident whose will stipulated that the funds be used to build a pool for Viroqua’s youth. The city is currently in the process of debating how best to use the donation, which would cover the cost of

building a pool but not its continued operation. Underlying the debate is a genuine concern for the city's young people and a desire to use the donation in its most effective way.

Despite the wide range of activities available, a significant portion of youth in Viroqua is missed by such efforts or is not fully reached. Sometimes there are concrete factors contributing to lack of involvement, such as transportation barriers, monetary costs, or lack of interest. For example, involvement in programs at the community hockey arena costs families several hundred dollars per season per child. But usually there are other factors at work as well. Many youth have overtly negative associations about group participation and are unwilling to take the risks that organized social activities entail. Furthermore, mere attendance at group activities does not necessarily ensure that all kids are fully reached. Involvement in community activities by youth is important beyond just keeping them off the streets and occupying their time. It is also important that all youths have the genuine opportunity to foster self-esteem, a sense of belonging, group and individual identity, and community values.

In a seemingly ironic twist, much of the daily activity of kids in Viroqua is adult-guided, be it school, after-school programs, or sports. In one teacher's words, there is no kid-directed fun anymore. Kids have lost the ability to direct play among their peers. Summer school is one example of this. In recent years, summer school classes were fun; kids could take rock climbing or classes in art. Now, "summer school is school," as one youth said. Boys and girls are divided into separate classes and activities, and groups are divided by age. There is no longer a neighborhood situation of older kids directing the younger kids in play and of boys and girls mixing naturally together. Young people, teachers say, no longer know how to be creative during the free time they do have. They have lost the ability to come up with appropriate play activities spontaneously. Teachers see this during school, too. When students are asked to complete projects on their own, it is sometimes nearly impossible for them to do so. They are unguided and lack follow-through. This might be what is behind the desire on the part of teens for "things to do" that are informal. Their comments suggest that a significant portion of youth who otherwise might attend country parties or engage in other types of risky behavior would benefit from increased opportunities for unstructured, yet supervised activities. The sad result of not providing these opportunities is that kids can make bad choices because they have not learned how to make good ones. As two high school students in a class for students with behavioral problems or criminal histories put it, in your free time, you get in trouble or go to prison; you steal cars and end up in foster care.

Domestic Violence and Child Abuse

Schools, law enforcement, and human service agencies all report high levels of violence in the home, both child abuse and violence between adults. Such violence presents significant problems both because of its devastating effect on youth and families and because of its hidden nature. Family violence tends to be underreported and thus is difficult to address properly. There is some sense that Viroqua's high rates of poverty and its rural geography contribute to the entrenchment of domestic violence. Isolation of victims from economic, family, and social support systems plays a key role in the perpetuation of family violence.

Domestic violence and child abuse are highly correlated and present three general risk factors for children: the risk of witnessing abuse, the risk of being abused, and the risk of neglect as a result of abuse (See "In Harm's Way: Domestic Violence and Child Maltreatment" a 2000 report from the National Clearinghouse on Child Abuse and Neglect Information in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services). All of these risks represent, in their own right, significant forms

of violence in the lives of some children and youth in Viroqua. They also underlie many of the violent activities in which youth become involved, be it delinquent behavior, domestic abuse, or other kinds of criminal activity. Significant cognitive, behavioral, and emotional problems result from growing up in violent homes. Recent research has clearly demonstrated the connection between having a violent childhood and future criminal activity. It has been found that the single most predictive factor in youth delinquency is the incidence of domestic violence or child abuse in families (See especially *Ending the Cycle of Domestic Violence: Community Responses to Children of Battered Women*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1995). Youth who grow up in abusive households are much more likely to abuse their future families. Moreover, they are six times more likely to commit suicide, 26 times more likely to commit sexual assault, 57 times more likely to abuse drugs, and 74 times more likely to commit crimes against other persons (A helpful Web site we found on this subject is produced by a group called Breaking the Cycle Inc. The URL is www.breakingthecycleinc.com/btc011.htm).

Community Responses

Several groups and organizations are working to help area youth and families deal with some of the specific problems facing the community. From parenting classes offered by social workers, to fellowship programs at a local church, from parent-teacher conferences at the high school, to community-wide events, Viroqua is reaching out. The following are some examples.

Community Action Program

The Vernon County Partnership Council was organized by area school districts and area agencies to address alcohol, tobacco, and drug concerns and to coordinate prevention activities. In Viroqua, the Community Action Program administers the council's programs. Their offices are centrally located on Main Street, and the front entrance features a large bulletin board with dozens of brochures, pamphlets, and other informational materials. Resource guides on a variety of topics are also available. The Community Action Program (CAP) operates its programs with several grants, including funds from the Tobacco Control Board, a Drug Free Communities Grant, CESA #4, and the Justice Department.

Using Tobacco Control Board Funds, CAP distributes the "Cost of Smoking Calculator" as part of its anti-smoking campaign. The Office of Justice Department funds also support the Teen Court. CAP sponsors community-wide events including alcohol-free events, pays for special speakers at the middle and high schools, and runs Family First and Teen-Mothers classes. Recent speakers have focused on bullying and violence. Ron Glodoski, a former gang member who dedicates his life to help other young people, recently accepted an invitation to speak at the high school. The staff have developed the "Guide for Parents: About Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs." The guide is a colorful flip chart listing warning signs of substance abuse and where to get help.

Teen Court

Many of the county's referrals for underage drinking and other youth crimes go to the newly created Teen Court that is run by the Community Action Program. The Teen Court was recently established, so it is hard to tell what effect it has had on the youth. Its administrators describe it as a useful project that has benefited the area youth by allowing them to hear how their behavior impacts the community. Viroqua's Teen Court is designed to hear cases of first time youth offenders who admit guilt. A teen jury then assigns a punishment of community service

work, among other things. One task that each offender must perform is to serve as a member of a future panel. Currently, Teen Court is accepting referrals from law enforcement, human services, and county judges. In 2001, 84 cases were referred to Teen Court. Of these cases, 40 were related to truancy and/or alcohol or drug use.

Family and Children's Center: Project Prevent

The Family and Children's Center is a community agency that provides counseling and educational programs. Project Prevent targets youth who are deemed "at risk," particularly those between the ages of 12 and 17 who either have been required by the courts to participate (one-quarter of participants) or who are referred by their schools or families and are participating voluntarily. The agency reported that about 80 percent of the referrals are for youth from single parent families living below the poverty threshold. Many of the youth referred to the program have low academic scores and have been labeled as having Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD), conduct disorder or adjustment disorders.

The program goal is to prevent at-risk youth and those with a history of criminal behavior from getting into trouble at school, at home, or in the community. Project Prevent has several components that help the youth in their interactions with family, school, peers, and the community. The program combines individual counseling and family sessions to assist the family in dealing with the youth, and it allows for a structured environment for the youth to confront problems at home. Youth are given opportunities to practice skills learned to enhance their interpersonal relationships thus allowing for the youth to communicate more effectively. Project Prevent also has community service as a core principle. Participants may already have convictions on their records, and giving back to the community is stressed from day one of the six-month program. The participants also learn what their community has to offer them. Through the recreational activities planned, the youth are finding positive and constructive ways to utilize their free time. The youth learn that the community offers them places to hike, camp, associate with peers and explore other interests.

Project Prevent helps youth accept responsibility for their actions. The program utilizes a cognitive restructuring program similar to criminal thinking to show the youth participants how their own feelings and thoughts lead them to react irresponsibly. The participants also have to write weekly goal statements for four target areas in their lives. Participants have to define what they want to accomplish and how they are going to meet those goals in their home life, at school, in the program, and for themselves personally. Part of the program allows for youth to challenge each other. The kids have to defend their behavior and also learn how their behavior is perceived and judged by their peers.

The program is an after-school program that addresses all facets of the participants' lives, so close collaboration with family, care providers, and the schools is needed. The program has served approximately 60 youth with roughly even numbers of male and female participants. The program is free of charge and transportation is provided for the youth so that families do not need juggle schedules in order to ensure the youth's participation. Project Prevent teaches the skills that the youth need to change their behaviors and their thought processes. An after-care program is also available to participants so they can maintain their new skills.

Insights Program

Maintaining a police presence in Viroqua schools has been an important part of addressing youth issues. One member of the police force devotes half of her time to working with youth and

makes frequent appearances on school grounds. She conducts a program called “Insights,” as part of the school’s curriculum. The program is designed to educate youth about law enforcement related issues. “Insights” not only provides specific information to youth, but it also allows kids to interact with a member of the police force before they might get into trouble. Thus, it enables them to view the police as a potential resource rather than as an adversary. The youth police liaison often deals with youth anonymously or in general, hypothetical terms in order to convey vital information without creating threatening or potentially incriminating relationships. The “Insights” program is delivered to every student in the 7th grade and to group of 11th graders that are referred by teachers, family, or county services. It covers a variety of important subjects, such as alcohol, drugs, harassment, sexual assault, and the criminal justice process.

One of the most effective units focuses on child abuse and domestic violence. Students learn what constitutes home abuse, watch a video about child abuse called “Radio Flyer,” and are asked to write anonymous essays so that they can reflect on personal experiences that they’ve had. Students also, of course, have the opportunity to approach the officer about any specific individual issues. This unit is a very emotional experience for some students as they acknowledge or become aware for the first time of abuse that they’ve suffered. Providing kids with this acknowledgment and the language to begin to talk about issues of abuse goes a long way toward beginning personal healing and ending cycles of abuse.

Church

The churches in Viroqua realize the need to address youth issues and to collaborate with other community institutions. Churches are in the unique position of offering youth structured and quality interactions with community members in a moral context. Viroqua’s interfaith council of churches recently sponsored an event that gathered youth from various churches in the area. Although the event was not very well attended, it reflects the growing concern among faith communities about youth in Viroqua. In addition, ongoing efforts by clergy to meet with law enforcement officials, schools, and human service agencies reflect a commitment to a broad community response.

The largest faith community in Viroqua, Good Shepard Lutheran Church, is an example of a congregation that is attempting to increase its outreach to youth. Programs such as religious education, youth groups, and particularly the confirmation process have traditionally been ways that the congregation has interacted with youth. Recently, however, leaders are attempting to increase outreach toward youth. Specifically, a more comprehensive confirmation process, a youth mentoring program, and parent education classes are measures that have either been attempted or discussed. The confirmation process is viewed as a key opportunity for reaching youth because it comes at an important developmental age, eighth or ninth grade, and because the process itself is about assuming adult responsibility. Also, there is an apparent commitment to the process on the part of parents to having their children confirmed. A possible youth mentoring program would call upon youths to select one adult from the congregation, other than a family member, to act as their mentor. This mentor would meet regularly with the youth and share in church activities such as fellowship and service projects. Ideally, youths would cultivate connections to adults beyond their immediate family and in turn begin to relate in a more mature way to the larger community.

One of the barriers standing in the way of churches playing a greater role in the lives of young people is that religion is one factor that becomes the basis for teasing and harassing at

school. Local teenagers pointed out that the “Christian” activities and the young people who participate in them get laughed at by other students.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conversations with various members of the community—both adults and youth—revealed widespread recognition of the various problems that the community faces. In recent years, the community has responded successfully to the needs of youth and families. Community institutions have collaborated and have sometimes attempted to involve parents and youth in community-wide solutions. The persistence of youth violence problems demands that more be done. Viroqua must build on its successes, such as the collaboration between police and the schools on the policy of zero-tolerance of gang activity, and remain open to new and creative approaches. The community must also continue to collaborate and communicate. Youth violence is not a static phenomenon.

Organizations within Viroqua are also changing as their budgets rise and fall and as they adjust their missions. The current state budget situation poses a serious threat to many of the human service agencies as well as the schools in being able to deliver their services. School and city officials, along with administrators of local nonprofit and human service organizations, should continue to actively research funding possibilities from the federal and state governments.

Involving Adults

The first step in effectively involving parents and adults in community solutions to youth violence is to recognize the reasons they aren't likely to participate. Most parents, especially single parents, simply do not have much time to spare in their lives. They are unlikely to participate in anything unless they are utterly convinced that it is worthwhile. Many are justifiably resistant to outsiders instructing them in how to raise their children. Adults in the community who are involved need to remain involved and draw more adults in. Recent failures to involve parents suggest that creative approaches are needed to convince parents and other adults of the need and potential benefits of becoming involved in youth issues. The parents do need to be involved but until the importance of their participation is realized, the community needs to see that the needs of the youth are attended to. The youth do not appear to be making unreasonable requests of their parents and other adults.

Accountability

In some cases parents need to be held more accountable for their involvement with their teenagers. The curfew law in Viroqua presents one opportunity to impose sanctions on parents. Currently, youth are fined if they are found to be not at home past curfew. Parents might also be required to attend alcohol and drug awareness classes at the schools or local community venues. Young people also need to be held accountable for their actions. Drinking and showing up to school drunk should not be tolerated at all by school officials. Several high school students cited this as a major problem and were concerned and confused over why no action is taken regarding these kinds of behaviors. They seem to be looking for more structure and more discipline in the areas that cause problems for the greater school community, namely drugs. Teachers and coaches must strictly enforce violations of the athletic code by holding the youth accountable for their behaviors. The matter of accountability needs to be dealt with across the spectrum.

Involving Youth

The dramatic failure of several attempts at establishing a Teen Community or Recreation Center in Viroqua highlight an area in which the community seems lacking. Young people must be consulted and brought to the planning table for these kinds of efforts. A youth planning board whose members represent the views of local youth and participate in town meetings is one way to achieve this. One young woman relayed a story of being asked to sit in on a committee responsible for hiring a new school administrator. She felt that her presence was merely symbolic and that she wasn't asked for her opinion. The idea to involve her was wonderful but the involvement also needs to be on a larger scale, whether a youth advisory board is created or whether existing youth organizations are invited to attend town hearings, school board meetings, and other such decision making meetings. This may allow for the youth to feel as though their opinions are with merit and worth consideration.

Collaborative Approaches

The relationships that have formed between the schools and the police department should be fostered and used as a prototype for further collaborations between other groups and individuals. Churches and schools working together might find ways to get the attention of area parents. Schools and the human service agencies cooperating on initiatives to address alcohol and drugs may see new successes. One important goal that must be pursued is the active tracking of those kids who slip between the cracks. The 10 percent to 20 percent of Viroqua youth not being served by the existing school or recreational programs are the young people most at risk.

Baraboo: Pulling Together for the Youth

Sara Schnoor and Sara Vail

The Baraboo area is located between Wisconsin Dells and Madison, directly off of Interstate 94. It is a politically conservative community, which has elements of both a rural and suburban area. Most residents are white and middle class, yet there is a significant population of migrant workers in the summer months. Recently, Baraboo has seen an influx of families into the area presumably to move out of the urban environments in Milwaukee and Chicago. In the past, Baraboo had been primarily an adult-oriented community, but the community is making efforts to pay attention to youth due to the fact that youth make up an increasing portion of the community than in the past. Currently, thirty-four percent of the population is under the age of 25. The per capita income for 1999 was \$24,355, well below the state average of \$27,390. The schools boast an impressive teacher-to-student ratio: one teacher for every 14 students. Student ACT scores, graduation rates, and attendance rates are all average for Wisconsin. Student participation in extracurricular activities exceeds the state average in the area of music, but is below average for athletics. Habitual truancy rates are far below the average level reported for the state.

Community Characteristics

Drug and Alcohol Use

Throughout our interviews in Baraboo, the area of largest concern was the prevalent use of substances by youth. While the underage drinking issue is more prevalent, Baraboo is not exempt from concerns regarding the use of other illegal and legal drugs. Students and administrators feel that marijuana may actually be more accessible to students than alcohol, although the students did mention an area gas station that sells to underage buyers.

According to law enforcement, the primary drugs seen in this area are marijuana, cocaine, and ecstasy. However, use is not limited to those three; young people are also reportedly using ketamine (Special K), crack, and heroin. Prescription medications used for non-medicinal purposes is an area of growing concern, especially Oxycontin, which is intended to be used by terminal cancer patients and chronic pain sufferers. It was interesting that the responses of students and law enforcement only overlapped in reference to marijuana. The main drugs mentioned by students at Baraboo High School were marijuana, acid, and mushrooms. This may mean that the students using mushrooms and acid are undetected by the community.

In addition to the drug concerns, underage drinking is an issue. Wisconsin has a drinking culture, and in Baraboo young people have many of their first experiences with alcohol at home under the supervision of their parents. This permissiveness, specifically regarding youth alcohol

consumption, was mentioned frequently in our interviews. Drunk driving also came up as a frequent problem. This was interesting given that the students said there were regularly other students who would go to parties and not drink so they could offer to drive home people who were drinking. Although this appears to be a great idea on the surface, one parent voiced a very logical concern. She does not want her children providing this service because she is worried that others driving near the area of the parties may be driving under the influence.

According to the students and some administrators, there is concern about chronic alcohol and marijuana use. Students estimated that 50% of those in high school use alcohol and/or marijuana at least once per day. That percentage rose to at least 75% when we asked how many used twice per month. Feeding into these high estimates is the students' belief that there is frequent use during the lunch period of the school day. According to students, teachers are not vigilant in determining if a student is under the influence of a substance.

High School students believe that most alcohol use began during their freshman year; however, they felt that currently, youth are experimenting at a much younger age. They thought that most males began using before females, but that use evened out as they moved through high school. In addition, they believed that athletes use more than the average student and that the Athletic Code is not a deterrent to use. Reasons students gave for using alcohol and other drugs included peer pressure and boredom.

Parents

As a whole, school administrators, human services providers and youth describe the parents in the community as permissive. The professionals and the students in Baraboo mentioned that parents would rather have students drink at their homes, where they know what the youth are doing and know they are safe, than have them off somewhere unsupervised. The parents themselves also echoed this sentiment. Students mentioned that some parents would leave their homes so that a party may take place there.

Adult misuse of alcohol and other substances is also a concern because it may present these behaviors as normative. According to many community leaders and the youth of Baraboo, regardless of the message parents may hope to be sending, it is being interpreted as one of at best an indifference to underage drinking. If youth continue to view underage alcohol consumption as acceptable by the adults in the community the problem will only continue to grow.

On a positive note, there was recently an article published in the *Baraboo News Republic* calling to light the issue of underage drinking in Baraboo. According to parents, it has prompted productive conversations between leaders in the community as well as between parents and their children. As with teachers, there is a concern that parents may not be educated regarding the signs to watch for as a warning of possible substance abuse issues.

Recreation

Students and administrators alike felt that a major contributing factor to underage drinking problems was the lack of activities for youth in the Baraboo area. They also agreed that students tended to reject efforts by adults to structure their time. Students felt that until a friend had a driver's license or until they had one themselves, there was not much to do. Besides the Ringling Theatre, the bowling alley, and the public swimming pool, youth do not have places to go where they are allowed to congregate or "hang out." A parent mentioned that there is an old WalMart building that nothing is being done with. She thought it should be turned into something for the youth to enjoy, such as a roller rink.

Gangs, Youth Violence and Law Violations

Students attempting to fill their time in Baraboo do not generally resort to gang activity. However, there is a gang influence in the community that until this year has not drawn the attention of law enforcement. The primary gang that came up repeatedly in Baraboo is the Latin Counts, which is concentrated in the Wisconsin Dells area. Other gangs mentioned that might be present in the area were: Latin Kings, Native Crips, Third Folk, Gangster Disciples, and “Wannabes.” The limited gang activity in Baraboo usually stems from a few youth who may have recently moved to the area and claim affiliation with a gang from home. According to law enforcement, the gangs do not appear to be organized or generational in nature; however, there has been increasing activity this year that is suspected to be gang related.

Illegal activity in the area tends to be property damage, rather than violence toward other people. However, there was recently a confrontation at the bowling alley where a youth was shot with a “BB” gun. The public defender’s office noted that property damage and juvenile crime in general have been on the decline. There are concerns about gang tagging (which seems to cycle), vandalism, theft, and burglary. According to law enforcement, since the new Super Wal-Mart has opened, incidences of youth petty theft have increased. In addition, there have also been problems at K-Mart where youth not only have been stealing, but also are suspected of starting small fires in the building.

A concern regarding gang involvement or graffiti is that those involved seem to be getting younger and younger. Teachers and parents do not appear to be trained in what to watch for with the students with respect to gang affiliations. A law enforcement official commented that this is an area of concern because some parents are allowing their children to decorate their rooms with gang graffiti due to the fact they simply believe it is artwork. Training as part of a teacher in-service or once each semester as part of a staff meeting, regarding current trends in gang activity, would be of value. It would also be helpful to incorporate education for parents about what is gang graffiti versus what really is simply artistic expression. Often, it can be difficult to differentiate between the two.

Police

The Baraboo Police Department is understaffed according to those who work there. It is hard, they say, to bust house parties because they are not held in the same location from one week-end to the next and given the large areas of open space, there is less chance that a neighbor will call to complain. When we questioned the students about their interactions with police, they said they felt they are being targeted. They claim police regularly conduct searches during routine traffic violations, and some students stated that the police officers were rude.

In the schools, the students felt more positive about the police. They felt that the programs the police officers taught the students served to increase positive relationships between the youth and the community police officers. It became apparent from the beginning of our study that the school police liaison role is very demanding, requiring a person to be a police officer, teacher, parent and counselor. It seems as though it would be impossible for one person to carry out all of those roles, which gets back to the issue of the police department being understaffed and under funded.

The youth we spoke with also argued that the current curfew was ineffective and inappropriate. They mentioned that in the past the curfew was not enforced and now it is, which the students feel shows police inconsistency. Students also mentioned that they felt it was the job of the

parents, not the county, to decide how late their child could stay out. Many thought the curfew was a joke and were more willing to be home when their parents wanted them home, whether or not it was after curfew.

If students are taken to court, community service orders are generally only given out when a youth requests them. There is no formal monitoring system in place. Typically, the youth would end up working the hours off at a location such as the fire department by washing the engines or something of that nature. Each hour would decrease the fine amount by \$7. In most cases, the youth is simply assessed a fine for the behavior.

Truancy

Although habitual truancy rates in the Baraboo area are below the state average, they are still a concern in the community. After a student is given multiple warnings, parents can be ordered to attend school with the youth. According to school officials and law enforcement, some parents do not follow through with stressing the importance of mandatory school attendance.

Mental Health

Some of the substance abuse issues that we encountered may center on the issue of self-medicating, such as taking mind-altering amounts of Oxycontin. When we asked the students about mental health issues, such as depression, eating disorders, or anxiety issues they did not feel they were stigmatizing enough to cause people to self-medicate with illegal substances rather than seek professional help. When talking with professionals, we found one population of students often ignored are those with Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD), who may or may not be diagnosed. The concern is that these students, especially those not diagnosed or not taking their medication, may turn to marijuana to decrease the hyperactivity that can be a symptom of this disorder.

Prevention and Intervention Programs

DARE

In Baraboo, the DARE (Drug Abuse Resistance Education) Program is offered to students at the 6th grade level by Officer Chris Nielsen, the local “Officer of the Airwaves.” The DARE program began during the 1993-1994 school year and stresses that students respect themselves and others. DARE provides children with the knowledge and skills to recognize and resist peer pressure to experiment with tobacco, alcohol and other drugs. DARE also helps kids to learn about behaviors that reduce the risk of becoming involved in potentially dangerous situations and know how to react to situations in ways that help to protect his or her health.

GREAT

Gang Resistance Education and Training is also taught by a local police officer (the school district’s Police Liaison) Ruth Browning. The GREAT program has been integrated into the Baraboo Middle School Social Studies classes since the 1994-1995 school year. GREAT was created to enable youth to develop positive attitudes toward police officers, avoid conflicts, be responsible, set positive goals and resist peer pressure. It is hoped that teaching students these basic skills will result in non-violent behavior. The program encompasses four basic skill areas: personal, resiliency, resistance and social to prepare students to avoid violent behavior.

Families Come First

In Sauk County, the Families Come First program is a collaborative effort between the Baraboo Police Department, Baraboo School District, Division of Community Correction, Department of Human Services, parents, foster parents, Children's Service Society, Family Preservation and Support Services Initiative, Guardian Ad Litem, Lutheran Social Services and Renewal Unlimited, Inc. Families are referred to the program on a voluntary basis when they have special needs and have multiple service providers. The program provides coordinated services to families in a "coordinated, collaborative, comprehensive manner" and encourages "families to become full participants in the planning and delivery of services." This is accomplished through case management, which in Sauk County is shared by Lutheran Social Services and the Department of Human Services. The Families Come First program is aimed mainly toward families just beginning in the system and is considered a prevention program. Currently, between 33-35 families are involved county-wide.

Family Partnership Initiative

The Family Partnership Initiative is another program offered by the Sauk County Department of Human Services with case management provided by Lutheran Social Services. The major difference between the Family Partnership Initiative and Families Come First is that Family Partnership Initiative is usually a court-ordered requirement for families with youth in the juvenile justice system. The main goals of the program are to provide a normalized environment for youth and to support family-like settings. The care coordinators assigned to families have a stronger role in the social work aspect of case management, but are not bound to a particular model or philosophical approach for treatment. The program serves youth with mental health, alcohol and other drug addictions, delinquency and/or behavioral issues and their families. They stay very involved with families, give unconditional care and serve as a last resort for families that have nowhere else to turn. Essentially, the care coordinators never give up.

Sauk County Truancy Court

The Sauk County Truancy Court enforces the Wisconsin statutes defining truancy and habitual truants. Students between the ages of 12 and 17 who receive truancy tickets are referred to Truancy Court. If the student does not attend the court date, he receives an automatic fine of \$98.30 excluding court costs. Over the course of a semester, a student can accrue up to \$500 in truancy fines. Students who appear in court receive a variety of consequences including:

- an order to attend school
- a parental order to attend school with the child
- a forfeiture (fine)
- community service (work without pay)
- anything else that might individually help the student improve school attendance

Parents can be charged separately for contributing to a student's truancy and are held responsible for all court ordered consequences.

Boys and Girls Club

The Boys and Girls Club of Baraboo recently opened its doors and is struggling to gain membership. Students in the 3rd through 5th grade can join for just \$12 a year and go to the center anytime Monday through Friday between 3 and 7 p.m. Boys and Girls Clubs are dedicated to enhancing the development of boys and girls by instilling a sense of competence, usefulness,

belonging and influence. The club in Baraboo provides a safe, fun place for kids to go after school to participate in activities under adult supervision.

SCAN

Sauk County's alternative high school, SCAN, currently serves 16 students (four from Baraboo) in a self-contained school a few miles outside of the city. The school caters to students who are on the verge of being sent out of their communities. These students are often special education students, emotionally disturbed or learning disabled. Contributing factors mentioned were mental health issues such as ADHD, use of alcohol and other drugs, and lack of connection with parent(s) at home. Most are behind academically, often resulting from struggles with reading. Ninety percent of the students at the school are sent by the courts. The school is built around the success of the students. The school gears its curriculum around cognitive behavioral theory. The students, parents, and SCAN staff draw up a contract that must be signed by all parties outlining the expectations while in the program. The minimum length of participation is one semester and the average is one year. The school days are shorter and the classes are smaller to allow more one-on-one attention. When the students and staff feel that they are ready for mainstream schooling, there is a slow transition process usually into a different district.

In-School Peer Group Meetings

The following groups are facilitated by the school district AODA coordinator and meet weekly at the high school:

- Anger Management
- Death and Dying
- Challenge/Student's Aware (sessions on how to stop using drugs)
- Friends (sessions for those concerned about someone else's use)
- Smoking Cessation (sessions by the American Lung Association)
- Separation/Divorce

Each year groups are also formed based on student need. For example, in the past there was a Female Issues Group.

Future Action and Recommendations

After meeting with community leaders, school administrators, human services professionals, parents, and students, we believe that the major issues that need to be addressed in the Baraboo area are excessive youth drug and alcohol use and youth recreation.

To begin to address the issue of alcohol and other drug use, parents and other adults in the community need to understand the messages youth receive through their actions. Parental acceptance of underage drinking implies to youth that abiding by the law is optional. Regardless of personal opinion regarding whether teens should be permitted to drink, the fact remains that it is illegal. Law enforcement should address the availability of alcohol, such as the gas station that allegedly sells to underage students. Parents and teachers need to be made aware of what warning signs to watch for that may signify a substance abuse problem. Teachers and other school personnel need to be alert to changes in students' behaviors, especially after the lunch period. They should refer students to a guidance counselor or school social worker for further AOD assessment as needed. This issue is not something that professionals can be allowed to turn a blind eye to. There was inconsis-

tency between the substance use professionals believed was occurring during the school day and what the students actually said was occurring during the school day. Adults need to talk with and listen to youth in a respectful and unthreatening way in an effort to work together toward solutions to this community struggle. A more aggressive approach regarding dealing with AOD use by students during the school day would help to address this area of concern.

Adults in the community need to make a unified commitment to all youth and monitor each other's children. If one parent finds out about a party, that message should be relayed throughout a parental network so that everyone can question their children about their whereabouts and facilitate a discussion about expectations in reference to the topic of drinking. "These kids are way too important for adults to just turn their heads and ignore this issue!" said one parent. The community needs to pull together and stop turning a blind eye. The meeting that was outlined in the article mentioned earlier appears to be a great step in the right direction. Throughout our time in Baraboo, the same themes emerged again and again, but there seems to be limited collaboration between community leaders, school personnel, parents, and law enforcement. Everyone is concerned and there needs to be a forum where those concerns can be voiced and the community can work together toward a common solution.

After speaking with youth regarding the drug and alcohol issues in their community, students mentioned that DARE should be implemented at a higher grade level. They felt that since students do not begin experimenting with substances to a significant degree until eighth grade or freshman year in high school, offering DARE to eighth graders would be more useful. Prior to that time, youth seem to feel that they would abstain from using substances on their own, without the help of the program. A truer test of the effectiveness of DARE would be to implement it during a time in their lives when youth are faced with the peer pressure and "opportunity" to make a decision whether or not to use when the alcohol or drug is in front of them at a party.

The youth complain that there is little to do in Baraboo, but this cannot be blamed solely on the community at large. At the middle school level, student organizations sponsor dances each month during the school year as a reward for positive behavior. This structure provides the students with a sense of ownership of their school and responsibility for their own recreation. In addition, this provides supervised activities that promote positive social interactions. At the high school, dances are less frequent, forcing students to find their own entertainment.

In terms of recreation, we recommend that youth be given the opportunity and encouraged to take the initiative to determine what they would like added to the community. Youth must also take some of the responsibility for creating a community that they can enjoy being a part of. It is too easy to sit back and complain that there is nothing to do without getting out there and letting the adults know what kinds of activities they would like to participate in if given the opportunity. Again, the leaders in the Baraboo community need to listen to these young adults and treat them as such.

Strengths of a Nation: Youth Issues in the Ho-Chunk Nation

Shannon Elliot and Lynsey Ray

This report reflects individuals' perceptions of youth issues held by Ho-Chunk Nation youth, parents, tribal members, and service providers. We tried to the best of our ability to gain perspectives from each Ho-Chunk government department. Unfortunately, we were unable to make contact with the Office of the President, despite many attempts.

People of the Sacred Language: A Brief Tribal History¹

Oral history has linked the Ho-Chunk people to Wisconsin since prior to two ice ages. The Ho-Chunk were originally hunters, gatherers, and farmers. Their original tribal lands extended from Green Bay, beyond Lake Winnebago, to the Wisconsin River to the Rock River in Illinois. Prior to the tribe's first contact with Europeans, tribal members called themselves Hochungra, which has different English translations. One of the translations is "people of the sacred language" another is "people of the big voice" both probably referring to the powerful orators within the tribe. For many years, the Ho-Chunk were also known as the Winnebago, a name derived from the Algonquin language probably given to them by the Potawatomi. Winnebago translates to "people of the dirty water" probably referring to the muddy water of the Fox River where a large group of Ho-Chunk lived. In 1634 when the French arrived they referred to the Ho-Chunk as "Gents Puants" translated as the "stinkards." This name probably referred to the smell of dead, rotting fish that was common every year during the heat of the summer. In 1994, after 360 years of being labeled the Winnebago, the tribe legally, under federal government reorganization changed their name to Ho-Chunk, the name they have always called themselves. The first known European contact with the Ho-Chunk nation occurred in 1634 when French explorer Jean Nicolet landed at Red Banks (present day Green Bay), and was greeted with a feast provided by the tribe. Artifacts suggest, however, that the Ho-Chunk were aware of the French presence through their own trade with the Ottawa, who exchanged European goods with the Ho-Chunk in return for Ho-Chunk furs. At the time of contact, estimates put the Ho-Chunk population at roughly 10,000, a number considered large for the historical time period, as many tribes were experiencing devastation of their populations as a result of diseases introduced by the Europeans. In addition, the tribe's warriors, numbers, and political influence were well known among the Algonquin speaking peoples of the region.

Like many native peoples, the Ho-Chunk endured hardships caused by U.S. policy. During the 1820's, lead miners began to move to southwestern Wisconsin, and demand increased for the fertile lands occupied by the Ho-Chunk. By 1836, the Ho-Chunk were forced into northeastern

¹ The facts for the history of the Ho-Chunk Nation outlined in this section were obtained from the Ho-Chunk Nation Web site at <http://ho-chunknation.com/>, Carol Mason's Introduction to Wisconsin Indians: Prehistory to Statehood, John Boatman's Wisconsin American History and Culture: A Survey of Selected Aspects, Nancy Oestreich Lurie's Wisconsin Indians, Visions and Voices: Winnebago Elders Speak to the Children, edited by Jane A. Hieb, and from personal interviews with tribal members.

Iowa. Within a brief time they were pushed out again, this time to northern Minnesota, where they then found themselves between the fighting Lakota/Dakota and Ojibiwe tribes. The Ho-Chunk repeatedly appealed to the U.S. Government to be moved closer to the Mississippi River, but instead of honoring the tribe's request, the U.S. government reduced the Ho-Chunk reservation by half, from 18 acres to 9 acres. Altogether the Ho-Chunk would endure 11 removals before finally being given a permanent reservation near Omaha Nebraska in 1865.

Many Ho-Chunk missed their homeland in Wisconsin and would walk back to their native land from Nebraska. Elders tell stories of relatives who returned to Wisconsin only to be rounded up at gunpoint and forced into boxcars returning them to the Nebraska reservation. The Ho-Chunk Nation eventually split and the members who stayed on reservation lands in Nebraska are known today as the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska. In the 1880s, the U.S. Government granted non-trust treaties that gave Wisconsin Ho-Chunk tribal members 40-acre homestead plots and encouraged farming and assimilation. Many Ho-Chunk families eventually lost their plots by not paying Wisconsin county property taxes.

In 1934, a group of Ho-Chunk leaders attempted to establish a formal government. The tribal leaders encountered resistance from tribal members, but efforts failed until 1949 when the Nebraska Winnebago and the Wisconsin Ho-Chunk filed a mutual claim for payments on ceded land. Finally in 1961, the tribal leaders formed the Wisconsin Winnebago Business Committee and began investigating the possibility of tribal organization under the 1934 federal Indian Reorganization Act. A year later the first Wisconsin Winnebago constitution was drafted and then redrafted. In 1963, a census taken by the U.S. Interior Department Bureau of Indian Affairs determined that 494 tribal members were eligible to vote in the first election under reorganization. The Constitution and Bylaws of the Wisconsin Winnebago were ratified on January 19, 1963, then later approved by the Assistant Secretary of the Interior and the Great Lakes Agency of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Ho-Chunk Nation Today

The largest concentration of Ho-Chunk tribal members today is in a 14-county area in Wisconsin. Most tribal members reside in Jackson, Monroe, Milwaukee, Sauk, Shawano, and Wood counties, where the nation owns 5,400 acres of tribal trust land. The Ho-Chunk Nation is the only Wisconsin tribe that benefited from the federal homestead alternative policy experiment, which granted non-trust 40-acre homesteads to Ho-Chunk tribal members in the 1880's.. As a result the Ho-Chunk Nation does not have a reservation in Wisconsin but the 6,100 tribal members are scattered throughout Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Illinois

Tribal members have different perspectives on the "non-reservation" status of the nation. One tribal member in Madison mentioned the challenge of providing outreach programs and services of value in areas where small populations of Ho-Chunk live, who may be in as much need of nation services as tribal members in Tomah or Black River Falls. Another tribal member in Tomah saw the "non-reservation" status as a tribal strength. She sees not being limited to a reservation as good because it forces the nation to form alliances and build relationships with non-native schools and county and state systems. She provided the example of Juneau County where Ho-Chunk Nation officials presented a fully marked and equipped squad car to the Juneau County Sheriff's Department at a March 4, 2002, ceremony.

Preservation of culture and language and economic development are two major areas of concern for the Ho-Chunk Nation. The number of native language (HoCak)

speakers, is diminishing at an alarming rate. The Ho-Chunk people believe that the HoCak language embodies their culture. According to Ho-Chunk Nation, the native language “is our contact with the past, the embodiment of today, and our vision of the future, containing generations of wisdom going back to antiquity” (Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council, Inc, 2000). The Ho-Chunk people believe that their language and their culture guide the paths of future generations and future leaders of the Ho-Chunk Nation.

In addition to preserving culture and language, the Ho-Chunk Nation continues to promote economic development. The tribe owns and operates four gaming establishments including the Ho-Chunk Casino, Bingo, and Convention Center - Wisconsin Dells, Majestic Pines Casino, Bingo, and Hotel-Black River Falls, Rainbow Casino and Bingo - Nekoosa/Wisconsin Rapids area, and the DeJope Bingo and Entertainment - Madison. In addition to numerous retail and convenience stores throughout Wisconsin, these gaming establishments produce the greatest source of tribal revenue.

As part of the economic development, the Ho-Chunk Nation designates a portion of annual net gaming proceeds to per capita payments to enrolled tribal members. This amount is divided among all tribal members. Per capita payments are paid to adults or invested in a minor’s trust fund in a variable sum (dependent on gaming proceeds) and distributed on a quarterly basis. Tribal members reported that per capita payments used to be \$1,000 every three months and have now increased up to \$3,000 per quarter. Every child born and enrolled in the tribe is allotted a trust fund of quarterly payments from birth until the age of 18. Youth are eligible to receive their trust fund in a lump sum upon reaching the age of 18 and upon obtaining their high school diploma. Youth must obtain a high school diploma in order to receive their per capita lump sum payment (earning a GED does not qualify a young person to receive his or her per capita payments). Youth who reach the age of 18 but do not graduate from high school may receive their quarterly per capita payments but must wait until their 25th birthday to receive their per capita trust fund. Tribal members also report that current high school graduates are receiving lump sum payments of approximately \$70,000. This amount is then supplemented by quarterly per capita payments for the remainder of the tribal member’s life.

While a positive source of economic development, the nation’s per capita distribution policy was identified by many of the people we interviewed as being problematic for the nation’s youth. One social service worker stated that the “per cap” was a disincentive, “Kids have no goals except to graduate high school.” According to some adults, youth don’t think of anything, including postsecondary education, except graduating and getting their per capita. A social service worker suggested that the problem with the per capita is that youth see their parents surviving solely on their per capita, which reinforces the idea that youth do not need an education because mom or dad doesn’t have a college degree and they are doing okay. A parent reported how she saw per capita not only as a disincentive for her own kids but also as a distraction for them during school hours: “My son told me that ‘Mom I see something I want and that’s all I can think of.’” The same parent questioned how an 18-year-old kid who has just graduated high school could possibly know what to do with a lump sum of \$70,000. A youth service worker mentioned that most of the kids squander their money and it’s gone within a matter of months. She said they spend it on new cars and give it away to family and friends without thinking about investing in a house or an education. The same worker described another typical situation among a group of friends: One kid will get the per cap and the group will live off that one person’s money until the next kid gets his or hers.

When asking the kids what they intend to do after graduation, we generally heard one of three answers: (1) Go into the military and then maybe go to college, (2) Go to college (with a variety of specific areas of study mentioned), or (3) Buy a new car.

When covering youth issues it is difficult not to talk about the family because family structure is an important consideration in most Ho-Chunk youth issues. The traditional family structure is complex, extensive, and distinctive from mainstream culture. According to *Visions and Voices: Winnebago Elders Speak to the Children*, a book produced by tribal youth and elders, the Ho-Chunk Nation was traditionally divided into 12 groups, or clans, each with their own traditions, duties, and customs. Clans are still an important part of the Ho-Chunk family structure. In the Ho-Chunk culture cousins are more like brothers and sisters, and aunts and uncles and grandparents play just as important of a role in rearing a child as parents do. Mothers and fathers are not traditionally disciplinarians. Instead, the *dagas*, or uncles, are the disciplinarians in the family unit. Dagas may also be responsible for teaching youth about Ho-Chunk culture, people, and family. Thus, a complex family structure serves as strength for tribal youth, because youth not only traditionally have support from parents, but also from extended family members.

Despite the family structure, many of the people we interviewed identified the break-up of families as a major issue within the nation. Single parent families are common. Single moms may have inflexible work schedules that require them to be at work at times when children are not in school. Lack of parental supervision may contribute to youth engaging in deviant behaviors.

Another current issue that appeared in numerous interviews is the issue of instability within tribal government. The Ho-Chunk Nation has four branches of government. The current tribal government consists of an executive branch (Office of the President), judicial branch (Department of Justice and Tribal Courts), and the lawmaking branch (Legislature), and the General Council. The current legislature is undergoing a redistricting process but in the past has been divided into four districts and an area at-large:

- District I: Black River Falls
- District II: La Crosse and Tomah
- District III: Wittenberg
- District IV: Wisconsin Dells and Wisconsin Rapids
- At-Large: Chicago, Milwaukee, Madison, and Minneapolis/St. Paul

The General Council is composed of all eligible voters of the Ho-Chunk Nation. The General Council is called to convene at least once a year by the president, or called by written request of the Nation legislature. The Council can also be convened whenever deemed necessary or with a petition signed by one-fifth of the eligible voters.

One social service worker mentioned that recent and frequent political changes are a tribal weakness. The normal term for the tribal president is four years. Within the past four years, however, the Ho-Chunk Nation has had three presidents. With each presidential change, a number of appointed positions within the tribe also change. One youth worker mentioned the lack of consistency among youth service workers. He addressed the need for “people to stick with the kids...the kids need consistency so they build up a trust and so we can work together”.

Another service worker noted a lack of communication between government agencies as a major problem. She mentioned that governmental departments don't communicate with each other. She used gang activity as an example. One department sees a problem (i.e., gang activity) in the

home but may not always communicate with other departments working with that family (e.g., someone in social services doesn't share information with the security patrol, or the Department of Justice doesn't share with youth services). One at-large educator stated that tribal politics undermine the investments made in social services, youth services, and education. She added, "It's all about who you know."

Current Youth Issues

It is difficult to determine the most prevalent youth issues for Ho-Chunk youth because the nation overlaps numerous jurisdictions' boundaries. Different communities have different issues facing their youth, but the common ones that adults identify are obesity, self-esteem, suicide, truancy, lack of cultural awareness, lack of parental involvement, and alcohol and other drug use and/or abuse. Youth, on the other hand, identify alcohol and drug abuse, grade problems, racism, as major issues facing them in their families, communities, and schools. Youth and services providers identified gang activity as having a presence within the tribal community, but not as a major issue.

Health Issues

When asked what are some of the issues facing youth, many educators, social service workers, and tribal members begin by identifying observable problems. Obesity is one health problem identified. When asked about what he knew about his culture, one youth answered, "Food is an important part of our culture." One tribal member mentioned the feast as an important aspect of cultural events. A health worker explained that inactivity also seemed common for youth that he worked with; he associated the inactivity with the popularity of N-64s and Sony Play Stations. Community members also see obesity as a not only as a cause of physical problems, but linked to low self-esteem, diabetes, and mental health problems such as depression. These, in turn, can lead to more severe forms of youth violence such as AODA use and abuse and even suicide.

Self-esteem was an issue frequently by social service and youth workers as a need that has not been addressed on a wide scale basis. A Ho-Chunk departmental administrator suggested that Ho-Chunk youth programs are not emphasizing self-esteem in their programs. She would like to see youth services focus more on self-esteem, coping, and skill-building and less on recreation.

Suicide, while not reported frequently within the Ho-Chunk Nation, has touched the lives of a few Ho-Chunk people we interviewed. One Ho-Chunk parent expressed concerns because a non-native friend of her daughter recently committed suicide. A Ho-Chunk teenager recently attempted suicide because "life was too much to handle" and there was "too much death," as she had endured two years of losing friends and relatives. A social service worker reported that she was currently working with a young Ho-Chunk woman who has attempted suicide three times.

Another health concern identified by young people themselves, particularly among early high school aged females, was the pressure to have sex. One young woman said she was alarmed when she learned in her high school health class that Jackson County has a very high rate of STD and AIDS cases. Her new awareness of youth sexual activity and its risks, she said, have made her more likely to practice safe sex.

Truancy

Truancy is a difficult issue for the tribe and was addressed by several service providers because of implied parental approval. Some tribal members suggested that the long history of

racism toward Native Americans in public schools has fostered a legacy of mistrust and a suspicion of mainstream public education among Native American parents . Parents who themselves experienced racism at school may not actively enforce their child's school attendance because of their own negative experiences.

Cultural Awareness

Decreasing cultural awareness was an issue of most concern to elders and highly educated professionals. Tribal elders express fears that the culture will cease to exist because there is no one to carry on traditions. One parent and tribal leader suggested that the reason youth do not know the culture is that parents do not take the time to share what they know about the culture with their children. He was concerned that youth were not even aware of where the Ho-Chunk people came from. Despite his concerns, he confided that he himself, as a parent, had not made an effort to teach his own children about the culture. He did, however, express both desire and plans to bring his parents and his children together to teach the younger generation the language and culture. Another tribal member stated that youth need to "look for the old ways," that the culture and language will not just be handed them. The same tribal member stated that youth cannot expect to learn about the culture by reading books. He added that the "famous books that are "out there" are "a joke." He also added the best way to learn about the culture is to speak the language; unlike the English language, which "talks around it," the HoCak language "gets right to the heart of issues."

One tribal member provided a contrasting perspective. He said the kids want to know their culture, "they are hungry for it...they are yearning for it." He says that it is the parents' and elders' responsibility to keep sharing the cultural ways and traditions with their kids. From his perspective, "much of the damage is already done," he suggests the loss of culture has already occurred, not with the kids today, but with their parents. In order for the culture to be regained he sees the need for the Nation to take an initiative to bridge that generational gaps that exist between grandparents, parents, and youth; he said that the gaps are formed by dominate culture. He explains that the Nation elders have acquired the dominant culture's stereotype of "bad kids" and used it as a barrier between themselves and today's youth.

Generally, the kids we talked to wanted to know the culture but had not heard much about it at home. When asked about her culture, a freshman in high school responded that she didn't know much about the Ho-Chunk tribal history. A high school junior added that his favorite music was pow-wow music and that he was very concerned about his culture disappearing. The same young man expressed a feeling of powerlessness because he did not have the ability to change things. Instead, he had to wait for what the tribal elders told him to do because he was adopted into the Ho-Chunk Nation, as his father was Ho-Chunk and his mother was non-native. Other youth wanted to learn the language and would be interested in participating in language programs, but thought that not all youth their age would want to participate in such activities because "they have other things to do." Other youth reported that learning their culture wasn't a priority because they were so focused on school.

Parental Involvement

Most of the service providers that we interviewed identified lack of parental involvement as the issue that most affects Ho-Chunk Nation youth. From truancy to teaching cultural awareness,

to driving kids to youth programs and activities, service providers are frustrated by the absence of parents. One of the reasons suggested for lack of parental involvement is the breakup of families. One youth service worker acknowledged the expectations that single parents face. The same youth worker helps on her own time by providing transportation to hockey practice and other activities for kids who are interested in activities and programs but who have no transportation. She also takes personal time to make traditional pow-wow dresses for young tribal women who are interested in dancing at pow-wows but who would not be able to participate because her mother is unable to make her appropriate clothing. She feels that this is her way to help pass on the tradition of their culture, while helping youth and families.

Although lack of time may be one cause of low parental involvement, another might be what one social service worker suggested: that “it is just easier to stay at home” or that people just “don’t care.”

One parent suggested that alcoholism was a major barrier to parental involvement. As a recovered alcoholic herself, she told of her 13-year-old son’s inability to read and her inability to realize it for so long because of her own alcohol use. Parents are unaware of what their kids are or are not doing because they are “asleep.” She added that as concerned parents and as service workers “all we can do is wait until they [parents] wake up.”

Alcohol and Other Drug Use and Abuse

In addition to parental involvement, alcohol and other drug abuse was identified as the most common problem facing both youth and adults in the Ho-Chunk Nation. According to many service providers and youth themselves, alcohol is the most commonly used drug among youth. Some providers suggest that underage alcohol use and abuse is a problem that is compounded by the fact that many parents have alcohol problems themselves. One youth services worker termed tribal alcohol abuse an “intergenerational norm.” She gave the example of a parent whose teenage son received some money for his birthday. His father took him to buy five cases of beer with his birthday money so they could invite all of his friends over for a birthday party. Such behavior sends the message to kids that drinking, including underage drinking is socially acceptable.

A number of Ho-Chunk high school students, whose parents do not approve of underage drinking, said they often feel peer pressure to drink in order to fit in and “be cool.” One youth mentioned that she often feels like “You’re not cool if you don’t drink.” Another teenager stated, “There is nothing else to do,” so kids go to parties and drink alcohol. Some Ho-Chunk explained how teens often find ways to integrate alcohol use into activities that are supposed to provide an alternative to alcohol use. For example, one girl mentioned that she knew of youth who drink before leaving for, and on the way to, Reflections, a teen dance club in Marshfield.

Both adults and youth agreed that tobacco and marijuana were also common drugs used by youth. A few people, including some youth, a parent, and some service providers identified crack cocaine as a drug often used. A group of juniors and seniors identified speed, ecstasy, and acid as commonly used drugs also.

Both social service workers and youth argued that per capita money may fuel abuse because many young people who have graduated from high school have access to more money than usual for a person their age. The additional money generally translates into youth using more expensive types of drugs such as cocaine. Another possible explanation offered by youth and adults was the communities’ location. Most of the Ho-Chunk communities are located either in large cities

(Milwaukee, Madison, La Crosse) or located en route to large cities (Milwaukee, Chicago, Minneapolis) and close to I-94. One youth said that she thought that the drugs come from out of town: “Drug dealers come into town, sell their products, and leave,” she said. Drug dealing and usage cannot be tied exclusively to traveling drug dealers, however. According to youth in one Ho-Chunk community, middle school kids often deal Ritalin in school.

Grades

For the majority of Ho-Chunk youth we interviewed, grades are the second most important issue, second only to the problem of alcohol and other drug abuse. In a report to the Black River Falls School Board, the Native American tutor presented average grade point averages (GPA) for core classes in grades 4-12 for the Black River Falls School District. The average GPA for Ho-Chunk students in math, English, science, and social studies classes are low:

Grades are from the second nine-week reporting period. Grades are not recorded for students K-3. While there is some fluctuation between 5th and 6th grades

12th Grade	1.55
11th Grade	1.64
10th Grade	1.51
9th Grade	1.35
8th Grade	1.77
7th Grade	2.4
6th Grade	2.07
5th Grade	2.14
4th Grade	2.31

and 6th and 7th grades, there is an overall decrease in GPA from 4th grade to 12th grade.

When asked to theorize why native youth have such low GPAs, the Black River Falls High School assistant principal stated, “They are sharp kids, they just don’t do the work.” Peer pressure is a problem often associated with negative academic behavior. Some youth said they often felt that it is “Not cool to do well in school or be involved in sports and other extra curricular activities.” An educator at one learning center, who observed the kids doing well on their homework at the center, knew that the problem was that the kids weren’t handing in their work at school. She expressed frustration at this “self-destructive behavior” but did not know how to stop it.

Many of the youth programs offered by the nation and in the community require a certain GPA, which some youth reportedly cannot attain. Free guitar lessons, for example, are available to youth in one Ho-Chunk community, but they are not eligible because of their low GPA. If prevention programs that youth would enjoy and benefit from being involved in are being designed with unrealistic eligibility requirements, youth who could truly benefit from the participation in such programs are not having their needs met. Similar to school-sponsored extracurricular activities, the very activities that could help generate interest in school and other positive activities are not being offered to the youth who most need to be motivated.

Racism

Perceptions of whether or not racism exists are mixed. When racism occurs, it tends to take the form of self-segregation, teasing, bullying, harassing, and name-calling. For example, native

students and non-native students tend to sit within their own groups in the lunchroom. A high school assistant principal mentioned, however, that during the 2001-02 school year, she has seen more integration in the lunchroom than ever before. Most of the youth agree that there are few cases where racism escalates to a more severe level of violence.

Service providers who are not working directly with youth on a continual basis report that racism exists in the school and community and that it occasionally takes the form of violence, but it is more of a systemic problem (curriculum and lack of native teachers and staff) and more of an issue with employment (unavailable jobs in the mainstream community). One educator stated “people are racist because they don’t know any better....”

An educator reported that racism has progressively become less of an issue in the past five years or so. She also noted that sports activities at the high school tended to bring all of the student body together and that there were fewer problems with racism during sports seasons. She gave the example of a football game where a native player was being harassed by the opposing team. In response, non-native players vocalized their acceptance and support for their native teammate. One reason why racism has become less of a problem in the past five years may be due to a zero tolerance policy that was implemented and began to be enforced approximately five years ago when the current assistant principal was hired. She reported that she enforces a zero tolerance for racism and sexism within her school; she continued, “Unfortunately, it [racism] still exists, but the kids know that it will not be tolerated.” The assistant principal also makes an effort to maintain a positive relationship with the native community. She has volunteered as a tutor at the learning center and tries to be involved in native organizations like the Johnson O’Malley Parents organization and regularly attends Native community education meetings as well. Her office is decorated with Native American art that has been given to her from past students, the most obvious piece is a quilt that covers one whole wall, that was given to her by a student at a Ho-Chunk Nation pow-wow.

The assistant principal’s office is not the only place where cultural acceptance and sensitivity are apparent. Walking through the halls of Black River Falls High School one senses a strong sense of pluralism embraced by the school. “Virtue knows no color lines” is painted on the walls above the lockers in one of the halls, and a poster of a Native American mascot is under the crossbar with the message: “Teach Respect: Indians are People. No stereotypes in our schools.”

Interestingly, Wisconsin Dells has a different perspective on the mascot issue. Wisconsin Dells’ high school sports teams are known as “The Chiefs.” Students wear a patch with an Indian “chief” on their letter jackets, etc. During a conversation with three young men who attend Wisconsin Dells’ high school, all three stated that the fact the school mascot was a chief didn’t bother them. One of these youth explained that as long as the school didn’t put someone dressed as an Indian, acting “stupid” on the football field, the mascot does not bother him, and the other two individuals concurred with this opinion.

Gang Activity and Youth Violence

Gang activity was identified as an issue by some individuals and not seen as an issue by others. Youth and service providers who work with youth and are in the homes are the most likely to report gang activity. One service provider said that there were large problems with gang activity in the past, but were no longer a major issue. He did believe, however, that gang activity still existed but that it was more “underground.” Another service provider stated that she sporadically sees evidence of gang activity, but that her agency “puts the fires out” before the activity becomes a larger problem.

One youth worker said that truancy, disorderly conduct in schools, underage drinking, and peer-to-peer assault composed of the majority of her youth cases. She was careful to note, however, that like many county social service agencies, she sees “everything.” She also confirmed the existence of gang activity. A school police liaison to both the Black River Falls Middle School and High School confirmed that Black River Falls has had issues surrounding gang violence in the past, but none within the past year. The officer described gang graffiti as a problem prior to having a simple truancy ordinance, which was implemented approximately five years ago. The fairgrounds, which are across the road from the high school, were continually vandalized by graffiti. More recently, gang-related graffiti appeared at the middle school on chalkboards and students’ notebooks.

Gang activity is often described as mainly a seasonal problem . Two youth workers workers also suggested that gang activity is a result of mobility: a Chicago tribal member chooses to move back to the tribal lands because he realizes that the city is no place to raise a family, but with him he brings his child who has his own view of the world. This inner-city view of the world includes gangs, drugs, and violence. Areas that are most affected by gang-related activity are “towns with several races of people coming together.” Specific counties mentioned are Wood and Dane counties. Specific cities mentioned are La Crosse and Wisconsin Dells where there are both male and female gang members.

One specific case of gang violence was cited numerous times during our interviews. An eighteen-year-old Ho-Chunk youth is currently awaiting sentencing in La Crosse County for first-degree intentional homicide for the gang-related murder of a 16-year-old La Crosse boy. Although many service providers identified this case they were also quick to assure us that it is an isolated case of gang violence.

A few youth mentioned that they knew of gangs, but did not see a lot of gang violence. Some of the youth named gangs including the Latin Kings, the Vice Lords, and a local gang called the Mob. One Black River Falls youth mentioned that the only current gang activity he knew of was in nearby Melrose where the Anarchists are a known group. A Tomah youth mentioned that she would often wear bandanas to school for no other reason except that it was in style, but school officials requested that she not wear bandanas anymore because she might be mistaken as a gang member. High-school aged youth in the Dells, explained they knew of gangs in the Dells such as the Gangsters’ Disciples, but that these gangs tended to be composed of non Ho-Chunk youth, and they did not see a lot of gang activity. In fact, youth in Wisconsin Dells went on to say that being in a gang was considered “uncool” and that the only gangs they knew of were “wannabe gangs” in their school. They also explained that they never saw any graffiti because the community was too “upscale” and that the town painted over any graffiti “before anyone had a chance to put it up” on buildings, bridges, etc.

An additional form of violence that needs to be mentioned is satanic activity. One tribal member raised the concern of satanism as a youth issue by referring to a shocking event that distressed the Ho-Chunk Nation in 1989 and has yet remained unresolved. According to numerous reports in the *Black River Falls Banner Journal*, a nine-year-old Ho-Chunk girl was beaten, choked, and sexually assaulted in the woods near her home in the Sand Pillow neighborhood, five miles east of Black River Falls. The case was open for nearly a year before any suspects were named. When a suspect was identified, the alleged perpetrator was identified as a nineteen year-old Ho-Chunk man. The young man insisted on his innocence throughout the investigation and the case was eventually dismissed due to the lack of evidence in the case. The case has yet to be resolved.

After we discovered the Sand Pillow murder case, we asked youth workers and social servic-

es workers if satanic activity occurred in the tribe. Three services providers confirmed that it did. Although no specific incidences of satanic activity were cited in our interviews, concerns over lack of spirituality were addressed as possible reasons for its existence. The general consensus among the people who identified satanic activity as an issue is that “it is there” but it is not a major problem and that the more common youth violence problems are bullying, harassment, and name-calling.

Tribal Responses and Community Resources

Numerous tribal responses and community resources are available to Ho-Chunk Nation youth. This section will provide a summary of the available programs for nation youth.

“They need something and somebody. . . . We can’t give up on them.”
-- Ho-Chunk Youth Worker

Ho-Chunk Social Services

Ho-Chunk Social Services function in much the same way mainstream social services systems do. Because the tribal population is dispersed throughout the state, though, it is difficult to reach people outside of the 14 Wisconsin counties with the highest concentration of tribal members. These 14 counties - Wood, Juneau, Adams, Sauk, Columbia, La Crosse, Monroe, Vernon, Crawford, Clark, Eau Claire, Jackson, Marathon and Shawano - have tribal social services while Ho-Chunk youth in the other geographic regions must work with non-native county social services. One social service worker reported that in general, tribal social services have worked closely and productively with county social services until recently when a sheriff discovered state statutes 48.396 and 938.396 that prohibit the sharing of information between county and tribal social services.

The Youth Community Service Program is considered to be one of the most successful programs run by Ho-Chunk Social Services. The social service case manager on the project reported that her caseload has decreased by 75 percent to 95 percent since the program’s inception in 1996. The purpose of the program is to provide case management services to at-risk youth and youth with county community service obligations. The program also acts as a method of prevention for juvenile delinquency by accepting referrals from parents, tribal members, and other tribal service providers before children have been admitted into the formal juvenile justice system.

After a referral, a youth is added to the Youth Community Service caseload, and both the youth and his or her parents or guardians participate in an initial intake interview. A major component of the program is the mentor relationship that is formed between tribal elders and the youth. Young men meet with the tribal elders and young women meet with the clan mothers. Elders and clan mothers involved in the tribal court represent different clans and different spirituality (i.e., traditional, Native American Church, and Christianity). Another important component of this program is a required session with the Ho-Chunk Traditional Court. Court proceedings may be conducted in the native Hocak language and by a panel of elders from different clans. The role of the elders and clan mothers is to counsel and teach the youth what it means to be Ho-Chunk and what expectations their tribal culture has of them. The case manager stressed the message that tribal members are trying to send to youth through the Traditional Court:

“You choose which way you want to go, but live the way you will make your brother proud. You belong to us, these are your colors, and these are your people.”

Ho-Chunk Nation Youth Services and Community Centers

Ho-Chunk Youth Services is a subdivision of Ho-Chunk Social Services. The youth services mission statement describes the overall vision of the program:

To provide youth activities that promote healthy lifestyles, to advocate for Ho-Chunk Nation youth, to develop leadership qualities, to empower Ho-Chunk Nation youth to be future leaders, to emphasize preservation and education, to strengthen while providing a positive and safe environment for enhancing their personal growth.

Ho-Chunk Nation Youth Services fund programs in seven communities with large Ho-Chunk populations: Black River Falls, La Crosse, Milwaukee, Tomah, Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin Rapids, and Wittenberg. These workers branch out to neighboring communities as part of their programming. For example, the three youth service workers in Black River Falls plan monthly youth activities in the neighboring communities of both Eau Claire and Neillsville. While the surrounding communities may not have a youth services person working directly in their community, Ho-Chunk youth still benefit from regularly scheduled activities.

Youth services offer a variety of informal and formal activities. Some activities may include structured language classes or unstructured time using weight room equipment and playing 3-3 basketball. Cultural, educational, and recreational activities led by youth services workers provide alternatives to alcohol and other drugs, youth violence, and other trouble that youth may become involved in. Each of the seven communities has a community center or learning center. In general, these centers provide a safe place for youth of all ages to hang out. Each center is designed to meet individual needs of the community, so no two community centers are exactly the same. In addition to Ho-Chunk Youth Services, the communities themselves offer educational, social, and recreational youth programs for both native and non-native youth.

Black River Falls

Black River Falls (BRF) currently has two community centers; one is in the Mission neighborhood, and the larger is in the Sand Pillow neighborhood. The community centers provide tutoring services, cultural activities, recreational, health, and exercise programs, and offer a safe place for youth to hang out. Three youth services workers, who work with approximately 200 out of 300 youth each month, staff the BRF programs. Each worker establishes an activity calendar for an entire month. According to the March 2002 calendars established by the youth services workers, up to three activities may be offered in a given afternoon. Crafts and cultural activities may include beading, basket weaving, making dream catchers, and native language classes. Tutoring, structured team sports, and fitness activities are also available. Occasional field trips and recreational activities include bowling, hayrides, fishing, canoe trips, skating, and horseback riding.

One particular youth services worker goes beyond her job responsibilities to take young people who are age 14 and above to Reflections, a teen dance club in Marshfield, as an incentive to come to other activities. As a stipulation for going to the dance club, youth must attend a “cultural” activity or do well in school for a given time period.

Youth services also participate in an annual summer leadership camp at Wisconsin Dells. Forty to sixty youth attend both educational and cultural workshops on everything from AIDS and how to develop leadership skills to making and sleeping in a wigwam and tanning deer hides. The

young people also have the opportunity to meet with and listen to tribal elders tell stories about their culture. Youth also learn drumming and dancing during the leadership camp.

Most of the youth we talked to enjoyed hanging out at the community center and participating in youth service activities. Several youth, however, addressed a problem with the hours that the community center is open. One youth articulated this problem: "If they [adults] want us not to drink and get into trouble they have to provide us with things to do like keeping the community center open during times when kids are likely to drink." The same youth suggested keeping the center open at least until 10:00 or 11:00 on Friday and Saturday nights and having open hours during the day on Sunday.

The BRF community also offers opportunities for youth involvement. The Lunda Community Center is open seven days a week at various hours to both native and non-native youth and adults. The center is conveniently located between the high school and middle school. Anyone can use the indoor track without paying a fee or having a membership, but a membership is required to use either the pool or the gym. A non-native high schooler working at the center estimated that roughly one-half of the people who use the center's facilities are adults and one-half are grade school and middle school aged children. The young woman mentioned that some middle school students use the facility, but high school students rarely do. She reasoned that high school students are usually involved in extracurricular activities and either don't have time to use the center or are participating in after-school sports programs. The cost may also be a factor in a decision not to use the center. Annual memberships cost \$200 for a family, \$125 for a single person, and \$100 for a student. The daily rates are \$2.50 for students and \$3.50 for adults.

La Crosse

The La Crosse community center is located in the beautifully refurbished tribal building-Three Rivers House in downtown La Crosse. There are two components to the community center youth programming. Students attend a mandatory learning center with educators available to tutor the youth after school until 5:30. From 5:30 until approximately 9:30, students may play pool, listen to the radio, or just hang out. The youth service coordinators schedule regular recreational activities during this time including, roller-skating, watching movies, and bowling. The coordinator reported that youth must participate in the learning center in order to participate in the recreational activities. He also builds educational and cultural lessons into daily activities. He expressed the need to tie the culture into life skills. He provided the example of a youth acting out. If a youth is acting out or calling someone names he will use the time to tell the youth that the behavior is not appropriate in the Ho-Chunk culture and why. He feels it is important for youth to constantly be receiving information about their culture and that it is the elders', parents', and service providers' responsibility to do so.

The coordinator did identify the need for AODA education in the youth services programming. He addressed gaps in services between the tribe and the youth services programming. He reported that he had requested that AODA workers attend an afternoon program with the purpose of educating Ho-Chunk youth on AODA issues. He stated that they have not come, so he has worked with other AODA services in La Crosse, who have been responsive and attended the La Crosse youth program.

Milwaukee

Milwaukee Youth Services is housed in the same building as the Milwaukee Branch Office and has roughly 40 young people participating in their programs. The Youth Services Coordinator

works in conjunction with the Study Center by tutoring students, as well as providing them with transportation both to and from Study Center. Most daily activities such as swimming, playing pool, or playing basketball, take place at the local YMCA and last roughly an hour and a half. In addition, the youth services worker plans monthly activities for different age groups. For example, if she takes the older kids bowling during the month, she will also take the younger kids bowling on a separate occasion during the month. The youth services worker views the center's Milwaukee location as strength since the city provides so many cultural opportunities (whether Ho-Chunk culture or other cultures) and activities for the youth that they wouldn't have access to if they lived in some of the smaller communities.

Wisconsin Dells

The House of Wellness serves as the main site for Ho-Chunk community services in the Wisconsin Dells area. The building houses a health clinic, a Ho-Chunk Social Services office, and study center, as well as a fitness center that is utilized by both native and non-native members of the Dells community; however, Native Americans use the fitness center for free, while community members pay a membership fee. The facility is relatively new and attractively designed, with large windows and skylights throughout the building. Large wooden logs surround steel beams, giving the center as earthy and natural an atmosphere as possible.

The House of Wellness is open seven days a week and Youth Services sponsors activities for young people Monday through Friday and on some Saturdays. There are two Youth Services Coordinators, one who works with children 6-12 and the other who works with children 12-18. There are planned activities everyday; however, because they are servicing a large area, different days of the week may have activities scheduled for groups from different surrounding geographic areas such as Mauston.

The Study Center is open Monday through Thursday with after school study from 3:30 until 5:30 and serves students from kindergarten through 12th grade. Close to 300 native students use the study center services at any given time and the center is funded by the Ho-Chunk Nation. Special tutoring sessions are held from 5:30 until 6:30 and help students with phonics, reading math and science on different nights. The Nation also funds three teachers who go into the Baraboo and Wisconsin Dells public schools everyday from noon until 3pm in order to tutor students who need extra help in various subjects.

The Study Center also has a program for gifted and talented 4th through 9th grade students that provides them the opportunity to visit places they probably wouldn't have the chance to visit otherwise. Last year the students visited the Museum of Science and Industry, staying overnight in Chicago. The Study Center is now expanding this program by putting "at risk" students with students who excel academically, offering an end of the year field trip to students who improve either socially or academically. So far the program has been very successful and students with academic problems have tended to improve roughly one letter grade. Behavioral problems have also subsided.

In an effort to encourage parent involvement, the Study Center hosts a monthly science night where parents are required to accompany their children. The activities tend to be very "hands on." For example, last month students made potato hats with coat hangers in order to learn about the laws of physics. The Study Center Coordinator turns away children whose parents do not accompany them. She says as difficult as it is for her to turn away a child, most often the child comes back the following month with a

parent or guardian. Science night has become very popular and parent/child attendance was at 44 people last month.

Wisconsin Rapids

Wisconsin Rapids also offers a mandatory study session until 5:00 and recreational activities including pool, listening to music, and scheduled field trips. On the day that we visited, a Native American Lincoln Hills employee was going to talk to the youth about consequences of deviant behavior.

Wittenberg

Wittenberg youth services has roughly 45 youth involved in its study center and youth activities and programs. Youth Services shares the community building with the Branch Office, health services, elderly services, and the local church and, as a result of limited space, rotates either study center or youth activities every other day based upon age group. Most youth activities take place outside the community center, making it difficult to reschedule activities if the van breaks down or the weather is bad. In most of these situations, the youth services worker is forced to cancel youth activities for the day because there is no space for the kids in the community building. The limited space and resources also make it difficult to offer cultural activities for the young people.

Tomah

Serving approximately 50 of 109 Ho-Chunk youth ages 5-19, the Tomah community center offers educational, cultural, and recreational activities. Tomah's center is open after school until approximately 7:00 p.m. A required after school tutoring program operates until 4:30. From about 4:30 until 7:00 youth play pool, listen to music, participate in structured games or crafts, take language classes, or just hang out. The Tomah program benefits from volunteer college-student tutors from UW-La Crosse. Tomah youth actively participate in fundraisers that benefit the community center and other activities like attending the national Unity Conference, where native students from around the United States meet. On the day we visited the center, youth were planning a breakfast fundraiser at the Tribal Executive building in Black River Falls on their day off from school, .

Tomah youth say they would like the Ho-Chunk Nation emphasize and invest in more youth programs, especially by building new facilities like the Wellness Center in Wisconsin Dells. For example, the current community center in Tomah is at one end of town and although it is conveniently located next door to the high school, the youth would like to see the center more centrally located in the downtown area. The physical layout of the building was also an area of concern for the youth. The current building is divided into several small classroom-sized rooms. It is difficult for staff to supervise so many areas, which makes it easy for some youth to "get out of hand." The youth would also like to see more college-age staff at the center because they would be able to connect more with adults closer to their age.

The youth would also like to learn more about the issues that they are facing. They would like the community center staff to talk to them more about important issues, including alcohol, drugs, sex, gangs, violence racism, grades, and tell them how the adults dealt with issues when they were growing up. Youth would also like to have different speakers once a month to talk about the youth issues mentioned above and youth opportunities. Ideally, youth want to hear from speakers that they can relate to.

With the exception of the Ho-Chunk Community Center, the youth reported that in Tomah there's "nothing to do." A community center in the center of town open to both native and

non-native high school students (and high school students only) would be just the thing. It should have a café, some pool tables, a study room, a place to hang out, and access to the Internet and movies.

Ho-Chunk Runners Against Drunk Driving

The Ho-Chunk Youth Marathon Runners began when the founder met a young woman who was a chronic runaway. When he realized she and a small group of friends enjoyed running, he volunteered to help them train in order to run in marathons as a means to encourage these youth to spend their time in a productive manner and keep them from drinking or using drugs. The small but committed group of six Ho-Chunk youth, supported by their families and sponsors, trained and raised funds for four months before running and finishing the 1999 Honolulu Marathon. The young woman who was the inspiration for the team and three of her friends were tragically killed by a drunk driver on their prom night five months after the Honolulu Marathon. The girl's teammates decided to change the name of the group to honor the girl; the Ho-Chunk Youth Marathon Runners would come to be known as the Ho-Chunk Runners Against Drunk Driving or the Runners Against Drunk Driving (RADD).

Since the first marathon, the group has evolved into a more formal organization that requires a runner's contract signed by the runner and his or her parent or sponsor. The kids train for three and a half months, six days a week, usually beginning in August. To get into the group, the youth must first pass a six-mile test. Once they're accepted, they run one additional mile a week until they reach 26 miles. After the new members reach the 16-mile mark, the returning youth members mark the trail with one-mile markers. Each of the new members' names appear on a marker as a means of encouragement and to remind them they've almost reached their goal.

The founder and coach of the group emphasizes junior leadership, group support, and loyalty throughout the training. He teaches the youth decision-making skills by empowering them with opportunities to make the team's decisions. He often uses himself as an example by giving them hypothetical situations and explaining how he would act in their situation and why. He then lets the kids make their own decisions without telling them what to do. He believes this approach gives them self-esteem and helps them learn how to make decisions. The runners are currently deciding whether to run in the Honolulu Marathon or another national marathon this year.

One interesting practice among the runners is the wearing of their "colors" of blue and yellow on their jackets. If the coach becomes upset with the runners because they aren't trying their hardest to reach their goals, he does not single out any one youth, but rather has them take off their colors and stand in a circle. Their colors are placed in the middle of the circle and they stand with their backs to their colors. The royal blue represents the blue in the Ho-Chunk Nation flag, and yellow stands for boldness and leadership. The circle has the cultural significance of the circle of life, and when they are in it they are as one. This is a time of reflection and re-focusing for the runners.

Johnson O'Malley

Johnson O'Malley (JOM) is a federally funded program through Title IX Indian Education of the Civil Rights Act. The program is designed to meet the special educational needs of Native American Students in K-12 public schools. Within the Ho-Chunk Nation, JOM is a partnership between the Ho-Chunk Nation, Bureau of Indian Affairs (U.S. Department of the Interior), and Local Indian Education Parent Committees. The Ho-Chunk Parent Committee designs and implements educational plans and programs depending upon the needs of each community. Many JOM

programs supplement community and learning centers within the nation. In addition, JOM sponsors an incentive program at learning centers and a school supply reimbursement program. Youth and families must document that they are one-quarter Native American (not necessarily Ho-Chunk) to be eligible for JOM benefits.

Unity

Unity is a national organization of high school-aged Native American youth. Unity plays different roles in different Ho-Chunk communities. In one community, a Unity group is active throughout the year. This group is currently working on a research project on Native American youth issues. Every year students from different Ho-Chunk communities, regardless of whether the community has an active Unity program throughout the year, participate in the National Unity Conference. The national conference is one of the largest gatherings of Native American youth. The 2002 National Unity Conference will be held in Paul Springs, California, and will feature five days of keynote speakers, workshops featuring both youth-led and adult-led presentations, forums addressing youth concerns, and fun. The Unity program is designed to promote positive activities, ideas, and alternatives to alcohol and drug abuse, health and safety issues, higher education, teen pregnancy, and other youth issues. In order to attend, students must participate in educational, cultural, and/or recreational activities throughout the year, must regularly attend school, must maintain a specified GPA, be alcohol and drug free, and must be in high school (grades 9-12). Ho-Chunk Nation Youth Services screens applicants and arranges all travel arrangements and chaperones.

Schools

Schools are examples of collaboration between tribal and mainstream systems that support youth. Different schools in the Ho-Chunk communities will have different school-tribal relationships, and offer different programs and different educational opportunities for native youth; for the purpose of this paper we focus on the Black River Falls High School because it has the largest percentage (14%) of native students in all Ho-Chunk Nation communities.

Black River Falls High School offers two unique educational alternative programs that Ho-Chunk Nation students have benefited from. According to the high school assistant principal, alternative educational programs have positively affected both native and non-native high school dropout rates. The Black River Falls School District in cooperation with the Black River Falls Technical College offers the Phoenix Academy Program and the Renaissance Program.

The Phoenix program is for students who are 16 years or older who have difficulties learning in a traditional school setting. Participants have had multiple failures, excessive absences, or disciplinary difficulties and have completed at least one year in a traditional high school. Fourteen students are admitted by application to a three-semester, half-day program; seven attend in the morning, seven in the afternoon. Using a self-paced and self-directed computer-based curriculum, successful program participants will be able to succeed in school and in life. Employment skills are integrated throughout the course and students are required to work a half day while not attending classes. By the time they have completed the program, students have job skills in addition to a Black River Falls High School diploma.

The Renaissance Program is open to 15 eligible students. The Renaissance program is designed for “sharp kids” who are “at risk” in the traditional school system. The program’s learning environment is flexible while focusing on school-to-work transition skills, development of academic and work skills, and how to apply skills to real life experiences. Graduates of this program are

required to develop a portfolio of project work, produce a résumé, and demonstrate achievement on the High School Equivalence Diploma (HSED) test. Successful students who have met the above requirements are awarded a Black River Falls High School Diploma.

Both programs mandate attendance. Missing more than five days of classes results in termination from the program. The school district pays for the instruction and in return demands full participation from students in the programs. The assistant principal referred to the opportunities created by these alternative programs. She said that she has seen some students go on to college with their diplomas, which may not have been an option for those students prior to their involvement in the programs. She said that the school may also pay for some students to attend additional technical school classes outside of their alternative school coursework, especially those who demonstrate a desire to attain a specific license or associate's degree. For most of the students, she says, it is a challenge just to get their high school diploma, and without the alternative programs, she is sure that some participants would not.

In addition to educational requirements imposed by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, Black River Falls High School funds a Native American tutor using federal Title IX funding. The tutor is available after school three nights a week for students who need extra help in their academic courses. In addition to her academic responsibilities, the tutor also organizes a Native American Awareness Week that features cultural drumming, dancing, singing, native speakers, an awards banquet, and a pow-wow. This week is not specifically dedicated to the Ho-Chunk nation culture, but to all Native American cultures.

In addition to providing academic help, Black River Falls High School offers a student assistance program to help students with social problems. The Considering Our Real Experience (CORE) program offers life skills training that includes problem solving, planning, decision-making, resisting negative influences of peers and the media, resolving conflict nonviolently, and coping with stress. Specific issue-oriented classes include classes on alcohol, tobacco, or other drug use or abuse, concerned persons (coping with alcohol or other drug abuse of family or friends), stress or anger, respecting differences, building positive relationships, teen parents, and family matters (coping with family changes including divorce, separation, and death).

Summer Work Program

In addition to academic resources, the Ho-Chunk Nation provides youth opportunities to develop their work experience. The Ho-Chunk Nation Department of Labor offers a summer employment program for youth 14 and older. The Department of Labor finds employment within the nation or within the youth's community for roughly one hundred Ho-Chunk youth for six weeks during the summer. The department first conducts an assessment of each youth's skills and interests. The youth are placed in a nonprofit, tribal, or community agency. They must pass a drug screening in order to participate in the program. Employment ranges from clerical tasks to working at a radio station and working outdoors with conservation groups.

Youth Collaboration Committee

In 1996 the Youth Services Collaboration Committee was formed as a result of the awareness of youth issues among service providers and tribal members. The committee is composed of tribal members and service providers from each tribal government department including the Departments of Education, Health, Social Services, and Labor.

The committee developed a Youth Strategic plan in 1997, which addressed tribal strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and perceived threats with the final product consisting of a comprehen

sive strategy to address youth issues. The plan was revisited in 1999 and is currently in the early stages of being revisited again.

Tribal Culture and Traditions

The most common response to the question of what strengths exist within the nation for youth is overwhelmingly its culture. One social service worker stated, "If youth knew the culture, they would know how to act." The majority of the social service workers, educators, and tribal members that we talked to confirmed this statement by expressing the idea that if youth were familiar with their culture and lived the way their culture dictated, they would not have problems with violence, alcohol or drugs, or grades, for example.

One tribal member confidently professed, "I don't believe in gangs" when asked about youth violence and gangs in the nation. He continued to explain that gangs are bad spirits that fill a void where there was once no spirit. He attributed the presence of gang violence to today's youth lacking spirit.

A youth worker expressed similar sentiment and attributed youth problems to youth "not being in touch with who they are . . . of what being Ho-Chunk means."

Some programs are beginning to be implemented to enhance cultural knowledge and understanding among youth. The tribe currently offers adults two-week language immersion programs at the Ho-Chunk Language and Cultural Center in Mauston, Wisconsin. Participants eat and sleep at the center while attending the two-week training that focuses on language acquisition, but it also integrates traditional cultural experience. Plans are currently under way to expand this program for youth in the summer.

Another popular cultural tradition is the pow-wow. According to *Visions and Voices: Winnebago Elders Speak to the Children*, pow-wows of today are the spiritual dances of the past. In the past, Ho-Chunk people would dance an entire day to give thanks and praise to the Earthmaker. The people would dance to "ask for good gardens, plentiful berries, and much game to feed the people" (p. 26). Today the pow-wow is still a very important part of Ho-Chunk culture. Youth actively participate in traditional dancing, drumming, and song. Pow-wows are a time when families and tribal members can be reunited.

A new activity that is gaining popularity among youth is the Ho-Chunk Spirit Ride. The Spirit Ride was established with the purpose of educating youth about traditional ways. The first Spirit Ride was held on Labor Day weekend of 2001. A group of youth and tribal leaders gathered for a two-day journey on horseback with the final destination as the tribal pow-wow grounds at the time of the grand entry at the Labor Day pow-wow. Spirit ride participants camped in the outdoors and had opportunities to learn about Ho-Chunk culture through the storytelling of their elders. The event was positively received, and a committee has been established to plan and expand the Spirit Ride for both the 2002 Memorial Day and the Labor Day pow-wows.

Areas of Need

Numerous areas of need have been addressed throughout this paper. This section will summarize areas of need discussed by youth, parents, tribal members, and service providers, some of which have already been addressed and some of which have not.

Extended and Accessible Community Centers. As already noted, many youth identified the need for extended hours at community centers. Many of the centers in Ho-Chunk communities are open only until about 7:00 or 8:00 p.m. Hours of operation need to be examined: Are the hours

contributing to the prevention of high-risk behaviors? Accessibility to community centers was another issue addressed by youth service workers. Many workers addressed transportation as a barrier to youth participation, a barrier that needs to be lowered in order for programs to succeed.

Mentor Programs. Many tribal members and service providers addressed the issue of parental involvement and the need for positive adult role models. Many adults suggested a mentoring program might address these issues. Social services reported that a mentor program has been proposed, but it is waiting to be implemented.

Programs that Address Self-Esteem. As mentioned, self-esteem was an issue addressed by many youth, parents and service providers. Current youth programs are not adequately addressing self-esteem issues. Self-esteem is such a critical factor in all youth issues that it should be an important area of focus when designing and implementing programs.

Evaluation of Programs. At least three Ho-Chunk department administrators mentioned program evaluation as an area of need. Programs of specific concern are the youth services program and the learning centers. Administrators whom we talked to want proof that these programs are an effective use of tribal monies; they would like to identify strengths and weaknesses of the programs so that programs can be modified to maximize both effectiveness and efficiency.

Youth Involvement in Program Design and Implementation. In addition to the Youth Collaboration Committee, many service providers addressed the need to include youth in the design and implementation processes of programs. This area seems to be the problem that has least been addressed by the nation.

Increased Funding for Expansion of Existing Services. A need addressed by youth service workers and social service workers was the need for increased tribal support through increased funding of existing programs. One program that seems to be especially needy of funding increases is the youth case management and community service programs. While these programs may not be as popular to fund as youth services programs because they often deal with very troubled youth, it seems that case management services have proven their effectiveness through the reduction of their overall caseload through the years. In addition, only one youth case manager and one community service coordinator staff the whole nation, whereas at least one youth service worker is in each of the seven Ho-Chunk youth service areas spread throughout the state. The case manager also expressed the concern that “I am not going to be around forever, and we need someone who knows the communities and knows the families to take over.”

Intergenerational Conversation. The youth identified the need to tell adults to “talk to us about the issues.” Youth want to know what their parents and elders did in similar situations when they were growing up.

One senior high school student wanted to know how to “look at life in a positive way.” It seems that while youth may not seem outgoing and motivated to engage in a conversation with adults, they are yearning to have the opportunity to participate in important conversations about topics that directly affect them. This seems to be especially true regarding the issue of preserving tribal heritage and culture. The youth seem to have a strong desire to know their culture and retain it; they just don’t know how to do this. At the same time, adults need to understand that youth are not necessarily going to ask them to “show me the old way.” Adults need to plan meaningful cultural activities that go beyond just cultural crafts to include spirituality, tribal history, language, and the “old ways” of life. These activities also need to be developmentally appropriate and fun. Another aspect that adults must understand is that while maintaining culture is important to tribal youth, youth are

also busy trying to survive in school socially and academically. Social and academic demands seem to be just as important to the youth as maintaining their culture.

Family-Oriented Programming. Family-oriented programming was suggested by numerous service providers and tribal members as a possible solution to parental involvement issues. Family oriented programs would involve all family members and require all family members to participate.

Per Capita Distribution Policy Change. In addition to the issues of family involvement, problems with the current per capita distribution were brought up in almost every interview with adults. The problem was confirmed by some youth when they were asked what they wanted to do following their high school graduation. The majority of parents, tribal members, and service providers interviewed stated that the current distribution of per capita monies needs to be changed. In its current form, the per capita was identified by most tribal members as a disincentive and distraction for youth as well as a catalyst for alcohol and other drug use and abuse, instead of aiding in the economic development of tribal members.

Juvenile Code. An area of policy development identified as a need is the need for a formalized juvenile code. The Ho-Chunk Nation currently has a children's code implemented through the Indian Child Welfare Act but no juvenile code. The social service worker who addressed this need stated that in order for the nation to address youth issues and youth needs most effectively, a juvenile code needs to be implemented. According to the worker, a juvenile code would give the nation tribal jurisdiction priority over county and state juvenile justice jurisdiction, which would allow the nation to implement culturally appropriate punishments and interventions.

Tribal Support for AODA Treatment and Aftercare Facilities. The need for alcohol and drug treatment and after-care facilities was addressed by a tribal administrator and a youth service worker. One person reported that while the current zero tolerance policy for alcohol and other drugs sends a positive message to youth that using alcohol and drugs will not be tolerated in the nation, it causes problems when a nation employee has his or her employment suspended. Under current policy a nation employee is suspended from his or her employment for six months and until the individual has obtained proof of participation in treatment. A tribal administrator reported that there is currently no support for treatment and rehabilitation programs. The only programs that may be accessible to an unemployed individual are free programs that may not offer the best possible opportunities for successful rehabilitation.

Appropriate after-treatment care was a need addressed by a youth worker who questioned how anyone could maintain sobriety and non-deviant behavior when he or she is given minimal treatment services and then released into the same environment that caused the individual to begin using alcohol and/or other drugs or engaging in deviant behavior in the first place.

Immersion Programs. The need for an effective cultural immersion program was addressed by youth, youth workers, and social service workers.

An example of an intensive youth immersion program that is already in place is the LifeSkills Center for Leadership in Minneapolis, Minnesota. According to youth workers who have attended the program with youth, the program teaches youth life skills including values and problem solving in a culturally appropriate manner for Ho-Chunk Youth. Youth reported increased positive behavior among program participants after the end of the program.

Another suggestion was that a tribal school could integrate both youth and family programming and increase participation in all tribal programs. A youth worker described the vision of "getting back to our roots" through the creation of "our own program conducive to our way of life." The curriculum would meet individualized learning needs unique to native students and teach

HoCak as the primary language with English as a second language, as well as tribal history, culture, and traditions. The person also addressed the need to include lessons on mainstream culture and how to succeed in it as a Native American.

Regarding the implementation of a tribal school, a youth worker suggested that the school be a boarding school with dormitories where youth would reside during the school week. In addition to wanting to retain culture, this individual expressed the idea that a tribal school is a means to retaining language, bloodline, and pride—that a tribal school would provide youth with the background needed to “feel good about being Ho-Chunk.” He also stated that youth would not engage in youth violence and deviant behavior because it is against the culture and it simply would not be tolerated.

One tribal member interviewed strongly believed that the nation has money from the gaming industry that could be used for a tribal school. He also believed that the nation could possibly obtain federal grant funding for the implementation of a tribal school, but the same person also expressed concerns that the tribal leadership is more concerned with gaming than tribal youth and the preservation of culture.

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