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Female Mentoring & Crime Prevention Program

(A Gender-Specific Project for At-Risk Youth)

Gary, Indiana

December, 1999

Woullard Lett,
Project Advisor

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A. Background

The Community

Gary, Indiana known as the "Steel City" is named in honor of Elbert Gary, the chairman of the Board of Directors of U.S. Steel Corporation in 1906. Gary is an industrial city surrounded by major steel mills such as USS/USX, LTV Steel, Inland Steel, Chicago Steel, Bethlehem Steel and many other smaller industrious mills. These mills once employed majority of the residents in the community until the 1970's. The downturn of the industrial revolution depressed the community economic condition. Businesses closed, the unemployment rate increased, the population decreased, and economic opportunities were scarce.

In 1970 Gary's population was 175,415 and began to decline at a rate of 33% per decade. According the 1992 U.S. Economic Census tract Gary's population is 116,646.[1] Of the 116,646 residents, 80.5% are Black, 16.3% White, and 0.3% Hispanic. The remaining 2.9% consist of Asian, Native American, and other races. The rapid growth of the southern suburbs left the inner city with a smaller and poorer population.

In 1992, Lake County's unemployment rate was 7.6 percent.[2] It has been shown that when there is an increase in the unemployment rate the crime rate increases also. For the last few years, Gary has been dubbed the "murder capital of the world" having more persons killed per capita (100,000) than any other American city. Like most urban cities with a majority African American population the norm is high crime rate, and economic depression.[3]

By the late 1970's, the spirit of Gary's communities plunged. The downtown area that once thrived with businesses and people became an eyesore community filled with deteriorated and abandoned buildings. After the massive layoff of the mills, many families migrated to other states seeking better opportunities, while the more affluent population relocated to the southern suburban taking their businesses with them. In talking with some lifelong Gary residents, they feel political factors caused this devastation to their community.[4]

In the meanwhile, more women became the head of households, and the primary provider for the family. As a result, the latch key era began, and more responsibilities were place upon unsupervised children while adults worked. According to findings by Kids Count in the Indiana 1999 Data Book, as of 1997 there were 852,090 children ranging from ages 10 to 19 in the state. More specifically to this project's geographical area, Lake County had 73,241 children during the same period. In 1997 there were 57,911 juvenile arrests and nearly 9% (8.7%) were of Lake County. In 1998, 2,182 juveniles were committed to the Department of Corrections, 119 of these juveniles were from Lake County. The crime rate among juveniles has increased consistently over the decade.[5] It has been noted that nearly 60% of all youth related crimes occurs on school days immediately after school dismissal between the hours of three and four in the afternoon.[6]

Research indicates that children who grow up in communities where violence is prevalent find it difficult to concentrate, reluctant to venture out, exhibit aggressive behavior, show sign of depression and passive behavior. Too often these children express no hope and dreams about tomorrow. Some simply believe that they will not live to be adults.[7]

The Organization

One of our greatest institutions that have contributed to the survival of the African-American community is the church. It has provided the faith, hope and meaningful programs and resources needed to equip people to lead meaningful and purposeful lives. This institution provides the moral fiber to sustain individuals, groups, and communities through difficult and dangerous times. Frank O'Bannon, Lieutenant Governor for the State of Indiana stated, "Our religious institutions have the ability to work as non-profits to revitalize our communities...They are often the leaders in grass root organizations. I believe we must begin to open some of our programs that address community needs to our community-based groups...Local churches have been working on Community Partnership for quite some time."[8]

Reclamation and Restoration Ministries, Inc. was founded in 1996 by Rev. Anthony Kelley, Pastor/Teacher of Van Buren Missionary Baptist Church in Gary, Indiana. The organization mission is to promote social and community wholeness by actively developing and implementing relevant and life-changing ministries and programs that will restore and/or equip at-risk youth and adults with values and alternative choices that will aid them to lead responsible, meaningful, and productive lives.[9]

The Groups

Prior to this organization existence, in 1992 Rev. Anthony Kelley organized the Rosa Parks Fellowship Society, a special ministry within Van Buren Missionary Baptist Church, which consist of a group of women ages 18 to 35. The Rosa Parks Fellowship Society purpose is to become a strong unit by providing ministries to Christian women through Bible study, prayer, and rap sessions[10]. One of the goals for this group is to develop a mentoring program for the female youth that will address some identified needs and concerns the youth have voiced. Some of the women who are members of the Rosa Parks Fellowship Society also have children who participate in the Youth Fellowship Program. The youth fellowship program is a special ministry for youth up to age 18 for church members and youth of the community (non-members). These youth are active in the church, school and community. *(For more information about these groups, see page 12).*

One of the first programs developed by Reclamation &Restoration Ministries, Inc. was the Manhood Training & Mentoring Crime Prevention Program. This program was designed to prevent at-risk boys ages 6 to 18 from engaging in criminal activity by instilling the principles of Kwanza and providing each youth with a professional adult male mentor.[11] The Manhood Training & Mentoring Program receives notification and financial support from federal, state, and local agencies. As a result of the program recognition and success, many of the female youth that participate in Youth Fellowship felt the need for a similar program that would cater to them. (See survey form and results on Appendix B).

B. DEFINITION OF THE PROBLEM

In conducting a survey of fifteen (15) girls ages 10 years and over that reflect, some problems identified are listed below:

Teenage Sex	Peer Pressure	No Career Direction
Teenage Pregnancy	Criminal Activity	Employment Opportunity
Gang Affiliation	Nothing to do	Boredom

(Research on the identified areas of concerns, along with the assistance of the Heartland Center in Hammond, Indiana, specifically targets the Lake County, Indiana area.)

Identified Problems Among Female Youth

- **Teenage Sex** - Since some at-risk girls have not had appropriate role models and the opportunity to learn the difference between love and sex, they often equate sexual relationships with love and caring. As a result, they make dangerous choices to engage in high-risk sexual behaviors that can lead to pregnancy, HIV, and sexual transmitted diseases.[12]

- **Teenage Pregnancy** - A report for Lake County indicates that the teen birth rate for girls ages 15 to 17 is down 7% since 1992. While 46% of birth that occurred in 1977 were of non-marital births (out of wedlock) rising 18% since 1992.[13]

- **Gang Affiliation/Peer Pressure** - A significant number of girls are becoming involved in gangs. Factors that motivate girls to join include abuse inflicted by parents or other relatives, poverty, and the failure of schools and other institutions to recognize and intervene on risk factors early. These girls are often torn between the fear of being loyal to gangs and the desire to leave gangs.[14]

- **Criminal Activity** - The total number of juveniles in Indiana committed to Department of Corrections is up 85% since 1994. The Violent Crime Index arrest rate for girls rose 103% between 1981 and 1997, compared with a 27% increase for boys during the same period. As noted, the escalating number of girls arrested for drug related offenses should be of particular concern as results from a 1998 survey indicates that substance use and abuse among adolescent girls in the general population are rising. Other relative studies indicate that the unprecedented increase in the number of incarcerated adult women since the early 1980's had largely been due to drug related offendings.[15]

- **Nothing To Do/Boredom** - Despite the trends and alarming patterns of self-destructive behaviors that girls are exhibiting, little attention has been focused on the unique needs of girls, the obstacles they face, or the services they require. Programs designed to benefit women and girls are significantly underfunded. Currently, less than 5% of philanthropic dollars in the United States are specifically designated for helping women. Local communities often lack gender-specific programming for girls in need even though girls are more likely than boys to be held in detention for status offenses such as running away from home, truancy, and other non-criminal offenses.[16]

- **No Career Direction/Employment Opportunities** - A survey reports that 91% of girls reported that they had experience one or more of the following: being suspended or expelled from school, repeating one or more grades, and/or being placed in special classroom. Eighty-five (85%) percent of the girls had been expelled or suspended, and the median age for the first experience was 13. Of the girls placed in special classrooms, only 1% said that the placement helped them stay out of trouble. Many girls described school as a battleground in which sexual harassment, racism, interpersonal rivalries with peers, and inattention from adult professionals made dropping out appear to be a necessary means of escape.[17] As reported for Lake County, the graduation rate is 89.2% increasing 21% since 1990. The Gary Community School Corporation had a 20,983 students enrollment in 1997, 99% of the students are minorities. Of the total enrollment, 1283 are twelfth grade students. The expectancy graduation rate is 88% of which only 52% will attend college.[18] In relation to employment opportunities, it is noted the lack of the opportunity to work does disadvantage youth in communities with poor economic opportunity structure. However, the teenage labor market itself has little effect on future employment rates, but does help youth accumulate work experience that employers can later reward through higher wages.[19]

C. THE PROPOSAL:

As it relates to the identified problems among at-risk girls, evidence shows that children are less likely to make bad choices (criminal and non-criminal acts) if they have responsible adults in their lives. Even impoverished kids living in criminal-ravaged neighborhoods tend to make it if they have an adult-parent, teacher, coach, or clergy - to protect them.[20] Although mentoring is not a panacea there is evidence to suggest that mentor programs can effectively make a difference in the lives of "at-risk", even "high-risk" youth. Society at large can reap the benefits of that difference...[21] Today's youth are growing up in a world in which caring, supportive adults tend to have less time to spend with them and are increasingly hard to find.[22] The decrease of adult involvement in children lives has been linked to numerous consequences for youth, from low academic achievement or grades, to lowered career aspirations, to truancy and juvenile crime. In an effort to counteract these trends, schools, social service agencies, and community organizations across the country are turning to mentoring programs, hoping to strengthen youth chances for success by providing them with greater access to caring adults and the wealth of resources those adults possess.[23]

The most exciting aspect of mentoring program is that it can be modeled to fit the specific and constantly changing needs of the identified group (at-risk, high-risk, male, female, etc.) Whether the participants need help making career choices, avoiding high-risk behavior,[24] identifying cultural differences, personal development, or tutoring, mentoring is a sustainable solution. Mentoring is a one-to-one relationship between a caring responsible adult and a child who needs support in achieving certain goals. Although mentoring alone cannot remedy all of the social and environmental factors which contribute to at-risk children, it can provide an individuals with alternative choices that will equip them to lead responsible, meaningful, and productive lives.

Problem Statement

If a mentoring program for at-risk female youth is not developed and implemented by March, 2000, Reclamation and Restoration Ministries, Inc. will falter to provide approximately 15 to 20 female youth with alternative choices that will contribute in equipping them to lead responsible, meaningful, and productive lives in Gary, Indiana.

Project Goals

- To organize a group of girls and adults to address the concerns and needs of at-risk female youth by developing a mentoring program for at-risk female youth ages 10 to 18 that will provide guidance, tutoring, life and employment skills.

- To offer at-risk female youth with alternative choices to illegal acts by providing educational, recreational and cultural enrichment activities.

Project Product

- This project will produce a mentoring program that will link at-risk female youths to responsible adult female mentors professional and nonprofessional, who will provide guidance, tutoring, life and employment skills, and recreational activities as alternative choices to illegal activity therefore, equipping the youth with values and skills that will aid them to lead responsible, meaningful, and productive lives.

- The minimal objective in the project is to equip the two groups (youth and adult mentors) with leadership skills to address and voice issues that relates to their community.

D.   METHODS/RESULTS

The Outputs/Inputs:

Organize a group of girls interested in participating in a mentoring program:

To organize the group of girls announcements were made at Van Buren's Youth Fellowship Program.   The group consists of congregation members, friends of members, and neighborhood youth ages 2 to 18. The youth meet each Tuesday for choir rehearsal, Bible Study, and rap sessions. The group has elected officers and conduct orderly meetings that include agendas and minutes. They are supervised by the Youth Advisory Committee that consist of official board members, the Sunday school superintendent, Christian education representative, two youth supervisors, and parents. The group desired to have a female mentoring program. However, they lacked someone to take the initiative to help them develop and implement such a project.

Organize a group of female mentors interested in participating, developing and implementing a mentoring program.

To organize the group of women to assist in the process, the project was presented to the Rosa Parks Fellowship Society, where I preside as president. It was one of the group's goal to start mentoring program a couple of years ago (as stated in the church's 1998 and 1999 Annual Report). This group of women consists of fifteen (15) members with ages ranging from 18 to 60. We are professional and nonprofessional women. Meetings are held on each 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month. These meetings consist of Bible study, prayer, rap sessions, and business related issues. The group is noted for their ability to work together efficiently and productively and they are called upon often to host various church/community-related events. For short project (one or two day events) these women are willing and able to devote their time and energy. The initial request to participate in the mentoring project was not favorable.   Knowing that the project had to move forward, I met with the grant-writing committee. Rev. Anthony Kelley, President/CEO, Reclamation & Restoration Ministries, Inc

assigned me to the committee. I thought this would be productive, but after meeting I discovered two (2)-encumbering barriers. First, in *this* group I was not in a facilitating position. The women had to ability and knowledge to make things happen, but my project was not considered of interest to them. The other barrier was the monetary self-interest. Changing to a new group was not the answer in this case. In August, I went back to the Rosa Parks group with a new plan of actions. We recruited additional women from the church membership and community, and re-emphasized to the existing members through a Bible study our purpose and mission. This strategy was favorable for the project.

Design a program that will address the need of the girls:

Designing a mentoring program became the minimal objective in this project. Our time line to complete the design of the program was December 1999 and it is taking longer than we project. We have look at several model programs, and those of interest are listed below.

- *True Love Waits* - An international campaign designed to challenge students to remain sexually abstinent until marriage.

- *Youth Volunteer Corps of America* - A national youth service program with the express mission of providing volunteer opportunities for youth ages 11 to 18.

- *Church Mentoring Ministry* - A manual that give steps to designing a mentoring program for youth in the church. The church mentoring model was designed by Pamela Ervin, Denver Seminary in Denver, Colorado.

- *Yes, You Can!* - A mentoring program designed to prepare youth for college.

- *Manhood Training & Mentoring Program* - A mentoring program for male youth ages 6 to 18. The program is specifically designed to provide at-risk youth (males) with alternative choices to prevent engagement in criminal activity.

- *Student Mentoring* - A guide to develop a school-based mentoring program referencing several existing models.

We wanted to design a program that would empower the girls socially, economically,

culturally and spiritually. The central objectives of the program are to provide youth development in which the girls will learn to be productive, learn to be connected to others and the community, and learn to navigate. We are concerned that focusing on so many facets could cause the program to lose focus. However, we concluded that collaborating with existing program in the community would keep up within our central objective and allow us to maintain the direction of the program. For example, to holistically address economic development, a former colleague of the CED program has implemented an entrepreneur program in the community for high school students. The program include credited college courses, entrepreneur training, projects among other skills.

Present the project to the President/CEO and Board Member of Reclamation & Restoration Ministries, Inc. for approval.

In January 2000, the proposal will be submitted to Reclamation & Restoration Ministries, Inc. for approval. The final draft has to be reviewed by Rev. Anthony Kelley for any necessary adjustment and/or revisions prior to submission to the full Board. The year-end quarterly board meetings will be held on January 29, 2000.

Prepare a funding plan for approval and submission.

The chairperson of the grant-writing committee is also working with the project group. We have already begun accessing possible funders for the project. The Indiana Juvenile Justice Institute is supportive of R&R Ministries and their community efforts. They are also possible funders to support the mentoring program. Application deadline to this funder is March 2000.

Submit proposal to funding sources:

After approval from the Board, proposals for the project will be submitted to the identified funding sources.

Implementation Plan:

September, 1998

- Organized a group of female youth ages 10 to 17 to participate in a mentoring program

- Met with girls weekly during Youth Fellowship

- Develop a trusting and open relationship with the girls by showing my commitment to them

January, 1999

- Received confirmation from Reclamation & Restoration Ministries, Inc. to facilitate and design a female mentoring program

- Secured a meeting place at Van Buren Church to hold meetings as needed. Tuesdays was designed for meeting days.

- Organized a group of women consisting of professional, community leaders, educators, and nonprofessional (young and old) who are interested in participating, designing and implementing a female mentoring program.

February - September, 1999

- Conduct a survey of the group members

- Held brainstorming sessions (continuously)

- Reviewed existing model programs (continuously)

September - December, 1999

- Compiled information from surveys

- Discussions about the design/type of mentoring program that will address the girls needs

- Issued assignments

January, 2000

- Design the mentoring program to include goals, objectives, structure, program activities, budget and an evaluation process.

- Submit draft of proposal to President/CEO for review and the Board of R&R Ministries for approval

- Identify funding sources (with the assistance of the grant-writing committee)

January - February, 2000

- Submit funding proposal to identified funding sources

- Conduct a fund raiser to support initial start up of the program

March - April, 2000

- Develop a implementation plan to start the program

- Start the program (if funding is approved)

E. CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION:

Conclusion:

In determining the project success, I reviewed the Logical Framework article discussed at the start of the project class. The Logical Framework is a tool to help strengthen project design, implementation and evaluation. As indicated the Objective Verifiable Indicator (OVI) basic principle is (says) if you can measure, it you can manage it. The OVI tells what will be sufficient performance to assure that we can reach the next level of objective. Based on this tool, my project goal proved successful in reaching its initial goal by overcoming obstacles, and mobilizing the project to move forward.

Presently the group (youth and adults) is actually designing the mentoring program. According to the implementation plan we should have completed this process by December 1999, but year-end events and activities interfered with our scheduled time line. If assignments are completed as assigned, a complete draft will be available for review and approval by the Board of Directors at the quarterly meeting on January 31, 2000.

My learning experience included patience, remaining focused, commitment, implementing management strategies and tools, and time management. While facilitating this project, I often reflected and used the tools and resourceful information received from the CED Program. The two (2) classes that equipped me to facilitate the group to move forward in the project were training of trainers (C. Turner/T. Smalls) and negotiation strategies (M. Swack).

In training of trainers we were introduced to various teaching methods that aided the

trainer to present and facilitate in instructional environments. What I learned most (relative to presenting) was the ability of the trainer to recognize when a presentation is ineffective and the ability to make immediate change to achieve the desired outcome. In making the necessary changes, negotiating skills such as separating the people from the problem; focusing on the interests, not the positions; working together to create options that satisfied all parties; and keeping interest fair and honest. Collectively using the tools from these classes moved the group to a satisfactory point by the end the project.

Constructive input from colleagues was also helpful. It provided me with the additional motivation needed to keep the project going strong. Hearing others struggles and achievements sparked ideas that could be used in my project.

It was an interesting experience dealing with the attitudes and politics of the project's constituents relative to addressing the problems of our youth. The project community consists of the girls, the Rosa Parks Fellowship Society (women), the church congregation, Board members, and the president/CEO (pastor). Trust and values were important factors of the adult group, while the youth were concerned about the adult's commitment to them. One among many internal political factors included the congregate leading members' judgment, criticism, and innuendoes against the group. Nonetheless, the groups' ability to move forward can be credited to their Christian beliefs as well as their professional and life experiences.

The community agreed on the problems at hand, and everyone had an opinion. The most difficult task was getting participants to stay interested and committed to the project (given the

politics we had to deal with). To maintain the group's focus we planned events together, went on outings, celebrated birthdays and occasions, gave out tokens of appreciation (bookmarks, journals, pens, etc.), and other creative strategies. These activities maintained the group focus, created natural relationships, and got others interested in the project.

Recommendations:

In facilitating such a project, my recommendations are to have good community organizing skills and the commitment of the community prior to starting the project. Assuming that these two groups were prepared to wholeheartedly participate in this project and implement a mentoring program was premature. Most of the project's life was spent organizing the groups. This unforeseen barrier dominated the project. Instead of addressing the youth's identified problems, the thinking pattern of the groups had to be changed. Empowering the groups with the desire and ability to create change in their community turned out to be the minimum objective in this project. Thereafter, the group was ready to address the problem at hand, move forward, and design a mentoring program.

I did not have the privilege of taking the community organizing class taught by Sam Grant. I highly recommended it to practitioners that lack community organizing skills. Nonetheless, the feedback from the project class was both encouraging and supportive. The suggestions and input from others helped to overcome obstacles in your project. Even talking about the project with unbias people in the community provided informative and thoughtful input that helped the project move forward.