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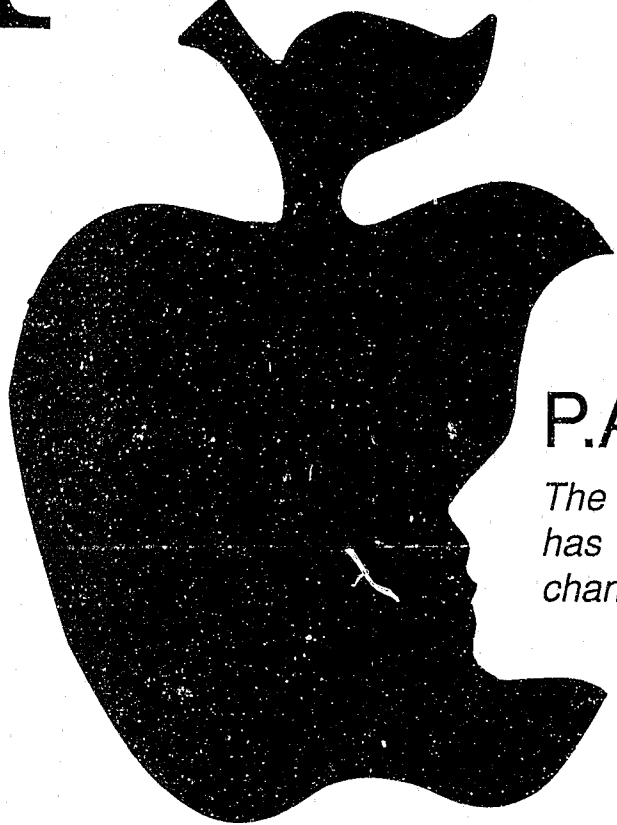
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profile

OFFICE OF JUVENILE JUSTICE AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION



NCJRS

APR 9 1993

ACQUISITIONS

P.A.C.E. Center for Girls:

The Florida program which for the past eight years has successfully given troubled females a second chance.

In 1982, when Vicki Burke, State Director and founder of the P.A.C.E. (Practical and Cultural Education) Center for Girls, began her crusade for effective juvenile justice programming for females, it was primarily out of a personal need to offer the girls with which she was working gender-sensitive programming that they were not being given.

"Initially I wrote on paper what I would want to do if I had the girls in a program. I took it to the juvenile judges feeling if they said we needed this program, that would be my confirmation.

"When the judges were thrilled, I took the same ideas to the Department of Health & Rehabilitative Services (HRS). There, with a female program manager, I refined them, and HRS agreed to send us the referrals if we began the program," said Burke.

"I was working at a juvenile delinquency program, and while we were getting a few girls referred, it was obvious most girls were ending up in the detention center or training school because of the lack of available programming," Burke said.

For the next two years, Burke and a local board of directors met on a regular basis to discuss what should be the direction of the new program.





Finally, in October of 1984, Burke decided that it was time to get started. "We had been meeting and meeting, but not really getting any where," Burke said. "So I quit my job, started looking for a place to house the program, and told the Board that we were going to open officially in January."

In December, Burke received permission to house the program for six months in a single room of a Methodist Church in downtown Jacksonville. "We started P.A.C.E. with a donated \$100 in the bank--that's how much it took to open a checking account--and two volunteer staff members; yet somehow it worked."

The first ten P.A.C.E. clients were recruited from the Jacksonville detention center and moved back into their homes or foster care. Originally program staff transported the girls to and from the program. Criteria for the program was (and is) broad so as to only eliminate girls suffering from serious addictions, with tendencies toward violent behavior, or in need of long term, intensive counseling services.

The girls spent mornings concentrating on academics for which they were given standard high school credits. The Jacksonville Community College also agreed to let the program use their library, computers, and home economics facilities. Volunteers provided classes and counseling in family planning, drug/alcohol education, career development, nutrition, and sexual abuse. "We were a small program so we taught what life skills we felt the girls needed. People volunteered to provide services," said Burke.

In the summer of 1985, HRS awarded P.A.C.E. a \$10,000 grant to continue their services, allowing the program to move to a larger space within the Community College, where it is still located.

"Being a part of the community college has been terrific. We don't pay rent, they have given us the full use of all campus facilities, and there's a great deal of security for the girls," said Burke. Jacksonville now serves an average daily population of 50 girls and has begun a remedial pre-P.A.C.E. program for an additional 10 females.

P.A.C.E.'s success in Jacksonville earned the program the 1987 Florida Juvenile Judges Outstanding Dependency Program Award bringing with it attention from across the state. Juvenile court judges in Bradenton and Orlando called to request P.A.C.E. be replicated in their cities to fill a lack of gender sensitive services for females.

"The first thing we did, as in Jacksonville, was establish a local board of directors," said Burke. "In Bradenton it was different because I really knew no one so I was dependent on the local juvenile judges to introduce me to the community people who would help carry the program."

Two years later P.A.C.E./Bradenton opened in 1989 in one room of a church before moving into a donated building six months later. Bradenton now has an average daily population of approximately 40 girls, with a 27% minority rate. P.A.C.E./Orlando was opened in 1991, and currently serves an average population of 30 girls, with a 50% minority rate.

In 1992, two additional P.A.C.E. programs opened in Miami and Fort Lauderdale, serving 20 and 30 respectively. Fort Lauderdale has a minority population of approximately 60%, and Miami serves 100% minority females. "The programs are reflective of the areas of Florida in which they are," said Lawanda Ravoira, State Operations Manager.

P.A.C.E. Enrollment Statistics 1/85 -- 3/92

Referral Status	# of Girls	% of Girls
Status Offenders	540	61.6%
Delinquent	117	13.3%
Dependent	101	11.5%
Drop-Out	66	7.5%
Teen Parent	25	2.8%
Academic Underachievement	4	.5%
Sexual Abuse	12	1.4%
Mental Health	10	1.1%
Substance Abuse	3	.3%
	878	100%

"We are reaching girls from all socioeconomic backgrounds as well as crossing all race boundaries." Plans are also underway for P.A.C.E. programs in Tallahassee and Pensacola.

"I think one of the unique things about P.A.C.E. is that at every place we've opened, it's because we've been requested to come by juvenile judges, by community leaders who've talked with the judges, or by others working with youth," said Burke. "Just having the community say, 'We need to have a program just for the girls in our community.' makes the program more successful."

While all of the programs are individual, they all must meet P.A.C.E. state standards of operations, be nonresidential and community-based, and are governed by a state Board of Directors made up of representatives from local boards.

"The state office is really an important key because when we are invited to a new community, we don't just come in, hand them a manual and say, 'Here's the program. Go ahead and start.' Vicki and I are there constantly to help them with everything from setting up filing systems to implementing program requirements," said Ravoira.

Current P.A.C.E. standards differ little from the services first described to Jacksonville juvenile court judges in 1982. Initial program components of academics, life skills, community service, and individualized follow-up are still a part of state standards, and programs continue to be governed by local boards who have control and flexibility within the requirements of P.A.C.E. standards.

"There is a model for this program, and we are very strict in insuring that individual programs

continue the vision Vicki started so that P.A.C.E. remains youth centered and gender sensitive," explained Ravoira. "The board of directors are made aware of the state standards, but within them there is certainly flexibility to govern their program and meet the unique needs of their population."

Both Burke and Ravoira feel that the board of directors system is one of the things that allows P.A.C.E. to be so responsive to the needs of troubled girls in the local community. Board members, often judges, youth service professionals, or local community leaders, provide the girls with positive role models while lending the program the community respect and influence necessary to be successful.

"The local boards get so involved," said Ravoira. "They want the program to be successful for the girls, and they want to share in that success. They know individual girls' names and ask program staff about their progress. We even have photographs of board members painting and scrubbing buildings donated to P.A.C.E., handing out movie money from their own pockets, or handing out Christmas presents."

Four members of each local board are elected as delegates to the state board which sets statewide policy for P.A.C.E. According to state staff, this system is designed to allow each P.A.C.E. program an equal voice regardless of the size of individual programs.

"Local board members are involved in state policy setting for P.A.C.E. as a whole as well as having governing authority on the local level," said Ravoira. "This community involvement keeps P.A.C.E. grassroots and community-based."

All P.A.C.E. programs offer core academic curriculum and are



Grace

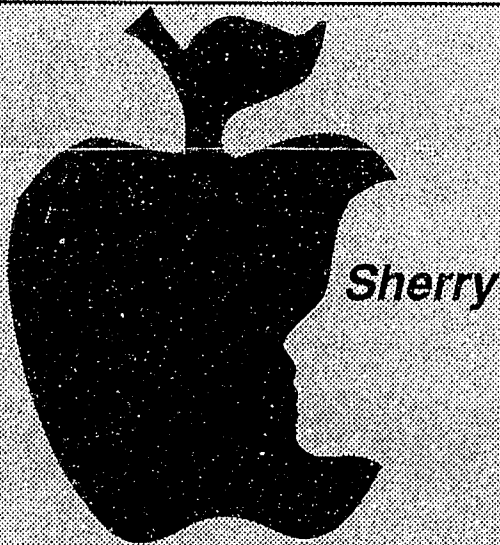
"You got to come here willing," fourteen year old Grace yells at a fellow P.A.C.E. member LaTarsha. "If you're gonna come here with a negative attitude, you ain't gonna learn nothin'. I'm a talkative student, but I ain't dumb. I want to be an obstetrician, live in a big mansion, and drive a fancy car," Grace continues, adding with an extra gleam in her eye, "and every Friday, I'd give \$1 to each kid in the projects."

Despite Grace's strong willed determination to accomplish her goals, it is the projects of Miami, Florida to which she is no stranger. As she puts it, she was "born and raised in the ghetto," surroundings which have taught her plenty about truth, trust, and taking care of one's own.

For Grace, as for many of the girls at P.A.C.E., junior high brought only trouble as she and friends began stealing clothes, skipping school, and fighting. Spending increasing amounts of time with neighborhood drug dealers introduced her to the money and pleasure connected to marijuana—"There's not a girl in this program who doesn't smoke weed."—and the power of violence.

"Once you do it once [hurt someone], it's easy the next time. It gives you a rush," explains Grace, who came to P.A.C.E. after being arrested for shooting a fellow teenager in the knee in an effort to prove herself to her "crowd." P.A.C.E. offered Grace a second chance, enabling her to put her past behind her and concentrate on getting an education and realizing her dreams.

"I love P.A.C.E.," she said. "Even when I come late or have problems while I'm here, at least I always come and try."



Sherry came to P.A.C.E. Center for Girls in 1992, shortly after the agency opened its doors in Broward County. Enrolled in eighth grade at her home school, Sherry had an exhaustive history of truancy and did poorly in her classes when she did attend. Her prior educational history left her mother little hope her daughter would finish her education.

Her first day at P.A.C.E., Sherry made it through without skipping a class. The staff felt there was hope. When she made it through her first week without skipping a day, it reaffirmed what the staff had first believed about Sherry, she had educational potential that could be tapped and cultivated. Since Sherry's first week, she has maintained perfect attendance.

At the end of the first grading period, Sherry received a certificate for the "Most Improved Student." As her mother visited P.A.C.E. staff at a Holiday Open House, she was bewildered by Sherry's progress and her new commitment to education.

Since her first term, Sherry has continued to progress. Most recently, her advisor advocated for her to be advanced to the ninth grade, her proper grade level, and the P.A.C.E. Program Manager presented Sherry's case to the School Board. Beginning February 1, 1993, Sherry will officially be a ninth grader.

After summer classes at P.A.C.E. Sherry will be returning to her home school and enrolling in the tenth grade. Despite years of apathy and lack of academic achievement, Sherry's progress in P.A.C.E. has surprised even herself, and provided her with a renewed sense of self confidence as she continues to evolve into a young woman.

state accredited drop out prevention schools, allowing girls to earn credits toward their GED or their high school diploma. Girls attend classes in math, social studies, English, and science, and are separated into class units by their grade level and academic achievements. While individual P.A.C.E. teachers develop the curriculum, all materials are based on the Florida state performance objectives for students in each grade level.

Programs also offer life skills courses to meet the specific needs of a program's particular clientele, and involve girls in community service projects to raise money for program expenses as well as instill in the girls a sense of community pride.

When a girl enters the P.A.C.E. program, she is assigned an advisor who is responsible for her throughout her stay. Advising sessions are held each morning to help girls unload any frustrations or anger from events the night before.

"We're able to handle a lot of crises in advising sessions and keep them from spilling over into the classroom time," said Josephine Lokie, a teacher in the Broward County P.A.C.E. .

Advisors also do frequent home visits where they discuss problems and successes with the girls and their parents in their own environment. Each advisor is to complete an initial home visit when the girl is enrolled in P.A.C.E. and then plan monthly parental visits either in the home or at the program site.

"You pick up a great deal in the home visits," said Kathleen Kinsley, a teacher at P.A.C.E./Broward. "You better understand the relationship between the child and her parents, and you can sense the support or lack of support the girl is given at home concerning her academic success."

While the program is voluntary, most girls are referred by the juvenile court, local schools, or HRS, and will participate approximately six to eight months. Most P.A.C.E. clients are ages 15-16, although the program accepts girls from 12-18.

Most girls are referred for problems such as inability to follow school structure, running away, lack of parental communication leading to problems at home, dropping out of school, or chronic truancy. Some, however, are referred after being arrested for more serious crimes.

Program statistics currently being developed, indicate that a substantial number of the girls entering the P.A.C.E. program have been sexually and/or physically abused before coming to P.A.C.E. Many girls are also diagnosed as having substance abuse or alcohol dependency problems.

Treatment goals for girls in the program are individualized, however, the ideal criteria for a successful termination includes:

1. earning enough academic credits to advance one or more grade levels;
2. increasing the TABES (standardized test of basic adult education) score at least one grade level;
3. completing two P.A.C.E. gender specific curriculum courses such as sex education, career development, or alcohol and drug education; and
4. maintaining a 92% attendance rate.

"While there is an ideal, a successful completion of P.A.C.E. is first and foremost based on a girl meeting her individualized treatment goals," explained Ravoira.

According to state staff, most girls unable to complete P.A.C.E. fail because of a lack of attendance and effort. "If the girl doesn't come, we can't possibly do anything for her, and we have to be fair to those on the waiting lists," said Burke.

"Some of them just need to know that we are going to hang in there with them because their experience at school has been that when they missed they were easily let go. No one called. No one came to see them. It was just accepted that they weren't going to be there. That's not the way it is with our girls."

Girls are required to call the program by 8:30 a.m. if they are not planning to attend. If a girl does not call or come, staff call and may send someone to the residence to see what the trouble is.

This same attitude is adopted in handling other disciplinary issues. "We don't have a hundred rules at P.A.C.E. You can't smoke, curse, fight, or do drugs, and you have to be there. That's really all," explained Burke. "When these girls make a mistake, they always expect us to kick them out. We have to instill in them that mistakes happen, and we can go on from there."

Staff at P.A.C.E./Broward agree that not expelling or suspending students in the program goes a long way toward helping them achieve success.

"The girls have an expectation of being kicked out for things they do wrong," said Lokie. "When we don't respond that way and try to work with them to solve problems, it builds their trust of us. They see we're different than the teachers they had before."

According to Agatha Pappas, Executive Director of P.A.C.E./Broward, discipline is something their staff takes seriously enough

to discuss regularly. "We think a key to discipline is staff consistency," Pappas said. "Staff are taught to back one another up so that a girl can't run to each teacher and get a different answer."

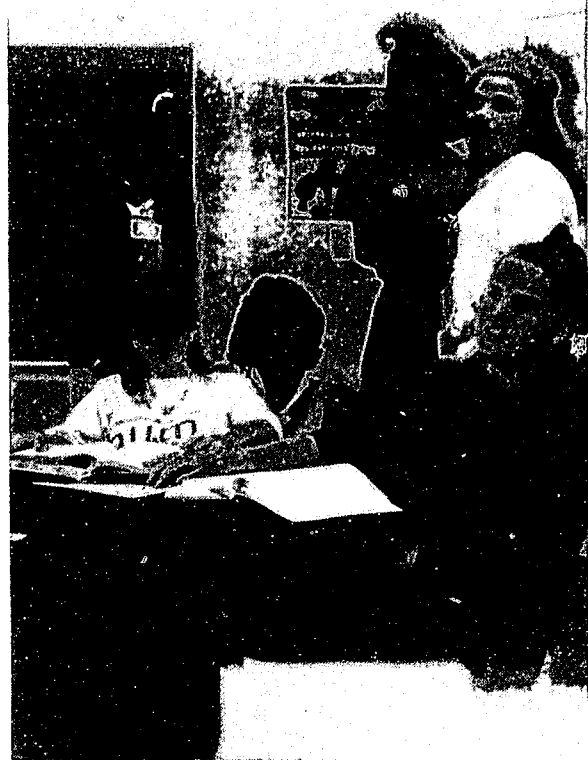
"As long as you're fair with them, they'll go along with you even if they don't like it," added Lokie. "I've found it is often more effective to tell them how disappointed you are with them, than to yell at them. They don't like to disappoint someone they trust."

Regardless of whether or not a girl successfully completes the P.A.C.E. curriculum, all programs will conduct an individualized, three year follow-up. As an office develops a population in need of this service, a follow-up/placement coordinator is hired who contacts girls monthly for the first three months after termination, and at least twice a year for the next two years.

"The good thing about follow-up is that the girls continue to see that we really care. We don't just say, 'Okay, you've been here for eight months; you're cured, now have a great life.' We really want them to continue in school or to be working because we know how easy it is to leave a program like P.A.C.E., where you get a lot of support, and to fall back into the life you were living before that experience," explained Ravoira.

Besides the follow-up coordinator, each program staff includes an executive director, a secretary, a part-time counselor, and at least two teachers, who double as individual advisors to the girls.

It is estimated that P.A.C.E. costs approximately \$3,500-\$4,500 per girl per year, which the program feels is cost effective considering many of the girls in P.A.C.E. could otherwise be candidates for detention or incarceration, costing the state approximately \$45,000 per girl per year.



P.A.C.E. Enrollment Statistics
1/85 -- 3/92

Living Status	# of Girls	% of Girls
Both Parents	195	22.2%
Mother	361	41.1%
Father	31	3.5%
Mother and Stepfather	101	11.5%
Father and Stepmother	11	1.3%
Guardian	61	6.9%
Foster Home	40	4.6%
Group Home	47	5.4%
Relative	31	3.5%
	878	100%

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For more information on P.A.C.E. Center for Girls, Inc., contact Vicki B. Burke, State Director, 9250 Cypress Green Drive, Suite 106, Jacksonville, FL, 32256, or call 904/737-3275.

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