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AN EVALUATION
OF THE
CITY OF ~~CONCORD~~
"FRIENDS Program, Inc."

GRANT NUMBER

78-II-JF-2150 D02

PROJECT PERIOD

April 7, 1978 - May 31, 1979

VIRGINIA GARRELL-MICHAUD
EVALUATION SPECIALIST

NEW HAMPSHIRE GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON CRIME AND DELINQUENCY

May 1, 1979

57473

SUB-GRANTEE City of Concord

PROJECT TITLE FRIENDS Program, Inc.

PROJECT DIRECTOR Richard Maxson

GRANT NUMBER 78-II-JF-2150 D02

GRANT PERIOD April 7, 1978 - May 31, 1979

GRANT BUDGET

<u>Item</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Fed.</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>Local</u>
Personnel Services	\$26,694	\$13,347		\$13,347
Consultant Services				
Travel and Subsistence				
Capital Equipment	2,089	1,044		1,045
Construction and Renovation				
Rental				
All Other	259	130		129
Indirect Costs				
Total Cost	\$29,042	\$14,521		\$14,521

PREVIOUS PROJECT HISTORY

<u>Grant Period</u>	<u>Total Funding</u>	<u>Fed.</u>	<u>Percentage State</u>	<u>Local</u>
January 1, 1977 - April 30, 1978	\$20,841	90%	5%	5%

NCJRS

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ACQUISITIONS

EVALUATOR: Virginia Garrell-Michaud
DATE: May 1, 1979

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The FRIENDS Program, Inc. is an independent charitable agency supported financially by the City of Concord, private foundation funds, individual foundations, and various fund-raising activities. The FRIENDS approach emphasizes strong community support and the establishment of quality one to one relationships between troubled youth and supportive adults.

Modeled after the PARTNERS Program of Denver, Colorado the concept of FRIENDS was brought to New Hampshire by Mr. Richard Maxson who, while earning his law degree in Colorado, served as a volunteer with the PARTNERS Program. Initial planning for the FRIENDS Program began in the Fall of 1974 when a survey of existing youth agencies, the Concord District Court, police departments and schools was conducted by Mr. Maxson to determine the problems affecting youth. According to the survey, those problems were the result of a vast number of juvenile delinquents, status offenders, and pre-delinquents overburdening the juvenile justice system. The large number of juveniles infiltrating the system resulted in fewer client contacts and, as a consequence a decline in the quality of services provided. The survey further identified a need for a comprehensive approach to deal with the diversionary, preventative and rehabilitative aspects of delinquency. In response to that need, the FRIENDS Program was designed and ultimately presented to the community in January, 1975, as a pilot project of the Central New Hampshire Community Mental Health Services.

During its first year of operation, the program was well received and initial success was demonstrated. However, it was determined to be in the best interest of FRIENDS and the Mental Health Center for the program to become an independent agency within the community. Consequently, alternative

sources of funding were explored, and on July 1, 1976, the program began operating as an independent agency. Adequate funds to operate the program for a six-month period were secured from various organizations. However, it became apparent that the program could not continue to serve the community after that time period without additional funding sources. Consequently, a request was submitted to the New Hampshire Governor's Commission on Crime and Delinquency for aid in the support of the program during calendar year 1977. That request was approved on January 21, 1977 and supplemented the existing Project Director with two staff positions, an administrative assistant and a professional counselor. On April 1, 1977, an additional award was approved for the purchase of capital equipment and operating expenses.

A GCCD evaluation conducted in March, 1978 concluded that the FRIENDS Program had demonstrated considerable success during the grant period and had continued to receive the support and endorsement of the Concord community. Therefore, continuation funding at the requested level was recommended and subsequently approved.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Concord FRIENDS Program is a community-based program designed to offer long-range and intensive individual attention to Concord youth who have had contact with the juvenile justice system, or who are otherwise appropriate candidates. The area served by the program includes the Concord-Penacook area, as well as six surrounding townships including Dunbarton, Bow, Chichester, Canterbury, Epsom and Hopkinton.

The FRIENDS Program has located office space at 105 Pleasant Street, Concord, New Hampshire, at the Bancroft Building of the New Hampshire State Hospital. Office space, utilities, and some equipment are provided free of charge by the New Hampshire State Hospital.

The FRIENDS Program revolves around rehabilitating one to one relationships between selected community volunteers (Senior Friends) and troubled youth (Junior Friends). Each relationship is supported by on-going activities categorized into the following areas: restitution, Outward Bound, school support, recreational activities, and counseling services. The services provided are directed towards:

- 1) Creating conditions to increase the Junior Friend's sense of self-worth, effectiveness, and general state of happiness;
- 2) Developing a level of moral judgement for Junior Friend's that takes into account the effects of one's decisions and actions for other people, as well as oneself;
- 3) Developing a realistic awareness for youth of the way in which societal values and institutions affect one's life, and learn more effective and appropriate ways of relating to these;
- 4) Improving the coping skills of the Junior Friend.

Client referrals are accepted from a variety of community youth service agencies. However, the Concord District Court and Concord School District have established a contractual agreement with the FRIENDS Program to serve a specified number of clients during the course of a year. Concord District Court approved \$12,000 for the purpose of supporting the costs of twenty Junior and Senior Friend matches. Each court referral is approved by the district court judge, and a written agreement is executed between the court and the FRIENDS Program. In a similar arrangement with the Concord School District, \$6,000 was approved to support ten Junior and Senior Friend relationships. In both instances, payment for services is provided on a quarterly basis in the amount of \$600 per youth served.

This grant provides funds for three staff positions: professional counselor, administrative assistant and part-time secretary.

It was proposed that the professional counselor would be responsible for counseling, monitoring and providing full resources in the form of restitution, school support and recreational activities to each Junior-Senior Friend relationship. It was further proposed that the professional counselor would aid in the promotion and recruitment of community volunteers and work cooperatively and closely with community agencies and institutions such as the school, court, and mental health facilities.

The administrative assistant was to be responsible for the maintenance and accounting of budget funds, grant obligations and disbursements. Furthermore, she was to assist the Project Director and counselor in coordinating and scheduling project activities as well as establishing and maintaining effective office procedures.

The part-time secretary was to assist the administrative assistant in maintaining accurate records of all phases of program operation.

In addition to the grant funded positions, the FRIENDS staff consists of a Project Director, two restitution counselors, and a secretary.

PROJECT OPERATION

Mr. Thomas Avalone has served as professional counselor of the FRIENDS Program since July, 1977. Mr. Avalone possesses a Masters of Education, degree in Counseling. His prior experience includes five years of teaching at the New Hampton School where he also served as a counselor and coach.

The first administrative assistant, Mrs. Joan Shady was hired in July, 1976, six months prior to commission funding. During that six month period her salary was supported through general operating funds. Mrs. Shady remained as administrative assistant until June, 1978 when she resigned her position. The vacancy was advertised, and in June, 1978, Mrs. Sandy Reed was selected to fill the position.

Ms. Elsbeth Kennedy served as part-time secretary from February, 1978 through June, 1978 when she resigned her position. The position has remained vacant throughout the grant period.

The position of Project Director has been held by Mr. Richard Maxson since the project's inception in 1974. This position is supported through general operating funds.

Two restitution counselors, Ms. Sarah Tirell and Mr. Ralph Carlson, were hired in December, 1978, under the terms of a restitution project funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. Given the current level of case activity under the restitution project, both counselors are able to devote approximately 90% of their time to counseling and monitoring Junior-Senior Friend relationships.

Funds, in the amount of \$2,089, which were originally approved for the purchase of capital equipment have been used to supplement the salaries of the professional counselor and administrative assistant. A GCCD grant adjustment notice was issued by this Commission on March 7, 1979 to approve this action.

The FRIENDS approach centers around rehabilitating one to one relationships between troubled youth and responsible adults. The model program is designed to serve 75 youth between the ages of 6 and 18 from the Concord area. The target population of this program is comprised of delinquents, pre-delinquents, status offenders, or any other youth who would benefit from the program. Referrals are not accepted to the program until it is anticipated that an appropriate match is available. This is accomplished so as to not create for the youth a false sense of hope. The program begins through the recruitment of Senior Friends. This is accomplished by means of a variety of public awareness activities. During the grant period, promotional activities have consisted of the following:

Newspaper articles.....	23
Radio Announcements.....	14
FRIENDS Newsletter.....	12
Television Coverage.....	2
Displays.....	20
Brochures.....	3
Posters.....	3
Community Presentations.....	21

Special Events..... 3

FRIENDS Luncheon Reception
 FUN-A-RUN
 4th of July Food Concession

These activities are used both to acquaint the community with the program and to encourage interested citizens to attend one of the regularly scheduled orientation meetings. FUN-A-RUN and the 4th of July Food Concession were also conducted to assist in the financial support of FRIENDS.

The Orientation meetings are conducted every six weeks and are used as a means to screen and train community volunteers for their prospective roles as Senior Friends. Each orientation consists of three evening meetings and is geared towards introducing the FRIENDS philosophy and program procedure, giving an overview of the juvenile justice system, and allowing a time for prospective volunteers to individually view and assess the program in a variety of ways. Participants are given the opportunity to meet directly with Concord District Court personnel, community youth workers, and Junior and Senior Friends. In addition, participants are asked to role play in order to explore their reactions to situations typically encountered by Senior Friends.

As a result of orientation, two categories of volunteers are selected. Approximately one out of every five volunteers is selected as a Senior Friend. Many prospective volunteers elect not to become involved; others assist the program as task force members. The FRIENDS Task Force currently consists of 30 active volunteers who devote time to every aspect of program operation. Such activities include, but are not limited to, tutoring, office assistance, promotion, and community service work.

During the grant period, one hundred citizens attended one of eight FRIENDS orientations. Of those participants, twenty-four became Senior Friends and twenty-five became task force members.

Once a volunteer is selected as a Senior Friend, he/she must make application, be subject to a thorough background check, read Reality Therapy by William Glasser, and be personally interviewed by program staff to assure the volunteer's understanding of the program. In addition, each Senior Friend must commit himself/herself to working with the Junior Friend at least five hours each week for a period of one year.

Once a Senior Friend is selected, a suitable Junior Friend is sought out from an appropriate youth service agency. Those referral agencies include, but are not limited to: police, probation, schools, mental health centers, parents, and welfare. Any youth who will benefit from the program is considered. Special emphasis is given to selecting a youth who has a compatible personality and similar interests to that of the available Senior Friend. It should be noted, however, that those youth subject to the fulfillment of the contract for services with the Concord District Court and Concord School District are given priority. In reference to the extent of the fulfillment of those contracts, FRIENDS has served fifteen of the proposed twenty court-referred youth and fifteen of the proposed ten school-referred youth.

Once an appropriate Junior Friend is selected, the youth must make application for membership and demonstrate a desire to help himself. The youth and family are then given a thorough briefing on the program. The youth must be willing to make a commitment of at least five hours a week to the FRIENDS relationship and the family must agree to support the relationship and allow the youth to participate in all scheduled program activities.

At this point, a meeting is arranged for the Senior Friend, Junior Friend, parents, and program staff. Membership cards are given to the Senior and Junior Friends and parental permission forms are signed for office records. At the conclusion of a six-week trial period, the staff meets with the Senior Friend, Junior Friend, and parents to determine the success of the relationship. If the relationship has proven to be successful a FRIENDS Pledge Certificate is signed by all parties involved. The pledge sets forth specific obligations and responsibilities for each party and is in effect for the entire year.

During the grant period, fifty-one matches were served by the program. Of those, thirty-nine are currently active. Data for the period April, 1978, through March, 1978, reflect the following sources of referral:

Active Caseload

School	15
Court/Police/Probation	15
Welfare	2
Mental Health	1
Senior Friend Referral	2
Self-Referral	1

Finished Matches During Grant Period

School	4
Court/Police/Probation	6
Welfare	1
Parental	1
Hassle House	1
Other	1

The FRIENDS staff carefully monitors each Junior-Senior Friend relationship to determine what areas of program support are necessary to enhance the relationship. The FRIENDS Program provides the following support services on a regular basis:

1) School Support Services

Twice a year, program staff work in conjunction with school personnel to assess the Junior Friends overall school performance and identify problem areas. If a problem is identified, the FRIENDS staff will arrange

for individualized school support in the form of tutors, extra credit, learning sessions and guidance.

During the grant period, sixteen Junior Friends have received individualized school support services. Support services are usually provided by FRIENDS Task Force Members.

2) Outward Bound Program

The Outward Bound Program offers a series of challenging experiences designed to furnish the Junior Friends with stress coping and group problem solving skills, and additionally, to provide exposure to the natural environment and ecological awareness.

The FRIENDS Program has established contracts with the New Hampton School and Concord High School for the procurement of Outward Bound courses and facilities. During the grant period, eight Outward Bound courses have been offered in the following areas: Tyrolean Traverse, rock climbing, rappelling, map and compass courses, rope courses, and various expeditions.

3) Recreational Activities

Recreational activities are provided to enable Junior Friends to find positive and constructive ways to use their free time. The recreational activities are also intended to reinforce positive role-modeling between the Junior and Senior Friend and to encourage more socially acceptable ways to behave in groups.

The FRIENDS staff has arranged for its program participants to gain free access to many community recreational facilities and to obtain reduced rates at others. The activities available to the youth include: movies, bowling, airplane rides, skiing, ice skating, tennis, golf, YMCA facilities and many others. This phase of the program provides the community with significant and visible ways to support and become involved with the FRIENDS Program and Concord youth.

Recreational activities also take place in the form of group outings which are designed to offer recreational, educational, and culturally enriching activities for Junior and Senior Friends. During the grant period, forty-seven different group outings have been conducted. Group outings have consisted of such activities as trips to Boston, sporting events, holiday parties, and musical and theatrical events.

4) Restitution and Community Service Projects

The Restitution Project is designed to provide an alternative means of dealing with Junior Friends who have committed various legal violations. Under program supervision an opportunity is devised for the juvenile offender to work directly for the victim or to pursue a constructive community project that will enable the offender to "earn the right" to stay in the community and face the natural consequences of his/her behavior. The terms of the restitution project are arranged cooperatively among the Program Director, offender, and victim and are subsequently presented to the court for approval. Specific times and expectations are defined for the offender and the entire process is closely monitored and supervised by project staff.

A specific objective of the Restitution Project is to decrease recidivism rates among program participants. However, no system of accountability has been designed to effectively measure the impact of this component on recidivism rates.

5) Counseling Services

The FRIENDS method of counseling is based upon a humanistic approach and stresses the importance of genuine human caring and personal responsibility. The counseling component is evident in all aspects of program activity and is always dedicated to the development and enhancement of meaningful one-to-one relationships. Monthly in-service sessions are provided

for Junior and Senior Friends. The Senior Friend in-service session provides counseling support and enables Senior Friends to discuss similar problems and proven solutions. In-service sessions conducted for Junior Friends provides an opportunity for group leadership and the development of a positive peer culture.

On a more personal level, counseling is geared toward the individual client and his/her specific needs. Support is provided in areas of job seeking, tutors, scholarships, placements in specific schools or programs and medical and dental care. In the end, the FRIENDS counseling model is uniquely comprehensive and always supportive of personal growth and human welfare.

Although numerous activities have been reported in most areas, the program staff had no means available to assess the impact of the Junior-Senior Friend relationship and, in addition, no tool to measure the value of each support service on that relationship. In response to that need, and for the purposes of this evaluation, an internal evaluation form was designed and distributed to all Junior and Senior Friends. Sixty-eight percent of those evaluations were returned to this writer and subsequently compiled. Results are reported in the following:

The evaluations indicated that Senior Friends maintained contact with their Junior Friend on the average of twice a week for approximately six hours. Senior Friends were asked to rate, from positive to negative, changes in various aspects of their Junior Friend's behavior. Sixty-two percent indicated a positive growth in responsibility while thirty-eight percent indicated no change. In reference to attitude towards school, sixty-four percent noticed a positive change. Eighty percent reported that their Junior Friend had shown a more positive attitude toward himself/herself.

The majority of Senior Friends also indicated that the following program

areas had a positive impact on the Junior-Senior Friend relationship:

- Relationship with FRIENDS counselor
- School support for Junior Friend
- FRIENDS activities
- Community resources (bowling, movies, YMCA, etc.)
- General support provided by FRIENDS staff

The overall response of the Senior Friend evaluation was that the FRIENDS Program had an affirmative impact on the Junior Friends with the major benefit in areas of developing a better self image, increased responsibility, and acceptance of self.

Junior Friends were also requested to complete an evaluation indicating their progress in the program. The average age of the respondents was thirteen years with participation in the program averaging twelve months. The evaluation asked the Junior Friends to indicate how the FRIENDS Program had helped them get along with each of the following: parents, family members, teachers, and friends. Eighty-three percent indicated improvement in their relationship with their parents. Sixty-five percent indicated improved relations with other family members. Sixty-nine percent reported improved relations with their teachers and seventy percent said the program had helped them improve relations with their friends.

Seventy-five percent of the Junior Friends reported that they feel better about themselves since their involvement with the program. In the end, the majority of the Junior Friend responses were favorable and indicated such things as, "helps me to communicate with my family", "gives me more confidence in myself", "helps me in school", and "keeps me out of trouble by giving me something to do".

COMMENT

The FRIENDS model is designed to serve seventy-five Concord youth. During the grant period fifty-one youth were referred to the program and subsequently

matched with adult volunteers. Although this figure appears to be inconsistent with the projected model, it should be noted that only one counselor was employed for eight months of the grant period. In addition, the number of Senior Friends involved in the program is insufficient to accomodate the projected caseload. According to the Project Director, the FRIENDS model was designed to also include an 'outreach, recruitment and promotion' person who would be responsible for publically promoting the project and recruiting volunteers. Because the FRIENDS Program revolves around one to one relationships between Junior and Senior Friends, the employment of an outreach, recruitment and promotion person is necessary to assist the program in accomodating a caseload of seventy-five matches. A request for funding of that position has been submitted to this Commission and is currently pending.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The Concord FRIENDS Program is presently in its second year of funding with this Commission. During the project period, FRIENDS has facilitated fifty-one Junior-Senior Friend matches with thirty-seven matches currently active. Of the fifty-one youth referred this year, twenty-one (41%) were referred from the juvenile justice system. The remaining thirty (59%) were classified as troubled or pre-delinquent youth.

As indicated by the results of the internal program evaluations, the program is successfully addressing the needs of the delinquent and pre-delinquent-type offender by offering rehabilitating one to one relationships, counseling support, and by providing time structured activities which enhance positive self-concepts and provide youth with constructive ways of using free time.

The FRIENDS Program is an effectively run program with a highly qualified and extremely dedicated staff. Community support is evidenced in almost every aspect of program operation. Thirty volunteers are currently mobilized as task

force members and assist the program in a variety of ways. Support is also being demonstrated through financial and in-kind contributions. In addition, several community agencies which refer youth to the Concord FRIENDS Program were contracted by this writer. In all interviews conducted, each involved referral agent repeatedly stated that they were satisfied with the FRIENDS approach and wished the program could expand to serve more youth in the manner demonstrated thus far.

One problem area identified by this writer was the lack of a system of programmatic accountability. As indicated previously, numerous activities were evidenced in each program area but no effective measurement tool was employed to assess the impact of program activities on the Junior-Senior Friend relationship. The one means of measurement currently employed by the project staff is the semi-annual school assessment. However, school assessments are not conducted on a timely basis and thus, do not accurately measure academic and attitudinal changes in the youth. Therefore, it is recommended that the school assessments be conducted within the first six weeks of program involvement and at the six and twelve month period following. It is further recommended that the FRIENDS Program incorporate a standardized measurement of self-concept to determine the effect of the entire program on the participating youth. In addition, in order to gauge the success of this program as it related to the juvenile justice system, it is recommended that program staff maintain recidivism data relative to program clients.

It should be noted that the proceeding recommendations have been discussed with program staff and technical assistance is currently being sought through this Commission to assist staff in accomplishing the above.

In the end, the FRIENDS Program appears to be a success. Program participants, referral agents, and the community at large support it with great enthusiasm. In fact, not one remark to the contrary was heard by this writer. Hence, continuation funding is strongly recommended.

END