

**CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE POLICE DEPARTMENT
1996 HERMAN GOLDSTEIN EXCELLENCE IN PROGRAM SOLVING
AWARD**

THE PROBLEM;

The overall juvenile crime rate within the City of Fort Lauderdale increased during 1993 and 1994 at an alarming rate despite the efforts of law enforcement and numerous programs to curb the problem. Violent crimes became more prevalent and the ages of offenders was becoming much younger. Substance abuse and poor economic conditions continued to be a root cause and, coupled with an increase in the number of active gangs operating in the City, juvenile crime became the most serious law enforcement problem confronting the Police Department. This situation was further complicated due to recent large increases in the City's multi-ethnic populations which compounded the issue due to language and cultural differences.

Given the increasing juvenile problem and research into the causes of this problem, determined that there was a need for "available activities" that provide youth, especially unsupervised youth, productive options to occupy their time, interests and energies before, during, after school and during vacation breaks. Further, to be successful, it was found that these activities must be community supported, offer a flexibility of resources, and require parent - student - system accountability to provide our youth with positive alternatives to criminal activities. Alternatives that we develop and offer must be ones that youth can identify with, have an interest in, and willingly participate in as members of the group instead of out committing crimes or becoming victims of crime.

A close look at the juvenile crime problem found certain "Factors" that directly impacted the problem. These include:

Single/two parent homes - parent(s) goes/go to work before the youth departs for school and is not there when the parent returns. In most cases parents are not being held responsible nor accountable for the actions of their children and have no way of knowing what their children are doing until they are in trouble.

Schools deny access to campus before a specified time and after a specified time. Staff, such as School Resource Officers (SRO) have become watch dogs and baby sitters instead of program and activity facilitators, and cannot stay after school and provide special programs and activities. Lack of staffing, limited funding and restrictive school board policies are the prime reasons given.

City/County parks and community centers don't open early enough and close too early for youth to use the facilities. An 8-5 mentality, budget constraints, lack of lighted facilities and the fact that parks and community centers are gathering places for criminal activities

(i.e. drug sales) are the main motivator.

Current options available to youth do not motivate them and there is a lack of system deterrent to criminal activity allowing youth the freedom to commit multiple offenses (20-100 or more per individual). Health and Rehabilitative Services (HRS) policies conflict with the justice system, and the courts continue to let offenders go free until they commit a serious violent act and/or they are bound over for trial as an adult. Property crimes, for the most part, do not put juvenile offenders in jail, a fact the juveniles are well aware of.

Worsening economic conditions divert youth attention to other means to make easy money. Crime has proven to be the most profitable. System and program budgets do not provide for activities and options, and the community and the private sector continue to not work together to solve the problem by providing viable economic options for youth [and in some cases their parents] (i.e. more and better paying jobs). Education system is not preparing youth to enter the work force while in school and especially after graduation.

Most communities do not provide activities and options for kids in their neighborhood such as dances, block parties, civic projects, etc. Communities are not accepting responsibility and accountability for their communities and the people who live their. Crime and the fear of crime are the main reasons.

The decline in our social and moral values has reached epidemic proportions. Our society has become: a free for all of crime with no fear of or little punishment; self serving, profit oriented "haves" and "have nots" - what can you give me for free attitude; programs that don't work; and "individual" oriented with a loss of family entity.

Abrogation of parental responsibility and lack of parenting skills: Youth become parents at early ages and no one teaches them how to be a parent. Parents let youth do as they please and when they please. This has lead to dysfunctional families, alcoholism, drug abuse and child abuse.

Lack of creative, non-traditional programs to recapture, redirect and occupy youth in the area they live through total community commitment and involvement. Red tape delays implementing programs with too much planning, discussion, parochial attitudes/interests and a lack of open partnerships are main contributors.

Lack of continuous (system) funding for programs and the lack of evaluation given time for programs (i.e. a program is funded for a year - results are not significant - program is not funded again). No consideration of years needed to solve a problem is given related to correcting programmatic issues.

During 1994 the City-wide juvenile arrests totaled 2,316, while in 1995 this number was reduced to 2,170 reflecting a decrease of 6%. However, though the overall rate is less, several specific

crimes have increased at an alarming rate despite the efforts of law enforcement and numerous programs to curb the problem. Specifically, narcotics/trafficking was up 281% in 1995 with arrests ranging from ages 13 to 17 years old; violent crimes (forcible sex-17%; robbery-32%;aggravate assault-3%) are more prevalent and the ages of offenders has become much younger; and property crimes (burglary-185%; auto theft 85%; resident burglary 195%) are becoming the crimes of choice because juveniles understand that the system will do little to nothing to them for these types of crime.

During 1995 the City also experienced a 17% increase in criminal and other serious crimes on our public school campuses. Substance abuse and poor economic conditions continues to be the root causes of our juvenile crime problem, and, coupled with an increase in the number of active gangs operating in the City, juvenile crime has become the number one priority law enforcement problem confronting the Department.

ANALYSIS;

During 1993 the Broward County Juvenile Justice Board conducted a study on Juvenile crime. This study revealed that youth crime increased by 80% between 1983 and 1992. Unfortunately, violent crimes realized the greatest gains (142%) and the juvenile criminal was becoming younger. Further, it showed that worsening economic conditions and a rapidly growing minority population were exacerbating these conditions because African American youth were already over represented (52%) in the juvenile justice system. It was found that approximately 61% of the offenses in 1992 occurred in 10 zip code areas and that a disproportionate number of these (31%) happened in the 33311 area in central Ft. Lauderdale. This region is significant because it also ranks highest in number of youth, minority youth, and poor youth and second in the county in rate of offense occurrence.

A major complication found by the study is the emergence of youth gangs. Police identified 3 gangs with about 45 members in December of 1986. The May 1993 estimate has dramatically increases to 81 gangs with 3,685 members. Membership consist of about 45% White, 29% Hispanic, and 22% Black. Over 92% are male and ages range from 8 to over 20. What is particularly disturbing about this growing gang problem is the violent nature of much of their activity. These gangs are also beginning to engage in more actively in narcotics trafficking which will only increase the violence.

In 1995, the Broward County Grand Jury 1993 Fall Term Youth Gang Investigation were released and discerned that White youth comprise a majority of gang population; Latino-American youths the next; and Black Youths the third largest. They found that some type of gang activity is found in every community and that the gangs are very mobile and not turf oriented in the classic sense. Ages of gang members range from 11 to 23, while the majority of youth gang members are male, some include females. More alarming is the fact that Police agencies identified 111 youth gangs in 1994.

C. Ron Huff, National Institute of Justice released the results of his study of the Criminal

Behavior of Broward Gangs and Youth At-risk of Joining gangs. His results confirmed the information from the two previous studies and presented the following trends:

- * Broward youth gangs are in a continual state of change with the current trend towards smaller and more covert gangs.
- * A move towards drug based gangs is seen on the horizon.
- * Many of the Black neighborhoods not previously affected by the gang phenomenon are now seeing the start of gang activity.
- * Broward has a much younger gang population than it once had, with many youth in middle schools and even in elementary schools now exposed to the concept of gangs.

During 1995, the Broward County United Way completed a comprehensive study of the needs of Broward County. This detailed needs assessment evaluated the current services offered in the areas of Economic, Education, Health & Wellness, Housing, Parks & Recreation, Public Safety, and Transportation. The purpose of this assessment was to clearly identify community service needs within the County today and anticipate future needs; identify the extent to which needs are being met; and create a formal assessment document that all concerned can use as a principal planning tool. This major undertaking demonstrated a number of serious shortfalls in service to youth.

Other statistics used in the analysis of this problem consisted of School Board incident, suspension, and truancy records; police department arrest and incident records; and community survey results of the Departments annual community survey.

Analysis of current options available to youth found that most alternatives and choices currently offered by the system fail to interest and motivate our youth to participate. Coupled with the lack of justice system deterrents to criminal activity, the results allow youth freedom to commit multiple offenses. Too often, these offenses are property crimes as the street smart youth know the system will not punish them for these types of acts. However, research shows that even these types of heretofore non violent crimes, are becoming more violent. Most communities do not provide positive activities and options of any kind for kids in their neighborhood because of their fear of what today's youth might do. As a result, communities are not accepting responsibility nor accountability for their communities and the people who live there. Crime and fear of crime are the main reasons.

Worsening economic conditions exasperate the juvenile crime situation, diverting youth attention to other means to make easy money. Crime is proving to be the most profitable and statistics show that the ages of offenders is becoming younger each year. The community and private sector continue to not work together to solve the problem by providing variable economic options for youth. Review of the current school curriculum shows that the education system is not preparing youth to enter the work force while in school and especially after graduation.

The City experienced a 20% increase in our youth population over the past three years. With this increase has come an expected increase in certain juvenile crime problems as shown above. Even though we had this expected major increase in juvenile population, budget constraints and lack of community accountability continued to not provide sufficient numbers of alternatives

required to stem the rising tide of juvenile crime.

Many facts were relevant in determining that a solution must be available. Unsupervised youth because parents go to work before the youth depart for school and are not present upon the child's return from school. In most cases parents are not being held responsible nor accountable for the actions of their children and have no way of knowing what their children are doing until they are in trouble. Schools deny access to campus before a specified time and after a specified time. Staff, such as School Resource Officers have become watch dogs and baby sitters instead of program and activity facilitators, who cannot stay after school and provide special programs and activities for unsupervised youth. Lack of staffing, limited funding and restrictive school board policies are the prime reasons given.

City/County parks and community centers don't operate during hours that accommodate unsupervised youth. An 8-5 mentality, budget constraints, lack of lighted facilities and the fact that parks and community centers have become the gathering places for criminal activities (i.e. drug sales) are the main motivator. The decline in our social and moral values has reached epidemic proportions. Our society has become a free for all of crime and violence with no fear of or little punishment. Today's youth see their heroes being charged with violent crimes and getting off with little or no punishment. They see self serving, profit oriented have and have nots living the good life which leads to a "what can you give me for free attitude".

Current juvenile crime can be directly attributed to the factors and problems above because of the limited alternatives our youth are offered and that they choose to pursue. Easy quick money is suspected to be the major cause in the drastic increases identified in the several crime areas tracked.

RESPONSE;

In recognizing all the problems and related criteria the City, law enforcement personnel and communities all felt that something had to be done in order to effectively decrease the juvenile crime rate. It was determined that our youth needed a program that:

- * counters distractions and provides positive motivation;
- * promotes intervention/prevention factors to reduce the impact of risk factors and enhance the influence of protective factors in the lives of youth at greatest risk of delinquency;
- * intervenes with youth immediately when delinquent behavior first occurs to include counseling, punishment as necessary and family involvement;
- * Supporting core social institutions, including schools, churches and other community based organizations to alleviate risk factors and help youth develop to their maximum potential; and
- * maintaining a family based orientation on instilling sound values and positive discipline.

The initial idea to offer the youth of our city a series of alternatives was based on a boxing program for troubled youth conducted by a Ft. Lauderdale Police officer, Pete Balkunas. Using Officer Balkunas's program as the nucleus, the Juvenile Alternative Motivation Program (JAM) was developed to try and give at risk youth something else to become involved in rather than

crime. It is strongly felt that the majority of our current juvenile crime problem can be directly attributed to the factors and problems highlighted above. Coupled with the limited alternatives our youth are offered and those alternatives they choose to pursue, the Juvenile Alternative Motivation (JAM) program has proven to be a program that counters these distractions and provides a forum of positive motivation by:

- *Promoting intervention/prevention factors that reduce the impact of risk factors and enhance the influence of protective factors in the lives of youth at greatest risk of delinquency;
- * Intervening with youth immediately when delinquent behavior first occurs to include counseling, punishment as necessary and family involvement;
- * Supporting core social institutions, including schools, churches, and other community based organizations to alleviate risk factors and help youth develop to their maximum potential; and
- * Maintaining a family based orientation on instilling sound values and positive discipline.

The goal of Project JAM is to provide a juvenile motivation program focused on City's "at-risk" youth which provides them an opportunity to select other options in life rather than drugs, crime, and gangs by providing a forum for their development so they can make positive contributions to the community, their family and to themselves. Project JAM is a family oriented program consisting of organized athletics, the fine arts (music and art) and educational development. Its clients are youth at risk of and/or those that have become involved with the juvenile justice system. As stated in the program goal, JAM serves as an effective youth interest focused motivational program that provides several alternatives other than crime and drugs for the City's trouble youth.

The purpose of the program is to teach youth that there are positive, popular alternatives that will benefit them now and in later life. For example, sports teaches team work, discipline and goal setting; fine arts develops artistic talents; and education provides the base for functional living and achievement. JAM impacts the entire community by getting families involved in what their children are doing; by getting community organizations involved as sponsors and volunteers; and by having the youth doing something positive in a supervised environment rather than out committing crimes. Initially, it was expected that we would have 75-100 kids involved in the program, however, over 200 have participated through the first three quarters of the FY 94/95 project. Currently, the program operates out of Carter Park (formally Sunland Park). For FY 95/96, it is planned to expand the program to Snyder Park to provide program participation opportunity to youth in the southern area of the City. Given the funded requested for FY 95/96, the program will be able to hire additional part-time staff to increase the types of activities provided and serve more youth.

The organizational structure of JAM consists of a full-time staff of one Project Coordinator (PC), a sworn police officer, who oversees and coordinates the entire program as described by category below:

Project Coordination:

City Parks and Recreation (P/R) Department: Daily interface with the P/R Department to

coordinate the use of park facilities and equipment in support of the program. Also coordinates the incorporation of program participants into P/R activities that support the program goals and objectives. This coordination facilitates identification and the use of other activities of interest to the community youth.

Local Schools/ School Resource Officers: Working with the schools and SROs, the PC identifies program participants and takes steps necessary to bring them into the program. Also coordinates the use of school facilities when possible for program use. Under the program's education component, works with school counselors, teachers, and administration to return dropouts to school and to get tutoring help for those at risk of dropping out.

Community/Civic Organizations: The PC enlists the aid of community and civic organizations to locate program participants and for program support. Support includes volunteer instructional assistance, equipment donations and team sponsorship. A key activity coordinated is community service (either volunteer or court ordered) performed by program participants. These activities include community clean ups and painting over of graffiti. The PC attends organizational meetings and meets with community leaders to effect this aspect of the project.

Corporate/Private Organizations: These organizations are approached by the PC and asked to be sponsors for activities and to donate equipment to the program.

Local Service Support Organizations: The PC works closely with these organizations to facilitate referrals of participants for individual or family assistance and treatment beyond program capability.

Justice System: The PC maintains personal contact with the courts, the police, HRS, Juvenile Justice Department, and the Sheriffs Office to identify program participants and coordinate community service hour support.

Volunteers: The PC arranges for all volunteers in support of program activities. To the greatest extent possible, these will be family members.

Numbers and types of Personnel:

1 Project Director/Administrator (FLPD)	15% part-time	In-kind
1 Project Coordinator (JAM)	100% full-time	Salary/benefits
1 Activities Coordinator (Parks/Rec)	15% part-time	In-kind
Activity Volunteers	As required	In-kind

Equipment and Facilities Used:

The City P/R Department provides office space for the program at Carter Park and will be providing similar space at Snyder Park. The P/R facilities include ball fields, basketball courts, class rooms, gyms, etc. Sports equipment routinely available through P/R is made available to the project. Other equipment includes boxing ring, gloves, helmets, weight equipment and safety

gear. Numerous facilities throughout the City are coordinated for specific use by the PC. These include YMCA/YWCA, Boys and Girls Clubs and schools.

Location of Primary Activities and Target Population:

Location of Primary Activities: Most activities take place at Carter Park and/or one of the other parks within the City based on activity and facility availability (i.e. soccer field). Sports activities are normally part of a league and move from one area to another. The gym at Carter Park houses basketball, boxing and office.

Target Area: The target area for this project is the identified corporate City Limits of the City of Fort Lauderdale.

Participants: Program participants are all youth residents of the City of Fort Lauderdale primarily between the ages of 8 and 18. Youth between the ages of 18 and 21 who are school drop outs will be admitted on a case by case basis. Primary focus is on youth that have and/or are in danger of dropping out of school, and those that have entered the justice system. These you are referred to the system by the courts, the police, the community, service organizations, other programs, and the SROs.

Hours of Operation:

The program normally operates Tuesday through Friday 12:00 noon to 9:00 pm; and 9:00 am to 6:00 pm on Saturday. On a case by case basis this schedule is modified to facilitate accomplishment of certain activities. During the summer months hours are to be 9:00 am to 9:00 pm.

Implementation Time Frames of Major Activities:

Sports activities are seasonally based and are usually conducted in conjunction with an established league. Fine Arts activities are accomplished on a class basis (i.e. 8 week art class). Educational activities are incorporated into other activities on a continuing basis with special classes setup as required to meet a given need.

Coordinated Drug Control Related Activities and Crime Reduction:

A number of "risk factors" in important areas of daily life have been identified dealing with: the family, the school, the community, peer groups and within individuals themselves, that increase the chances of problem behaviors, and that understanding these is the first step to prevention. Equally important is the evidence that certain "protective factors" (individual characteristics, bonding, and healthy beliefs and clear standards) can help shield youngsters from problems. Using this methodology, participants are identified that are exposed to these risk factors and subsequently brought into the program where they are exposed to the prevention factors in order to change their behavior to productive citizens.

Project JAM addresses three of the six priorities identified in the County's Juvenile Justice Boards 94/95 Comprehensive Plan. Additionally, the project supports the Broward County Commission on Substance Abuse conceptual model which deals with Risk Factors and Prevention Factors as described above. The project provides awareness to youth of these risk factors so that they can identify and avoid them. Protective factors are enhanced by the project since it is family based and uses mentors in cases where there is a breakdown in the family.

As described above, certain risk factors are evident that cause youth to get into trouble. By bringing these youth into the program we can change their behavior by having them participate in and accomplish the stated program objectives. These objectives focus on civic duty, team work, sharing, assuming responsibility for actions, giving - not taking, and the importance of education. In the projects controlled environment, we are able to modify negative behavior with positive action that demonstrates to the youth, their family and to the community that good is better than bad. In turn, accomplishment of the objectives returns to the neighborhood a productive citizen who does not commit crimes which leads to prevention as the solution to a serious problem.

EVALUATION, PHILOSOPHY & ORGANIZATION;

Project JAM is the only program of its kind in the City that offers a full continuum of services for the target population. These services include year round sports, fine arts (dance, music, art, etc.) and education (GED, drop out prevention, substance abuse resistance, etc). Further, the program has established a very successful referral system to Service Support organizations which facilitates getting treatment services for those youth identified with a need. In some cases, this may include the parents and/or direct assistance to the family as a whole. Project JAM has formed a partnership with Parks and Recreation in order to maximize the use of limited resources and to strengthen each organizations capability to offer better and more activities for our youth. The target population for the JAM program are all City youth ages 6 to 18 with, emphasis on those youth in neighborhoods demonstrating those factors that increase the risk of their becoming involved with crime and substance abuse.

In 1994 with the assistance of the FLPD Grant Division the Jam Program was started with funding provided by the City of Ft. Lauderdale Police Department and a grant provided by the Broward County Commission on Substance Abuse. During the first year the project served the Northwest section of the City and had approximately 150-200 participants. Sports were the major portion of the program though we did have some dance and art. Education during this period was limited to substance abuse resistance and drop out prevention.

During the second year JAM experienced many successes. The target area was increased to the North half of the City and the number of participants increased to approximately 300. JAM positioned itself for a total success. The sports component continued to be the most successful element given that youth favor these types of activities as fun items. The Fine arts element opened with a high rate of enrollment and interest due to a variety of activities which include dance, singing, art, painting, drawing, photography and video movie making. JAM's Educational program has proven successful by including substance abuse training into each

activity as a separate class before or after the sports, fine arts or field trip events; by having cultural sensitivity session; by teaching life skills; and by tying school performance to activity participation (we have seen an increase in school performance of our participants in that they are making better grades and not being suspended because they are discipline problems).

Going into its third year of operation, Project JAM now serves a City-wide target audience of over 500 youth. The Project is providing a juvenile motivation program focused on the "at risk" youth that gives them an opportunity to select other options in life rather than drugs, crime and gangs. It is providing a forum for their development so they can make positive contributions to the community, their family and to themselves. The purpose has been to teach youth that there are positive, popular alternatives that will benefit them now and in later life. Statistical data shows that JAM has been successful in that juvenile crime is down 6% from last year; participants are making better grades in school; and the neighborhoods are seeing the results through community projects.

As with any new program, JAM experienced start up shortfalls during the first year. However, successes have far outweighed the failures. The sports component has proven to be the most successful element given that the youth favor these types of activities as fun items. The fine arts element has been very successful, especially for young females. JAM's educational program has proven successful and is woven into each activity as a separate class either before or after the sports or fine arts event. In the beginning limited funding and people resources were major inhibitors to accomplishing desired goals and objectives. However, community interest and participation in the Project quickly caught on and has grown each year ensuring the success of the program. Over 1,500 youth have been involved in one JAM program or another over the past three years and it is felt that this number will grow as community awareness is made about the program.