

**2009 Progress Report for Rec Night
A Grassroots Gang Prevention/Intervention
Program in Smith Hill, Providence**

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Thank you for your help with this report and continued dedication to Rec Night:
Tou Pathoummahong, Keith Morton, Heather Gaydos, AJ Benton, Teny Gross, Francis Smith, Lt. Daniel Gannon and the District 6 & 7 Providence Police Officers, Sgt. Michael Wheeler and the Gang Squad, Lt. Stamatakos, Bob McMahon, Beth Charlebois, Karl Brown and the Rogers Recreation Center staff, Councilman Terrence M. Hassett, RI State Representative John McCauley, RI State Senator Maryellen Goodwin, all the ISPN Streetworkers, the many Providence College and neighborhood volunteers and Kathy Dorgan for her help with this report.

I would like to extend a special thanks to Joe Cammarano, Providence College Professor of Political Science, for creating, administering and aggregating the results of the Youth Participant Survey.

Christian

I Introduction

Rec Night is a collaborative, largely volunteer-run program designed to provide the youth of Smith Hill and Chad Brown, many of whom are gang-affiliated, with a safe, recreational environment one evening a week. It seeks to encourage positive relationships with adults who can help the youth develop additional opportunities for personal and community growth. In most of 2009, the program was run out of either the Rogers Recreation Center or in Davis Park once a week from 6-9 pm. The typical evening consists of youth-oriented recreational activities, which include basketball, foosball and break-dancing, and food.

Since March 2008, a committed core of team members and a few equally committed volunteers have been working directly with the youth on Rec Night evenings. The program's primary organizational partners are: *The Institute for the Study and Practice of Nonviolence (ISPN or Nonviolence Institute)*, *Providence College and Smith Hill Community Development Corporation* and the *Providence Department of Parks and Recreation*. A larger group of key stakeholders is also involved in supporting this program and has been involved at different levels. The team consists of members of local non-profit organizations, schools, local political and law enforcement leaders, and neighborhood residents.

In terms of youth engagement, the number of consistent participants has been exceptional. The last year's averaged attendance was 65 youth per week. This attests to both the willingness of the target population to engage in positive activities and the great need that exists within the community for positive recreational options.

Rec Night began as an outreach program to area Laotian youth, many of whom are affiliated with the Laotian Pride (LP) street gang. In the last two years, however, the program has attracted youth from other parts of Smith Hill as well as from other local neighborhoods, particularly Chad Brown and Mt. Pleasant. While maintaining a strong LP presence at each session, on any given Rec Night there are also in attendance members of several different street gangs. While all youth who attend Rec Night are not gang members, many are and several different Providence street gangs are represented. As such, Rec Night should be considered in the context as a gang prevention/intervention program.

II Gangs

The daunting challenge to creating sustainable positive change in low to moderate income neighborhoods is well documented. As opposed to more affluent neighborhoods, low to moderate income neighborhoods suffer multiple problems caused by poverty that include, but are certainly not limited to degraded school-buildings and housing stock, low homeownership rates, isolation from beneficial social networks, joblessness, financial insecurity and reduced political power. (Ferguson and Dickens, 1999)

Youth who grow up in low to moderate income neighborhoods face additional obstacles. Researchers describe a combination of factors that has weakened the informal community support once available to young people: high rates of family mobility; greater anonymity

in neighborhoods, where more parents are at work and out of the home and neighborhood for long periods, and in schools, which have become larger and much more heterogeneous; extensive media exposure to themes of violence and heavy use and abuse of drugs and alcohol; and, in some cases, the deterioration and disorganization of neighborhoods and schools as a result of crime, drugs, and poverty. In addition, the nature of today's world has become increasingly complex, technical, and multicultural, placing new demands on young people in terms of education, training, and the social and emotional skills needed in a highly competitive environment. The length of adolescence has also been extended to the mid- to late twenties, and accompanying that change, the pathways to adulthood have become less clear and more numerous. (Eccles & Appleton-Grootman, 2002)

Gang affiliation is one particularly pernicious adaptive behavior developed by youth from a community development perspective. Though there is no consensus of a standardized definition of "gang," researchers Mason and Klein have developed three criteria for defining a street gang:

- Community recognition of the group
- The group's recognition of itself as a distinct group of adolescents or young adults.
- The group's involvement in enough illegal activities to get a consistent negative response from law enforcement and neighborhood residents.

(Gist, 1998)

Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin's concept of "differential opportunity" is consistent with Ferguson and Dickens' perspective of the multiple problems associated with low to moderate income neighborhoods. Differential opportunity describes a situation where individuals become involved in gang life because legitimate pathways to success are unavailable to them. They also identify a differential opportunity structure for illegitimate means of achieving success. The significance of this work is that for most inner city youth opportunities – legal and illegal – are unavailable. (Gist, 1998)

According to Cloward and Ohlin, differential opportunity, the restriction of the means of success for large numbers of youth, is the prime factor that draws youth into three specific types of gangs - criminal, conflict or retreatist. Criminal gangs are typically in stable low income neighborhoods and are organized to make money. (Gist, 1998) Venkatesh describes this phenomenon in the evolution of large street gangs, which have directed their energies toward income generation. These activities are typically anchored in drug distribution but include other informal economic activities such as gambling, extortion, arson, loan sharking and theft. (Venkatesh, 1999).

Communities with dilapidated conditions and transient populations are fertile ground for the development of conflict gangs. In situations where criminal opportunities do not exist, conflict gangs fight to gain social status and protect their honor and integrity. Retreatist gangs do not possess the skills or inclinations to be considered criminal gangs. They typically retreat into the marginal edges of society that usually involves heavy drug use and withdrawal from social interaction. (Gist, 1998)

Gang Programs and Interventions

Gang programs and interventions are generally separated into a few distinct categories: prevention, intervention and suppression. Prison-based programs constitute a separate category and will not be discussed here, as the focus is on community-based interventions. Preventative programs are focused on keeping youth from joining gangs. Other short-term objectives are often involved in these programs, including improving school engagement and performance, encouraging positive attitudes towards police and changing perceptions about gangs. Intervention programs often target individual gang members and involve directly working with these members in the community. In fact, most recent programs involve an intervention team approach. Intervention programs typically include the police and include incarceration and a strong deterrent component. The evidence suggests that the best approach to gang programs include a comprehensive approach that incorporates each of these techniques. (Bureau of Criminal Justice, Gangs2)

One example of a prevention program is *The Huntersville Program for Gang and Drug prevention* in Huntersville, N.C. The program is coordinated by the church-based organization Urban Discovery Ministries, and pairs at-risk teen-agers with adult volunteer mentors. Created with \$95,000 in seed money from a federal grant for school-aged children, the Huntersville Program's goal is to keep young people away from gangs and prevent them from dropping out of school. The participants meet in the afternoon several times a week for a few hours at a time. Students complete class work, prepare for GED exams, and also receive counseling that incorporates some of the "most up-to-date computer software and technology in each session." (Nunley, 2004)

Police in Colorado Springs, Colorado use a suppression model of intervention to address gang violence. The Problem-Oriented Policing framework works with community groups in order to develop crime prevention and neighborhood watch programs that are designed to monitor gang activity and crime. The programs strengthen resident participation in community-building activities that decrease area crime rates. By interacting with their law enforcement officers, residents get an opportunity to raise questions or concerns and receive immediate feedback. (Nunley, 2004)

Phoenix Arizona's Parks, Recreation and Library (PPRL) Department created the City Streets/At-Risk Youth Division (CSARYD) that is dedicated to providing services for preventing and intervening in gang activity. This comprehensive department-level intervention is able to marshal the resources of existing agencies and also allows for an excellent level of accountability. The City Streets program has many initiatives including, a newsletter written, edited and distributed entirely by teens; a mobile recreation unit which provides social, employment, and recreation services for underserved areas; teen boards, councils, forums, and annual conferences which give teens a voice in city issues and involve them in government; and a Culture Fest which is developed, implemented, and evaluated by youth and which addresses racial and cultural issues via an ethnic entertainment festival format. (McCann & Peters, 1996)

A novel intervention program within the *City Streets Program* is X-Tattoo, which offers laser removal of gang-related tattoos in exchange for community service and a

nominal fee. X-Tattoo is designed to help gang members committed to making the transition to a more positive lifestyle. Participants undergo removal treatment from nine weeks until the tattoo is fully removed. (Nunley, 2004)

There are also for-profit intervention programs that claim to provide comprehensive approaches to gang intervention in either prison or community settings. Once such program, *Phoenix Gang Intervention Programs*, advertises, “state-of-the-art treatment programs for gang intervention, built on respected concepts of cognitive-behavioral treatment (CBT) and motivational interviewing (MI).” The website states that the *Phoenix* program provides “evidence-based treatment and curriculum resources for use in correctional, probation, parole, detention, diversion, school, and community-based programs.” The core program provides 50-hour and 25-hour core curriculum programs which focus on motivational elements, emotional intelligence, problem solving, risk factors and protective factors. (Phoenix)

Program Evaluations

Evidence-based evaluations of gang-related youth programming, like most research in education and youth programming, in general, has seen a dramatic increase in the last decade. Most of the research has indicted modest and/or short-term impacts of gang-related programs. In some cases, whole programs were shown to be ineffective or actually to contribute to an increase in gang activity and crime. Recent evaluations of the more comprehensive programs are encouraging and offer evidence that blending components of stand-alone programs may hold the most promise for effectively addressing gang involvement and gang-related crimes in the community. (Bureau of Criminal Justice, Gangs2)

The Bureau of Criminal Justice has identifying the following points as best practices:

- Form collaborations among community, schools, corrections, probation/parole, and law enforcement to increase coordination efforts in responding to gangs.
- Promote a comprehensive approach by developing and implementing gang programs/strategies that include prevention, intervention and suppression strategies.
- Develop criteria for defining gangs and gang-related crime.
- Efforts should focus on gang-related behavior as well as membership.
- Develop clear goals and objectives based on the community needs and problems.
- Collect measures that will address how the program affects factors including gang membership, gang violence or other harm caused by gangs.
- Use multiple sources of data to determine program impact.
- Strengthen the study's research design by ensuring similar comparison groups are used to determine program impact.

(Bureau of Criminal Justice, Gangs3)

III Smith Hill

Smith Hill is a low income neighborhood in Providence, RI that borders the downtown area and includes the state's Capital building. According to 2000 Census data, Smith Hill's population includes 6,216 people, 33% of which is under the age of 18. The racial/ethnic composition of the neighborhood is approximately 36% Hispanic, 29% white, non-Hispanic, 15% African American, and 15% Asian or Pacific Islander. As compared with citywide statistics, Smith Hill has a 17% smaller white population, a 5% higher Hispanic population, an equal African-American population and a 9% higher Asian or Pacific Islander population than the city average. 61% of public school children have a primary language other than English; the city average is 54%. Smith Hill's Median Family Income is 31% lower than the city average (\$22,041, \$32,058) and one third of its families live below the poverty line. Only the Olneyville and South Providence neighborhoods are statistically worse in both categories. (Prov Plan)

Rec Night

Rec Night was initially designed to provide a safe environment for LP or Laotian Pride youth. The Laotian Pride group fits the Cloward and Ohlin's model of a classic conflict gang. Though there may be low-level illegal income-generating activities like intermittent drug dealing and after-hour sales of alcohol, there is no evidence of high-level criminal enterprise in its current ranks. The concept of differential opportunity provides an ideal theoretical framework for Rec Night since the “overall lack of youth and adolescent programming... job training and jobs, [and] limited resources” were identified as main reasons for the program’s development. (Meeting Notes, 2008) In fact, Rec Night can be considered an attempt to combat the deleterious impact of differential opportunity on Smith Hill youth by aiming to expand available choices to local youth.

Descriptive data

The period of examination for this report is from approximately January 2009 through August 2009. During this span, the Rec Night program was held on Monday evenings from 6-9pm. In the summer it was held in Davis Park at the basketball court and during the school year it was held at the *Rogers Recreation Center*. The program was held 25 weeks during the 32 week cycle under current examination. Since the Recreation Center follows the school calendar, Monday holidays accounted for four of those missed weeks. The average attendance during this period was 65 youth and 11 adult volunteers, including on average two Recreation Department employees. *Providence College* provided pizza each week.

The activities engaged in during the Rec Night sessions included: ping pong, checkers, chess, foosball, basketball tournaments and break dancing. There was also a Rec Night logo design contest managed by one of the Providence College student volunteers. The winning logo was subsequently used for Rec Night T-shirts that produced in conjunction with the US Census Bureau’s *US Census 2010* promotional efforts. An informal mathematics tutoring situation requested by one youth started up during the summer and

has continued into 2010. There was also a large and successful cookout to celebrate the last Recreation Center session before summer sponsored by the Recreation Department.

Team

During the period under review, the Rec Night core team members included representatives from the *Nonviolence Institute*, *Providence College* and the *Smith Hill Community Development Corporation*. The acknowledged program coordinator is a member of the ISPN organization who is a former Smith Hill resident and LP member. When the program takes place at the Rogers Recreation Center, the Director and one additional employee are there to open, close and help supervise the site. Volunteers for Rec Night sessions come from four primary sources – the core team members, *ISPN* Streetworkers, *Providence College* students and neighborhood residents.

The Institute for the Study and Practice of Nonviolence has been a primary partner with Rec Night through its work with program origination, design, administration, its Streetworker volunteers and the availability of its support services. The tenets of nonviolence provide the framework for the program, though there has been little direct training of program participants. The primary delivery method for this training has been modeling through the Streetworkers and adult volunteers who have also participated in trainings. The Streetworkers are trained in intervention and outreach to at-risk youth and regularly work with youth gangs. Having come from similar gang-affiliated backgrounds as the youth, the Streetworkers provide guidance, crisis management and mentoring. ISPN is also able to offer other support services to the youth on an as-needed basis. For instance, the Institute provided grief councilors at a Rec Night session following the suicide of a local Laotian youth.

Providence College is another Rec Night critical partner through the leadership of its Feinstein Institute for Public Service faculty, weekly food purchases, and its student volunteers. One professor, in particular, has been the driving force of *Providence College's* commitment to Rec Night, acting as core team member, volunteer recruiter, co-manager of the weekly sessions, and weekly record keeper. Another PC faculty member was directly involved with this report, designing the Youth Survey and aggregating the collected data. Student volunteers also account for approximately one third of the total weekly volunteers and a core group attends virtually all Rec Nights when school is in session.

Sustained, consistent police presence and interaction at Rec Night has been a critical aspect of the program's success and also indicates a clear pathway for creating meaningful change in the neighborhood. Rec Night provides a forum for police and neighborhood youth to move beyond the typical street dynamic of law enforcement interaction, which is most often defined by mutual distrust and conflict. In the summer, police were a constant presence in Davis Park and, after an initial period of unease, the police officers routinely played catch with youth or otherwise interact on a personal level. Police are also a consistent presence at the Rogers Recreation Center during sessions there. The District Lieutenant is supportive of the preventative nature of the program and has committed to sending officers who are comfortable with casual interactions with the

youth in order to both ensure a safe environment and to improve the relationship between youth and police.

Expanded Opportunities

Rec Night is also a valuable venue for engagement of program participants beyond the three-hour sessions, though progress in this area has been inconsistent. Program administrators actively seek opportunities to introduce other groups and resources to Rec Night youth. There are many examples of type of engagement. *The Nonviolence Institute* provides a monthly chaperoned movie night at the *Providence Place Cinemas* for Rec Night youth through an arrangement with *National Amusements*. The Institute also recruited thirteen Rec Night participants for its 2009 summer job training and leadership programs. Currently, Rec Night program administrators are working with *The Boys and Girls Club of Rhode Island* to integrate Rec Night participants into a city-wide youth basketball league.

Another example of this engagement took place in the spring when representatives from a neighborhood group spearheading site improvement efforts at Davis Park attended two Rec Night sessions in order to consult with the youth about their ideas for the park. This “consultation” resulted in new tables and benches around the basketball courts and, possibly more importantly, brought the youth into a process of civic participation in the redesign of a public space they regularly use. One singular opportunity took place in July 2009 when a Smith Hill resident hosted ten Laotian youth from Rec Night at his family’s rental beach house in Narragansett. The youth spent the day in the surf with the host’s family and they later enjoyed a backyard cookout. Everyone reported having a great day and a lot of fun and the resident has expressed interest in hosting the group again in 2010.

Providence College (PC) has also been directly involved with Smith Hill youth outside of Rec Night. *PC's Feinstien Institute of Public Service* offers a class in Smith Hill History and the professor has brought on the Rec Night coordinator, a former LP member, to co-teach the course with him. During the course, many Laotian youth have attended class on campus and the PC students have met with older LP members directly in the neighborhood. These meetings have provided opportunities to open a dialogue to both groups and have provided a bridge between the Laotian youth and the world beyond the neighborhood borders. The bridge works both ways; however, as PC students have been moved well outside of their “comfort zones,” in the space where true learning takes place. In addition, PC student volunteers, working in conjunction with the PC administration, have secured free tickets for a few home Friar basketball games and Rec Night participants have subsequently attended several chaperoned games at the “Dunk” as a group. On one recent night, over thirty youth attended the PC vs. Louisville game, which regrettably the home lost in a second half rout.

It is important to note that the frequency and quality of this type of engagement with neighborhood youth has grown incrementally over Rec Night’s existence as more neighborhood residents and organizations and the city at-large have learned about the program.

Evaluation

Youth Survey Data

As an integral part of this report, a random selection of 50 participants of the Rec Night program completed a Youth Survey that posed a range of questions designed to measure the impact of the program on their behavior, attitudes and feelings of connectedness to others and the broader neighborhood. The survey was created and administered by Providence College Professor Joe Cammarano. Table A illustrates the results of individual questions by percentage.

Table A - Rec Night Youth Survey Responses by Percentage

| | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Agree | Agree | Disagree | Strongly Disagree |
|---|-------|----------|----------------|-------|----------|-------------------|
| I feel safer at the Rec Night program than I do on nights when it isn't available | 86 | 13 | 38 | 49 | 9 | 4 |
| I enjoy the chance to play basketball on Rec Nights | 94 | 6 | 62 | 32 | 4 | 2 |
| One of the reasons I come to Rec Night is for the pizza | 35 | 65 | 13 | 22 | 47 | 18 |
| Going to Rec Night makes me feel more connected to neighborhood | 86 | 13 | 36 | 50 | 11 | 2 |
| Police presence at Rec Night makes me feel safe | 73 | 27 | 29 | 44 | 20 | 7 |
| The police who come to Rec Night probably have a better opinion of us than they did before | 84 | 16 | 24 | 60 | 7 | 9 |
| I do not think the police need to be present at every Rec Night, but only when there is a good reason for it. | 63 | 37 | 20 | 43 | 35 | 2 |
| I feel like I can talk to adults who are at Rec Night if I wanted to do so | 85 | 15 | 40 | 45 | 13 | 2 |
| The presence of the Nonviolence Institute is something I like | 93 | 6 | 37 | 56 | 4 | 2 |
| As a result of going to the program, I sometimes "think twice" before doing something I know is wrong | 89 | 11 | 35 | 54 | 9 | 2 |
| Having Rec Night makes me feel like someone in the neighborhood cares about my friends and me | 94 | 6 | 39 | 55 | 6 | 0 |
| I want a bigger variety of things to do at the recreation program | 70 | 29 | 34 | 36 | 23 | 6 |
| It would be better if basketball games were more structured | 87 | 14 | 40 | 47 | 7 | 7 |
| I think the program is better when there is a good mix of people from different parts of the neighborhood | 87 | 12 | 30 | 57 | 6 | 6 |
| It would be nice to have something to eat other than pizza | 73 | 27 | 43 | 30 | 23 | 4 |

The first two columns are totals by percentage of the “agree” and “disagree” categories, with the subsequent four columns breaking out each into two respective sub-categories. The results are expressed this way in order to provide a chance to examine the “strongly” agree and disagree categories.

The survey results indicate that participants report with an overwhelming majority that Rec Night makes them feel safer than on other nights when it is not available, more connected to the neighborhood and that the program makes them feel that others care about their welfare. Eighty-Five percent of respondents state that they feel like they can talk to the Rec Night adult volunteers and ninety-three percent report to like Streetworker and ISPN presence. These responses suggest that Rec Night is increasing the participants’ feelings of connectedness to their community through the physical space of the rec center, the acknowledgment that others in the community care, and the positive association they express for the interaction with program volunteers.

In terms of the program participant attitudes, it is clear that respondents prefer an open and diverse group of youth as opposed to a closed group, they tend to prefer more structure and variety in activities and snacks, and that safety is a major concern. A few interesting indicators about youth attitudes toward police are evident in the survey results as well. Even though sixty-three percent state that there is no need for police unless for “good reason,” seventy-three percent agree that a police presence at Rec Night makes them feel safer and eighty-four percent agree that the police officers who regularly attend Rec Night have a better opinion of them as a result. One question that was not explicitly asked is, “Do you have a better opinion of police as a result of Rec Night?” While the study provides no clear evidence of improved feelings towards police from youth, it stands to reason that if youth believe the police’s opinion of them have improved, their own feelings may have improved as well.

While it is difficult to identify programmatic impacts on behavior in a self-reported survey, one specific question did address this issue. Eighty-nine percent of respondents stated that as a result of Rec Night they sometimes think twice before doing something they know is wrong, a response that suggests the program is positively affecting participant behavior.

The write-in section of the survey asked participants what they considered important or special about Rec Night and what they would like to change about the program. The answers with the greatest frequency to the question of what makes Rec Night “important” were: meeting new friends, having fun, getting more respect from others, making neighborhood connections and learning how to get along with others. The write-in answers regarding desired changes were generally split into two two categories: increased activities and increased opportunities. Among these opportunities were “longer nights,” “more tutors,” “more time.” A change that was repeated, “stopping violence.”

Adult Volunteers and Administrators

A random selection of adult volunteers were asked to comment on their involvement and impressions of Rec Night over 2009. Most agreed that Rec Night was an overall success and that it was meaningful to the youth. The inherent value of relationship-building

between area youth and caring adults and the creation of a safe, positive environment were the consensus answers of the adults. The following is a representation of adult responses.

Rec Night is a place for me to get to know many of the youth from Smith Hill and Chad Brown. They want a safe place to be and fun things to do. I'm struck often by how marginalized many of these youth are, and how responsive they are to alternatives.

The youth on the whole are very respectful of and protect rec night – it matters to them. And they respect it even though we often have youth from several gangs present. It works, I think, because the inspiration and most of the leadership for the program comes from people with deep roots in the neighborhood...

My favorite thing to watch every week are the friendships and conversations that are developing, especially between youth and the adult volunteers.

IV Conclusion:

Rec Night youth, adult volunteers, local law enforcement and neighborhood stakeholders all seem to be in agreement that the program is worthwhile. The results of the Youth Survey suggest that the Rec Night program is valued by the participants, has a positive impact on their behavior and increases their feelings of connectedness to positive role models and the community. The views expressed by program youth and adult participants are all consistent with the view that there is a great need for more resources available to the youth reached through the program. Rec Night attempts to address this “resource” gap for Smith Hill youth through a recreational event that is both preventative and interventionist in nature. As a constantly evolving program, there are also some concerns and issues that must be worked through in order to ensure the quality and safety of the program.

Scheduling

A few scheduling concerns have developed over the last year. Mondays have proven to be a scheduling challenge to both the Streetworkers and the local police, since both groups have reduced staffing that night. The Rec Center is also closed most Monday holidays, which results in many weeks missed throughout the year. Another scheduling conflict that has come to light is the Parks and Recreation Department's policy to follow the public school vacation calendar for closing local rec centers. This policy results in the Roger's rec center being closed during school vacations, times when area youth could most benefit from Rec Night. Summers have seemed to work well at Davis Park, but finding other community spaces suitable for the program continues to be a significant challenge.

Structure & Safety

As the Rec Night program evolves, the work continues on striking the proper balance between the program's unstructured atmosphere and the roles and responsibilities of youth, volunteers and program administrators. Two such issues during the period in

question involve the policies surrounding recreation center admission on Rec Night and whether backpacks are allowed in the recreation center. Both issues are currently under review and new policies are being set. Other areas of concern are being addressed through defining roles and responsibilities of volunteers to ensure the program's safety.

There is general agreement between the police and Rec Night administrators about the issues involved with the program's safety, though there is some natural friction between the law enforcement angle and the determination of administrators to maintain an open and hospitable environment. The inclusionary perspective of the Rec Night is decidedly not "zero-tolerance." There are absolutes, but much of the work in relationship-building takes place in real-time and with youth often in crisis. From the administrative perspective, the trust that has been build over the program's lifespan is itself as critical to safety as implementing suppression-style procedures like pat-downs for weapons. Despite this natural tension, it is recognized that careful and transparent implementation of good policy changes can successfully address the concerns of all parties.

Programmatic Options

A major goal of program administrators, which is supported by the Youth Survey, is to increase the range and structure of program options. This goal is complicated by the volunteer nature of the program and space limitation, but progress has been made in this area and the program's offerings continue to become refined. One example of this progress is that the basketball tournaments have become much more structured since the Youth Surveys were administered.

Program expansion is an agenda item at each of the bi-weekly planning meeting and a great deal of effort is expended in this area. However, in order to achieve a true range of quality programming choices, more help is required in the form of financial resources and expertise in program design and implementation. Despite these challenges, there is one interesting new program slated to begin in early 2010 - a music recording project for Rec Night youth. A Providence College student volunteer has received a small grant for the project and is currently seeking space in the community. This is the type of grassroots, entrepreneurial programming that program administrators hope to see proliferate in the next year.

Interestingly, the summer Rec Nights at Davis Park seems to attract less females participants than the nights inside at the Rogers Recreation Center. The reason is unclear and certainly requires clarification. One option to pursue this summer is to include more programming activities for females.

One final area that requires attention is in program assessment. Rec Night administrators are currently seeking to improve program assessment capacity by exploring measurements of the program affect and by cultivating multiple sources of data collection. Assessment is critical in to measure the program's impact and to demonstrate this impact to the community.

Program Goals

Short and Medium range goals:

- Scheduling
 - Continue to work with partners to address scheduling conflicts with Monday holidays and school vacation at the Rec Center.
 - Find other suitable neighborhood in-door locations for program expansion
- Continue to address the structure of the sessions in order to improve safety for all involved
 - Continue to define rules for participants and volunteers.
 - Implement and enforce rules for sign-in and backpacks
 - Continue to enforce Red Card/Yellow Card system in order to address behavioral issues during session
 - Implement volunteer roles and responsibilities
- Program Development
 - Continue bi-weekly planning meetings
 - Increase access to tutoring
 - Work on programming for females, especially at Davis Park
 - Add variety and opportunities during sessions

Long term Goals:

(Rooted in the Bureau of Criminal Justice's Best Practices of Gang-Related Youth Programming cited earlier)

- Continue to develop collaborations with new partners and continue to deepen established partnerships
- Continue to pursue a “comprehensive” approach to the program that includes presenting opportunities for job training, civic involvement, homework help,
- Develop clear program goals and objectives of the program based on the needs of the youth and the community
- Improve program assessment capacity by exploring measurements of the program affect and by cultivating multiple sources of data collection

Current Work

At the time of this writing, Rec Night is experiencing a significant degree of careful attention. This is largely the result of the *Nonviolence Institute* adapting Rec Night as a pilot program in its youth services division. This designation provides the program with a legitimate organizational commitment for the first time. The former volunteer Rec Night coordinator now has a title associated directly with the program - Program Assistant with ISPN's Youth Development and Rec Night now falls under the purview of its Youth Development Director.

Over the last three months, all the core team members have increased their commitment to Rec Night in the form of bi-weekly planning meetings at the *Smith Hill CDC*. In

addition, recently the *Providence Department of Parks and Recreation* has agreed to be part of this core team and become full participants in the planning meeting.

This increased level of organizational support is a cause for great optimism as the program continues to evolve and grow in scale. However, the strength of the Rec Night program has always been and will continue to be the individual youth participants and adults volunteers, whether neighborhood residents, students or law enforcement officers, who contribute their time, expertise, and care to this unique and important community building initiative.

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“What Have We Learned From Evaluations of Gang Programs/Strategies?”

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“Putting the Evaluation Findings to Work”

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Phoenix Gang Intervention and Prevention Programs Web Site

<http://www.gangprograms.com/>

Original Source Material

The first strategy meeting to discuss youth options in Smith Hill was held at Selim-Rogers Recreation Center. [strategy-for-adolescent-outreach-initial-mtg](#), <http://www.smithhillcdc.org/rec-night>

Interviews and surveys from Rec Night program participants, organizers and volunteers.