

Pima Youth Partnership

A Catalyst for Community Actions

By Nan Friend

"No place to go and nothin' to do." It's a common complaint from teenagers and children, wherever they live. But, if they live in rural communities, their complaints are louder. Unfortunately, teens with time on their hands are frequently teens with time to get into trouble.

"I know there were fewer broken windows in Marana this summer because 80 kids were in the Pima Youth Partnership (PYP) summer recreation program," says PYP Marana site coordinator Brissa Apodaca. Youngsters in small towns all around Tucson had "someplace to go, and something to do."

PYP started serving Ajo, Marana and Sahuarita in January 1991; it was created to bring needed services to people, especially young people. For example, PYP brought teen parenting classes to Ajo. Through a cooperative effort with Pima Community College, summer workshops came to Sahuarita Junior High. And Marana Junior High students had an opportunity to learn and to talk about their problems even though they were in detention.

Each targeted PYP community has a site coordinator, a professional who works with at-risk kids and their families by identifying problems and bringing in already existing services or developing new ones. Children, teenagers, families, community groups, schools, businesses and human resource providers are partners.

How did it all get started? Kate O'Reilly, aide to County Supervisor Ed Moore and one of 27 members of the PYP board of directors, said it is not trying to become another service agency.

"The important factors are that the school and community want us and that an informal or formal group exists within the community to find out what the community's needs are," O'Reilly says.

"PYP is like an extra set of hands working with at-risk kids," said Board President Gene Weber, an administrator with Tucson Unified School District. "The impact of PYP on the communities involved must come from the communities themselves. We are really making the effort to demonstrate that we are a partnership."

PYP has worked with Pima Community College, La Frontera, businesses, government agencies,



Julie Camp Adamcin

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school districts and many others to bring services to these rural areas. Many see PYP expanding to serve other areas in the future, but its role as facilitator and community catalyst will not change, Weber noted. "PYP will continue to work in partnership with communities, developing resources to bring children, youth and services together for the benefit of the entire community."

Metropolitan service agencies, with their limited budgets, are unable to serve rural communities. Transportation is another big obstacle.

"It's no use having a good program for kids if they can't get to it," O'Reilly said. She contacted a United Way committee exploring ways to serve areas outside of Tucson. ADAPT, a private, not-for-profit agency receiving state and county funds, agreed to fund PYP in the fall of 1990, and the first site coordinators were hired in January, 1991.

PYP also has a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Arizona's Cooperative Extension 4-H Youth program to provide management and training for volunteers and staff, said Julie Camp Adamcin, UA Pima County Extension 4-H agent, and PYP Project Director.

Site coordinators hired by the Partnership worked in the junior high and middle schools during the year. Since January, Reed Bradford, in Ajo, and Brissa Apodaca, in Marana, have set up community support groups, conducted preventive programs, built an awareness of youth needs, identified youth at risk and helped them find needed services. Joy Johnston held the same position in Sahuarita from January through July, but she has since returned to teaching.

Sahuarita

The multi-faceted Sahuarita PYP program is a good example of the diverse activities PYP has promoted. Johnston conducted rural forums at Anamax Park and in Amado to determine community needs.

- People from the small town of Santo Tomas decided one of the children's basic human needs—breakfast—was not being met. So they went to a local group and got \$1,000 to provide food before school for children who had not had breakfast.

- At a day-long eighth grade prevention workshop, Sahuarita Junior High students watched the Matrix Teen Theater dramatize such issues as self-esteem, assertiveness, substance abuse and suicide prevention.

- Amado planned a community block party and formed its own team, Governor's Alliance Against Drugs.

- This summer, 50 young people from the area took part in COOL Summer Workshops through a program co-sponsored by Pima Community College and PYP. In hour-long morning classes at the Sahuarita Junior High,

children learned about French, calligraphy, drama, Tae kwon do, oil painting, ceramics, reading for fun and Indian-style clay pot-making. In the afternoon, they swam in the pool.

- Area teens also learned leadership skills at a 4-H Teen Leadership Workshop along with youngsters from Ajo, Marana, Sahuarita, Amado, Arrivaca and South Tucson.

Ajo

This summer, thanks to PYP, old-fashioned jump roping, skate board riding and horseback riding were available—and the kids in Ajo had something new to do. In cooperation with 4-H, a club with projects in all three activities formed, and by the middle of July, it had 15 young members and eight adult volunteers. Four teenagers from Ajo attended a Teen Leadership Workshop in Green Valley and learned how to conduct focus groups. They practiced their new techniques in Lukeville, an 80-member community south of Ajo, to find out that community's needs. And this summer, PYP and County Parks and Recreation staff conducted recreation programs in Lukeville twice a week.

Ajo coordinator Bradford found 12 community residents willing to be mentors for at-risk youth. He also organized a teen parenting class and is working with the school to provide classes for teenage mothers, with child care available for their babies.

Marana

Marana Junior High kids were staring at the wall during "time out" (detention) when Apodaca came to the school in February 1991. By gradually gaining their trust, she was able to talk to them about being responsible for their own actions and about drug and alcohol abuse. More prosaically, she developed a referral form to use when students had repeated absences. Talks with family members, home visits and attendance contracts followed.

"My goal was to improve attendance by five per cent," Apodaca said. "We actually did better than that."

Children have other kinds of down-to-earth, daily needs. For example, PYP helped several young people who needed glasses by using existing services. Apodaca contacted the northwest Lions Club; they provided glasses for six young people. The Good Samaritan program expanded to Marana at PYP's invitation and began offering stipends to people needing gas for their cars so they could look for work. They also gave money for utility payments to families in need.

"Benefits to the community trickle down to help our youth," Apodaca said.

Marana's Summer Fun in '91 brought



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80 youngsters to the county recreation center Tuesdays through Fridays for seven weeks. Cooperation between the Marana School District, the Marana town council, Pima County Parks and Recreation made it possible. The school district allowed PYP kids to ride the summer school bus and dropped them

off at the center. The town council agreed to split lifeguard costs with PYP. Parks and Recreation donated the use of their ceramics room so the kids could make pottery.

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