

NORTHEAST FLORIDA BOY SCOUT COUNCIL

BOY SCOUTS IN PUBLIC HOUSING

PROJECT S.T.A.Y.

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT

FINAL REPORT

to

The Jessie Ball duPont Fund

From

Jeffry A. Will, Director

and

Tim Cheney, Research Associate

Northeast Florida Center for Community Initiatives

University of North Florida

Jacksonville, FL 32224

August 1999

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INTRODUCTION

In the following report, we discuss the findings from a 10 month examination of the Scouts in Public Housing Initiative, operated by the Northeast Florida Boy Scout Council. This report attempts to clarify the operations of the Scouting in Public Housing program, and to assess the impact this program has had on the participating children and their housing communities. Originally designed as a 6 month study, this project represents perhaps one of the most difficult projects undertaken by the Center For Community Initiatives (*CCI*) over the past several years. Findings from this examination cast doubts on the Boy Scout Council's delivery of the program, and the subsequent reporting of the programs activities to the duPont Fund.

In essence, this report represents both "good news" and "bad news." In brief, the good news is where the Scouting program took hold, it appears to be well received, and, particularly with the Hilltop program, quite successful. The concerns are that the program has done little in the way of reaching most of the sites laid out in the Council proposals, and the reporting on activities from the initiative does not lay out the whole story of the impact of the program. Little data, if any, is available to substantiate if this program has achieved any of the objectives laid out in the proposal. Indeed, very little data is actually collected on the program to assess its impact. In addition, the "evaluation" components of the annual reports provided by the Council do not appear to accurately portray the program's numbers. This is not to say that the information is intentionally misleading, but rather that the information does not clearly explain the operations or impact of the program.

This report represents the culmination of an extensive data collection and evaluation effort. Research team members from *CCI* made numerous visits to Housing Complexes targeted by this program in an effort to interview housing representatives, Scouting leaders, Scouts, residents of the complexes, and even security personnel to assess the impact of Scouting. Additional telephone interviews were conducted in Spring 1999 to assess the status of the program. Personal interviews were conducted with Scouting Council personnel on three separate occasions, and a number of telephone conversations were conducted to clarify

information from the Council Office. As this report was being prepared, we again met with representatives from the Council to gain better insight into the disparities we have found.

THE SCOUTING IN PUBLIC HOUSING INITIATIVE

Assessment Methodology

Assessing the Scouting in Public Housing Initiative utilized several approaches to gathering data. Initially, Council representatives indicated that there were 16 active Scouting sites in public housing complexes throughout Jacksonville. However, after telephoning each of the identified sites and attempting to arrange site visits, it was clear that most of the Scouting Initiative sites were no longer in operation. In all, there were five (5) active Scout sites when the CCI research team initially collected data during September and October, 1998. The active sites included: 1) Jacksonville Beach, 2) Hilltop, 3) Emerson Arms, 4) Nia Terrace, and 5) Westgate. A sixth site, Forest Meadows, was “active” in trying to operate the program, but, according to contacts at the location, no kids were participating in Scouts as of October 1998.

As proposed, the assessment of the Scouting Initiative was to utilize both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques. These included:

- L *Site Visits*. Each of the active sites was visited at least three times, at least once by Faculty Research team members (either Jeffrey Will or Charles Owens), and multiple visits by research team members for the purposes of data collection and focus groups. During these visits, research team members conducted informal conversations with people we encountered, conducted focus groups and surveys of Scouts and other youth in the complex, and interviewed complex managers.

- L *Focus groups*. Focus groups were conducted at each of the active sites during October 1998, with members of the Scout troops, non-Scout residents of the housing complex, and representatives of the housing complex staff. These focus groups employed semi-structured

Number of Scouts Included in Data Collection			
<i>Location</i>	<i>Focus Group #</i>		<i>Survey Resp.</i>
	Cub S.	Boy S.	
Emerson Arms	0	2	7
Nia Terrace	5	4	5
Hill top	9	3	9
Jacksonville Beach	2	5	2
Westgate	NA	NA	NA
Total Kids	16	14	23

discussions designed to gain an understanding of the impact of the Scouting program on participants, perceptions of the program within the complex community, and the roles and activities of the Scout troop within the complex. We were not able to bring together respondents for formal focus group discussions with parents. Copies of the focus group questions can be found in Appendix A. In all 30 Scouts, 16 cub Scouts and 14 boy Scouts, participated in the focus groups.

- L *Surveys.* In addition to focus groups, *CCI* staff also conducted brief surveys during the course of data collection. Older boys involved in Boy Scouts completed brief surveys addressing perceptions of the programs, the impact of the program, and perceptions of the Scout leaders. (Younger boys in cub Scouts only participated in focus groups).

Telephone interviews were also conducted in Fall 1998 with directors (or other representatives) of those housing complexes in which the Scouting initiative was either undergoing restructuring or where the program had ceased to operate. In May 1999, telephone contact was again made with all of the complex managers to update the status of programs. By May 1999, four (4) additional sites had re-started operations.

- L *Review of Scouting Files and Scout Records.* In the original proposal, the primary focus would be on reviewing Scouting member records to assess improvement in conduct, school performance, and Scouting activities. The primary source of this information was to be the Council records and the individual Scout troops.

This phase of the assessment was not possible due to the virtual non-existence of any records or data on Scout members. In addition, the information that we did receive from the Scouting Council was not always consistent, either internally or with information gathered through other components of the project. (We discuss this in detail in later sections of the report.)

- L *Interviews with S.T.A.Y. Coordinator.* We conducted two in depth interviews with Eric Jefferson, Project Coordinator, during the course of the project, as well as a number of telephone conversations with him. In addition to information from Mr. Jefferson, we were able to identify additional data sources that he was able to provide to assist in this report. Information from these conversations is also included in this analysis.

FINDINGS

Overall Profile of Scouting Initiative

Program Shortcomings. As stated above, a review of the overall Scouting In Public Housing Program is not very positive. In this section, we examine the overall program-wide results. In particular, we examine the total number of Public Housing sites where the program was implemented, the number of Scouts, and the number of adult leaders and volunteers who participated in the program. We also examine how the findings from this analysis compare to those reported in the annual reports to the duPont Fund filed by the Scouting Council. It is important to note here that much of the data upon which the following discussion is based is believed to be of questionable quality and accuracy. Where needed, we address these problems in the discussion. Finally, we compare our findings with the objectives outlined in the original Scouting proposals.

The Sites. In August 1998 representatives from **CCI** met with the North Florida Council of the Boy Scouts representatives responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the Scouting in Public Housing program. In this meeting, the Council representatives provided a list of all Sites considered “active” in the program, as well as contact names, addresses, and phone numbers of Scout leaders. Most sites had contacts for both Cub Scout and Boy Scout troops included in the information. It is important to reiterate that this list was presented as the *active* program location and leadership list.

Once **CCI** received the list of sites, attempts were made by staff members to arrange visits by the Faculty research Project Directors (Jeffrey Will and Charles Owens), and to set up focus groups, surveys, and other data collection processes. For most of the sites, the contacts provided by the Council were no longer involved in the project. When the specific contacts could not be reached, additional calls were made to determine who the current Scout leaders were, and the extent to which the Scouting program was active within the specified housing complexes. When no Scout contact could be identified, **CCI** staff then contacted the directors of the Housing complex to assist in locating Scout leaders. In Table 1, we present the status of all Scout sites as of Fall 1998, as well as for follow-up contacts made with all sites in May 1999.

At the August 1998 meeting, Council representatives provided **CCI** with a list of 16 Public Housing complexes that were considered active participants in the Scouting in Public Housing Program. Analysis of the Council proposals to the duPont Fund indicates that 17 sites were initially included in these proposals. After numerous attempts to contact leaders to arrange for data collection, we could identify only *five* (5) housing complex sites, from the list of 16 sites identified by the Council as active, which actually had an active Scouting program as of September 1998. One additional site from the list was “active” only in the sense that a Scout leader had come on board, but no Scouts were participating.

In all, by September 1998, 10 sites identified by the Council had either closed or were undergoing “restructuring.” Two sites, The Durkeeville and Golf Brook complexes, were listed

as having “active” Scouting programs, even though these complexes had been closed by the Housing Authority for some months for reconstruction and remodeling when this evaluation was initiated. The 17th site, Centennial Park, had never opened. Three other sites from the original proposals to the duPont Fund targeted for the program also never formed, although they were merged with programs at other sites. These include Roosevelt, replaced by Hartwood, and Anders Park, which was replaced by Hilltop Village. The Pottsburg Park site joined with Southwind Villas to form one program.

TABLE 1: BOY SCOUT SITE HISTORY

Site	Status October 1998	Status May 1999	Contact	Grant Year	Start Year
PRIVATE OWNERSHIP					
Cleveland Arms	Non-Active	Active No Estimate Given	Denise Coward	1994	1994
Emerson Arms	Active	Active Estimate: 24 Children	Timothy Phelps	1992	1993
Westgate	Active	Active Estimate: 10 Children	Mrs. McClenton	1994	1994
Eureka	Non-Active	Non-Active	Betty	1996	1997
Nia Terrace	Active	Active Estimate: 16 Children	Brenda Harris	1996	1997
Hartwood (Roosevelt)	Non-Active	Active Estimate: 30 Children	Mrs. Orr	1996	1997
Hollybrook	Non-Active	Active No Estimate Given	Rev. Gee	1996	1996
Hilltop (Andreas)	Active	Active Estimate: 40 Children	Mr. Mills	1994	1997
JACKSONVILLE HOUSING AUTHORITY					
Site	October 1998	May 1999	Contact	Grant Year	Start Year
Durkeeville	Closed	Closed	No Contact	1992	1992
Brentwood	Non-Active	Active No Estimate Given	Mr. Perry	1994	1997
Jacksonville Beach	Active	Active Estimate: 6 Children	Mrs. Jones	1992	1992
Southwind/Potts burg	Non-Active	Non-Active	Mrs. Hodge	1992	1993
Blodgett	Non-Active	Non-Active	Mrs. Stewart	1992	1993
Ramona Park	Non-Active	Non-Active	Veronica Sledge	1994	1995
Forest Meadows	Active	Active No Estimate Given	Mrs. Wilham	1994	1997
Golf Brook	Closed	Closed	No Contact	1992	1992
Centennial Park	Never Formed	Never Formed	No Contact	1994	-----

In October 1998, *CCI* faculty research team members and staff met with Eric Jefferson from the Council to discuss these discrepancies. At that time, Mr. Jefferson acknowledged that these sites were not operational when we received the list, but that he was working on bringing them back on board. In addition, Mr. Jefferson indicated that he had not been comfortable submitting the 1998 proposal to the duPont Fund asking for new sites when the current ones were not fully operational. Mr Jefferson also provided additional printouts from the Council indicating the total number of Scouts enrolled each year.

In May 1999, *CCI* staff re-contacted all of the complexes from the original list provided by the Council. In those contacts, we found four (4) sites had re-activated during Spring 1999. Four sites were still considered inactive, but restructuring, with two sites having closed. The Centennial Site included in funding for the 1994 grant proposal never formed. Thus, by May 1999, of the 17 housing complexes targeted for Scout troops under the duPont grant, 10 were operating in some form, while seven did not have an operational Scouting program.

The Scouts. The primary objective of the Scouting in Public Housing Initiative is to “reach all boys in the designated housing area with the positive values development program of Boy Scouting.” (From the original proposal to the duPont Fund). To measure recruiting success, the Council was to look at the “number of boys who join compared to the overall boy population in public housing.” In each of the “internal evaluations” conducted by the Council, they reported the overall number of boys enrolled in Scouts.

Confirming the number of boys participating in the Scouting initiative, overall or at any one time, is difficult. Contradictory information from the Council reports to the duPont Fund and information provided by the Council to *CCI*, as well as direct data collection at the

individual sites by staff, reveals widely divergent numbers. For example, in the 1995 assessment of the first three (3) years of the initiative, the Council reported that “at this time the North Florida Council is Serving over 250 boys and girls in the designated public housing areas” (Memo from Travis Johns to Sally Douglass, September 12, 1995). In the proposal for Phase II, the Council indicates that “there are currently over 200 youth and 69 volunteers involved in Scouting” in the Phase I sites. In the assessment of the 1994-1995 project year dated September 22, 1995, the Council stated that “during this period of

TABLE 2		
Youth in Programs in years 1992 - 1998		
Year	# Youth	Cumulative#
1992	80 youth	
1993	102 youth	182 youth
1994	61 youth	243 youth
1995	117 youth	360 youth
1996	108 youth	468 youth
1997	113 youth	581 youth
1998	42 youth	623 youth

time we opened up three Public Housing Communities with 81 youth” (letter from John Reesor to Sally Douglass).

The primary difficulty encountered in assessing the overall participation numbers for the initiative is consistency in reporting. In Table 2, we present the overall number of Scouts identified by the Council as participating each year and the cumulative number of Scouts served over the past seven years. This information was provided by Mr. Jefferson after the October 1998 meeting. Note that the “cumulative” number as provided by the Council would imply that every Scout active in a particular year quit at the end of that year. Given the improbability of this, we attempted to extrapolate from the cumulative totals to estimate the number of Scouts listed as active each year. According to this information, in 1992 there were 80 youth involved in Scout troops affiliated with this initiative. In 1993, records indicate 102 youth had participated at some point during that year. By 1994 we estimate that the number of active Scouts in the program had dropped to 61. This number increased to 117 in 1995. By fall of 1998 we estimate that only approximately 42 Scouts were active in this initiative.

Note that these estimates are based on the records provided by Mr. Jefferson after the October 1998 meeting. We were not able to obtain lists of specific individuals involved in Scouting, nor were we able to ascertain how *active* the Scouts enumerated here were with regard to attendance at meetings and other functions. From this data, however, we also cannot substantiate claims in the Council reports for 1995 that “85% are still active in their unit” (From the September 1995 report from the Council to the duPont Fund, page 2). Again, the inconsistencies and inaccuracies in the various data sources prevents us from identifying the actual number of youth who participated in this program.

Additional information gathered from the Council also casts doubts on the accuracy of reports outlining the delivery of the Scouting Initiative. In Table 3, we present data obtained from Mr. Jefferson citing the number of youth and adults “active” in this program as of September 28, 1998. According to this data from the Council, 534 Scouts were active in September 1998, with 15 housing areas having active Scouts. However, as we presented above, *most* of these Public Housing projects did not have an active Scout program at that time. Indeed, over 280 of the youth cited in the Council data (52 percent) were in complexes with inactive programs. Indeed, one site, Durkeeville, was said to have 29 active Scouts as of September 28, even though the complex did not exist at the time. The whole complex had closed for rebuilding over a year before this assessment was undertaken.

Other inconsistencies were also documented for the *active* sites. For example, Council records showed that the Jacksonville Beach site had 43 active Scouts as of September 28. When *CCI* staff visited the site in both September and October 1998, however, the Scout leader indicated that there were less than 10 Scouts who were actively involved at the time - either as Cub Scouts or Boy Scouts. Similar experiences resulted when we visited the other “active” sites. Emerson Arms, Westgate, and Nia Terrace had only a fraction of the active members cited in the Council printouts. Hilltop, while the most successful location observed during this assessment, had far fewer active members than the 56 youth cited in the reports from the Council. In May

1999 Hilltop reported approximately 40 active Scouts, while Nia Terrace (16), Westgate (10) and Emerson Arms (25) reported numbers much lower than the data provided by Mr. Jefferson.

It is important to note that these figures differ dramatically from all reports presented by the Council in correspondence to the duPont Fund trustees. In 1996 the Council reported a retention rate of 92 percent for youth who had joined the program. The report even compared the initiative's results with national statistics. Although the data here do appear somewhat incomplete, it is clear that the retention rate is very low, at best approximating the national retention rate for youth in Scouts.

Finally, it is also important to discuss problems with the assessment of the impact of the Scouting initiative on the youth. A primary goal of the initiative is to "serve as a value transfer system" that will emphasize the ideas of "citizenship, character development, and personal fitness...(and) establish meaningful values for a lifetime" (from the 1992 proposal to the duPont Fund). As part of this assessment, we originally planned to review data obtained from Scouting records to assess the extent to which the program carried out these objectives, including areas such as school performance, participation in volunteer activities, whether the Scouts stayed out of trouble with legal institutions, and other activities that would be determined through these records. We were unable to obtain *any* information from Scout records that would allow us to assess the impact of participation in this program. Even within those sites listed as "active" in Fall 1998, little or no information was available concerning how the youth involved in Scouts performed within these behaviors and activities. The only site which collected significant information on youth in the Scout program was Hilltop (discussed below). Data from the Hilltop program, however, was collected as part of a proprietary comprehensive program implemented by the complex ownership. While we were not able to access these records, discussions with Hilltop staff indicated that they do track behavioral and educational activities of youth involved in all programs sponsored by the complex.

When we met with Mr. Jefferson in August, we believed that all Scouting sites collected basic educational and behavioral information on the youth in their programs. When we met with Mr. Jefferson again in October, however, he indicated that virtually *no* information is collected by the Council on youth in these programs. In addition, he indicated that the Council did not intend to collect data that would allow for the tracking of youth in the program. He suggested that what data they did collect was purged from their archives each year. When asked what the Council's response would be if a funding source required such data collection, he stated that he believed that the source would not be used for these programs. Indeed, he stated that, because of outcome reporting requirements being implemented by agencies such as the United Way, the Council hoped to be "United Way free" by 2002 (Quoted during conversation in October 1998).¹

¹ It is important to note that on July 1, 1999, *CCI* Faculty Research Directors and staff met with the Rod Rush, the new director of this program, and George Broughton of the Council to discuss these findings. They indicated that while data was not collected in the past they were interested in future efforts at assessing the outcomes of the study. We will address this further in

Thus, it is impossible to evaluate the success of the components of this program which seek to implement the “value-transfer system” as outlined in the Council’s proposals to the duPont Fund. From all data available, it is not possible to identify individual Scouts to track, nor to gain access to Council records that would assist in assessing how participants in this program perform in school and other civic areas.

The Adults. In addition to recruiting youth to participate in Scouting, this initiative also focused on recruiting adults to participate as both Scout leaders and as volunteers. As with data on youth in Scouts, however, little can be ascertained with regard to the recruiting efforts of the adult volunteers. As we see in Table 3, the Council records report that over 285 adult leaders and Volunteers were actively working with Scouts as of September 1998. However, these numbers are again suspect, given that 160 of these adult volunteers were attributed to housing sites which did not have an active Scouting effort at that time. Even at those sites where the Scouting initiative was active, the actual number of volunteers was much lower than the information from the Council would suggest. For example, Jacksonville Beach showed representatives of *CCI* a list of approximately 15 “active” volunteers. It was acknowledged by the Scout leader that not all of these persons came very often, and that some had merely signed on, and had never really participated. Indeed, one of the active “volunteers” on the Jacksonville Beach list, known by staff at *CCI*, had moved out of state a number of months prior to this study. As with the problem enumerating active Scouts, no differentiation between persons who, at one time or another, signed up to volunteer and those who actually participated is made in the Scout records.

One area in which we were able to obtain adult volunteer data from the Council concerned the official Scout leaders. In Table 4, we list each site and the leaders for both Cub Scouts and Boy Scouts since the initiative began. Overall, between 1992 and 1998, 51 individuals served as leader for either Cub Scouts or Boy Scouts at the 17 sites identified in this initiative. In all, 26 men and 25 women have served as Scout leaders in the past 6 years. While most of the women worked with Cub Scouts, the youngest age group within this initiative, seven (7) women also served as leader for the older Boy Scout troops. For those sites where active Scouting programs were in place last Fall, 17 different individuals had served, or were currently serving as Scout leader.

the last section of this report.