

LONG ISLAND INSTITUTE FOR GROUP WORK WITH CHILDREN & YOUTH

a newsletter about working with children and youth in groups

Volume 5, Number 4.

❖ Fifth Year of Publication ❖

Fall 2000

From the Editor

Long time readers of HUH?!? will recall an action research project of the Long Island Institute for Group Work entitled "A Sense of Alienation or Belonging: Building Bridges Through Group Involvement." The idea was to learn about how practitioners perceived their own ability as group workers. We weren't really surprised to learn about how poorly prepared and supported many practitioners felt. That was 1996.

In 1997-8 we surveyed executive directors and program directors. They reported valuing group work in their agencies and bemoaned the fact that the job applicant pool of potential employees with good educational grounding in group work was such thin pickings. By the way, it's not a bad idea for administrators themselves to be well grounded in group work.

The editorial space in this fifth year issue of HUH?!? is devoted to taking a look at how marketing, fundraising, and program development is enhanced when administrators have an in-depth knowledge of group work. Following is testimony by two long time steering committee members Cynthia Cavallo and Andrew Peters, top administrators of two children and youth serving agencies. Cindy and Andrew, sound group work thinkers and practitioners, write about the impact of their understanding and commitment to group work from a fund raising and program development perspective. I hope that these stories provide a peek into how two administrators who *really know* group work, use it to market and build their programs.

Andy

From Cynthia Cavallo

Executive Director,
Nassau Coalition on Child Abuse and Neglect

Soon after assuming the position of Executive Director of the Coalition on Child Abuse and Neglect (CCAN), I used my group work knowledge to assist a staff member with the establishment of a program for child victims of sex abuse and their non-offending parents and siblings. Having come from a long background working with groups, I believed that this would be an important service to offer to our clients. *Project Kidz Talk*, a mutual aid, peer support group work program became operational in the fall of 1998 and has grown tremendously over the last two years.

As expected, the families served through this program have found it extremely supportive. They have indicated to us that it has provided them a mechanism for breaking down the isolation they experienced after the disclosure, a safe a supportive place to discuss issues, an opportunity to connect with others who have a similar life experience, and a chance to develop projects that empower them to move from the role of helpless victim to active change agent. We are pleased with these outcomes, but they were no surprise to me. Aware of the

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From Andrew Peters

Director, Pride for Youth

For the past four years I've been the director of a project providing services and advocacy for lesbian and gay adolescents. Although I was interested in group work before I started in this position, working with stigmatized young people has reinforced this interest. Among the youth that I have worked with over the years I have seen many examples of the power of groups to effect individual change - overcoming isolation, shame and guilt, and social change - promoting greater sensitivity and support for lesbian and gay young people in the community. I have less opportunity now to work directly with groups of teenagers than I did as a "front line" social worker, but I call upon my group work skills and values in the variety of roles I have assumed as an administrator - leading a staff meeting, providing group supervision and in-service training, and developing programs that meet the needs of young people.

In one of my toughest and least favorite roles - fundraising - I find that my understanding and appreciation of group work has come in handy as well. While government grants fund the core services of my project -

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Dear Reader,

We offer HUH?!? to you at the very reasonable rate of \$5 per year. This includes four issues of the newsletter and an annual index. Nevertheless, our subscription base has not kept up with expenses. If you have been receiving the newsletter, we ask that you subscribe or renew your subscription by October 15, 2000. Your subscription is your vote for HUH?!? to continue. Please take a few minutes to vote "Yes" for the continuation of HUH?!? Your "Yes" vote is a statement of support for group work with children and youth. Register your vote by sending a check for \$5 (A subscription application can be found on page 3.)

Editor



Looking Back ... A Reminiscence

"No Room for Swelled Heads or Bruised Egos ..."

By: Andrew Malekoff

This is the 14th
feature in a
continuing series

Growing up I belonged to lots of groups. Most were sports related. Many only lasted a few hours at a time, like the choose-up teams we'd organize. We'd start with football in the fall and then move on to basketball and stickball. We also devised more unconventional "street" games that were often complex variations of hide-and-seek and cops-and-robbers, grand psychodramas that combined elements of justice, surprise, fear, and lots of running, jumping, climbing, and colliding.

Sometimes the games weren't too complicated at all. We had snowball fights and free-for-alls called "kill the man with the ball" and "king of the hill." Some of these were games of unbridled aggression with only a few loosely defined rules to prevent blindness and paralysis.

The games were pretty easy to organize. *Presto*. Someone would begin the phone call chain, a meeting place and time would be determined, and everyone would ride their bikes or walk to the playground and hop the fence to the playing fields. We'd choose up teams, agree on rules, and play. *Magic*. These were games I always looked forward to.

Later I got involved with organized sports like little league baseball and then high

school and college teams. I guess what I was playing before that was *unorganized sports*. In organized sports there were coaches, formal practices, predetermined rules, and strict schedules. There was no choice about who was on your team. You were stuck, for better or worse, with the same teammates every game. In organized sports there was more of an emphasis on winning and losing and on how good or bad you were doing.

In unorganized sports we also cared about winning and losing and we wanted to play well, but everyone seemed to get over it faster. There was no room for swelled heads or bruised egos to grow and fester. And besides, the next day teams changed. The only loyalty was to the game. We had a stake in making it work. We adhered to a self imposed structure so that we could enjoy our time together.

The ephemeral nature of unorganized sports was appealing. No adults knew the outcome of the games so they couldn't remark on them or critique anyone's performance. Parents never knew who got a hit, made an error, or struck out. There were no records or box scores in unorganized sports, no documented history of one's performance. There was only the shared

memory of being together and away from grown ups for a few precious hours. Our parents had no stake in what we did in the playground as long as we stayed out of trouble.

I have to admit that it feels a little *cliché* writing about this now. I know that I'm not saying anything new and earth shattering. Don't just about all grown ups romanticize the past, recall childhood games of days gone by, and lament the present state of affairs? Maybe it's an adult rite of passage. Nevertheless, I think we've come a long way from choose up games where we could temporarily escape the adults in our own lives, to today's leagues where we too often obsessively intrude on our own kids' time and space.

These days whenever I go to a playground to see local kids playing organized sports my focus is often interrupted by the ghosts of my youth. I always seem to end up in a dissociative state of some sort. At those times I feel like the little boy on the silver screen who whispered, "I see dead people."

I see faceless kids arriving in all directions on their blurring bikes huddling together in a mass to choose up sides

then apart
intense
arguing
laughing rolling in the dirt
undaunted by rain and snow
grown-up free
for a time
and
then
back on their bikes
blurring away
to someplace special
drinking cokes
laughing teasing
joking and
back on their bikes
scattering
blurring
back home
refueled
with
a
shared
memory
of a time away
and
together.

And then I snap back to present time and think to myself, *many years from now ... in a time most of us cannot imagine, we will look back at the era when our kids were young. Some of us will remember our children as graceful young athletes, others as gritty competitors, others as awkward yet persistent, and still others as tentative but game. And then they will surprise us as they develop in so many unexpected ways. However, it is what our kids will remember about this time in their lives that*

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» Continued from Page 1.
From Cynthia Cavallo

benefits of good group work I expected that they would occur.

The surprise in all of this has been how this program has helped the agency! As Executive Director it is often my responsibility to speak to funders/donors about CCAN and it's services. *Project Kidz Talk* has provided me with a strong, concrete service and amazing stories that most people can relate to and appreciate. After all, most people have belonged to a group at sometime in their lives. Potential supporters are moved by the program and have generously supported our efforts after learning about it.

The projects that the children and youth group members have developed though the program have helped CCAN to market the agency and raise awareness in the community regarding abuse and neglect. These are outcomes that hadn't occurred to us at first, and yet we are reaping the rewards. It behooves all of us to recognize the ways this powerful method - group work - can benefit all of us, clients and agency.

From Andrew Peters

counseling, peer education, and HIV prevention, tapping into private foundation money has

allowed us to offer programs like a young lesbian/bisexual women's creative arts group and an anti-homophobia school campaign utilizing an action research approach. Of the half dozen or so grant proposals I have written in the past year, each of them has incorporated group work in some way. In proposing a new program to fund, I can talk about group work as a method for such diverse outcomes as health promotion, risk reduction, self-esteem enhancement, and leadership development. Further, I find that the core group work beliefs and values mesh well with the interests of many private foundations: consumer input, client self determination, youth empowerment, social change, and peer-to-peer services.

I still consider fundraising to be one of my dreaded roles. Nevertheless, conveying the impact of group work on clients and community to funders has been a very successful approach to expanding programs and diversifying services.

» Continued from Page 2.
Looking Back ...

A Reminiscence

is most important. What will they remember about their experience in youth sports?. Will they remember being a part of something special? Will they remember the good feeling that teamwork and team spirit can bring? Will they remember the adults who guided them along, patiently taught them new skills, and encouraged them from the stands? What will they remember?

We cannot afford to forget that our kids are still children, as we were.

Andrew Malekoff, ACSW, CASAC is the Project Coordinator for the Long Island Institute for Group Work with Children & Youth. He is also the Director of Program Development at NSC&FGC.

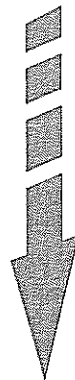


Mission Statement Long Island Institute for Group Work with Children & Youth

The Mission of the Long Island Institute for Group Work With Children and Youth is: To promote and enhance effective group work practice with children and youth through advocacy, education, and collegial support. **HUH?!?** is the Institute's quarterly newsletter dedicated to providing information, inspiration and support for anyone working with young people in group settings.

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TIPS: For Grown Ups Attending Youth Sports

"The main purpose of youth sports is to emphasize effort, participation and skill development," according to Joel Fish, director of the Center for Sports Psychology in Philadelphia. Children need safe places to have fun, learn skills, practice sportsmanship, and become exposed to healthy competition.

TIP: Don't get too involved in the outcome of a youth game - who won, who lost, who scored the most points. Don't lose sight of the mission.

R E S O U R C E S . . .

- **International Group Work Conference:** Social Work With Groups: Social Justice Through Personal, Community, and Societal Change. October 19-22, 2000. 22nd Annual International Symposium of the Assoc. for the Advancement of Social Work with Groups, Toronto, Ontario, Canada. Contact: E.S. Mesbur or N. Sullivan; Phone 416-979-5000 (Mesbur Ext. 6219) (Sullivan Ext. 6229); Email emesbur@acs.ryerson.ca or navillus@interlog.com.
- **Information Wanted:** The Long Island Institute for Group Work with Children and Youth in collaboration with Pride for Youth of Bellmore is developing an educational forum for school and agency staff working with gay and lesbian student groups. We are currently looking for feedback from workers and teachers in the schools in order to plan this event. If you are interested in being a part of the project or if you have information that you wish to share please contact steering committee member Cari Abatemarco at (516-679-9000). Or write to: C. Abatemarco; Pride for Youth; 2050 Bellmore Avenue; Bellmore, NY 11710.

HUH??? is the quarterly newsletter of the Long Island Institute for Group Work With Children and Youth, a program of North Shore Child & Family Guidance Center; 480 Old Westbury Road; Roslyn Hgts., NY 11577-2215; Phone: (516) 626-1971 •• Fax: 626-8043. **Executive Director/CEO:** Marion S. Levina, ACSW; **Director of Program Development and Newsletter Editor:** Andrew Malakoff, ACSW. **Newsletter Design and Layout:** Jane E. Meckwood-Yazdpour. **Participating Agencies:** Coalition on Child Abuse & Neglect, Garden City; Youth Directions and Alternatives, E.Northport; Harricks School District, Albertson; Sanctuary Project, Huntington; Plainedge School District; L.I. Chapter/Assoc. for Advancement of Social Work With Groups; L.I.Crisis Center, Bellmore; Temple Sinai of Roslyn; Huntington Youth Bureau, Huntington. Copyright September 1, 2000/USA.

Literature Corner

"Out of Control," by William Nack and Lester Munson,
Sports Illustrated, July 24, 2000, pp. 87-94

This special report to *Sports Illustrated* magazine is about the rising tide of violence and verbal abuse by adults at youth sports events. In addition to a chronicle of horrific events over the past several years, culminating with one hockey father killing another, the authors attempt to explain the phenomenon of out of control parents and coaches. The article examines the development of organized youth sports in the late 1880's, coinciding with the newly industrializing America. It also presents results of surveys in which children identify what's most important to them. As the article states: "children invariably say they enjoy the fun, they like being with their friends, and they enjoy learning the fundamentals to improve their skills...they rank winning about seventh or eighth down the list." "Out of Control" should be required reading for all adults involved with youth sports. The article is a sad reminder for those who have witnessed such violence and verbal abuse, and a wake up call for all those involved in providing leadership for youth sports.