

ACTION PLAN

FOR

ZION BAPTIST CHURCH
807 Piedmont Street
Reidsville, North Carolina 27320
AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM
FOR GRADES 4-8

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Summer Leadership Institute
Summer 2002

Background

In an area fondly referred to as the Piedmont/Triad, Rockingham County, with a population of more than 94,000, is a northern bordering county to the state of Virginia. As a result of economic challenges, Rockingham County has just been designated by the Governor's office as Tier-2 County, which reflects one step away from the most economically deprived. With a population of slightly more than 14,000, Reidsville is the second largest community located in Rockingham County, North Carolina. The significant majority of the population is Whites (76%) and next is Blacks (20%). Despite a significant population increase, Hispanics are only 3% of the city's population. Most of the population has been directly or indirectly impacted by recent economic shifts including corporate relocations, company downsizing, and high employment lay-offs, having been a trend over the past five years. One of the larger and more lucrative employers in the county, American Tobacco Company, closed more than four years ago due to relocation to Augusta, Georgia. Perhaps, these signs of imbalance and tough economic swings have produced higher school dropout rates, drug trafficking and abuse, youth aggression and confrontation against family and law enforcement. Reidsville has its share of obvious economic woes; but, it continues with optimism. The recent development of a new industrial park, which is adjacent to a major highway, and two major single-family dwelling neighborhood developments, sponsored by Project Homestead, Inc. are signs of anticipated and expected future change.

Zion Baptist Church of Reidsville, organized in 1900, is a church of economic strength, political connectivity, social consciousness, and spiritual engagement. With 432 members, Zion's congregation is a spectrum reflective of economic, political, social, and spiritual in the city of Reidsville and county of Rockingham. Having just completed \$1.5 million dollar building and renovation project (August 2001) affording service to the community in a variety of ways, the church has already hosted banquets for the announcement of both District Attorney and District Court Judgeship and other area and regional organizations in the Multi-Purpose Center. This facility lends itself to host an After-School, which is not in existence, with relative ease due to space. Politically, Zion's reach has breadth, length, and depth. In the year 2000, Rockingham County only had five African-American elected officials on various forms of governing and government. Three of those persons are active members and leaders in the Zion Baptist Church. One, among many, of the mission efforts of Zion is the Reidsville Outreach Center, which serves as a community clearinghouse for persons in need of various assistance. It is the vision of Zion to impact with the Gospel of Jesus Christ through both word and deed and bring betterment to the community by service and tithing to local efforts that promote human wholeness in the community. The respect of Zion reaches throughout the state of North Carolina and the country. All of this is done with a great faith and trust to improve the life and spirituality of the community and county.

SITUATION ANALYSIS

The Zion Baptist Church is a congregation that loves community. Major efforts and finances have been used to make a difference, especially for the black community. Nestled in the neighborhood known as West End, the majority of the members live in the city of Reidsville. Some even live walking distance from the church. On the other hand, some members, who were reared in the community, have moved to the edge of the city limits. The geographical location of the members of Zion are 15% walking distance, 50% in city limits, 20% in the county, and 15% drive from various place. One, in particular, frequently drives 90 miles one-way Sunday worship and special services.

Zion has a rich tradition in member retention, in that, the majority have grown up in the church. They are not only aware of the area but also the church loyal and family ties both Zion members and non-Zion members alike. Even today, many remember the days of Booker T. Washington School, which has been closed, as if it were yesterday. One of the deacons served as Administrator and Coach and several other members held various staff positions of the former Washington School. It is this type of history that has perpetuated a strong sense of community ownership in the membership.

The sense of ownership is the element of survival in a declining neighborhood. The West End Neighborhood is challenged. Drug trafficking and abuses, along with random prostitution, are two major concerns that face the neighborhood. The prevalent drug is Crack-Cocaine, both organic and synthetic. Another concern is crime, especially involving guns. Until the last week in December 2001, Reidsville had no fatalities by gun. Less than one week before New Years, a fatal shooting occurred also injuring another victim. Occurring after midnight, both victims were black males under the age of 25. These types of incidences are the source of urgency for Zion and community.

Much of the neighborhood youth activity centers around three locations:

- YMCA;
- Recreation Department (a.k.a. "The Rec");
- Griggs Park.

All three are within a three-minute drive from each other; therefore, walking time is very manageable.

The Y.M.C.A., Young Men's Christian Association, is non-profit membership organization that has a wealth of programming offered in a Christian atmosphere to build both body and soul. The usage of the Y.M.C.A. is year-round. The facilities boast an Olympic-size pool, two basketball courts, an aerobic room, weight room, female and male locker rooms, and meeting rooms. Membership is often required, if not, a fee can be accessed. The Y.M.C.A. is currently running an After-School program that has a long waiting list; therefore, some students are not being serviced.

The Recreation Department, on the north edge of the West End neighborhood, is a public non-membership facility. The usage of the Recreation Department is year-round. Offering a slate of organized sports for young people, the games are seasonal. With an oversized gymnasium, sizeable meeting area, and weight room, "the Rec", is taxed with budgetary cuts; therefore, the necessary funding to program and staff additional programming is not feasible.

The Griggs Park, named after one of principals of the former Booker T. Washington School, is a beautiful gathering place. The preferred time of usage is during warm non-inclement weather. With mature shade trees, the park was dedicated in to service 2001 under the management of the Reidsville Parks and Recreation Department. In the heart of the West End neighborhood, it is the recreational hope of the community. Due to bad company and visitation, it has offered greater potential than reality. With only two basketball courts and a small assortment of playground equipment, the young children are not as participatory as the large children and adults due to structure of the games. Because of the potential of danger from some gatherings, Griggs Park has been the place of challenge for law enforcement. Numerous police calls either originate or migrate to the park, due to accessibility.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

While these options are viable, their usage has been limited. Due to membership requirements or seasonal constraints or disruptive behavior, the limitations are more obvious than passive. On the other hand, not all children are athletically inclined. Basketball is the common element in these three facilities. While one could argue a majority of children love basketball as a recreational activity, it is not the sport of preference for all. While basketball and other recreational activities invite group participation and good body motor development, it does not meet the needs of the education of the youth, particularly grades four through eight.

The following is an example of the status of the schools in the community, according to the Governor of North Carolina, Mr. Mike Easley, as his report on schools from the North Carolina Report Card 2002 (*website: www.ncreport.org*):

- Reidsville Intermediate School (serves grades 4 and 5)
Percentages of Students' Scores at or above grade level on Reading and Math Tests
 Grade 4 Reading scoring 68.8% (versus District 73.7% and State 74.6%);
 Grade 4 Math scoring 84.2% (versus District 86.4% and State 86.8);
 Grade 5 Reading scoring 73.9% (versus District 80.2% and State 80.2%);
 Grade 5 Math scoring 76.9% (versus District 83.1% and State 86.7%).
- Score Center (serves grades 3 through 5)
 Scores are not available.
 This school is specifically designed for at-risk youth. There are 43 students.
- Reidsville Middle School (grades 6 through 8)
Percentages of Students' Scores at or above grade level on Reading and Math Tests
 Grade 6 Reading scoring 53.9% (versus District 63.5% and State 70.6%);
 Grade 6 Math scoring 77.3% (versus District 80.7% and State 82.9%);
 Grade 7 Reading scoring 62.3% (versus District 72.7% and State 75.3%);
 Grade 7 Math scoring 68.7% (versus District 76.5% and State 81.3%);
 Grade 8 Reading scoring 69.7% (versus District 81.1% and State 83.3%);
 Grade 8 Math scoring 67.6% (versus District 77.4% and State 79.4%).

The testing results reveal the need for a supplementary service that may offer competitive learning by bringing resources together to equip children with better skills to negotiate the school process.

One could argue that the economy has a direct impact on the ability of the children to learn. For example (*website: quickfacts.census.gov*):

- Persons under the age of 18 make up 23.4% of the total population;
- Children living below poverty make up 17.3% of the total population.

Of 100 counties in North Carolina, 60% of children are raised in single-parent homes. Therefore, one contributing factor of these statistics could come from the large number of single-parent homes with children in Reidsville. Most often, grandparents actively parent their grandchild(ren) while the parent is working. Such practice helps to ease after-school care cost that can offer both convenience and supervision of time until the parent gets off from the day's work.

The county of Reidsville is not new to the struggle of education. For example (*website: quickfacts.census.gov*):

- 34,027 persons of the city's total population are high school graduates;
- 5,080 persons of the city's total population have college degrees (inclusive of undergraduate, graduate and post-graduate degrees).

Nationally, statistics reveal that parents have influence on a their child's educational aspirations. In Reidsville, the challenge is great with only 33% of the citizenry as high school graduates and approximately 6% with higher educational achievement.

The challenge is to engage these students in an environment that is both stimulating physically and scholastically.

TARGET COMMUNITY

Zion's desired targeted community is grades four through eight. Some major factors are as follows:

- The child should be readily able to communicate vital information (address, phone, etc.) in the event of an emergency;
- The child has been informed enough to make decisions for personal betterment (friends, actions, etc.);
- The child should possess an ability to handle personal acts (bathroom, water, etc.) with little or no assistance;
- The child can communicate both needs and desires to staff;
- The child respect for others and self is still under construction and can be positively influenced by others;
- Lessens security risk for children who have no place to go but to an empty home until an adult arrives.

PROPOSED STRATEGY

The strategy would be to serve up to 50 students on a first-come, first-serve basis. The proposed hours of operation will be from 3:30 p.m. until 5:45 p.m. The activities and recreation portion of the program will be housed in the Multi-purpose Center. Activities list will include, but not exclusive to, the following: basketball, volleyball, dodge ball, prop games (i.e. parachute, potato sack race, etc.), etc. The tutorial portion of the program will be housed in the lower fellowship. Tutors will provide help with homework and other assignment assistance. On Wednesday, the focus will merge with regular Bible Study.

Zion has a large force of volunteers. On any given day, several members are involved in several church related functions. From Sunday preparation to special events planning, Zion is constant organization of movement.

The target adult to child ratio is 1:10. To reach such target ratio, the program would rely heavily on the membership, community, and partnership efforts with other organizations. The proposal would afford Zion to manage the only church sponsored After-School program in the West End Community.

PLAN OF ACTION

The following would be an approach to making an After-School program, with up to 50 fourth through eighth graders, a reality:

- Pastor to submit proposal to Deacons and Church Leaders by August 1;
- Church membership meeting for approval by September 15;
- Selection Special Committee for publicity and to perform plan per churches directives by September 20;
- Church leaders develop a plan for volunteerism among the membership and community by October 1;
- Special Committee, with cooperation with Finance Committee, project cost of programming addition (i.e. increase in utilities, snacks, etc.) by October 20;
- Finance Committee led in the petitioning for financial support from congregation, community, and business community to fund and underwrite program by November 10;
- Church members, by special committee members, enlisted to develop a mailing list from congregation, community, and the Y.M.C.A. waiting list to project the potential number of participants by November 18;
- Pastor and Special Committee to meet with the Y.M.C.A. to request assistance and partnership to meet staffing and expenditure needs by December 5;
- Church Trustees to meet with Fire Department to ensure code compliance by December 15;
- Church Trustees to meet with Health Department to ensure facility readiness by December 15;
- Church Trustees to meet with Reidsville Police Department for random visitation and security support by December 15;
- Pastor and Special Committee to request meeting with school officials to request that participants coordinate school bus routes for drop off near church by December 15;
- Special Committee, with assist of the Pastor, to draft letter of interest to confirm interest in program of the neighborhood homes that have fourth through eighth graders by December 15;
- Church leaders to develop plan for operation hours and possible subsidy of additional cost involved by December 15;

- Church leaders to appoint church volunteer staff (crafts, recreation, tutoring, etc.) by December 15;
- Pastor and special committee to meet with all staff for scheduling and organizational coordination (if applicable) by January 5;
- Special Committee to offer status reports and proposed first date of operation (February 3) by January 18.
- Church Secretary to publicize (i.e. Reidsville Review Newspaper, local radio, local television, Ministerial Alliance, United Ministries, Rockingham County Union) intent to community with projected opening date by January 20.

WEAKNESSES

Volunteers and funding are major elements that the program must obtain. With a maximum number of 50 students, the volunteer staffing would require 5 persons per day. Without the personnel and financial support the program, which could service 50 children would be dangerous to implement. Scheduling should not offer any conflict due to existing vacancy during these hours in current church calendar.

ALTERNATIVES

The following could be offered as alternatives to current proposal:

- Zion could offer the Y.M.C.A. the Multi-Purpose Center, in lieu of a collaborative effort, to facilitate a desire overage from the waiting list. Zion is approximately three blocks from the Y.M.C.A., which lends both convenience and close proximity.
- Zion could make schedule reductions to fit any funding or volunteer restraints. For example, the After-School program could meet two or three days a week to work into a five-day a week schedule, after funding and volunteer numbers increase.