

BOYS & BEYOND PROGRAM

by Pace Community Action Agency, Inc.

Region 5 • Vincennes, Indiana
pacecaa.org



Life Skills • Mentoring • Youth

INITIATIVE OVERVIEW

Pace's Boys & Beyond Program was developed in 2015 to work with boys in the 4th and 5th grade using experiential learning to teach the children life skills. Boys attend sessions to learn about topics such as financial literacy, technology, health and wellness, how to tie a tie, how to change a tire, and social skills. Community volunteers help make the lessons come to life in meaningful ways that keep the boys engaged.

LOCAL NEED ADDRESSED

According to Pace's most recent needs assessment, Boys and Beyond meets many of the top identified community needs. Youth mental health programs were the #2 need, with youth programs at #6. The needs assessment also identified a 6.7% increase in single parent households. Although this program is not exclusively for boys who have a single parent, many participants are part of a single-mother household. As one mother told the agency, "You are teaching my son things I wouldn't know how to teach him." Creating and enhancing educational partnerships is a part of Pace Community Action Agency's strategic plan. The board and stakeholders recognize the important role schools play in the community. This program involves schools at many levels, including program planning, identification of potential participants, donating volunteers for sessions, etc.

ROLE OF CSBG FUNDS

Boys and Beyond utilized CSBG funding for the initial planning and implementation of the program. The



funds are also used for staff time spent on the program, including planning and evaluation. The program was initially funded through an Innovation Program Award from the Indiana state CSBG office. Due to the success and community support after initial program sessions, Pace continued the program using various funding sources, including CSBG and other leveraged community and private funds.

TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT

Boys and Beyond has become a well-known and loved program throughout the community. From the beginning, this program has engaged stakeholders, including schools, businesses, individuals, parents, social service agencies, healthcare facilities, and more. Each Boys and Beyond session is facilitated by volunteers, which allows the program to leverage expertise throughout our community. For example,

mechanics and farmers have taught participants how to change a car tire and perform basic car maintenance; a university professor and Licensed Clinical Social Worker addressed health and wellness; and local banks teamed up to share expertise regarding financial literacy and savings.

Providing a variety of different male role models to the boys each week allows two-way community connections. Volunteers better understand some of the challenges youth in the community are facing, and participants in the program see many different career paths available in the community. Partner schools share information about our program, help to prioritize applicants, and attend the final session, where participants share information about the program and what they've learned with their families and the broader community.

EVIDENCE-BASED OUTCOMES

Program successes are measured by outcomes and also qualitative data gathered from parents, volunteers, and school officials. The boys are given a pre- and post-test which demonstrates outcomes. Due to the level of community engagement and identified community needs, the program could be easily modified. There are several documents available that could be used to assist other agencies interested in implementing a similar program.

EQUITY LENS

Often racial equity is not considered when implementing programs, especially in rural areas that are almost exclusively white. Pace Community Action Agency is different. From the conception of this program, Pace was aware of racial inequality and took measures to create an inclusive program by seeking out racially and ethnically diverse volunteers to assist and partnering with the Black Male Initiative (BMI) Club at the local university, a club comprised of college-aged African American men who want to assist the community.

According to Census data, only 2.5% of the county's population is black. By purposely seeking out and engaging diverse volunteers to share their expertise,

participants were acquainted with a diversity of experiences and perspectives that they are unlikely to experience in their regular life. Representation matters when fighting the systemic, often unaware, prejudice prevalent in this rural service area.

CUSTOMER VOICE

The Pace Community Action Agency board of directors includes low-income representation and was involved with the creation of the Boys and Beyond program. The agency heard feedback from previous Head Start families indicating they wished there was a way for their children to remain engaged with our positive programs. Pace also used feedback from the school social workers and counselors who are very aware of the needs of the children.

The program periodically provided parents and participants with an opportunity to share feedback regarding the sessions. That feedback was used to structure and re-shape the program in the future. For example, some participants expressed a desire for more activities regarding robotics and computers. During the following program season, Boys and Beyond incorporated more technology activities. The program took great care to let both the previous and current participants know that they not only wanted feedback, but that they actually adjusted the program based on what was suggested.

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