



THE CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY

CHILDREN DO WELL WHEN THEIR FAMILIES
DO WELL, AND FAMILIES DO BETTER WHEN
THEY LIVE IN SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

2006 FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

REACHING OUT TO PARENTS

In 1997, the City Challenge Boys & Girls Clubhouse in New York City set out to reduce the alarming proportion of young men—more than 80 percent statewide—rearrested within three years of their release from New York’s residential detention facilities. From the beginning, the Clubhouse put early outreach to parents at the heart of its program to help young offenders make the transition back to life.

“Typically, these young men do well in the upstate facility, but then come back to the same negative situation,” says William Weisberg, Associate Executive Director of The Children’s Aid Society, which runs the program in partnership with the New York State Office of Family and Children’s Services (OFCS). “We involve parents to start the reintegration process before their children come home. We show them the way to the support and services they need to help their children.”



TO BE SUCCESSFUL WITH PARENTS, WE HAVE TO
EDUCATE THEM AND EMPOWER THEM. WE MUST

INVOLVE THEM AS STAKEHOLDERS IF WE REALLY
WANT TO HELP THEIR CHILDREN.

—C. Warren Moses, Chief Executive Officer, The Children’s Aid Society

GIVING SUPPORT, ANTICIPATING NEEDS

Starting months before their children come home, City Challenge reaches out to parents with a range of services and activities. The Clubhouse organizes a trip to the Youth Leadership Academy, the state facility, while the children are still there. The City Challenge Parenting Institute engages parents in weekly support groups, where they can share concerns and advice with each other. Intensive case management includes weekly contact with a caseworker for about 40 percent of the families.

Such outreach helps parents become full partners in the process of bringing their children home to better situations than they left behind. “Giving parents a voice can be challenging, but it’s essential,” says Felipe Franco, Director of Juvenile Justice Programs. “They can help us learn about their children, and together we can plan for what needs to be in place for the return.” This might take the form of an activity that interests the young person, such as art or sports, job skills training or an internship program. It also might take the form of medical and dental care, mental health services, substance abuse treatment and financial assistance.

City Challenge serves approximately 150 youth and their families each year. Fully half of the young people who take part in the program stay free from arrest for three years or longer. Most of them complete high school and move on to work and/or college, becoming positive role models in their communities.

FAMILIES COUNT FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

Through a joint venture of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Boys & Girls Clubs of America, the FAMILIES COUNT Family Strengthening Awards recognize Club programs that work to give children what they need most—strong, capable and economically successful families. Responding to the varied needs of the families they serve, these organizations improve the economic prospects of working men and women and create the services and networks of support that all families need to realize their aspirations for themselves and their children.

This year, Boys & Girls Clubs of America (BGCA) and its vital programs will reach nearly 4.5 million young people and their parents in 3,700 neighborhoods and rural communities. BGCA's professional staff will support and engage parents as their school-age children learn character and leadership development, vocational training, and healthy behaviors and benefit from a wide range of academic and cultural pursuits. "We not only change the trajectory of a young person's life today but also the trajectory of their children's lives tomorrow," says BGCA President Roxanne Spillet. "That's why we call our work family-strengthening and generation-changing."

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Award-winning Program: The City Challenge Boys & Girls Clubhouse

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