

INSIDE	Page
Executive Director's Corner	2
Research Digest	3
Ongoing Research	3
What's Going On at HFI?	4
Urban Improv Model Program	5

Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence
2121 K Street, NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20037

Executive Director

Beverly Caffee Glenn, Ed.D.

Editor/Writer

Tasha M. McGuthrie

Editorial Coordinator

Ofield Dukes
Ofield Dukes & Associates

Contributing Writer

Ruth A. Marshall

Creative Director/Graphic Design

Saschane M. Stephenson
LINK Communications Group

The Hamilton Fish Institute News is the official newsletter of the Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence. To make a tax-deductible contribution to the Hamilton Fish Institute, be added to the mailing list or receive information, contact: 2121 K Street, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20037 or email: info@hamfish.org

This newsletter resides in the public domain. Any use for commercial purpose is prohibited. Copies of this newsletter may be downloaded from <http://www.hamfish.org> or redistributed for educational purposes only.

This newsletter is supported by Grant No. 2005-JL-FX-0157 awarded to The George Washington University, by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice. Points of view or opinions in this newsletter are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice or The George Washington University.

Washington, D.C. Inner-City School is Recipient of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library Program

The Dolly Parton Imagination Library program has come to the District of Columbia through funding from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs' Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) to the Hamilton Fish Institute (HFI). The Benjamin G. Orr Elementary School (Orr School) was chosen as the first recipient of this program in the District. The Imagination Library delivers a new children's book every month to the home of each child from birth to age 5 who attends or will attend Orr School.

Orr Elementary School celebrated the introduction of the program during a special ceremony on Monday, December 4, 2006. Orr School Principal Michelle Edwards, who co-hosted the event with OJJDP Administrator J. Robert Flores, provided the welcoming comments. Elayne Bennett, Founder and President of the Best Friends Foundation; David Dotson, Executive Director of the Dollywood Foundation; and Dr. Beverly Caffee Glenn, Executive Director of HFI, provided additional comments. The Best Friends Jazz Singers provided several musical selections in song and dance.

"With the Imagination Library program, Orr School is another step closer to realizing its mission of providing students an effective and well-rounded educational experience so that they may become independent thinkers and life long learners," Principal Edwards said.

Regarding the impact of the Imagination Library program, Phyllis Barts, Orr School Guidance Counselor, said, "We're very excited that our school was selected because this will enhance the reading and writing program that the teachers are already emphasizing with the children."

"Teaching and learning are critical in the abatement of violence," said Dr. Diane Powell, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services, D.C. Public Schools. "This effort is most important as an effective strategy to reach students by strengthening their skills. Research documents that when students are connected and engaged in meaningful learning experiences, violence in schools dramatically decreases."

"We are especially pleased to have the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program come to Washington," said Dr. Glenn. "Research tells us that early exposure to books helps build reading skills in young children as well as developing a love for reading."

During the event, the Primary Orr School Singers sang Parton's Coat of Many Colors, which was most fitting because, in this song, she demonstrates how one can keep dreaming despite the odds and dream big. With help from the Imagination Library, HFI believes that the children will be well positioned to turn their dreams into the promise of a bright future. ■

Executive Director's Corner

Reading is the most important skill that a child can obtain. Low literacy—a direct result of poor reading skill—affects a multitude of social and economic issues and increases the likelihood of youth violence. Individuals suffering from low literacy are limited in their employment opportunities and ultimately, the options open to them in life.

Many of us forget how important literacy is and how big a problem it is in our country. Reading is such a common part of our day that we frequently forget that there are some people who suffer because they can't read. Imagine trying to support your family if you can't even read a job application to apply for a job.

Studies by the U.S. Department of Justice show a correlation between illiteracy and violent behavior. Sociological studies of background factors of violent felons showed that their behavior is more strongly attributable to failure to learn to read than poverty, drugs, or broken homes. Their defective reading, language, and vocabulary results in depressed communication skills thereby sabotaging skills that they need to resolve conflicts. When these youth confront conflict and cannot communicate, their interaction is more likely to turn violent.

If we have any ambition to increase adult literacy and curb youth violence we must begin with our younger children. For this reason HFI supports programs that emphasize improving reading skills. We know that regardless of what goals teachers and parents have for children, they are more likely to succeed if they are good, motivated readers. Motivation to read is stimulated by family, school, and community involvement and the excitement of owning books. And this is why I think that the collaboration between HFI and the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention highlighted in this newsletter will surely help the students at Orr Elementary School and their siblings to become motivated readers!




"On behalf of OJP, we are pleased to support Dolly Parton's Imagination Library at Orr School," said Administrator J. Robert Flores. "This program lays a strong foundation for early literacy skills through the parent reading to their child and sharing the love of books. As children become good readers, academic success is more easily attainable as well as, a protective factor for reducing delinquent behavior. We applaud Dolly Parton for her outstanding Imagination Library program that helps our young people grow up to become contributing members of society."



"Reading is critical to a child's development and success later in life," said Regina B. Schofield, Assistant Attorney General at OJP. "In addition, when students share what is learned in school with their families, it creates a protective factor against juvenile delinquency. By making books available at home to Orr students and their families, this program reinforces the connections to their school, families and community."



What Is HamFish?

WHO, WHAT, WHEN, WHERE

Congress established the Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence (HFI) in 1997 as a national resource for the research and development of school violence prevention programs. Named in memory of the Honorable Hamilton Fish, a New York Congressman who had participated in several of the early discussions that framed the idea for the Institute, the non-profit, non-partisan Institute is funded by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) of the U.S. Department of Justice. The Institute is housed in the Graduate School of Education and Human Development (GSEHD) at The George Washington University (GWU).

PARTNERSHIPS

HFI functions as a national consortium organization whose members span the country and bring multi-disciplinary expertise to bear on the problem of violence in schools and their immediate communities. The Institute, together with its research partners, has established local community/school/university partnerships committed to long-term violence reduction and prevention. Key staff within the research teams are experts in trauma, adolescent violence, criminology, law enforcement, substance abuse, juvenile justice, gangs, education, behavior disorders, social skills development and prevention programs.

Each research partner diagnoses specific violence problems within the local schools and their communities and works to develop, implement and evaluate appropriate violence reduction strategies.

The Institute's research partners, over its ten-year history, have included:

- Eastern Kentucky University
- Florida State University
- Morehouse School of Medicine
- Shenandoah University

Continued on page 4

Research Digest

Kisiel, C., Blaustein, M., Spinazzola, J., Schmidt, C. Zucker, M., and van der Kolk. (2006). Evaluation of a theater-based youth violence prevention program for elementary school children. *Journal of School Violence*, 5 (2), 19-36.

This five-year study evaluated the impact of Urban Improv, a theater-based youth violence prevention program developed for inner-city youth. The study compared outcomes for 77 elementary school students in classrooms designated to receive the intervention with those of 63 students from matched control classrooms.

Article available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH; Email address: docdelivery@haworthpress.com; Web site: <http://www.HaworthPress.com>

Naber, P., May, D., Decker, S., Minor, K., and Wells, J. (2006). Are there gangs in schools? It depends upon whom you ask. *Journal of School Violence*, 5(2), 53-72.

In this paper, the authors offer a new method to define a gang and estimate the prevalence of gangs in schools in a three state region. One key finding was that how one defines a gang can greatly impact estimates of prevalence of gangs in schools.

Article available for a fee from The Haworth Document Delivery Service: 1-800-HAWORTH; Email address: docdelivery@haworthpress.com; Web site: <http://www.HaworthPress.com>

Bradshaw, C. P., Sawyer, A. L., O'Brennan, L. M. (in press). Bullying and peer victimization at school: perceptual differences between students and school staff. *School Psychology Review*, 36(1).

This article draws from a district-wide survey of student and staff perceptions of and experiences with bullying conducted in 75 elementary, 20 middle, and 14 high schools. Results indicate that staff on all school levels underestimates the number of students involved in frequent bullying. Yet, are more likely than students to intervene and less likely to make the bullying situation worse.

Ongoing Research

The Institute is sponsoring the following research activities this year. Stay tuned or join us at our annual conference for results.

- Convening focus groups to explore qualitative study of ninth grade, at-risk, Black males
- Conducting a survey to evaluate the "Youth Court Model"
- Conducting survey research on alternative schools for preschoolers.
- Conducting assessment inventory/needs assessment of local school board members
- Sponsoring the Trauma Center at Justice Resource Institute, Inc., Boston, Massachusetts to continue work to validate the use of theater to address school violence in middle and high schools located in the Boston area
- Sponsoring Shenandoah University's work to continue research on the use of film clips to teach conflict resolution skills and address bullying in middle and elementary schools in Shenandoah Valley
- Sponsoring Morehouse School of Medicine's efforts to organize and evaluate an Atlanta-based community partnership to address violence prevention

Continued from page 3

- Syracuse University
- The Trauma Center—Boston
- The Trauma Center at Justice Resource Institute
- The George Washington University
- University of Kansas
- University of Kentucky
- University of Oregon
- University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee

MISSION (Possible)

The Institute's mission is to provide information, research, and support to make schools safer for high achievement. The Institute's goal is to determine what works and what can be replicated to reduce violence in America's schools and their surrounding communities.

NEED TO KNOW MORE?

For information about services available, and eligibility for services from HFI, go to www.hamfish.org, or E-mail: info@hamfish.org, or write to HFI at 2121 K Street, N.W., Suite 200, Washington, DC 20037-1830, or phone HFI at (202) 496-2200.

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

The National Conference on Safe Schools and Communities 2007.

Visit www.hamfish.org for details.

What's Going on at HFI?

During the remainder of this year the Hamilton Fish Institute on School and Community Violence (HFI) staff will be convening, training, collaborating, and presenting on issues relevant to the abatement of youth violence around the country. The following is a listing of these activities.

MARCH 14-15, 2007 Dennis White will present at the Inter-American Summit on Conflict Resolution in Cleveland, Ohio.

APRIL 9-13, 2007 Beverly Glenn, Anane Olatunji, and Dennis White will present at the American Educational Research Association in Chicago, Illinois.

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER

The National Conference on Safe Schools and Communities 2007. Visit www.hamfish.org for details.

ONGOING Jeremy Jones and Lahaja Furaha will consult, on an ongoing basis, with the Criminal Justice Coordination Council.

ONGOING Beverly Glenn and Danny Rice will consult, on an ongoing basis, with the DC Safe Schools & Communities Coalition.

In addition to these activities HFI will partner with several national organizations focused on youth safety and law-related education to seek remedies to the problem of youth violence. The following is a listing of upcoming partnerships.

JULY 8-12, 2007 HFI will join with the U.S. Department of Justice and others in co-sponsoring The Family, Career and Community Leaders of America's National Leadership Meeting in Anaheim, CA.

SEPTEMBER 6-8, 2007 HFI will join the U.S. Department of Justice and the Louisiana Center for Law and Civic Education in co-sponsoring the American Bar Association, Division of Public Education's 25th National Law-Related Leadership Conference in New Orleans, LA.

DECEMBER 2-5, 2007 HFI will co-host the "Youth Court Training for Youth Court Directors" in New Orleans, LA.

Urban Improv Program Model Accepted for Inclusion in OJJDP's Model Program Guide

OJJDP's Model Program Guide (MPG) to promising youth violence prevention programs is touting a new program – **Urban Improv**. The improvisational, theater-based program which was evaluated for the past five years by the Trauma Center at Justice Resource Institute, was rated as PROMISING by OJJDP program reviewers. The Model Program Guide is an easy-to-use information resource tool that offers a database of scientifically proven programs to address a variety of youth problems. According to OJJDP officials, "programs in the model programs guide are reviewed and scored along several effectiveness dimensions, including the following:

- The conceptual framework of the program
- The program fidelity
- The evaluation design
- The empirical evidence demonstrat-

ing the prevention or reduction of problem behavior; the reduction of risk factors related to problem behavior; or the enhancement of protective factors related to problem behavior.

The effectiveness dimensions as well as the overall scores are used to classify programs into three categories (exemplary, effective, and promising) that are designed to provide the user with a summary knowledge base of the research supporting a particular program."

The Trauma Center at Justice Resource Institute evaluated the Urban Improv program using a quasi-experimental, matched control group design with 4th grade students from classrooms in 5 different inner-city schools within the same school district.

The profile of the Urban Improv program is available on the MPG web site at the following address: <http://www.dsgonline.com/mpg2.5/>

[TitleVMPGTableIndRecprt.asp?ID=703.](#)

Urban Improv was created in 1992 as a violence prevention program for at-risk children and initiated in collaboration with the Boston public schools and Roxbury Community College in 1993. It is a school-based, interactive and educational program that utilizes structured drama improvisation to teach decision making, conflict resolution, problem solving, cooperation, leadership, and values clarification skills and provides students the opportunity to deal creatively with major issues in their lives. Urban Improv currently serves more than 1,000 elementary, middle, and high school children from inner-city Boston public schools and throughout New England. ■



Download *Urban Improv* Curriculum for Free

The nine-week curriculum, *Urban Improv for the Classroom* is designed for 4th grade teachers, is compatible with the Massachusetts Department of Education curriculum and can be easily adapted to other state curricula standards. There are two versions of the curriculum: one serves as a supplement to the standard Urban Improv program for classrooms already participating in the actor-led Urban Improv program and one was designed as a stand-alone youth violence prevention program for classrooms and schools. Training and consultation is available

locally, regionally, or nationally to schools and school districts, via the Trauma Center at Justice Resource Institute. In addition, the Trauma Center is offering optional evaluation services to help schools determine the effectiveness of the curriculum with their students.

To download a free copy of this curriculum, visit www.traumacenter.org. For questions about training or evaluation services contact: Dr. Marla Zucker at (617) 232-1303, ext. 219 or mzucker@traumacenter.org.



THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT