

NYSP at Metro State

This is still a pretty new camp but we're good.
Metro State Project Administrator

These were among the first words I heard from Paula Jenson, Project Administrator of the Metro State program. In the '80s the NYSP site at a nearby college closed and the area had been without a site until when in the early '90s, Metro State University joined the local Police Activities League in sponsoring one. I had already known Jenson's site was among the nation's newest sites but I learned quickly that performing to a high standard was fixed in their minds.

Police Activities League

Paula Jenson's full-time job was Director, Police Activities League (PAL), an adjunct of police departments across the country. PAL is a "partnership between youth, police, and the community building positive relationships through recreational, athletic and educational programs." It is a neighborhood-oriented social service aimed in part to counter-act drug traffic, vandalism and gang action.¹ When Jenson became director, the Director of Recreation suggested to her that they get involved in NYSP, noting both social service and political advantages. Jenson approached Henry Berlin of Metro State, found him supportive; he saw such a camp would fit nicely into the University's urban mission. Jenson and Berlin submitted a plan to their separate Trustees and soon an application was made to NCAA, which acted favorably.

Jenson was a professional person, dynamic and enthusiastic, a Nordic woman of perhaps 35, a woman looking for new challenges. She said that all police officers had an educational responsibility, helping to raise the self sufficiency of youth, helping them to feel good with themselves. Jenson was delighted with the MSU tie. "We consider all kids to be 'college material.' I think parents are changing their views about the reality

¹ PAL activities here included Youth Center, DARE overnight camp, Spring Break Violence Free Camp, Fishing Program, and Race Against Drugs.

of higher education, seeing it necessary for their kids.” She noted that although the present 252 enrollees (as of Day 8) was a higher enrollment than in previous years, the ‘96 staff was smaller, with diminished support from the National Guard and from drug education resources--yet with an NCAA-fixed set of sports activities to provide. She added: “Even though NYSP requirements push us toward uniformity, there is plenty of opportunity for uniqueness, opportunity for us building a program to fit the needs of our community.”

Activity Director. As NYSP Activity Director, Betsy Wilhelms was directly in charge of daily activities of the Metro State program, serving her fourth year in this capacity. Like Jenson, Wilhelms was a full time employee of the Police Activities League, specializing in youth work. With a degree in psychology and child development, experience in fitness programs and adult corrections, Wilhelms had spent the last eight years in PAL. Tireless, self-confident, attractive, intelligent, she agreed with Jenson that hers especially was an education assignment.

Jenson and Wilhelms pretty much agreed that the work of the Police Activities League, including the local NYSP program, needed to emphasize social structure and personal discipline. As they saw it, almost all youngsters--but particularly those from disadvantaged and troubled homes--needed a clear set of rules to govern their life experiences, a consistency in adult response to the complex choices young people make, a low level of tolerance for repeated violations of the rules.² Structure and discipline were seen not so much as establishing social conformity as preconditions to opportunity and personal happiness.

Each morning at nine, after breakfast in the cafeteria, the counselors, coaches, and youngsters gathered at the edge of the close-by playing field. Betsy warmly would greet a number of kids, recognizing them by name, offering a “high five” here and there, occasionally asking for assistance on a small task. She was setting an example, as she explained at a staff meeting, for interpersonal behavior at the camp: “I liked the way you went back to pick up the litter.” and “Hugs, no; high fives, yes.” Boys and girls, for the most part, were in separate training sessions and elsewhere were to keep their hands off each other. Keeping kids

² An article in the local paper that week linked availability of youth camps to reduced homicides in Boston.

and counselors from hugging each other was a difficult task, but that was the way it was to be. Lines needed to be drawn, violations needed corrective response.

Those opening sessions would be closed with the NYSP pledge, Betsy first with over 200 voices following, belting out:

I WILL BE --	I WILL PUT FORTH --
A GOOD SPORT --	MY BEST EFFORT --
AT ALL TIMES. --	IN ALL COMPETITION --
I WILL CONDUCT MYSELF --	AND ALWAYS COMPETE FAIRLY. --
WITH DECENCY AND HONESTY.	
I WILL DO MY BEST --	I WILL WALK TALL, --
TO GET ALONG WITH OTHERS.	TALK TALL, --
I WILL HAVE PRIDE --	STAND TALL.
IN MYSELF. --	

Their specialist for drug/alcohol and discipline. The discipline/structure orientation was developed also by Rex Austin, third in command at the Metro State camp. Austin grew up in a military family, played varsity football at Orangeburg State College, spent eight years in the Army and, since 1990, was an officer in the local police force. His current PAL assignment was with gang resistance education. Earlier this summer, for 465 kids, some of them now at NYSP, Austin ran a one week PAL sports camp, drawing assistance heavily from police officers with backgrounds in sports.

Austin reminded me that at camp he was known (affectionately, I would say) as "the Hammer." He had a gym-tuned physique, a deep optimism, and an aggressive interest in all that was happening. And he was often the happening, such as when leading an after-lunch in-cafeteria gathering in "Cadence Count." He approached troublemakers with an authoritative demeanor. To him, adaptation of military and police authority to NYSP provided structure and security for the youth, combating a widely-recognized chaos and insecurity in their lives.

Of these NYSP kids he said, "I know many of them from the streets. Some are surrounded by Bloods (a gang). We have to be a better alternative." He spoke of Daniel, a twelve-year-old in Mario's group: "He has a computer at the precinct. He could be on the other side but now his schoolwork is important. He knows how to get other kids involved. Other kids say, 'Cops are bad'

but Daniel says, ‘Come on up to the precinct and find out for yourself.’”

Campus and Community

When I asked Daniel what impressed him about the campus, he said, "The trees." There are lots of wooded areas outside this city but a stand of high trees darkly shading noontime walkways so near the urban center was a worthy observation. Perhaps not a deep insight into the meaning of higher education but perhaps recognition of an ambiance associated with privilege. Other NYSP participants acknowledged that this campus was a good place to be. The walkways are short, running between the PE Building,³ Education Building, practice field, Student Union, and bus loading area. A compact mini-campus, a safe haven, the groups of kids could quickly walk from one activity to another.

Daniel was African American, about twelve, in the modal group at this camp for age and race. White kids filled a third of the roster, with a smattering of Asians and Latinos, one or two showed Native American lineage. Betsy Wilhelms indicated that no effort had been increase numbers of any particular age, race, or gender. "The areas of our heaviest recruiting, like one called Parole Parkway, are areas of racial diversity but we go to families in the deepest poverty and where we know the kids need help." Cultural clashes seemed not prominent in this metropolis this year. There was talk of church burning, gang issues, gun issues. Again Betsy Wilhelms:

We had a youth forum recently, 300 kids at an old-style theater, discussing such issues, issues the kids are aware of and have beliefs about. If you had put 35 year old in there, they would have had the same mix of ideas, although perhaps less willing to express them. One little girl stood up and said, "Why is it that they can call each other *nigger* but it's not okay for us?"

Is a campus the best place to gather these kids for five summer weeks? Are we not putting them unnecessarily at risk

³ Overlooking the indoor pool, the NYSP office occupied a back-corner room in the PE Building. Lacking running water, the nurse had to send kids to the rest rooms to wash the wounds. The office was air conditioned, as were the cafeteria, bowling alley and Education rooms. The dance and gym spaces were muggy.

exposing them to people intolerant of their lifestyles? The Congress, the colleges and the kids indicate that it makes sense, not just because the facilities are there but because a campus experience should be a part of growing up for all kids. That argument, eloquently put by community activist Jacob Croner, is presented in the section closing this chapter.

Campus partners. As to its 'round-the-year program, MSU was very much a post World War II urban university. In an extensive summer program for degree candidates and others, 40% of the courses were being taught after 4 p.m. Restriction on education funding around the state had actually increased the number of education programs at MSU, many of them in non-traditional areas such as computerized marketing and English for Southeast Asian immigrants. Campus and community were caught up in the national dilemma of the need for extended social services and the huge cost of providing them.

According to Henry Berlin, Assistant to the President, in spite of its desirability, it was difficult to work NYSP in during the first couple of years. "Sports spaces were being used. The traditional uses had to be re-examined to fit it in. President Abbott was firm in saying that NYSP should have a high priority in the allocation of space. At first there seemed to be real competition with the summer camps the coaches were running--which we consider legitimate campus functions, an important recruiting tool for them. Sports camps are necessary. But the President made it clear to Facilities Coordinator Hugh Ordonia that NYSP had equal priority, and space became a non-problem."

Following a history of youth sports camps on campus, the NYSP youth were not a presence unexpected by the regular faculty and staff. Perhaps the most noticeable intrusion was NYSP's complete take-over of the Student Union cafeteria between 8:00 and 9:00 for breakfast and between 1:00 and 2:00 for lunch. The occasional misdemeanor, e.g., popping decorative balloons or setting off a fire alarm, irritated some. To my question of what it really cost the university, Henry Berlin answered:

It is hard to say what it costs us in in-kind support. Perhaps \$20,000. Part of my salary would have to be included. We probably needed to redo the gym floor a year ahead of schedule. Not a huge outlay. It is PAL which really makes substantial contributions, much of it solicited. They get the

money needed to run the program. I think it is amazing what is accomplished for such a small amount of money. The federal support is only \$47,000. Betsy and the staff carry a large responsibility and work "on the cheap." PAL makes the staffing contributions. Meal expenses are held down. We have been very fortunate with our contract for food services; they manage to take the NYSP group in stride. Of course, food provided by USDA helps keep the costs down.

Elizabeth Cuong was Fiscal Officer, the university person in charge of technical aspects of NYSP. She spoke of early uncertainties as to how to handle the camp, with some planners preferring to run it through the Foundation (where there was limited experience with federal funding) but finally setting it up as a special instructional program. Some difficulty remained in meshing last-minute and casual hiring practices of the NYSP program with the University's accounting system.

Cuong noted that organizational arrangements for NYSP came at a very busy time with competition from summer school. Arrangements for meals perhaps were the most hectic, with complex contracts with USDA, a subcontract with the State Department of Public Instruction, and special arrangements with Metro Restaurant Association. Further complications arose with donated services from staff and last minute paperwork with enrollees. Staff members paid by the University were paid directly to the individuals.

Cuong expressed regret that the University had not made one particular contribution: "As members of an education institution, people here are aware of shortcomings in instruction, counseling, and human service support for the NYSP kids. University personnel have many of the needed skills but few have responded to our calls for volunteers and the University is unable to pay for it."

All in all, this odd couple, MSU and PAL seemed to be working together quite well. One central administrator commented that the NYSP was more "quirky" an operation than others the University gets into, such as the mathematics department extension work and other human services collaborations. From University officialdom, working with PAL had not been problematic and MSU could not have run the program without the heavy contribution of PAL.

Sports Skills and Enhancements

The deep theme of this camp is structured experience for each participant and the strategy is participation. That means that they do not worry as much about skill development among the interested as getting everyone involved in everything. Still, NYSP programs nationally are organized around *instruction* in sports skills, typically three out of four hours per day devoted to athletic coaching and teamplay. The remaining hour is spent in some educational activity, with health education and educational planning dominating. At MSU, the youth are divided into six groups by age and gender, about 40 to a group, with absentees dropping daily participation to under 35. At least three adults are assigned to a session, the coach and the counselor and an aide. For some sessions, the group is divided into sub-groups. As much as anything, the adults try to keep each kid involved and on task.

NYSP Guidelines required a minimum of three sports activities for all participants. Swimming, at least two field sports and at least two gym sports were almost universal. Activity directors were encouraged to help develop lifelong sports experiences, so bowling, tennis, golf, dance, and martial arts were to be found in some programs. Swimming was the favorite at MSU and the pool was used all four hours a day, sometimes with two groups at a time. Extra swimming time on Friday was a reward for good attendance and exemplary behavior. During the first week I was at MSU (the program's second week), the twelve-year-old boys, Group 4, had this schedule:

Hour	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9	Soccer	Dance	Soccer	Swimming	Drug Educ
10	Basketball	Volleyball	Softball	Education	Football
11	Nutrition	Swimming	Careers	Dance	Martial Arts
12	Swimming	Soccer	Swimming	Martial Arts	Basketball

In other weeks, sessions in tennis, bowling, environmental conservation and anti-violence education were included. At a special session of his dance class, Jimmie Guyot related artistic and folk dancing to cultural diversity, drawing certain connections to team sports and physical aggression. The education program will be discussed further after a concentrated look at one of the participant groups.

Group 4. Activities varied considerably by age and gender as well as by coach, with Vic Coffyn's tennis sessions being fundamentally skill development and Monique Brown's bowling sessions being fundamentally play. In some sessions, the main activity was getting the participants to pay attention to the instruction with coaches and counselors berating kids for disruption and diversion. The twelve-year-old boys at MSU quickly gained a reputation as disruptive and the staff worked hard at imposing a structured environment. This Group 4 will be used in the following pages to illustrate the NYSP program as well as the commitment of the staff to make the NYSP experience the reward of living in a rule-oriented community.

The counselor and thus the constant companion of Group 4 was Mario Carvajal. Of Mexican heritage, Mario was raised in Metropolis, graduated with a MSU bachelor's degree with a major in broadcast media. He aspired to work at a radio station but found jobs hard to come by. As for working at NYSP, Mario said,

I have two aims, to be happy and to make a difference. I can do both here. I would like to be a teacher someday or work in youth programs. I am trying to be a role model although I can't say I had one as a youth. I had a very good home, parents were solid.

I don't know why they gave me Group 4. It's my rookie year. Maybe it's a challenge, putting me to the test. Group 4 is a good group of kids. They have a reputation they don't deserve. They certainly don't get me down. I am just getting to know them, know the problems they have at home, their attitudes, their maturity. Camp provides structure, something concrete, not all their homes have it. Here they get sports, education, but mainly they get security, something they can depend on. If you don't have structure in life, consistency, you drift, you wander. They don't show that they feel these things but down low, they appreciate it.

After breakfast on the ninth day of the summer program, Mario whistled his group together and walked them across the parkway. To the delight of classmates, Kennedy slipped out of train to pop balloons on lampposts marking New Student Orientation Day. Mario called him back in line and drilled him amiably about responsibility until they reached the playing field. There the group sat on the curb to await the morning's

announcements. Mario worked a bit on their Spanish. "Buenos Dias." "Uno, duo, tres, quatro." "Gracias." "Muy bueno." The boys repeated the words with vigor. Betsy Wilhelms arrived and, after a few minutes of greetings and chatting, more waiting for most, spoke about the heat of the day, the placement of water jugs, and other matters, then led them in the NYSP pledge. Group 4 boys happily joined the clamor.

Softball. It is 9 a.m. and 28 Group 4 boys have to move but a few steps into the playing field to play softball. The equipment arrives a few minutes late, is laid out, two bats, seven gloves, a ball, pylons for bases. Mario's assistant, Mark Romano, divides the kids into two groups, more or less the big kids against the little ones. The smaller ones take the field and Mark pitches. Waite catches. Monique, the softball/basketball coach hired just last week, now the umpire, lets Mark do the organizing. Peter Williams,⁴ an adult volunteer, gets the bigger boys to line up in batting order. Somehow there is no argument.

Mark stands close, makes an arching soft pitch. Deron pops the first pitch to second and Arkie catches it on his hip. Selmer singles to left. The next batter, David, and those who follow for a while, get on base on errors. Perhaps exasperated by the porous defense, Mark snags the next ball hit and runs to first to make the second out. And so it goes, lots of running, lots of yelling, lots of fun. I saw no coaching, no explanation of strategy or rules, except once an encouragement to choke up on the bat and again when the team at field had three second basemen. Eddie somehow has a blister on his thumb, is sent to Angela Weatherby, the nurse, who applies a Band-Aid.

Martial Arts. At 10 AM, Group 4 moves into the gym. Then it takes 15 minutes more for the boys to get into places. They seem constitutionally unable to form ranks, to have anything of the perspective that good things can happen if they follow the organizational plan of the teacher. Makir Hussein selects them

⁴ Williams was an African American father of grown kids, volunteered as an NYSP aide because, he said, he had not had the chance to provide this kind of experience for his own children. Recently finishing his BA in social science, working at Americorps, he asked them to assign him to NYSP for the five weeks, and they did. As an NYSP bus monitor, he took public transportation early and late to accompany some 40 kids on their daily round trips.

individually and places them in a spot in matrix five by five. Mario occupies the back row, right corner spot, Mark creates a spot behind the group, Peter lingers at the door.

This is the wrestling room, about 30 x 40, high ceiling, warm. Sponge pads cover the floor. Its cement walls and severe box shape and use designation give it a stark look, maybe even a combative feeling.

The formation is fluid, swirling, kids melting to the floor pads, pursuing minor variations of fake fighting (During the morning pledge, the kids had vigorously responded in cadence form, as led, "I WILL NOT" "FAKE FIGHT." "I WILL NOT" "FAKE FIGHT.") At any one time, maybe half have drifted off spot. With half the group in place, Hussein had brought them to attention to try to keep them in ranks but that quickly wore off. Hussein offers a maxim: "If you can keep quiet, you can do anything." A couple of boys exceed the allowable dissension. They are sentenced to the hall, soon to be hauled off to the office by Mark.

Now with all approximately organized, Hussein brings them to attention again, and quickly into the side spraddle hop. Everyone responds in vigor, shouting out the count for every second move. The spirit of excess is not lost.

Now, in the fourth of ten sessions, a small amount of background to authenticate the martial arts. The boys seem not to need it, but listen up. I am unable to comprehend quite a bit of what Hussein has to say. He delivers it something as would my stereotype of a revivalist preacher: "For this is the Way (pause) Life is Lived. The Body's the Line between (pause) the Heart and the Way. (pause) Do you Copy?" I have trouble believing that the youngsters are copying what I cannot--but they sound out in unison, as I am moved to myself, "Yes!"

Focusing it is, but not spell-binding. A voice instantaneously asks, "Mr. Hussein, can we get a drink?" This is a tough choice for Hussein because he wants total concentration on the task at hand, has finally got to Square One, but, with room temperature not far from 100, faces the possibility that he will turn down a request for water just prior to a twelve-year-old passing out. This time he holds out, but he will not at the next plea, 20 minutes from now. A bit more philosophy in his mixture of army dialect, revival, and street language: "Knowledge . . . love

. . . grounded support . . . balance . . . personality . . . power . . . knowledge." Then, "Am I right?" "RIGHT!" "Are you ready to move on?" "YES!"

He takes them through five or six moves. Left fist forward. Right foot back. Left knee bent. One move at a time, repeated twenty times, describing it at a shout, then counting off the repetitions. His movements are elegant, disciplined, visually arresting. The boys keep an eye on him, feel their bodies making some such move, then carry it out extravagantly, outside the balanced rim of demonstrated action. And few lose sight of interesting challenges to right or left.

"Okay, this is the alphabet. Each of these moves is a letter. What do you get if you put them all together? You get words. These are the moves that make up all the martial arts: Korean, Japanese, Chinese. Basically, they are all the same." He puts Sylvester into a position, fist forward, elbows out, leg back. "Balance . . . ready . . . hard to move him . . . heavy like a mountain." Again and again, the group follows Hussein, moving forward and back, intent, wanting it as an individual, not yet showing any group adherence.

"Mr. Hussein, can we have a drink?" Although several of the boys cry out, "No," Makir Hussein cannot refuse again. First he urges: "Forget about time. Make your own conditions. Forget about water breaks." But he allows them to disband and the last ten minutes of the class is lost.

Dance class. It is 11 am (on the previous Thursday). We are in the dance room, a hardwood floor, cement block room, mirrored on one wall, dance rails on three sides. Jimmie Guyot, the instructor, is here with his lithe Amerasian aide, Kuo, impatiently awaiting the arrival of Group 4. Guyot wears dashiki and cap, his feet bare. Kuo is warming up; he tries a few modern dance moves, stretches. In come four boys, one shouting his loathing for dance. Now we have 16, shoes left outside. Guyot yells at someone, "Don't do that in my class." "Do what?"

"We should be in groups of four." Gradually more subdued, they are reduced to sitting positions, a couple still wrestling. Now we have 20. "There should be four on that side, four on this side (of the aisle). This formation is the preparation for performance. I have shown it to you four times. You should

have it." More delay. Finally Waite, the smallest boy, tries to straighten them out. The bigger boys acquiesce slowly.

Ignoring Waite: "Every one look at my face. Your rows and lines need to be adjusted to be straight. Fix it!" Many are talking but now are spaced four and four, four and four, and a final four. "Row 1, stand up. Row 1, space fingertips. You in the back, stop talking. Sit up. Thank you." Pause. "Look at the clock: seventeen minutes!"

Two boys start to stray away. Mark scoots them back but Guyot waives him off. "It is not your counselors who do it--you do it!" Guyot glares at them, shakes his head in dismay. "Stay in line, man."

"Stand up. Face the front. Face the front. Face the front." Each breath a pause, waiting. "Second row, you know what to do, GO." Most raise their arms to fingertip distances. The full-wall mirror is fascinating many of the them. They keep watching their moves, make new moves to watch. One rolls a penny, watches others who move to stop it. "Last row, let's make it three on a side. Chris, where's your spot? "I'm going to spit out my gum."

"Now we have it. This is *performance formation*. Stand like you are, in formation. First position parallel. *This is what I want*. Do you know what this is? Look around. We have covered this already. Hands to your side, shoulders relaxed. Freeze!"

With Kuo modeling the simplest exercise, Guyot bids them to follow, talking them through it. Most of the kids are working hard at it but even the simple routine, at this moment, is too difficult to follow, and they drift into inattentiveness.

"We have 29 minutes to make it go. You are in control. I can't make you do it."

Guyot is visibly exasperated with the unwillingness to submit to his approach. His teaching aspires to discipline but it also requires it. The students concentrate on their moves in the mirror. They admire Kuo's moves. They won't, perhaps they cannot, submit to Guyot's notion of structure.

"Sit. Follow Kuo. Straight spine, relax the shoulders. Keep quiet." More waiting. "Straight spine, chest up, deep breath,

out your mouth. Legs out front, reach for your ankles. Deep breath, feet together. Breathe in through your nose, out through your mouth. Feet together." Some are talking. A few boys still frown at Guyot, resisting. Some just ignore the instruction. They continue this way another twenty minutes with increasingly difficult, silky smooth sequences by Kuo, with bold throwing of body parts, yet a small coherence developing among the two thirds who are trying.

After class, Guyot says to me, "This is the worst group but they were coming along by the end. One thing that will change them is to see another group. When they see how much further along others are, they'll get to work." "Yes, I am pretty patient. It doesn't do any good to pull them out for bad behavior. It takes a while, some a lot longer, but they will do it."

Nutrition. Seeing that much resistance to Dance, I thought the Nutrition Education session might be a disaster but it wasn't. Group 4 joined another group in the main gym for an activity organized by the State University's Extension Division. "Eat right! Get in shape! Be winners!" The organizer had a small list of nutrition facts to establish, she repeatedly called the questions, "How many glasses of water a day?" and, with aides exposing hints on hula-hooped posters, the kids shouted out the answers, "EIGHT!" Then, Olympic video clips with additional nutrition slogans. Next, a relay race with each kid issued a paper plate inscribed with a food name. They had to run across the gym, deposit the plate in the right bag, "healthy food" or "unhealthy food," and race back to the next runner. Not reluctant here, a Group 4 team won the race.

Swimming. At 12:06 most of the boys have donned the swim trunks provided, showered and gathered at pool end. Kate O'Brien, the coach, divides the group asking "Who's deep water and who's shallow? Shallow guys over here at the corner; deep guys stay where you are." Two boys sit at the side serving 5 minutes for breach of discipline. The shallow guys are told to "take 15 bobs and 1 exhale under water." Some jump in, most ease in slowly. Some bobbing follows but most just stand or play in the water.

The deep boys are given push boards and told to kick to the other end of the pool. They are watched by Bonnie Maye, the

life guard. Kate goes back to the dozen or so non-swimmers for push-boarding 20 feet. Their activity degenerates into pool play, their noise overwhelming her admonishments. She does not appeal to Mark or Peter to get them quiet but tells Mario to tell them that she only will coach them if they want it. It is not clear what he does but there is no show of wanting it. The kids splash, use pylons for buckets.

Gary's group of oldest boys arrives and crowds into the pool, further impeding instruction. A dozen or so of Gary's boys are immediately caught up in a game of keep away against Gary, his assistant Wilf, and a sixteen-year-old. The boys try to wrest away the ball with little success. On one occasion, a fourteen-year-old does intercept a pass and Wilf, 100 pounds heavier, pulls him under to pop loose the ball. No one appears troubled by the rough play. Those interested in swimming have space to do so. No diving is allowed but jumping into the water is.

Mario maintains his characteristic good humor, chats with individuals, encourages them to work at their skills. Getting splashed, he hears: "Mario, I meant no disrespect;" answers, "I know, that's cool."

At 12:45, "Out of the pool." Pool clearing is slow but dressing is fast. Towels and wet suits are tossed into the canvas cart. Then over 15 minutes of waiting, sparring, yelling. "Guys away from the wall!" Some move. By 1:10 they file out to cross the Parkway to the cafeteria for lunch.

Hamburgers, grapes, and milk, no seconds. Served cafeteria style, they ate with 200 others, sitting in booths or around tables, pretty posh. The noise level is lower than in most school lunch rooms. The staff is there in full. No food fights. Rex Austin, "the Hammer," uses a bull horn to make some announcements, then leads Group 5 in cadence: "When I say group, you say five. What's your group?" "NUMBER FIVE," with in-chorus variations continuing several minutes. Some are asked to clean tables; they do. Austin leads the trek to the bus loading.

Education. For a five week summer, NYSP Guidelines call for a minimum of 15 hours of Education sessions for each kid, including 7.5 for drug and alcohol prevention, 3 hours for personal health, and 3 hours on higher education. The MSU program exceeded that considerably, scheduling one hour a day, 25 hours

in all, for each kid. Every Monday morning included an hour of nutrition education, an "enhancement." Enhancements were considered important by NYSP visiting Evaluators. This year's Evaluator, Regis Bartholomew, had also encouraged the Metro State staff to organize more of a "linked" program, drawing the sports and education activities closer together with fewer unconnected individual presentations (such as this year's presentation on conservation in the local river basin), and to prep and debrief kids before and after sessions. The nutrition program was highly linked, a good enhancement--but with attendance a problem, Bartholomew encouraged Activity Director Wilhelms to convert some education sessions into sports sessions.

Some of the education activities were excellent. Four exceptional hours were provided by Dr. Rosethal, emergency room surgeon from a nearby hospital. She brought vivid photos of youth with gunshot wounds, describing gruffly how each occurred. Her performance was kid-riveting; her message simple. "Guns don't protect anyone."

The NYSP Education Director at MSU was Stefi Dunn who had been the Education assistant last year. Dunn held a Masters Degree in Elementary Education and taught primary at a suburban school from which a number of the participants came. At the end of the second week she still needed two more speakers (eight already signed up) to round out the alcohol and drug prevention sessions. She told me:

I enjoy working here. I am proud of the program. It has both structure and flexibility. I hope to continue for a few years. It will go better when I have a little more experience. Even though I get good help from Betsy and Rex, I do not know the resources of the community well enough. I would like to tie drug and alcohol prevention to our GREAT program (violence and gang reduction). What I really would appreciate is better information about possible education activities, perhaps an NYSP Education Notebook. And I would like to work closer with other Education Directors.

Issues

This fieldwork study was part of an evaluation of the National Youth Sports Program, not just the program at Metro State. The observations were made with major attention to issues

having implication for national administration of the program and the discussion of issues to follow bears that same concern. The best summary came from Project Administrator Jenson: "NCAA is doing about as good a job as it is possible to do. We found the Guidelines wonderful, really helpful."

The NYSP kids. The Guidelines are clear, this is a program for poverty kids, to be at least 90% on each project roster. The burden of identifying economically disadvantaged kids falls to the local community action agency which may designate poverty neighborhoods, making kids residing there eligible. Such was the procedure at Metro State. The project staff, PAL and the University made no effort to verify their eligibility. Community Liaison Officer Bret Otieno organized recruitment in those neighborhoods and schools and got in touch with campers of previous years.⁵ It seems that with a catchment area population of more than a million, there should have been a waiting list of eligible kids. But the '96 roster was the fullest in four years and no-one was aware of a block of youngsters missed. Recruitment appeared not to be a critical issue.

Nothing occurred to suggest that the wrong kids were coming to campus. A few were sent home. Natalie, here for the second day, in trouble for amorous advances, argued heatedly with disciplinarians Lassiter and Austin. Her 12-year-old face, cosmetics only partially washed away, was strained; her voice shrill. Unheeding even for a moment, protesting. Austin stepped away, "Now that's a girl with an attitude." Her mother agreed not to send her again.

Most kids were "into the system," even Kennedy. When I asked him what he would be doing were he not in camp this week, Kennedy said he would be at Disneyland. To the same question, Waite answered, "Roller-blades, watching the Olympics, swimming." I asked him how far he lived from the pool. "Oh, we have a pool. So do the people next door." I paused, reflecting on the meaning of poverty. These two boys and their mates were dressed in universal attire for the playground: baggy T-shirts, caps, marquee shoes. They talked articulately about how much they were learning, even in Nutrition, how much they liked the experience. They looked much like the kids I talk to in the poorest

⁵ Of this year's roster, a third were returnees.

schools of Chicago. Nothing I saw really marked them as poor.⁶ For kids that wear Nikes, is it a mistake for taxpayers to create country-club-like camps?

It was clear to me that, in a different way they were poor, poor in spirit. Not that many lacked energy, wit, group-feeling, competitiveness, friendliness--but few of them understood the personal discipline needed to earn their way to privilege, how to be successful students, how to be successful athletes. In dance, for example, a motivation was there to be tapped but most had not learned to submit to the focus, the practice, the conformity needed to raise performance to a high standard. And this was what I saw the MSU camp largely about. Not about sharing the privileges of society but about orienting to the pursuit of life's privileges.

Absenteeism was felt to be a problem. The average daily absenteeism ran at twenty percent. The staff made a point of urging kids to be back tomorrow, to win special swimming on Friday. Running off, truancy, seemed not a problem. The children were watched pretty closely but maybe on the fourth try it would have been easy to slip away, but few tried. Once there, they seemed to have no better place to be, no better people to be with. The alternative draw seemed to be other organized activities, special events, other camps. Kids would be gone a week, then back again. For programs without a waiting list, it was not apparent that there was anything better the local staff or national office could do to cut losses.

The staff. Henry Berlin and Rex Austin both commented on the difficulty of getting good staff members at minimum wage for five weeks. And both men expressed an enthusiasm for how well MSU was doing. Certainly it was a dedicated team and in some ways highly competent. Austin said, "Vic and Stretch are outstanding coaches, they really work on skills. But this camp is for full participation more than for maximum preparation. It has to be enjoyable." And, for all its emphasis on rules, the staff made it so.

⁶ Early on I asked myself, "Can anyone who bowls well be eligible for this camp?" That criterion faded when I found no-one--except the coach, Monique--who could keep the ball out of the gutter.

The main source of staffing was the Police Activities League drawing from its own payroll. The University kept its contributions in-kind, assigning NYSP duties to a few administrators. Although this was a relatively new site, there were opportunities to comment on the NYSP legend about "long time staffs do it best." The first year or two at an NYSP assignment were difficult challenges but some who had been there three or four were already defining the camp more as what it is than what it could be.

With regard to staffing Group 4, Activity Director Wilhelms said,

This group needed three counselors. I wanted Mario because he is bilingual--important with some families--and he is genuine. Not much beyond a teen-ager himself, he was a nice match. Susan's previous experience was better but she wanted to work with the older boys. Mario was really excited about the camp. He was ready to learn. Peter, with VISTA, brought age and experience--a calm, quiet fellow--I thought that might be useful. And Mark, fulfilling his community service requirement at Holy Name, very mature, on the ball.

Wilhelms was also looking for staff members who had ideas about how to make things better. She appreciated the experience that next year's staff could bring from this year. But she knew she could improve the camp with some new hires. One thing you get with long-time staffers is routine. They know the rules. And that appeals to the visiting evaluators.⁷ The irregularities in developing a new idea seems not nearly as attractive to them. Better to follow last year's plan again. Sometimes that is the best thing to do, sometimes it is not.

I was impressed with the mature perspective of Susan Wassiman, Group 6 counselor. Far off the field, watching her boys play football, she told me:

It's good for me to take a long look at the guys out there. They look different up close. I'm looking for those not really participating. Sports aren't just for the athletic. We need to see buddies helping each other.

⁷ MSU-NYSP staffers prepared extensively this summer for the annual visit of the Evaluator, later expressed disappointment at having had little opportunity to show him activities, get his reactions.

Later I saw her feeding her reflections back to her 14-15 year-olds. After some vigorous competition, they were sprawled across the gym floor. Ingeniously, quietly, she drew them into discussion, raising questions of life's choices, things like protecting your property, pregnancy, confidences, unemployment. She used her weekly calls to each parent to add a generalized home view to gym corner conversations.

I saw little use by this NYSP staff of having participants assist in the operation of the program. I concluded that Paula Jenson and her team wanted to keep lines of authority clear, the structure, the distinction between being a staff member and a participant, but Betsy Williams said there was much more assistance than I had seen. We agreed on the importance of getting the youngsters to share ownership of the program.

Leadership. At MSU, the auxiliary staff (senior staff under the Project Administrator) knew what to do. They had thought it out, had set their priorities, knew the routine, budgeted their time carefully and made their presence known to the kids. They ran the office well, kept in touch with supporting institutions, but kept their minds mostly on quality of the experience for the youngsters.

What they did not do quite so well at Metro State was supervising and upgrading their staff. I saw it rare for an auxiliary member to examine the work of a coach, and some needed help, such as in deciding how much time should be devoted to skill instruction or how to cut down on "hurry up and wait" time. It did not appear that the auxiliary staff was coaching the counselors and aides, and maybe they did not need it, but perhaps they could have worked some on cutting down on idle time. Staff relations were excellent but MSU seemed to me like a place without a sense of staff development. As far as I could see, the leaders did not create an expectation of staff learning.

Of course they did learn. Each day was filled with episodes which made them better able to react to future problems. There was little time to get all this organized. From bus arrival to bus departure, the tempo was *allegro*. But staff development is important even in the busiest of places, even with those most meagerly paid. The source of a staff development program,

especially for short term staffs such as in these projects, needs to be the central office. The expectation and the habits of this management responsibility need to originate in Overland Park.

What kids need. Kids need lots of things. Different kids need different things. No one program can address all those needs nor come to know well enough how to help individually many of the youngsters. But they can choose among several options as the local project theme. Kids need challenging and rewarding experiences and MSU-NYSP provided them.

The Guidelines make it clear which kids are to be served and which kind of activities are to be provided. The emphasis is on sports skill instruction but lots of leeway is left to local directors and individual coaches and counselors. And, because all of us parents and teachers and friends are more effective when our coaching is driven by our own beliefs rather than by institutional themes, a large measure of personal leeway is wise. Still, it is important there be response to that leeway and the presence of institutional themes.

The main theme at MSU was provision of life-shaping structure and discipline made possible by sports participation. It was important that staff behavior be consistent and a bit distant. Wilhelms said to them, "No hugging, no kissing, a high five will do." Estella Lassiter, discipline aide on assignment from the National Guard, was as tough as any assistant principal but said, "Skittles (candied fruit chews) can always resolve an attitude problem." Keep the boundaries between adults and kids. Little sharing of adult responsibility, much development of youth responsibility. When four girls were thought to have set off the fire alarm in the cafeteria, all five buses were delayed a half hour so that investigations could proceed. It was not a trade-off, it was an opportunity to display the workings of authority to all the youngsters. Other camps are known to be more an extension of family experience, a time for treasured experience. Here the intent was much more on the purposes of the Police Activity League, as I saw them, to acquaint youngsters with the proper codes for living, to help them purchase opportunities for a good life in the more distant future.

For individuals, there are many roads to the good life but for a people, there is only one and that is education. Sports, health, money, family, love, all are important but the one youth

programs can do most about is education. For all of us, education is as natural as eating and sleeping, to generally know the world at our fingertips, but the formal education, the kind that regularly commands the respect and investment of others, is more elusive. It is recognized by diplomas and titles and comes to most only by sacrifice and discipline. The capstone of this kind of educational experience is found on a campus. Attending an NYSP camp is not really a start on that road but it makes the road less strange, less beyond imagination.

I talked with Jacob Croner, executive director of the Northeast Neighborhood Coalition, the largest African American collective in the city and the largest poverty center. The coalition helped make that neighborhood a stable population area, attractive with affordable housing. When the Bloods and the Crypts “came creeping in,” the staff (a mix including “Asians and Hispanics and skin-heads”) undertook a gang containment program, emphasizing counseling and crowd management force, working with the police. Reflecting on the philosophy of the NYSP program, Croner told me:

I wonder about today's youth. In our time, (noting my age), we were afraid to violate the code. Now I know of an instance where a 6-year-old child challenged a 40 year old adult male. I don't know what has gone wrong. Not all youth are problematic. Large numbers are home before dark, do their homework, respect others, are part of an extended family. I call them "average youngsters." They can be successful.

I don't know where things went wrong. I don't know if collectively we can figure it out. They understood being partners in education, how to create environments outside your own. I am not talking about the *creme de l'creme*, not about those headed to the penitentiary, but the others, the ones in the middle, the kid who has a GPA only at 2.7. No one talks to him about college. A lot more needs to be done to counsel them.

You see, for African American youth there is no option other than college. In our schools we need curricula that assume they will go to college, but we have gotten away from that concept of preparation. We have to put it back in place.

That is why the concept of youth camps on campus is excellent. Many youngsters have no idea of what a campus is like. It's like when one kid went to Atlanta for the first time

and saw Black people with suits and attaché cases. They change aspirations. Our job is to see that the opportunity remains.

Croner went on to talk about the tenor of the NYSP project at Metro State:

I would say something about the role of structure, of discipline, in the make-up of the youth camp, making it something of a "boot camp." One way or another, for a kid to succeed there has to be some form of social structure. Kids don't know the system, they need to be taught. Preparation for life responsibilities requires discipline. Some treat youth by becoming youth themselves. I speak to them as an adult, not as one of them. They find my patterns do not vary. Youth are observant, sharp, they see stuff. They need models, action and talk not only from individual adults but from whole schools and neighborhoods.

Taking his 30 year community appeal to parents and the neighborhood, Croner extended it to NYSP sponsors and administrators:

What we spend on NYSP is money well spent. But there is a piece missing. They come to NYSP for five weeks and go home to the neighborhood. How should their experience be reinforced? Everyone needs to work to support their attitudes. They need help putting down negative environments from which they come. What can be done to provide follow-up? What can communities do to recognize the NYSP experiences? How can we help them pick it up when the five weeks are over?

Jacob Croner brought my thinking back to Paula Jenson's early summary: "Old and new, for the '96 kids, NYSP was very good." But, sticking with Croner, for these very kids, for essentially no more money, what more could be done?"