

## Boys-N-Girls Club Project (Fall 2005-Spring 2006)

This past summer I was assigned as a PEGASUS Mentor to the Phea Boys-n-Girls Club. My initial visits to the Phea Club were to participate in activities for the children and to help organize a summer program. To my dismay, I witnessed some disturbing interactions between children and much undisciplined behavior. The condition of the facility was also very rundown and unkept. However, in spite of this, I continued to visit the club, played games with the children, and involved myself in getting to know them.

The Phea Club was nothing like the other clubs I had visited. In the other clubs the atmosphere seemed more positive and they were fixed up and clean. I wondered if this could be a contributing factor to the behavior of the children at this particular club. I expressed my concerns to some of the PEGASUS Mentors also assigned to this club, and we all agreed that we would look into what we could do to encourage positive change.

I interviewed some of the children and spoke to the workers about how they felt. It became apparent to me that the children didn't appreciate the facility because they recognized the differences in their club activities for children and in the facilities themselves. The workers simply didn't want to work picking up after children that did not appreciate their efforts in providing a place for them to "hang-out" during the summer and viewed many of the children as being "troubled" or "problem" cases.

We decided to take a tour of the facility, there were many rooms that were locked, hiding the club's potential. I remember being over at another Boys-n-Girls Club last summer called "The Optimist Club" that had educational rooms and areas for the children to study. Some of the locked rooms at this club looked similar, having the set-up of a library and a computer lab. They simply were not being utilized and were in need of a thorough cleaning. It was at that point that the other PEGASUS Mentors and I decided to take on the project of cleaning up and restoring these rooms, hoping to be able to use them as reward for encouraging better behavior in the children there.

After speaking with the director of the club, she arranged for us to be formally introduced to all of the children there. We told them of our plans and discussed with them the need for them to make changes in the way they treated each other, and the facility. If they would work on their attitudes and behavior, then we would help to fix-up the facility, offering them more activities and challenges. The Mentors and I then got busy cleaning, painting and organizing these rooms. We even got school supplies, books and furniture from the Texas Tech Surplus Department donated for the club. I have also contacted various community organizations who will be providing tutoring for the kids during the school year. This was a very fun and rewarding project. The change in attitudes and smiles on the children's faces were well worth all of our hard work.

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