

Best of the NETWORKER

Feature Articles from Past Issues

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Instinct versus Training

By Jerry Fest

Meet Kiera, a 300 pound female Siberian tiger that I was up close and personal with last weekend. I took this picture from a few feet away with only a chain link fence between us. Standing her full 8 foot height above me, she is one of the most beautiful cats I've ever seen.

Being a cat person, I was a bit nervous driving through the Illinois Valley of southern Oregon when I happened upon a place called [Great Cats World Park](#). I hate zoos and can't stand to see cats mistreated, so I almost drove by. But something compelled me to pull in, and I'm really glad I did.

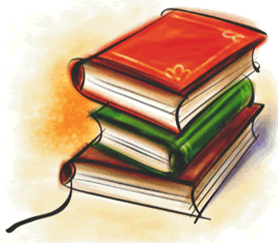
All the cats there are rescued from zoos ... no cats are taken from the wild. They are well cared for and well loved, and they love their caretakers, as well. Seeing the relationship between the cats and the people who care for them was really heart warming, and visitors get to see the cats in a way you'd never see them in any zoo. You stand a few feet away from them and they are trained to respond to their caretakers in ways where you get to witness their natural predatory behavior. In fact, most pictures of big cats that you see, as well as cats that you see in the movies, are the cats that you'll meet here. If you're ever in the Illinois Valley, a stop here is highly recommended.

But here's the thing. As much as the staff loves the cats, and as strong as the relationship is between the cats and the staff, these cats remain wild, predatory animals. The main trainer there, a man named Craig, is obviously loved by the cats ... I witnessed him scratching the chin of a 480 pound lion like it was a house kitten ... yet he has spent hours in surgery as a result of encounters with these cats that went bad. Our tour guide explained it like this: in the cage you are either their equal or their prey, and if you make a mistake, *instinct trumps training every time*.

There's a lesson here for youth workers. Instinct trumps training. It's true for cats, and it's true for us. You can go to all the trainings in the world, but when push comes to shove, when you are in a high stress situation, you will react more from your instincts than you will from your training. Fortunately, there is one thing that separates us from being slaves to our instincts as the cats are. We can *think*. We can be *self-aware*. In other words, while we probably can't change our instincts, we can be *aware* of them. And if we are aware of them, we can choose to *respond* differently.

Because of my life experience, I instinctually react to physical posturing. At the first sign of posturing, my instinct is to withdraw or escalate. It is a physical reaction that I actually feel. This reaction served me well in the past ... but it does not serve me well working with street-dependent youth who physically posture at the drop of a hat. Fortunately, I'm not a cat. I can be aware of my instincts and choose to *respond* rather than *react*. I can recognize my instinct and choose to use my training instead.

In the cat world instinct trumps training every time. In the human world, instinct trumps training every time *you're unaware of what your instincts are*. That's one of the great challenges of good youth work; we need to spend as much time learning about ourselves as we do learning about our clients.



Gary's Recent Readings - October 2, 2009

By Gary Hammons

I received an advance copy of the publication *Runaway and Homeless Youth and the Law: Model State Statutes*.

This handbook by the National Network for Youth and the American Bar Association Commission on Homelessness and Poverty is a follow up to a conference they sponsored in Seattle one year ago. The manual is well organized and user friendly with chapters on a wide range of topics. These include: Education, Status Offenses, Family Law, Health, LGBTQ Youth, Immigration, Access to Custodial Systems, Discharge from Custodial Services, Housing, Identification, Public Benefits, Access to Legal Services, Employment, and Runaway and Homeless Youth Service Providers.

Designed as a reference or guide for policy and legislative actions, this manual should be a great resource for advocates and activists. The only disappointment I encountered was only a brief reference to driver licenses, and then only in the context of identification. Many, if not most, states highly restrict or preclude driver licensing for young people in foster care or with a history of running away. While this may seem justifiable in terms of liability to states or a consequence of incorrigible behavior, a driver's license is a major asset for employment, access to education and independence. Thus, it would have been great if there had been model statutes to promote access to driver licenses as one of the chapters.

Another paper in the recent edition of **PREVENTION RESEARCHER** featured *Promoting school engagement*. The Authors, Karen Stout and Sandra Christianson, assert that dropping out of school is typically an extended process over several months or years. They list several risk factors or predictors: social background (minority group membership), male, transitory (changing schools often, overage for grade level (being retained) growing up in a single parent household, poor grades, low test scores, absenteeism, behavioral challenges, lack of connecting with teachers and the school community. Some elements such as being retained a grade resulted in a much higher likelihood of not graduating.

The authors found considerable research that indicates that measures that promote engagement in the school community, particularly at the middle school level, was a very effective means of preventing early departure. They list the following elements in this regard: success in learning experiences, a positive interpersonal climate in the school, relevant coursework & content, support, such as mentoring, for personal problems and circumstances. A targeted intervention CHECK & CONNECT (<http://ici.umn.edu/checkandconnect>) provides a framework for incorporating regular monitoring, connecting to school learning, and family involvement in addition to monitoring.

Partnering with Youth Requires New Skills

By Jerry Fest

We are youth workers. We are counselors, case managers, teachers, outreach workers, and dozens of other categories. We mediate, we counsel, we provide guidance and information, we educate ... these are the skills that we bring to our jobs, and these are the skills that we have been trained in and practice. And then along comes the Youth Development approach with its dang research-based premise that the best way to help young people develop into healthy and accomplished adults is to *partner* with them and provide them with

opportunities to be *meaningful participants* in their own lives. And when we do that, many of our traditional skills become more of a liability than an asset, and we find that what we really need to know how to do is *negotiate*.



Negotiation skills are not an innate human quality. They are a practice, an art, a skill set that can be taught and *must* be learned in order to realize the promise of partnership with youth. Yet I rarely see (OK, I've *never* seen) negotiation training integrated into any youth agency training curriculum. So my advice to you is, if you are going to be partnering with young people, get the training on your own initiative. I guarantee that having a good set of negotiation skills in your toolkit will make your partnership efforts less stressful and more productive.

There's good news here, though. Negotiation trainings are happening all the time all over the place. Most of them are business oriented, but the skills are still applicable ... you just have to translate the language a bit. Even better news is that negotiation books are available by the hundreds! Browse any bookstore, in the real world or online, and you'll find a large selection to pick from.

One word of caution, however. There are two "schools" of negotiation. The first is the old-time, "traditional" approach of win/lose negotiation. That's where two sides sit down and whoever walks away with the most wins. This is a very aggressive form of negotiation guaranteed to leave one side very unhappy ... which is not what we are trying to do when we partner with young people. The second school, and the one I recommend you become skilled in, is win/win negotiation. This is a relatively new negotiation approach with the aim of reaching solutions that benefit both parties. Perhaps the best way to demonstrate win/win negotiating is to revisit one of it's earliest applications ... in the area of international relations:

1967, the Arab-Israeli conflict known as the 6-day war. Egypt, Syria, and Jordan mass to attack Israel on three fronts, so Israel strikes first. 132 hours and 30 minutes later, Israel has captured the Golan Heights from Syria, the West Bank from Jordan, and the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula from Egypt. Basically, Israel kicked butt.

Fast forward to 1978: The Camp David Accords. Egypt broke ranks and made peace with Israel. What many do not realize, however, is the diplomatic triumph that those accords represent.

Here was the problem. Egypt was making overtures of peace to Israel. They were willing to settle the long-standing dispute, but came to the table with one absolutely non-negotiable position: the Sinai must be returned to Egypt. Israel, on the other hand, welcomed the overtures of peace, but they too had one absolutely non-negotiable position: the Sinai will not be returned. Somewhat incompatible positions, wouldn't you agree? What to do ...

The US negotiators decided to apply the principles of *win/win negotiation*. That is, rather than focus on positions (control of the Sinai), they focused on interests. Both sides were asked the simple question, why? Why was control of the Sinai a *non-negotiable* position for them?

For Egypt it was a matter of national sovereignty. The Sinai had been part of the Egyptian State since the time of the Pharaohs. It would be like the US giving up New Jersey (or, if you think that's a bad example, substitute a state that you *might* be hesitant to surrender). For Israel it was a matter of national security. They had been

sucker-punched by Egypt out of the Sinai, with Egyptian forces only 90 miles from the then Israeli capital of Tel Aviv. Israel was understandably reluctant to go back to that precarious position.

Once *positions* were ignored and *interests* were identified, a solution became clear. Israel would give the Sinai back to Egypt, who would exercise complete national sovereignty over the area -- with one, small concession: no military forces of any type will be stationed in the Sinai. If so much as a jeep crosses the Suez Canal it will be recognized by the international community as an act of war against Israel. By focusing on *interests* instead of *positions*, Egypt got sovereignty, Israel got security, and the world saw peace where none seemed possible.

The basic principles of win/win negotiation are easy to express and, for your convenience, I've attempted to summarize them below. But this summarization is intended to whet your appetite for developing skills in this area; it is not a substitute for additional training and learning. My only goal here is to highlight the need for new skills when partnering with youth that have not been traditional skills in the youth work field, and to point you in a general direction for obtaining them.

Principles of Win/Win Negotiation

Compiled by JT Fest from various sources

Negotiation style comparison:

	WIN/LOSE	WIN/WIN
Focus:	<input type="checkbox"/> the position (what is wanted)	<input type="checkbox"/> the interest (why it is wanted)
Attitude:	<input type="checkbox"/> me against you/us against them	<input type="checkbox"/> us against the problem
Atmosphere:	<input type="checkbox"/> competition and mistrust	<input type="checkbox"/> collaboration and openness
Approaches:	<input type="checkbox"/> personal attacks <input type="checkbox"/> lying <input type="checkbox"/> withholding information <input type="checkbox"/> threatening	<input type="checkbox"/> respect <input type="checkbox"/> honesty <input type="checkbox"/> disclosing information <input type="checkbox"/> encouragement
Basis of Outcome:	<input type="checkbox"/> compromise <input type="checkbox"/> pressure <input type="checkbox"/> coercion <input type="checkbox"/> manipulation <input type="checkbox"/> prone to being sabotaged	<input type="checkbox"/> consensus <input type="checkbox"/> exploration <input type="checkbox"/> fairness <input type="checkbox"/> mutual interests and needs <input type="checkbox"/> likely to be upheld
Relationship:	<input type="checkbox"/> damaged or destroyed	<input type="checkbox"/> sustained or enhanced

Method:

1. Separate the people from the problem

- consider each party's perception (for example by reversing roles)
- seek to make negotiation proposals consistent with the other party's interests
- make emotions explicit and legitimate
- use active listening

2. Focus on interests, not positions

- Positions may be thought of as one-dimensional points in a space of infinite possible solutions
- Positions are symbolic representations of a participant's underlying interests
- To discover interests, ask questions like:
 - Why do you want this?
 - What are you trying to satisfy?
 - What would you like to accomplish?
 - If you had what you are asking for, what would that look like or mean to you?
- In negotiation, there are *shared*, *compatible*, and *conflicting* interests

- It can be helpful to begin by identifying *shared* and *compatible* interests as “common ground” or “points of agreement” before working on *conflicting* interests
- Principles can often be extrapolated from “points of agreement” to resolve other issues
- Focusing on interests tends to direct discussion to the *present* and *future*, and away from the *past*

3. Create Options for Mutual Gain

- Before seeking to reach agreement on solutions for the future, generate multiple options.
 - The typical way of doing this is through “brainstorming”
 - In developing options, look for options that provide *mutual* gains

4. Lighten It Up With Humor

- **Negotiation should be FUN**
 - Look for ways to keep it light and playful



This week, it's all Gary!

By Jerry Fest

Our illustrious Executive Director has been losing sleep recently, and his loss is our gain. This week I'm turning over the soapbox to him, where he will share with us some perspectives on the economy, as well as a few of the things he's been reading lately.

Gary, take it away ...

By Gary Hammons

An advantage of having a sleep disorder is middle of the night time perusing financial and economic websites & blogs. Having done this for several years, I have developed some theories and predictions for the not-for-profit sector. While I do not purport to be a financial advisory or anything other than an amateur economist, I trust the following will be interesting and, perhaps useful, for agencies and organizations that provide services and supports for young people. Those of you who find your eyes glazing over when economics is discussed may wish to skip down to the “What Might Happen” paragraphs.

While it is frequently noted that the recession is over and the stock markets have been increasing in value for several months, there are troubling indicators at home and abroad suggesting that our economy is far from recovery. For example, there is a huge and unaddressed loss facing the banking sector, with both residential and commercial mortgage foreclosures continuing to accelerate. Further, unless and until the employment picture turns around there can be no meaningful recovery, except for executive bonuses.

That is, there is a downward spiral of available jobs with the number of potential workers continuing to grow via population and immigration expansion. Check out <http://www.usdebtclock.org/>. Without jobs people cannot buy things or services, investment in new or expanded business not likely, and the result is no new jobs and reductions are inevitable. Unfortunately, this is a worldwide problem and is much worse in the United States, since we have also experienced a massive credit contraction.

The headlines of financial media have been somewhat misleading. For example, yesterday it was “China leads in Economic Recovery”. In reality, China is simply less far behind than other countries. Similar representations can be found in TV interviews and throughout the internet.

One of my favorite economists for more than ten years, John Mauldin, writes a twice weekly newsletter; <http://www.frontlinethoughts.com/subscribe.asp> provides a much better perspective on the big picture. Mauldin notes that neither strong recovery nor sharp declines are likely; rather we are headed for a “muddle through” economy held down by restricted credit, surplus housing, and excess manufacturing capacity. However, he notes that 85% of people are working, cows have to be milked and services continue. While times are hard, it could be much worse.

What might happen?

Mauldin also notes that the current situation in the US is further limited in that conventional measures to recover from a recession are not readily available. Raising taxes to cover the huge Federal deficit would throw the economy back into severe recession, or even depression. Inflating our way out via devaluing the dollar is also limited since the world is now highly interactive. Thus, the current situation is likely to continue for some time.

Youth serving agencies and organizations need to adjust their planning and services in response. There are two indicators to monitor closely. Should the stock market take another dive, those agencies with a high degree of dependence on foundations can expect that continued support will be at risk as their portfolios are diminished. Second, tax returns for State governments need to be monitored closely. Those states with a high degree of dependence on sales tax (Washington) could suffer major losses if retail sales continue downward due to protracted unemployment, while those States with income taxes (Oregon) can expect recovery to be delayed much longer than those with more balanced taxation (Idaho). State revenues from property taxes and real estate sales are also down and will remain so for much longer than most people realize. Even Alaska, with its huge oil derived endowment, can expect a downturn if worldwide energy use retracts.

The safest strategy for agencies and organizations will be to reduce costs in every way possible, while seeking grassroots support even though need for services are intensifying. Fortunately, there has been a willingness toward giving by individuals, as the governmental funding for non-profits and social services has been diminished. The good news is that highly qualified staff will be increasingly available to agencies due to lack of employment opportunities in other sectors. Most important, agencies and organizations need to batten down the hatches for much longer than the popular financial media would project.



Gary's Recent Readings - October 16, 2009

By Gary Hammons

I look forward each month to the *Mockingbird Times*, a print newsletter written and produced by young people as a component of the [Mockingbird Society](#). Founded and led by Jim Theofelis, the Society provides employment, support, advocacy and engagement for current and former foster kids as well as homeless teens. The September edition features a lead article describing the **Center for Children & Youth Justice** which was founded and led by former Washington State Supreme Court Judge

Bobbe Bridge. Other features in the recent edition include a description of the Mockingbird Family Model, what it takes to be a good man, accolades for organizations providing on-going support for young people and guidelines for beginning activism.

Regular monthly comments from Jim Theofelis, news from each of the six regional advisory chapters, summaries of community events, as well as excellent youth originated poetry and insights provide a cross section of information and guidance for youth serving agencies across the State and Nation. You can/should subscribe directly by calling 206-323-5437 and go to their website: www.mockingbirdsociety.org.

DROPOUT PREVENTION

The Annie E. Casey Kids Count 2009 feature on high school dropout prevention provides an extensive array of factors and strategies regarding this topic. Citing a wide range of statistics and observations, this paper points out the huge discrepancy in earning potential, quality of life, and loss of opportunity for dropouts compared with those who complete high school. Moreover, the gap is increasing at an alarming rate.

Of particular note was/is that grade nine seems to be highly pivotal as to the likelihood of students making it through to graduation. It is at this level when indicators surface that are predictive of leaving school before graduation. Minority students, those with limited English proficiency, and disabilities (especially behavioral) are much more prone to non-completion. Overall, the average non-completion of high school is 29% and growing.

The paper provides some proven and innovative strategies for reducing dropout rates. The paper, in its entirety, has been included as an attachment to this issue of the Networker. It should be mandatory reading for parents and professionals serving youth populations.



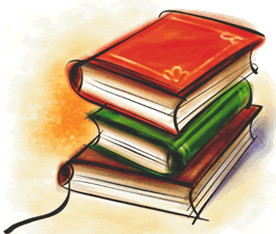
Many Thanks to MANY

By Jerry Fest

This week I had the honor of presenting on street outreach at the 21st annual conference of the Mid-Atlantic Network of Youth and Family Services (click on their logo above to visit their website). MANY is a non-profit membership association of youth services in Delaware, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, West Virginia* and the District of Columbia. Held at the [Bedford Springs Resort](#) in Bedford, Pennsylvania, this conference not only gave me the opportunity to meet the dedicated staff and members of MANY, but it also enabled me to return to my home State of Pennsylvania in the autumn. Being reminded of the beauty of a Pennsylvania autumn is something for which I am very grateful.

But most of my gratitude is reserved for MANY. They put on a well-run conference and were incredibly gracious hosts. I felt very welcome and met many fine people, and found my presentation audience to be very skilled and thoughtful youth workers. From what I witnessed, young people in the Mid-Atlantic States are in very good hands, particularly with youth workers such as Steven Tuck from the [Children's Home Society](#) of West Virginia who was presented with MANY's Outstanding Youth Worker of the Year award. It is indeed a pleasure to have had the opportunity to present at this conference, and I would like to publically express my gratitude to and admiration for MANY and all of it's members. Many thanks to MANY!

* Which I was told more than once is "West Virginia, NOT Virginia" ;-)



Gary's Recent Readings

By Gary Hammons

From Time Out to Hard Time: Young Children in the Adult Criminal Justice System

Authors: Michele Deitch ; Amanda Barstow ; Leslie Lukens ; Ryan Reyna

Available from the Juvenile Justice Weekly Accessions list:

The study found that just over half of U.S. States permit children under age 12 who commit serious crimes to be processed as adults for the purposes of prosecution, trial, sentencing, and punishment. Twenty-two States and the District of Columbia allow children as young as 7 years old to be processed in adult court and be subjected to harsh adult sanctions, including long terms in an adult prison. The U.S. Supreme Court is scheduled to consider the case of a 13-year-old from Florida who received a sentence of life without parole for a noncapital crime. The study determined that every year approximately 80 children ages 13 and younger are judicially transferred to an adult court for criminal justice processing. The study cites a number of reasons why the adult criminal justice system is inappropriate and does not work for children. Adult criminal procedures and facilities are not designed to address the needs and developmental limitations of child defendants and convicted child offenders; young children are incapable of understanding adult criminal proceedings and actively participating in their defense; and their limited intellectual and emotional development makes them incompetent to stand trial as adults. The study argues that juvenile courts are better suited to manage the processing of young offenders, since their procedures and case dispositions are tailored to the developmental level, backgrounds, and needs of children and adolescents.



Northwest Network Welcomes New Alaska State Coordinator

Greetings! My name is Marylee Bates and I've been given the privilege of being the State Coordinator for Alaska. I taught school for 13 years. I live in Fairbanks where I currently work as an AmeriCorps Program Manager for [Joel's Place](#), a faith based youth center and indoor skate park. Our AmeriCorps program targets young people, 16-25, then facilitates opportunities for them to explore their vocational passion through service. My work is very rewarding as I am able to work directly with the AmeriCorps Members and directly with agencies who have unmet needs. When I'm not networking, I might be birding -binoculars are always near, skimming the most recent cooking magazine or dreaming up the next textile project.

GO PHILLIES!

What the soon-to-be repeat World Series Champions can teach us about Youth Development

By Jerry Fest



I am a Phillies fan. A cap-wearing, cheesesteak-eating, Yankee-hating Phillies fan. I'm not alone. In the City of Brotherly Love there are millions like me ... but most of them have been Phillies fans for years. Me? I've been a Phillies fan for a little over a week.

I recently went back to Pennsylvania for business. I say "back" to Pennsylvania because, although I make my home in Oregon, I was born and raised in Philadelphia. While I was back there I spent some time visiting with family and friends, and reconnecting with

the city of my birth.

Between you and me, I have a confession to make. I'm really not much of a sports guy. Frankly, for most of my life I couldn't have cared less about sports. I often can't even identify the sport a team plays. So how, you may ask, did I suddenly become a Phillies fan?

As most of you probably know, the Phillies are going for a repeat World Series Championship ... two in a row if they get it (oops, I mean WHEN they get it). And this year they're up against the New York Yankees [ptooie].

Please pardon the spitting sound, but I'm pretty sure that it's a Philadelphia City Ordinance that requires spitting when you say that dreaded name. I think I saw a sign in Philly that said "spitting prohibited ... unless someone has uttered the name of that New York baseball team, in which case it's required under penalty of law!"

Such is the passion I was surrounded by during my week in the Philadelphia area. Whether it be family, friends, or *total strangers*, THE topic of conversation was the impending Phillies repeat victory, and this year over the New York ... well, I don't feel like spitting. You could start a conversation about Afghanistan, or healthcare, or anything else ... but it would end up coming down to ... GO PHILLIES!

And so, I had my Philly roots thoroughly watered. I started saying "YO" a lot. I bought a Phillies cap. I even went brim-to-brim with the bravest man I've ever met ... a guy wearing a Yankees [ptooie] cap at 10th and Market in Center City Philly (may he rest in peace, as I can't imagine that he survived the night). But a legitimate question that may be on your mind is; what's this got to do with Youth Development? Simply, it's another example of the impact of environment.

In Youth Development we talk about the importance of Protective Factors ... environmental influences that foster innate resilience. Specifically, we talk about the importance of exposing youth to caring, supportive relationships, high expectations, and meaningful participation. Youth development is often less about changing a youth, and more about changing the *environment* around a youth. Protective Factors give young people a different context to adapt to, and, particularly, *meaningful participation* provides that all important sense of belonging that I reconnected with during my time in Philly. It's a very powerful process, and the same process that turned a sports-apathetic Oregonian into a Yankee-[ptooie]-hating Phillies fan.

So here are two thoughts I will leave you with from this story. First; don't try to change a youth's behaviors. Instead, decide what environment the behaviors you desire make sense in, and promote that environment. And second, but no less important ... GO PHILLIES!

Your humble editor visiting the grave of [Harry Kalas](#) in Philadelphia.

