



October 2011

Dear Lee County Legislative Delegation Member,

Thank you for the opportunity for the girls of the PACE Center to share their voice with you on November 8. As I am sure you are well aware, Florida incarcerates girls at a rate higher than almost any other large state in the United States. Most of these young women are victims of violence, and/or protracted neglect, physical, or sexual abuse.

I feel strongly that investment in effective, proven prevention programs for moderately at-risk youth is the answer to the growing cost to taxpayers when any girl ends up in the juvenile justice system. Review of our material will show how PACE is a good return on investment.

We would love for you to visit our center even if you have already! Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or concerns, and...

Thank you for continuing to believe in girls!

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alice", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Alice McLeod Brunner, Ed.D.
Executive Director



PACE Center for Girls, Inc. is a community-based, non-residential prevention, diversion, and early intervention program in the state of Florida. PACE serves over 2,000 girls each year in 17 locations around the state as an alternative to incarceration by providing therapeutic support services, individualized and group counseling, a gender-specific life management curriculum, academic education, individualized attention, parental involvement, community service and 3 years of follow up transition services. PACE supports the mission of the Department of Juvenile Justice by preventing juvenile delinquency, teen pregnancy, substance abuse, academic failure, and welfare dependency.

PACE IS EFFECTIVE

- Approximately 41% of girls come to PACE with prior DJJ involvement. A year after leaving PACE, 95% of girls have no involvement, or no further involvement, with the criminal justice system.
- Most girls come to PACE 2-3 years behind in school, often due to chronic truancy, suspensions or expulsions. Last year 96% of girls improved academically while at PACE and 85% improved by a full grade level in 6-9 months.
- 75% of girls who come to PACE successfully complete the program and 3 years after completing PACE, 82% of girls are in school or employed.

PACE IS COST EFFECTIVE

- A one day, \$50.30 investment in a girl at PACE averts the average \$180 per day cost to taxpayers if she is committed to a juvenile justice facility, saving Florida over \$22 million every year.
- Research demonstrates that if a program is able to achieve a lower recidivism rate, taxpayers spend less money on criminal justice. With an extremely low recidivism rate, PACE is cost effective to the taxpayers of Florida.

PACE reduces the number of girls entering the juvenile justice system and reduces the significant long term costs associated with teen pregnancy, substance abuse, dropping out of school and unemployment and long term economic dependency.

For more information please contact:

Adrianna Sekula, Associate Director of Government Affairs, 904-553-7850, Adrianna.Sekula@pacecenter.org

FAST FACTS

pace
believing in girls

PACE Center for Girls is:

- A Florida-based, nationally recognized 501(c)3 prevention program for adolescent at-risk girls;
- The program that understands the impact that gender-responsive prevention services have on decreasing juvenile crime and in helping adolescent girls turn their lives around;
- A comprehensive program that integrates social services, education and career service in an individualized manner;
- Recognized as the most effective program in the country for keeping adolescent girls out of the juvenile justice system.



PACE AT A GLANCE

17 centers statewide

2,072 girls served in 2009-2010

More than **25,000** girls served since 1985

Facts:

- Florida incarcerates girls at a higher rate than any other large state – delinquency cases are almost twice that for the nation as a whole.
- Girls enter the juvenile justice system as victims of violence – 68% in residential programs in Florida have experienced neglect or physical or sexual abuse.
- A one-year, approximately \$12,500 investment in the life of an at-risk girl can avert the average \$44,000-per-year cost to taxpayers if she ends up in the juvenile justice system.



Meet Angel

Angel is a tall, graceful young woman, who is equally comfortable on the ballet floor as with taking cars apart and putting them back

together. Where Angel was not comfortable was a school setting. Being shy, she found high school especially difficult when other students made fun of her different interests. Her grades and attendance started to suffer.

In order to ensure she succeeded in school, Angel transferred to PACE Center for Girls. Responding to the program's positive and supportive atmosphere, she rediscovered her love of learning. She came to PACE with a "D" average. She finished PACE with her high school diploma, reached a "B+" average, and received a college scholarship.

Today, Angel is attending college to study law. She also enrolled in a two year automotive program to become a certified mechanic. Angel's reason for two very different pursuits is, "I grew up around cars so working on cars will be a fun way to pay the bills while I am studying to become a lawyer."



Mission

PACE provides girls and young women an opportunity for a better future through education, counseling, training and advocacy.

Philosophy

PACE values all girls and young women, believing each one deserves an opportunity to find her voice, achieve her potential and celebrate a life defined by responsibility, dignity, serenity and grace.

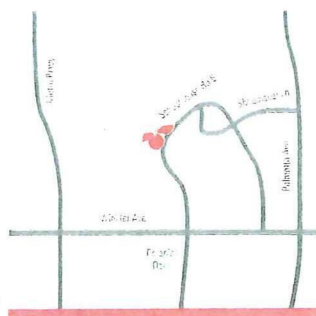
How can you support PACE?

- Call to tour or volunteer at your local PACE center.
- Make a commitment to the long-term future of PACE by considering a planned gift.
- Visit pacecenter.org and learn about the toll violence and victimization takes on girls.
- Speak out and get others to listen.

The Girls of PACE Lee

Executive Director
Alice McLeod Brunner, Ed.D.

3760 Schoolhouse Road West
Ft. Myers, FL 33916
tel: 239.425.2366



107 girls served in 2009-2010

Average age: **15.1** years old

66% live in neighborhoods with higher than average crime rates

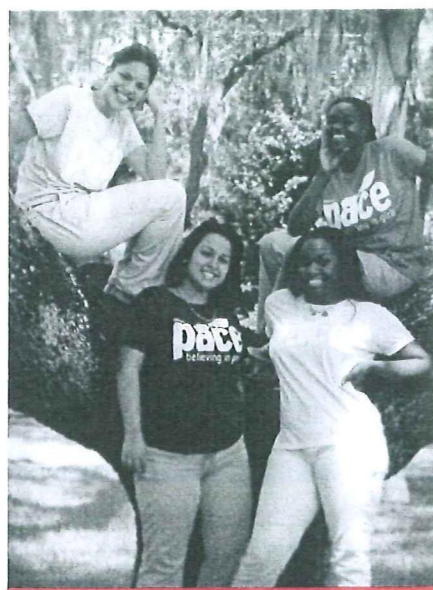
54% reported using drugs and alcohol prior to coming to PACE

54% had run away prior to coming to PACE

97% had no involvement with Juvenile Justice within a year of leaving PACE

84% were placed in appropriate educational settings after leaving PACE

94% improved their academic performance



Source of Funding

