

Tucker Center for Research on Girls & Women in Sport

Tucker Center News

University of Minnesota

Spring 2003

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Greetings! As I sit down to write this letter in the coldest part of the new year, I can already sense the smell and sounds of spring inching closer. With spring comes new beginnings. This is especially true for the Tucker Center because this spring, we welcome two new members to our team—Amber Murray and Anne Barry, both graduate students in the School of Kinesiology. Amber joined the Tucker Team in October and has been a major asset in organizing events and participating in various outreach programs. In addition to working with the Tucker Team, Amber is also teaching undergraduate physical activity courses. Turn to page 5 to learn more about Amber and her contributions to the Tucker Center.

Anne Barry also wears a variety of hats. In addition to being a Ph.D. student in sport sociology, Anne works for the state of Minnesota in the Department of Finance, and is a Senior Fellow in the Department of Health Services and Research Policy at the U. As always, the Tucker Center is overflowing with talent and a desire to make a difference in the lives of girls and women. Amber and Anne will certainly do their part to make that happen.

Though it has been a good year for the Tucker Center, it has been a tumultuous one for Title IX. Last fall, the Bush administration created the *Commission on Opportunity in Athletics* in response to allegations from opponents of Title IX that the federal law is responsible for the decline of men's non-revenue sports such as wrestling. In late January, the Commission voted on proposed changes to Title IX, changes that many Title IX advocates feared would weaken gender equity in women's sports. Though the Commission's recommendations have not been finalized, many educators have suggested that, at least for the time being, there will not be any major overhaul of Title IX. Additional information about the Commission, as well as some myths and stereotypes about Title IX, is highlighted on page 3.

In the Donor Profile column we feature Minnesota native Pam Ryan, founder and president of *Designer Sports, LLC*. Ryan's innovative company creates sporting goods products that help keep girls safe and interested in sports. An athlete herself, Ryan grew up playing a variety of contact sports including football, softball, and hockey. She credits her athletic experiences for a large part of her successful career as an inventor, entrepreneur, and role

model for young female athletes. Turn to page 2 and learn more about friend of the Tucker Center, Pam Ryan.

It should come as no surprise that participation in sport plays a significant role in the lives of young children. In many instances this participation has a positive impact, but as we all know, there are also occasions when sports lead to negative outcomes. Numerous scholars and educators have examined the influence of sport on youth development, and have also begun to address the ways in which race, gender and geographic location (e.g., rural versus urban) mediate their sport experience. The Tucker Center will explore these important issues in our upcoming Distinguished Lecture Series when we host a panel presentation entitled "Linking Sport to Youth Development: Race, Space, and Gender." The presentation will take place on Wednesday, April 9th, 7:00–9:00pm at the Humphrey Institute on the West Bank Campus (see enclosed flier).

The panel will consist of three nationally known experts in the field of sport and youth development—Doug Hartmann, faculty member in the Department of Sociology at the University of Minnesota, Kathy Jamieson from the University of North Carolina-Greensboro, and Matthew Taylor from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse. Professor Hartmann will explore the possibilities and problems of using sport-based programs for social intervention aimed at young urban men of color. Professor Jamieson will focus on the implications and relevance of elite sport programs for adolescent Latinas, and Professor Taylor will share his latest research involving African American youth and their relationship to sport. Please join us for what is sure to be a thought-provoking event. As parents, students, educators, and coaches, we need to understand how sport affects all our children so that we can develop sporting environments that promote positive youth development.



Mary Jo Kane

DONOR PROFILE: PAM RYAN

For some people sport is leisure, while for others sport is business. For Tucker Center donor Pam Ryan, sport is a combination of both. Ryan is not only a sportswoman who skis, runs, and generally stays active, she is also an entrepreneur in the sporting goods industry. On the surface, Ryan develops protective equipment for female athletes. If you probe a little deeper however, she'll tell you that, "My job is to develop products to keep girls interested and to maintain all the opportunities for girls in sports." Such a commitment is rooted in her own childhood and her love of sports.

Ryan grew up in Mankato, Minnesota, in a neighborhood with an open field next door to her family home. Combine that with lots of neighborhood kids and you get football and baseball galore. Even though most of the neighborhood kids were boys, Ryan's father always encouraged her to "get involved." Not that she needed much encouragement: Ryan spent countless hours playing any type of sport that had a competitive edge. Besides playing with the neighborhood kids, Ryan also played catch with her father and accompanied him on hunting trips around the Mankato area and fishing trips throughout Canada. Ryan notes that both her parents were very supportive of all her interests. This more than paid off in later years. At Good Council Academy, an all-girls' high school, Ryan participated in almost any sport that was offered. Some of her favorite activities included football, softball, and tennis, but as Ryan pointed out, "I loved any sport that had anything to do with competing." Such a passion for competing didn't set Ryan apart. But one aspect of her sports career did: Thanks once again to her parents, safety was continually emphasized. As a result, Ryan was often the only neighborhood kid wearing the right kind of protective gear, gear that allowed her to engage in physically tough, competitive sports.

It was this type of early sport experience that led to the career Ryan has carved out for herself in the sporting goods industry. She learned many times over that not all sports gear is equal, particularly when it comes to female athletes. One of the most obvious examples of this has to do with batting helmets. Many young girls have long hair, and when they play sports like softball and baseball, most of them pull their hair back into a ponytail. Nice idea but it can also alter the fit of most helmets. To the rescue came Pam Ryan who, in the 1980s, began working on a special helmet for girls. Such creativity paid off. Ryan was issued her first patent in 1996 and a second one in 1997. And in 1996, she started *Designer Sports*, which, under her

pioneering leadership, continues to address (and solve) equipment needs for female athletes. These days Ryan is working on a girls' helmet for hockey, skiing and snow boarding. But her work in the sporting goods industry is not limited to girls' helmets—Ryan also works closely with Schutt Sports, a company that provides protective athletic equipment to many collegiate, Olympic, and professional athletes.

So how does a professional business woman, even one keenly interested in sports, get hooked up with an organization like the Tucker Center whose primary focus is research and education? Ryan provides the answer. While developing specialized sports products like batting helmets for girls, Ryan needed to do extensive research on equipment use and athletic product development. What she found was a direct correlation between product development and increased athletic participation in youth sports for girls. She also discovered that, unlike boys, girls tended to drop out of organized, competitive sports around the age of twelve or thirteen. In short, Ryan knew some general statistics about girls' sport involvement and product development, but she didn't know the whole story behind the numbers.

Not surprisingly, she tackled this problem with the tenacity and determination of any good athlete. She dug deeper into research on girls and women in sport, and that is when she learned about the Tucker Center and a more complete answer to her questions. As Ryan states, "The Tucker Center helps frame the statistics by adding substance to the research and providing a contextual narrative for participation patterns." Because the Tucker Center provides Ryan with a solid research base for her business ventures, she has become an active friend and supporter of the organization: "The work the Tucker Center does is very good, unique, and necessary. We need to have that quality of information disseminated to the public. The mission of the Tucker Center is important because it keeps girls involved." Ryan also notes that both the Tucker Center and the world of women's sports are in a dynamic and ever evolving state of change. Continuing her own legacy as an active and competitive sportswoman, Ryan welcomes the challenge of being on the front end of such a process, both as a business woman and as a supporter of the Tucker Center. To learn more about Pam Ryan and *Designer Sports*, visit their website at www.designer-sports.com.



Pam Ryan

—Amber Murray, Graduate Student
and Tucker Center Staff

RESEARCH UPDATES & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Note: In prior newsletters, this page has focused on current research initiatives conducted by Tucker Center staff and affiliated scholars. It has also highlighted various community projects sponsored by the Tucker Center. However, because this is an historic moment in Title IX's history—and because efforts are underway to alter this landmark legislation—we wanted to give you the latest information available on the status of Title IX. For updated information on the Tucker Center's research and community outreach efforts, visit our website.

Commission on Opportunities in Athletics

Background

Last summer marked the 30th Anniversary of Title IX, federal legislation that prohibits sex discrimination in educational settings, including athletic opportunities. Though enormously successful in ensuring greater equality for girls and women nationwide, the enforcement of Title IX remains a major focus of controversy. Why? Because over the past 30 years, men's non-revenue sports have been eliminated and opponents claim this decline is the result of Title IX. However, during this same time period, women's sports have also been eliminated. According to a 2001 government study, women's programs, especially gymnastics, fencing and field hockey, have also been significantly reduced. This is one major reason why advocates of Title IX claim that the reduction in men's sports is the result of the ever-escalating "arms race" in men's athletics, not Title IX.

Commission Created

Last June, Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, formed a blue-ribbon panel of sport professionals and educators charged with examining ways to strengthen Title IX enforcement and to ensure fairness for all collegiate athletes. The Commission included proponents and

opponents of Title IX. (additional background on commission members can be found at, <http://www.ed.gov/units/commissionsboards/athletics/index.html>). Commission members were to collect information, analyze issues, and obtain public input directed at improving current Federal standards for measuring equal opportunity in athletics under Title IX. The Commission held its final meeting at the end of January; a final report will be delivered to Secretary Paige in late February.

Reactions to the Recommendations

As we go to press, many advocates of Title IX are concerned that the Commission's final recommendations will lead to the dismantling of efforts to ensure gender equity in athletics. According to news sources, the central finding in a preliminary draft report from the Commission is that Title IX guidelines should be changed to stop colleges from cutting men's teams and male athletes. If that is the case, the Commission is clearly siding with the opponents of Title IX by placing blame on the law instead of the excessive and unnecessary spending that routinely occurs in men's athletics. This finding, and other parts of the Commission, is being challenged by advocates of Title IX. The Women's Sports Foundation is educating the public and members of Congress on the importance of Title IX, and the need to oppose any significant change to the current standard of equality and opportunity. Their major concerns about altering Title IX, as well as the reasons behind their concerns, can be found at www.WomensSportsFoundation.org. At this pivotal moment, it is essential that opportunities for girls and women be protected so that all of us—men and women alike—can continue to reap the benefits of being involved in sports.

—Anne Barry, Ph.D. Student and Tucker Center Staff

SELECTED DISCONTINUED AND ADDED SPORTS TEAMS

Men's Teams Discontinued		Women's Teams Discontinued	
Wrestling	-171**	Gymnastics	-100**
Tennis	-84**	Fencing	-31**
Gymnastics	-56**	Field Hockey	-28**
Men's Teams Added		Women's Teams Added	
Soccer	+135**	Soccer	+846**
Baseball	+85**	Cross-Country	+516**
Basketball	+82**	Softball	+432**

— Government Report, Four-Year Colleges' Experiences Adding and Discontinuing Teams, 2001

LEARNING OUR LEGACY: GIRL SCOUTS GOT GAME ... AND SHELLY BURZINSKI!

The purpose of the “Learning Our Legacy” column is to profile individuals who have made significant contributions to the development of women’s athletics. But we decided to expand our profile to include organizations who have also done great things for girls and women in sport. The Girl Scouts is one such organization.

When you think of the Girl Scouts, images of campfires, badges, and those ever popular (and yummy) cookies come to mind. But another image should now be among everyone’s top-five list of things Girl Scouts do—organized sports. Basketball, soccer, softball, and running—name your sport because in 1997, the Girl Scouts established a sports and fitness initiative to stimulate girls’ interest in athletics, and to create sport opportunities for girl scouts around the country. What prompted the Girl Scouts to add this pioneering initiative were some disturbing statistics about the status of young people’s health and physical activity. Did you know that today, one in four children are considered obese, putting them at higher risk for cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and certain cancers? The Girl Scouts viewed these and other health issues as serious concerns, and knew they were in a position to make a difference by promoting health and wellness among their members.

As an organization with tremendous networking capabilities, Girl Scouts of the USA—the organization’s national governing body—was able to rapidly translate their sports initiative into actual programming. Using their system of Girl Scout Councils, new opportunities to participate in sports were in place in less than a year. Not surprisingly, the Girl Scouts Council of Minneapolis was one of the first units in the country to implement the new initiative. But they did more than merely implement a new program—they ensured its success by hiring Shelly Burzinski as their program manager.

Shelly’s approach to promoting girls’ interest in sports has been to organize a series of sport clinics and health/wellness days, as well as to encourage Girl Scout sports teams to compete in local recreation leagues. The goals of these programs are to foster such values as fair play and teamwork, to develop leadership skills, to provide information about health and fitness, and to educate girl scouts around the country about how to make sports a life-long activity. Shelly’s programs also ensure that all girls,

regardless of skill level, have an opportunity to participate in organized athletics. Unlike school-based sport programs, there are no tryouts and no cuts on Girl Scout teams. And all players are rotated into games to provide equal playing time.

In addition to ensuring that all scouts have an opportunity to play, Girl Scout sport programs instill the notion of sportswomanship in athletes and their parents. Parents are encouraged to accept their child’s triumphs and letdowns on the court, and are continually reminded that skill development—rather than winning—is the top priority. Parents are also reminded that kids play sports to

have fun, to be with friends, and to make new ones. Given this approach to playing sports, it is easy to understand how once a girl joins one of Shelly’s teams, she stays with it for the life of the program. Under Shelly’s leadership, the Girl Scouts have clearly found the right formula to provide enjoyable sport experiences and to ensure that these types of programs encourage lifelong physical activity.

The University of Minnesota has been a strong supporter of Shelly’s sports clinics. Girl scouts

who participated in one such clinic recently made a trip to the U where they watched a women’s volleyball game, and met with the coach and some volleyball players to talk about being physically active, having a healthy life style, and setting goals. Girl Scout members also went to the U’s hockey rink to skate and to receive pointers on good skating techniques from several varsity hockey players on the women’s team.

Last October, the Girls Scouts and the Tucker Center teamed up for a “Women in Sports” event for the Westonka/Orono Girl Scout Council. As part of the day’s activities, Joah Iannotta, Ph.D. student and Tucker Center affiliate, led the group through an informative—and research-based—presentation on how the media portray female athletes. This presentation is part of the Tucker Center’s “Image is Everything” educational program that highlights the ways in which mainstream media emphasize women’s femininity rather than their achievements as highly-skilled athletes. The Tucker Center is delighted to have made this new connection with the Girl Scouts and salutes their efforts to support girls and women in sport. For more information on Girl Scouts sports programs, or to register for a program online, visit their website at www.girlscoutsmpls.org.

— Joah Iannotta, Ph.D. Student,
Sport Sociology



*Minneapolis Girl Scouts,
Cub Division Soccer Team*

KUDOS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

- Tucker Center Affiliate, Jo Buysse, will be speaking at the Minnesota Chapter of the American Association of University Women's annual conference on April 5th. Her talk will focus on Title IX and is entitled "The Ramifications of Recent Attempts to Alter Title IX: Fact Versus Fiction."
- Tucker Center Affiliate, Diane Wiese-Bjornstal, recently published the following book chapter: "From skinned knees and Pee Wees to menisci and masters: Developmental sport injury psychology." In M. Weiss (Ed.), *Developmental Sport and Exercise Psychology: A Lifespan Perspective* (2003). Morgantown, WV: Fitness Information Technology.
- Mary Jo Kane will deliver a keynote address at the annual conference of the American Association of University Women, "Women in Charge in the 21st Century: Innovation and Collaboration," Providence, RI, June 21, 2003.
- Mary Jo Kane gave the following three keynote addresses related to her research on sport, media, and gender, as well as Title IX:
 - 1) "Assessing Title IX: Past, Present, and Future Symposium," Center for Research on Sport in Society, Miami University, Miami, FL, December 6, 2002;
 - 2) "KeyBank Cultural Diversity Lecture Series," Westminster College, Salt Lake City, Utah, March 11, 2003; and
 - 3) "National Women's History Month Lecture Series," College of St. Benedict, St. Joseph, MN, March 31, 2003.

STAFF UPDATE

Master's degree candidate, Amber Murray, is a recent and most welcome addition to the Tucker Center.

Providing administrative and clerical support, Amber joined the Tucker Team in the fall of 2002. She learned about the Tucker Center as an undergraduate in the Psychology Department at the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, while working on an honor's research project that examined drinking behavior among female athletes. According to Amber, "The Tucker Center represents a thorough form of education, not only by conducting unique and innovative research, but also by dispensing the valuable information gained by such research to many communities. The Tucker Center breathes life into the research process and gives the numbers a tangible and applicable quality."

In addition to her work with the Tucker Center, Amber enjoys the outdoors and community service. This summer

she will be biking across the country with *Bike and Build* to raise awareness about Habitat for Humanity (HFH) and this organization's mission. Participants in the *Bike and Build* program raise much-needed funds for HFH and also stop at various locations along their cross-country journey to build homes for the needy. Amber draws many comparisons between the hard work she will do this summer and the work she currently does at the Tucker Center: "Basically what I do is help educate others, whether it involves spreading knowledge about affordable housing, or disseminating information about girls and women in sport. With *Bike and Build* I will literally help build communities. At the Tucker Center, I like to think I help cultivate a sense of community in the sporting world as well." From our perspective, Amber Murray is a master builder for girls and women in sport!

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