

Otto Bremer Foundation

Year End Report for the 2000-2001 Funding Cycle



I. Program Purpose and Description:

The Tucker Center's **Image Is Everything: Achieving Equitable Media Treatment for Females** was designed to teach girls from all backgrounds how to counteract negative cultural messages that can be harmful to their self-esteem, social and psychological development, and even minimize the array of opportunities available to them. To accomplish these important objectives, the "Image Is Everything" program teaches adolescent females how to recognize the media's stereotypic portrayals of female athletes. In so doing, these adolescent females learn powerful, hands-on strategies and techniques for challenging and counteracting the harmful effects of racism, sexism, and homophobia found throughout mainstream sport media.

The "Image Is Everything" program consists of an intensive, all-day workshop that takes place in Minnesota and Wisconsin high schools located within Otto Bremer Bank communities. The workshop begins with a dynamic and interactive slide show presentation which is open to the entire student body, faculty and staff. The slide show is designed to raise public awareness of the types of coverage athletic females receive in the media. Those in attendance are asked to reflect upon how these images may affect society's attitudes toward sportswomen and thus limit their abilities to reach their full potential. Open discussion among the participants and the presenter is encouraged and often results in a lively exchange.



Following the hour-long slide show, a group of 15-25 female high school athletes are invited to participate in a workshop for the remainder of the day. These workshop participants—identified beforehand as leaders in their school—engage in several hands on activities and group discussions, which enable them to brainstorm strategies that will produce creative, alternative images to the current media practices. By the end of the workshop, girls have created and displayed

empowering images in highly visible locations throughout their schools. They have also developed strategic plans to improve awareness in their schools such as displaying images and narratives on bulletin boards and in locker rooms and gymnasiums. In addition, participants also outlined emailing, phone calling, and letter writing campaigns to call for improved coverage from local media sources.

II. How was funding used to make the project effective?

Funding from the Otto Bremer Foundation was used to defray costs of conducting the workshop (e.g., travel to schools, food for participants, art supplies) and to cover any expenses incurred by the school (e.g., reimbursement for a substitute teacher). Ensuring that the various educational institutions did not have any expenses associated with bringing the workshop to their school was an important factor in earning the cooperation of high school administrators. Funding was also used to pay Tucker Center personnel to organize, administer, and travel to and from the workshops.

III. Where was the workshop performed and who was impacted by it?

In this second year of the funding cycle, we expanded our area of coverage to include one Wisconsin high school along with five high schools in Minnesota, all of which were located in Otto Bremer Bank communities. This included one rural high school in New Richmond, Wisconsin, as well as three suburban schools: Blaine High School, Columbia Heights High School, and Simley High School in Inver Grove Heights. We also conducted the workshop at two inner city schools, Johnson High School in St. Paul and Patrick Henry in Minneapolis. The slide show presentation was viewed by more than 400 male and female students as well as school faculty and administrators. In many cases this audience represented a **diverse group of workshop participants**. In addition to the slide show audience, each all-day workshop included between 15-25 female athletes (approximately 100 girls overall).



IV. How were participants impacted?

At the conclusion of each workshop, participants were asked to evaluate the workshop and slide show in order to assess the impact and effectiveness of the “Image Is Everything” program. The overall response from participants was extremely positive. For example, participants indicated that they now have a greater understanding of the portrayal of female athletes in the media, the history and results of Title IX, as well as strategies to promote continued improvement that will bring about lasting change. Workshop participants also stated that they appreciated the opportunity to discuss their opinions in an all-female environment and that they especially liked learning that there are many girls who felt the same way about these issues. The participants enjoyed the hands-on activities that allowed them to express what they

had learned, and the ability to create positive images and representations that they would like to see much more of in mainstream sport media.



During group discussions, many participants expressed frustration with inequalities that they experienced in their own school and community. For example, participants stated that they feel girls' sports do not receive as much coverage as do boys' (i.e., scores for girls' sports are not reported over the PA system in the morning, whereas football, boys' basketball and hockey scores are routinely reported). They also discussed issues such as pep rallies for boys' sports, namely football, and not for girls' even though several of the girls' teams earned

their way to state championships. The Tucker Center staff worked with the participants to develop ways in which girls can approach these issues proactively and promote change in their own schools. The participants talked about letter writing campaigns, marketing strategies they can use to promote their sports within their school and community, and how to most effectively approach faculty and staff. One group talked about developing their own workshop, which they would bring to the middle school in order to promote girls and women in sport. The following quotes capture some of the workshop participants' reactions:

"I liked being able to talk openly about everything. I heard lots of different opinions and that has helped in broadening my view of things. The workshop makes you want to make a difference."

— Student at Blaine High School

"I liked the girl power of it. It was fun to know that other girls feel like me and want to change it like me."

— Student at Johnson High School

"It's a good experience to help build better and stronger women."

— Student at New Richmond High School



In summary, participation in the workshop had significant and long-lasting impact. How do we know this? The answer is found in the evaluation forms and in girls' individual statements made to each other and Tucker Center personnel. The "Image Is Everything" experience not only provided girls with the tools to critically look at the media, it also taught them how to develop concrete action plans to change inequitable practices. As a result, it empowered them to be agents of social change by showing them that they possess the skill and the right to speak up against racist, sexist, and homophobic attitudes and practices both in their own school and communities, as well as in society at large.

"I learned a lot about things I never even noticed. For example, how people look at us [as athletes].

— Student at Columbia Heights High School

"I really enjoyed making the posters so that our school can benefit from what we learned."

— Student at Columbia Heights High School

