Three Rivers Youth
Student Consultant, Michael Livanos
Community Partner, Thomas Bellucci

I: The Consulting Situation

Organization

The Three Rivers Youth (TRY) main administration office located at 2039 Termon Avenue, Pittsburgh, coordinates the activities of its various youth program locations throughout Allegheny County. There are four major program areas. Group homes provide long-term housing for children to promote independent living skills. The Shelter Program provides short-term housing for runaway children and tries to place them back with their family. The Family Partnership Program provides family therapy door-to-door. Finally, the fourth program is a host of smaller services which fill the gaps between these previous three, providing everything from very-long-term housing to one-day holdovers for children skipping school.

An expansive organization, TRY has 164 staff positions, most of which are full time, though some are part time or volunteer. The top level of administration consists of Peggy Harris, CEO, Tom Bellucci, COO, Doug Jackson, CFO, Kathleen Rawlins, Director of Development and Marketing, Sebastian Lacy, Human Resources, and Jackson Angela, Continuous Quality Improvement. Each program and location has managers, supervisors, and support staff, which work closely with the administration.

All of Allegheny County is served by this organization, though there is limited space at each program location. Working closely with the county, TRY sends children from shelters to the group homes of other organizations, while taking in children that fit most closely to their programs. Thus it is the county which provides almost all of the organization's clients and funding. In most cases, TRY charges the county a fixed rate for each child, per time period, based on how difficult the child is to care for. In addition to this funding, TRY also receives a comparatively small amount of money from donations.

Programs & Facilities

There are 5 Therapeutic Group Homes for youth that have long-term stays.

McMurray House for 8 adolescent females, 466 Thompsonville Road, McMurray, PA has 10 full time staff positions.

Academy House for 8 adolescent males, 253-55 Academy Avenue, Mt. Lebanon, PA has 10 full time staff positions.

Brighton House for 4 adolescent females, 3865-37 Brighton Road, Pittsburgh, PA has 7 full time staff positions

Mt. Lebanon House for 8 adolescent females, 124-126 Mt. Lebanon Boulevard, Mt. Lebanon, PA has 10 full time staff positions.

Termon House for 10 adolescent females, 2051 Termon Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA has 13 full time staff positions.

Each of the group homes has 1 supervisor, 1 therapist, 1 senior residential counselor, and multiple residential counselors. Each one of these locations has 1 staff-only computer and 1 printer, most not connected to the Internet. No critical information is routinely stored or transmitted from these computers.

The Dithridge Shelter and The Family Partnership Program, both housed at 200 N. Dithridge Street, Pittsburgh, PA, keep 8 networked, staff-only computers. The shelter program keeps 12 beds and has 19 full time staff positions. The Family Partnership Program has a full time staff of 20 people.

The Loft, a short-term house, has 4 beds and is co-located with the Transitional Living Program, a long-term house, which also has 4 beds. Both are located at 508 Franklin Avenue, Wilkinsburg, PA and share 9 full time staff members and 2 staff-only computers. These computers are networked with those at the Training center and both buildings connect to the internet via shared DSL.

The Safety Zone, a single day center, has 7 full time staff members and 1 staff-only computer. It is located at 100 Grant Street, Pittsburgh, PA.

The Hub, located at 26th and Smallman Streets, Pittsburgh, PA, keeps 2 computers for staff and 6 for kids. Currently there is no data on the staff.

The Training Center, for computer skill building, is located on 512 Franklin Avenue, Wilkinsburg, PA and houses 10 computers. These computers are networked with those at The Loft and both buildings connect to the Internet via shared DSL.

The Administrative Office at 2039 Termon Avenue has a full time staff of 16 and keeps 6 networked computers.

Staff
The body of staff which makes policy, sets guidelines, and steers the organization is entirely located at the administrative office. The main players of the administration were mentioned in the overview. After talking with Thomas Bellucci, the Community Partner for this project, and Michael Swaitek, a part time computer consultant for TRY, it became apparent that most members of the staff have no computer skills at all. Mr. Bellucci himself is quite proficient with many different computer programs, including the Microsoft Office Suite, and database interaction and design using MS Access. Mr. Bellucci carries his Handspring PalmOS device equipped with wireless internet wherever he travels and expresses a general interest in computer software. Mr. Swaitek has administered several large networks managed with Microsoft Windows Domain Servers and has multiple computer software and hardware certifications. He has applied this knowledge in helping to write a plan for connecting the different locations over the internet via a server. It is the opinion of both Mr. Bellucci and Mr. Swaitek that the current staff knows very little about computers and is reluctant to learn about new software. In one recent instance Mr. Bellucci offered training in Microsoft Office to the staff, few showed interest. Staff in positions that require database entry and update are already trained in that task.

Technical Environment & Management
All computers run on either Windows 2000 or XP, most equipped with Microsoft Office and little else. The computers at the administrative office are under the close watch of Mr. Swaitek, who works part time in an office in the administrative building. Mr. Swaitek handles all problems for all remote locations personally, but his time is stretched by travel to and from these locations. Mr. Bellucci has been involved in troubleshooting basic computer issues around the office and teaching staff members basic computer skills.

Technology Planning
There is no current technology plan for the organization, although Mr. Swaitec is slowly moving towards the initial goals in his proposed plan, which is still in the process of being approved. Mr. Doug Jackson,

CFO, is Mr. Swaitec's boss and the last word on technology budgeting. Mr. Bellucci is influential in technology planning since he is both tech-savvy and involved with the staff's use of technology.

Internal & External Communications

While there is a network in the administrative building and limited internet access, there is no electronic file-sharing or email transmission other than that to save a walk across the office. All of the group homes have modems in their staff computers, though the entire organization shares 1 AOL account with several login names. Mr. Bellucci holds a temporary email account connected with his personal ISP service which he occasionally lends to staff.

Information Management

Most static information, such as policy manuals, is still kept on paper, although it is scanned or re-typed then stored digitally when there are updates and edits. Frequently updated data, like youth client information and family information is kept on a relational database in the administration office. Since there is no remote access to the database and the house locations have no internet connectivity, information updates must be moved via paper forms to the administrative office and entered by hand. Marine Stauder, a staff member at TRY, selects children (clients) from the CYF Database, run by the county, to become candidates for the TRY group housing program. Books are kept electronically, and accounting is done with PeachTree financial software. All databases managed by TRY are backed up periodically.

Consulting Focus: Improve information transfer between remote locations and the administrative office

Description: For staff at TRY, any excessive time spent managing records takes away from the mission, helping youth (clients) "change their lives." TRY has information coming from multiple remote locations to the administrative office. As of this consulting report, some information was entered into databases and some is kept in filing cabinets, to be eventually disposed of. This problem caused chronic slowdowns in the everyday operations of TRY at its remote locations, pulling the attention of staff away from clients. At the administrative office employees had to process and manage the load of information throughout the day. Another consequence of keeping paper documents was that records were prone to getting lost and could not be stored and recalled with ease. Streamlining the process of information transfer to the administrative office could help the organization direct more staff time and organization funds to the client. The consulting task was to first survey a sample group of remote locations to identify staff computer skill level and staff's opinions and suggestions on the information sharing process. The second step was to increase the CP's knowledge of the staff opinions and suggestions and remote file and information sharing. The final step was to develop a plan to create a simple data-sharing system.

Approach: The consultant met with the staff supervisors of the group homes. The consultant asked the supervisors to discuss opinions on the process of information sharing between the remote locations and the administrative office. The consultant introduced the idea of computer communications as a new method of information transfer and asked the supervisors to make suggestions on potential uses for email in the process. Since some supervisors had email experience and some do not, the consultant furnished suggestions on email use to stimulate the conversation. The goal was to make the supervisors involved and interested in this technology upgrade and aware that TRY is interested in staff opinions and suggestions. The CP then provided a list of administration members likely to send out content over this new email system. A similar meeting was conducted with those members. The consultant then presented and discussed the results of the meeting with the CP. The two worked together to author a plan for the

new information sharing model, outlining software specifications, necessary hardware and software purchases, an internet connection method, and the specific content to be transmitted.

Expected outcomes:
  Supervisors at remote locations would be involved in the technology planning process and will be more interested in using the technology upgrades
  The administrative staff would be involved in the content distribution planning process and will be more interested in sending out information in new ways
  The CP would know faults in the current information transfer process and be able to correct some problems immediately
  The CP would know the average computer skill level of supervisors
  The CP would know how to go about creating a technology plan for future issues and will gain domain expertise in communications planning
  Mr. Swaitec, TRY's technology consultant, would be able to easily incorporate this into his current technology plan, which covers this issue in far less detail. TRY would have a stronger technology plan.

Expected impact on capacity: This approach would give TRY a new blueprint for communications improvement, based on the suggestions of all involved in that process, and authored in part by the CP. The CP would have become aware of issues in technology planning with specific detail to communications planning. Staff members would feel more motivated about these specific technology upgrades as well as technology at TRY in general, thus raising the bar for the role of technology in the organization.

II: Outcomes and Recommendations

Consulting Focus: Improve information transfer between remote locations and the administrative office

Introduction: Throughout the consulting period the CP and the consultant examined communications between TRY locations. The findings have helped the CP gauge staff opinions on the issue and create a plan to correct problems and improve efficiency in the organization. Since the plan incorporates so many different perspectives it shows great potential for being applied, helping to bring new communications technology into the workplace.

Outcome 1:
The CP now has a list of the technical skills with specific detail to email skills for all of the staff supervisors. This will allow the CP and the consultant to build a technology report outlining steps for the creation of a tutoring program. Previously, specifics on the technical skills of supervisors were unknown. It was thought that most did not use email at home or think it would be a good idea for office communications. This has helped reassure the CP and the administration that it is time for an upgrade to the communications system and will put extra weight and priority on the technology report that the CP and consultant will produce.

Outcome 2:
The CP now has a list of technology related complaints from staff supervisors. Most of these complaints are related to the amount of time it takes to have simple problems solved. The CP will handle these complaints by advising the TRY part time technology consultant. Previously, technology issues were not

a formal topic of discussion at staff supervisor meetings. Therefore, the administration had no ability to gain regular feedback about the effectiveness of technical support. This feedback and future feedback cuts service wait time for important problems by giving the TRY technical consultant information on service priorities.

Outcome 3:
The CP now has ideas for initial content distribution as generated by the future distributors themselves. Key administrative staff members have shown that they are ready to start sending paper memos, updates, newsletters, policy manuals, in electronic format to save time and money. As important as putting an improved communications system in place is insuring that there will be useful information being sent out.

Outcome 4:
The staff has a chance to make suggestions and air opinions about email in the workplace. Most of them have stated that they use email at home and that it would be easy to setup at TRY for information transfer. Several staff members expressed relief and anticipation for new technology upgrades related to information transfer. All staff members stated that they are now more informed on technology upgrades to TRY. This has greatly expanded capacity for the organization since supervisors now are excited for new technology and appear to want to contribute their ideas. This helps acceptance of new technology and eagerness with which to learn about it. Consequently, the organization saves on excess training and technical support by receiving less questions and more feedback.

Recommendation 1: Circulate the Technology Report
The CP should forward the technology report to board members to inform them of upcoming changes in the organization. The CP may also circulate the document among current and potential funders to show improvements in efficiency and technology in the organization. It is also important for the CP to continue to probe the staff for technology feedback and create similar technology reports for future issues. As previously noted, these reports as these are valuable information and planning sources. This organized, forward planning mentality will help to ensure a lasting increase in capacity for TRY.

Recommendation 2: CP and Technical Consultant Collaboration
With the CP's ability to interact with staff and understand technology, he can relay information and conference with the TRY technical consultant, who will be vital in implementing the technology plan. The CP and technical consultant must strive to have a strong relationship so they may help each other with planned technology upgrades.

Recommended resources:
> The TRY technical consultant: He will play a valuable role in setting up the email system and in assisting the CP with future technology reports.
> http://search.office.microsoft.com/assistance/tasks.aspx?p=Outlook : "Microsoft Office Assistance Center – Outlook", by Microsoft, offers answers to common Outlook questions.
> http://www.npowerseattle.org/tools/techplanning.htm : "NPower Technology Planning Resources", a section of the NPower.org website, has links to several resources for technology planning in non-profit organizations

Recommendation for future project: Reorganize computers and computer network in the administrative office

Background: This recommendation comes from plans for consulting work that wasn't selected for use during this consulting term. The CP originally suggested it as a potential project at the beginning of the

term and it was seriously considered, although it was found to be very time consuming and not as impacting as the current consulting focus. It is important for this recommendation to be taken seriously since it would bring TRY up to a technology benchmark held by business network administrators around the world. Careful planning of regular computer software installation, computer hardware upgrades, and network layout are key in keeping technical support questions to a minimum. Also, an efficient and complete computer network scheme will allow administrative employees to work together on projects using the computer. This is currently not viable since certain computers are not connected to the network, and currently networked computers do not have a uniform data-sharing scheme. The ability for multiple staff members to work on the same project, or simply share files quickly, over several computers speeds up work tremendously. The efficiency of administrative work will increase, which will leave more time and funds for youth, TRY clients. Network administration courses and certification programs support a network layout similar to the one proposed in this recommendation.

Description: The TRY administrative office currently keeps a set of computers ranging between 366mhz and 1.2ghz. Some of these computers have peripherals, the most common being printers, although there is no uniformity between system configurations or printer models. Six of these computers are connected by a wireless network and interaction between them is accomplished with windows peer-to-peer file-sharing. Files are shared on a limited basis and none of the printers are shared, rendering the network fairly unused. One dial-up internet account is shared amongst the networked computers using Windows 2000 Professional's ICS (internet connection sharing) feature. There are a number of non-networked computers in the building, although not all necessitate sharing.

Approach: The organization purchases wireless network cards for the remainder of computers on the network, a non-profit licensed version of Windows 2000 Server, and a simple server to run as a domain controller. The technical management builds a simple server solution using Windows 2000 Server's out-of-the-box capabilities for internet sharing, file sharing, and printer sharing. The new wireless network cards are setup throughout the office and all computers are reconfigured to join the Windows 2000 domain. A DSL service provider will be selected to appropriately handle the transfer load into and out of the office. The administrative office has three floors, each with multiple offices, so 3 high capacity black and white laser printers with built in networking will be purchased and configured for network sharing. The server will be protected against failure by automated file redundancy via a RAID hard drive array.

Expected outcomes:
> Administrative staff will be able to easily recall documents from each others workstations
> All administrative staff will experience upgrade in print quality
> With a standardized system, administrative staff can answer each others minor computer questions
> Server-side file-sharing will ensure staff doesn't lose information in the event of computer failure
> Greatly streamlines administration for all programs by enhancing communication with remote locations outfitted with internet
> Staff will spend less time at the copy machine
> Staff will become more computer literate with prolonged use

Recommended resources:
The TRY technical consultant is a great resource for this project. He has much experience working in large scale organized network environments and has certification in network administration. The TRY technical consultant is very busy with repairs and support for the organization, so this task is difficult for him to accomplish on his own. If the CP makes a good case for this upgrade to the board and to management, extra funding and priority may be allocated to the project. The technology report found in appendix A serves as a good model for further investigation into the issue. The CP can also find more

help from student consultants for this project for a nominal fee or for course or independent study credit. The CP already has ties with Pittsburgh colleges such as La Roche and CMU and can draw on the tech savvy student base.

> About the consultant:
> Michael Livanos is a junior double-majoring in Computer Science and Business Administration at Carnegie Mellon University. After graduation, Michael plans on pursuing strong interests in venture finance and consulting with a technology focus. Once attaining a broader perspective, Michael plans to continue education in an MBA program.

**Three Rivers Youth
Communications Technology Report**

Introduction:
Between September and December of 2002, Thomas Bellucci, COO, and Michael Livanos, technical consultant and student at Carnegie Mellon University, worked in a partnership to improve technology at Three Rivers Youth (TRY). The focus of that work was to investigate an upgrade to the communications system within the organization. The purpose of this document is to record the findings over the consulting period.

Situation:
For staff at TRY, any excessive time spent managing records takes away from the mission, helping youth (clients) "change their lives." TRY has information coming from multiple remote locations to the administrative office. As of this consulting report, some information was entered into databases and some is kept in filing cabinets, to be eventually disposed of. This problem caused chronic slowdowns in the everyday operations of TRY at its remote locations, pulling the attention of staff away from clients. At the administrative office employees had to process and manage the load of information throughout the day. Another consequence of keeping paper documents was that records were prone to getting lost and could not be stored and recalled with ease. Streamlining the process of information transfer to the administrative office could help the organization direct more staff time and organization funds to the client.

Approach:
The consultant met with the staff supervisors of the group houses. The consultant asked the supervisors to discuss opinions on the process of information sharing between the remote locations and the administrative office. The consultant introduced the idea of computer communications as a new method of information transfer and asked the supervisors to make suggestions on potential uses for email in the process. Since some supervisors had email experience and some do not, the consultant furnished suggestions on email use to stimulate the conversation. The goal was to make the supervisors involved and interested in this technology upgrade and aware that TRY is interested in staff opinions and suggestions. The COO then provided a list of administration members likely to send out content over this new email system. A similar meeting was conducted with those members. The consultant then presented and discussed the results of the meeting with the COO.

Group house supervisor meeting findings:
The group house supervisors were asked to take part in a meeting with the COO and the consultant. Only six could attend, though their results are representative of the entire group. They were first asked about their experience with basic email, email attachments, the Internet, and Microsoft Word. For these questions, each participant was given a number to ensure anonymity. Their responses are recorded here:

1) Familiar with the AOL Internet service provider for personal use. Feels confident about surfing the web and basic email usage. Does not feel comfortable with attachments or Microsoft Word.

2) Familiar with the Stargate Internet service provider for personal and office use. Feels confident about surfing the web and email usage. Does feel comfortable with attachments and Microsoft Word.

3) Feels very uncomfortable about surfing the web and email usage. Does not feel comfortable with attachments or Microsoft Word.

4) Familiar with the CompuServe Internet service provider for personal use. Feels confident about surfing the web and basic email usage. Does feel comfortable with attachments and Microsoft Word.

5) Familiar with the AOL Internet service provider for personal use. Feels very uncomfortable about surfing the web although has basic email usage skills. Does not feel comfortable with attachments or Microsoft Word.

6) Familiar with the AOL Internet service provider for personal use. Feels confident about surfing the web and basic email usage. Does feel comfortable with attachments and Microsoft Word.

There was also discussion about current methods of transferring information between organization locations. The supervisors were asked as a group to discuss failures of the current system and changes that could be made using computers and email. The group reported that moving papers between offices by car was too slow and that keeping track of papers was too cumbersome. All agreed that using email to send and receive policy manual updates, daily announcements, scheduled events, etc. would be a superior system to the current.

Administrative staff meeting findings:

Administrative staff members who were in charge of sending information between organization locations were asked to take part in a meeting with the COO and the consultant. They were first asked about their experience with basic email, email attachments, the Internet, and Microsoft Word. They were also asked what they would send over the email system if it were installed. The names of the interviewed appear below followed by his or her responses.

Thomas Bellucci, COO
Familiar with the Libcom Internet service provider for office use and Adelphia cable modem Internet for home use. Feels confident about surfing the web and basic email usage. Does feel comfortable with attachments and Microsoft Word.

Planned usage of email:
      Send forms for fiscal requests, payroll, training, job announcements, and staff evaluations
      Survey staff members
      Distribute of policy manuals and updates
      Send reminders and updates

Peggy Harris, CEO
Familiar with the AOL Internet service provider for personal and office use. Feels confident about surfing the web and basic email usage. Does feel comfortable with attachments and Microsoft Word.

Planned usage of email:
      Distribute CEO Newsletter two times a month
      Send updates to board
      Transfer important items to secretary by email instead of disk
      Send management staff reports, updates, meeting schedules
      Send announcements to kids in group homes

Mary Jo McCarrick, Family Partnership Program Manager
Familiar with the AT&T WorldNet Internet service provider for personal and office use. Feels confident about surfing the web and basic email usage. Does feel comfortable with attachments and Microsoft Word.

Planned usage of email:
 Send program billing reports
 Send any document that doesn't require a signature
 Send meeting reminders

Maurine Stauder, Residential Director
Familiar with the AOL Internet service provider for personal and office use. Feels confident about surfing the web and basic email usage. Does feel comfortable with attachments and Microsoft Word.

Planned usage of email:
 Send operational schedules
 Send reminders and updates

All administrative staff members interviewed mentioned similar positive outcomes to the introduction of an organization wide email system. All stated that email would be an important time-saver over phone and fax communications. Most also stated that the current system of interoffice mail caused the occasional loss or delay of important documents. All were pleased to see that plans for a new email system were being developed.

Recommendation:
It is recommended that a simple email system be installed on the computer at each organization location. Each location already has dialup Internet access and an email address through Libcom. Michael Swaitek, the TRY technical consultant, will install the Microsoft Outlook email client and an Outlook address book on one computer at each location. He will also administer a training session to the staff supervisor or person in charge and leave him or her with a short manual on email use with Outlook, to be produced at some point in the future by Mr. Swaitek. At the administrative office, a similar install and training session will be conducted at the computer of each information distributor (as listed in the "administrative staff meeting findings" section). After these installation steps have been taken, there will be a meeting with the COO, Mr. Swaitek, and all those involved with the use of the email system. This meeting will be a reintroduction to its uses and benefits as well as the official starting point of its operation.