

Martial Arts for a Better Tomorrow

Why Society Needs this Program

- ❖ In 2003, juveniles were involved in 1 in 6 arrests for violent crime, 1 in 3 arrests for a property-offense, and 1 in 4 arrests for a weapons law violation (Bartollas, 2006).
- ❖ In 2003, 1,563,149 juveniles were arrested. Juvenile's constituted 25% of the entire population, and yet were arrested for 15.5% of all violent crimes committed and 28.9 % of all arrests made (Bartollas, 2006).
- ❖ It is suspected that over 90% of all juvenile crimes remain undetected, referred to as “undetected delinquency” (Bartollas, 2006).
- ❖ Juvenile arrests for murder grew 20% between 2004 and 2005 (Butts, 2006).
- ❖ Robbery arrests involving juveniles rose 11% between 2004 and 2005 (Butts, 2006).
- ❖ The number of violent crimes reported by NCVS (National Crime Victimization Survey) respondents who believed the offender was under the age of 18, increased by 57% from 2002-2005 (Butts, 2006).

Recognizing and Fulfilling Basic Needs

Psychological and Social Factors

“Martial Arts for a Better Tomorrow” is a philosophy as much as an enrichment and deterrent program for at-risk youths. The philosophy is that by changing the life of just one child, we can change the lives of hundreds through the future behaviors of that one child and his/her contributions to society. Juveniles have received much attention lately in various avenues of topics ranging from promoting good behaviors, deterring bad behaviors, and providing alternatives to gang involvement. Regardless of focus, however, there are several main ingredients essential to the development of a well-socialized child who will grow to become a beneficial part of our society. A few of these are family, peer and community relations. In fact, the US Department of Justice defined these as being 3 of the 5 factors that can put children at risk for delinquency (Shader, 2008).

The family category, of course, includes those factors which can occur at home. Parents can protect their children and possibly prevent delinquent behavior in their children in many ways. Some of these include providing warm, supportive relationships and monitoring their children, being social with their peers, and providing fair and consistent discipline (Bartollas, 2006). However, many children, especially those from lower socioeconomic groups, do not receive these benefits. This unmet “familial” need is most often cited as the largest contributing factor to the joining of gangs by youth. The Gang becomes the youth’s family and provides the supportive relationships and bonding they do not receive at home. “Martial Arts for a Better Tomorrow” proposes that the peer relations our youth receive from interactions in and outside of class in the Dojo will fulfill this unmet need and give youths a positive alternative to gangs.

Why Society Needs this Program *(continued)*

Looking back to our own childhoods, we can understand the importance that peer relationships have in a child's life. Proper socialization in younger years encourages the development of emotionally-stable and pro-social adults who benefit our society. Too often, economically deprived children do not receive this proper socialization which can lead to delinquent behaviors as juveniles and into adult years. The "Martial Arts for a Better Tomorrow" Program recognizes this and maintains a pro-social environment for youth with their peers and with adults.

Community relations is perhaps not an obvious concern for youth, but research has proven that youth who feel strongly connected to their community are far less likely to engage in antisocial behavior and delinquent acts than youth who are not (Bartollas, 2006). The "Martial Arts for a Better Tomorrow" Program emphasizes community involvement by regularly conducting public seminars, Belt Graduations, and numerous other events that involve the community as a whole, not just those involved in the martial arts. As part of the martial arts class, the youth will feel the support and care of the community during these events which should form lasting community ties and promote future pro-social behavior.

Research has proven that youth who are victims of crime are more likely to become offenders themselves. By providing youth with a means of physically defending themselves in violent communities and/or school, we lower the probability that this child will become a victim, further lowering the probability of the youth themselves turning to antisocial behaviors and/or crime. Additionally, when a youth feels confident of their ability to protect themselves, they are less likely to carry a knife or gun to school (Bartollas, 2006).

Physical Factors

The Martial Arts provide youth with an extra-curricular activity that provides physical and mental stimulation. A typical hour-long class provides students with regular stretching and exercise including the learning and mastery of a particular martial arts skill. These classes provide excellent physical fitness and cardiovascular benefits. In addition, martial arts teach self-discipline and focus. Research has shown that martial arts students often improve their school grades due to this increased focus and concentration learned (Hendrie, 2008).

Martial Arts students obtain numerous physical and mental benefits including increased focus, increased self-discipline, increased balance, physical appearance and ability, self-confidence, and respect. Research isn't needed to tell us that these factors are hugely beneficial to any child and will follow them through to their adult years.

Why Society Needs this Program *(continued)*

Summary

The concept of “childhood” is relatively recent, with respect to our nation’s history, in that its first partial definition was brought about due to child labor laws evoked around 1914. Compulsory public schooling and special legal protections for juveniles in the 1960s and 1970s also helped form the concept of “childhood”. The children’s rights movement, which became popular in the 1970s, probably has made the biggest impact in our view of childhood and the equitable and fair treatment of children as individual “beings”, different in age and conscience, but not different in their desire to be treated with respect and dealt with fairly (Bartollas, 2006).

Today, in an age where the time span of “childhood” is much longer than in the recent past, children need positive activities to keep them busy and growing. The Martial Arts fits perfectly to fill these additional years in a youth’s life as it applies to every aspect of the youth’s development: physical, mental, social and psychological.

Our Mission Statement

To provide equal opportunities of growth and positive pro-social development to economically disadvantaged youth through exposure to the Martial Arts, the values and tenets that it teaches, and positive role models who can nurture children’s capacity to think skillfully and critically. To deepen children’s predisposition to pro-social values such as kindness, helpfulness, personal responsibility and respect for others in order to provide them with qualities essential to leading humane and productive lives.

Our Vision Statement

Martial Arts for a Better Tomorrow is recognized nationally for the social, emotional and physical benefits it has helped provide to children all across the country. Research shows that children participating in the MABT program have lower drop-out rates, lower rates of antisocial or criminal behavior and gang involvement and less recidivism for former offenders. Other youth programs across the nation recognize the benefits of MABT and actively support our efforts by providing scholarship forms and information to disadvantaged children and their parents. Adolescent and adult crime rates drop as the values of the martial arts make a difference in children’s lives who then, as adults, become beneficial members of society and further this teaching in their own children.

Guiding Principles

To realize our mission and vision, we follow these principle guidelines:

- Actively market MABT for maximum community awareness of the program and its benefits to economically disadvantaged youth and society.
- Review participating martial arts schools regularly and vigorously to ensure all instructors provide positive and appropriate values to youth.
- Interview participating youth regularly to ensure the program is making the impact we desire and making adjustments where necessary.
- Actively forming alliances with other successful youth diversionary programs to maximize the benefits we can offer youth and the society they live in.
- Continuing education on youth development for all active members of MABT to understand as completely, to the extent possible, the social, psychological and physical needs of youth, to ensure our program is maximizing its value to today's youth.

Program Description

Overview

“Martial Arts for a Better Tomorrow”, MABT, offers economically disadvantaged youth an opportunity to benefit from the physical, mental, social and psychological benefits of the martial arts. Up until now, only economically privileged youth benefited from the martial arts (these programs can run several thousand dollars per year per child). MABT recruits martial arts schools and instructors to help change the world by helping disadvantaged youth recognize their potential.

Recruiting Schools and Getting Commitments

Once a martial arts school becomes a participant in the MABT program, they agree to provide three scholarships per year to a child of a family who shows financial need. This scholarship includes all the advantages and benefits received by paying children, including access to uniforms, practice equipment and summer camps. Students and instructors are required to create online journal entries at least once per week to document their progress in the program. Parents are encouraged to participate as well.

All schools requesting participation will require approval from our Board of Directors to ensure that each school and their instructors truly follow and honor the valuable martial arts principles that we wish to promote for these youth. Schools will need to provide along with their application three recommendations from current students detailing what values they have received from the martial arts and how their instructor helps instill those values. Only schools with the highest reputation for integrity, and the best-interest of the children in mind will be eligible to participate in our program.

Program Description *(continued)*

Awarding Scholarships

Applications for scholarship will include basic information about the youth and his parents including any prior delinquent or antisocial behavior by the parent or the youth, current and past school grades, involvement in other extracurricular activities, family income level and any physical or psychological ailments the youth may have been diagnosed with as well as standard identifying information (address, birth date, etc.). In addition, each application must be accompanied by a letter of recommendation from two adults, one of which must be from a school official or aftercare officer, if applicable. The youth and their parents will be required to sign a promissory note stating that if chosen for the program they will maintain a minimum of 90% attendance to class (at the dojo) and social events held by the Martial Arts School, regular school attendance of at least 90%, participate in recording of weekly journal entries, provide an entrance and exit interview, and an understanding that their involvement in this program may be revoked at any time if their behavior or involvement does not meet minimum expectations by the instructor.

All applications for scholarship to a participating school are reviewed by one member of MABT, the main instructor of the school as well as one additional school employee as appointed by the instructor, and two of the youth's peers who are members in the school and volunteer to participate. These five individuals will review all applications, and submit their recommendations to MABT. A meeting will then be coordinated either in person or by phone to discuss awarding the three scholarships. A final decision will be made based on majority opinion and the winners of the scholarship will be notified by phone and in writing. Once the youth and their parents have accepted the scholarship and enrolled at the school, the scholarship winners will be photographed and a public statement released to the media.

Marketing

Pro MA Marketing will provide all marketing materials required to effectively promote the Scholarship program to the public. Schools are responsible for media coverage including news and radio announcements. Marketing materials including flyers, marketing cards, door hangers and leadbox inserts will be provided to each school as part of a marketing package. Schools may then order printing of these materials from Pro MA Marketing or print them locally.

Follow-Up

All scholarship participants and their parents will conduct an entrance interview that will help determine the child's current physical, emotional and social status, as well as an exit interview in regards to their participation with the school and report on all positive and negative factors of the program. Personal information and interviews will be provided on each participant to MABT so follow-up can be conducted upon program exit to determine the effectiveness of the program.

Goals and Objectives

- ❖ Educate the community on the benefits of martial arts for youths and encourage program participation.
 - The community will learn about the program through media news coverage, flyers distributed to communities and schools, door hangers distributed in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods, and leadboxes displayed prominently in areas where economically disadvantaged youth and their parents will most likely encounter them (free health clinics for youth, delinquency prevention program sites such as P.A.L. and The R.I.C.H. House).
 - Encourage community participation by showcasing youth achievements during community events, and easy methods of participation and donations through websites and community projects.
- ❖ Provide a measurable increase in the youth's pro-social activity and behavior, and school grades.
 - Entrance interviews of the youth and their parents will determine the youth's current level of community involvement, social behavior and general attitude toward society. Exit interviews with the youth, their school and their parents will determine if progress has been made in these areas.
 - Weekly journals created by youth, their parents and school instructors will show the gradual evolvement of desired behaviors and attitudes as a progression throughout the year.
 - For those youths previously involved in crime or delinquent activity, aftercare (probation) officers will be informed of the youth's participation in the MABT program and required to report any further criminal or delinquent activity.
- ❖ Reduce delinquent behavior and gang involvement in the community through providing positive factors that counteract the theorized reasons for these behaviors.
 - Provide positive role-models who will instill positive values and behaviors to youth.
 - All instructors will encourage positive values and behaviors through their own behavior and actions, and discourage antisocial values and behaviors.
 - Provide a supportive, "familial" type away-from-home social structure that will provide youth with an alternative means to receiving the encouragement, love and support that they may not receive at home.
 - All instructors will be sure the youth is aware of their "open door" policy and that they are available for the youth to talk to about anything that may be concerning them. Instructors will handle the situation to the best of their ability and obtain the assistance of qualified professionals in any area which they cannot effectively handle without undermining the trust of the youth.
 - Provide the basis for positive peer interactions to promote social health.
 - All instructors will encourage peer interaction of all students and be certain that peer discriminations do not exist due to race, sex or social status. Instructors will teach peers to be encouraging and supportive of one another in all social aspects.

Benefits to the Participating Martial Arts School

It should be apparent by now the obvious benefits to at-risk youth that this program will provide. There are also numerous benefits for the Martial Arts school that chooses to participate in the program. The most rewarding benefit is probably in knowing that you are making a huge impact in a child's life who otherwise would not have this opportunity, and with this impact, indirectly making the world a better place, and our society's future a little bit brighter. However, these benefits also include spiritual, financial and personal growth.

Many martial arts schools already recognize the importance of marketing, and the value of media coverage. By participating in the MABT program, the martial arts school has a unique opportunity for extensive media coverage to inform the public of the scholarships available. Throughout the program, media coverage can regularly cover the improvement an individual youth has made through the program.

Additional marketing opportunities present themselves in the form of delinquency prevention programs who will be happy to provide information about your program to those youth in their care and their parents. Getting local police department juvenile divisions and other juvenile delinquency prevention programs involved and on-board will further provide marketing exposure for the martial arts school.

Finally, let's face it. What goes around, comes around. Ghandi knew it, Christians know it, and even Justin Timberlake knows it. And you know it too. By giving the gift of martial arts to youth's who would have no other means to experience these benefits, martial arts schools will reap rewards beyond what they are even able to imagine.

What happens after the youth's scholarship ends after one year?

In a perfect world, the youth would be able to continue his learning at the martial arts school free of charge but unfortunately the martial arts schools need to pay their rent, their salaries and other operating expenses in order to continue to provide this service. MABT has a solution that will allow children to continue after their one year scholarship ends.

Upon winning and accepting a scholarship program, a youth will within one month be featured on our website in a Sponsorship Program area. This page of the website will list complete biographies on the youth including regular updates on the youth's progress in the program as well as links to videos of belt testing's, etc. Citizens and businesses who want to become involved by making a cash donation to MABT will be encouraged to sponsor a child instead. They will select a child from this page and essentially pay for their martial arts education for an additional year. Once the child has been sponsored they will be removed from the Sponsorship Page and informed of their sponsorship. The sponsor will have the opportunity to communicate with their sponsored youth through the website. They will also be notified by email each time an event occurs where their sponsored child will be present. This way they can be actively involved in their sponsored youth's development if they so choose. For more details, please visit our website for a full description of our sponsorship program.

Works Cited

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Make a difference in these youth's lives. It will make a difference in yours.