

12-1-1999

Lions-Quest programs continue to teach the basics to youth

Sue Crosson-Knutson

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/slceslgen>

Recommended Citation

Crosson-Knutson, Sue, "Lions-Quest programs continue to teach the basics to youth" (1999). *Service Learning, General*. 195.
<https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/slceslgen/195>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Service Learning at DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Service Learning, General by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu.





LIONS-QUEST

programs continue to teach the basics to youth

"Life is tough for kids today," stated principal Allan Richardson to the 1998 Lions District 201-V2 convention in Port Fairy, Australia. "Every day, you read about it in the newspapers — child neglect, youth suicide, drug abuse and family breakdown. In my role as principal of a primary school, I deal with it every day."

From experience, Richardson knows that family issues affect children. "How would you cope," the principal asked the Lions, "if your father walked out on you last night? How would you feel if you were still left sitting at the school gate long after the other kids had gone, knowing that your mum was still at the pokies (in jail)? What if the night before, you watched your dad bashing up on your mum, or he came home drunk — again?"

Richardson told the Lions that today's students have other concerns, too. "What would you do if the kids in your class threatened to bash you?" he stated. "And, what if you were so hungry, you stole food from other kids' lunch bags?"

As a principal, Richardson couldn't offer the Lions an instant cure for society's ills. Changing the behavior of adults is outside the realm of the classroom. Instead, Richardson talked about the impact, value and benefits of Lions-Quest for youth.

Learning to cope with everyday life

The history of Quest begins with Rick Little. In 1975, this 19-year-old college student from Ohio, USA,

was involved in a serious car accident. His recuperation took several months.

During this time, Little realized that he was unprepared to handle life's difficulties. As the child of an alcoholic parent, Little's home life was less than ideal. He had never learned to make decisions affecting his future.

Educators must complete Lions-Quest training workshops prior to teaching the curriculum. By sponsoring and attending workshops, Lions enable the program to be presented at local schools.

Determined to develop these life skills, Little returned to college. He changed his major to psychology. He spent months traveling throughout the United States talking to high school students. Two thousand interviews later, he knew his intuition was correct. There were many other students who also lacked life skills training.

Little spent the next year writing to foundations requesting funds for his new venture. Three major foundations responded to his grant proposals. Little decided to name his new nonprofit youth advocacy/curriculum development organization, the Quest National Center.

In 1977, with help from educators, child development experts, researchers and curriculum developers, Quest published its first life skills curriculum, *Skills for Living*. The school-based curriculum taught life skills to students ages 14 to 18.

Around this time, Lions decided to take action against drug abuse in young people. In 1983, the association made a five-year commitment to support drug abuse prevention education. To fulfill this objective, Lions entered into a cooperative agreement with Quest. The programs later created as a result of this agreement were known as Lions-Quest.

Since that day, Quest has continued to create award-winning life skills curricula for school-age students. Lions have remained true to their initial commitment. They have supported Lions-Quest initiatives around the world.

Three different Lions-Quest programs

Today, there are three age-appropriate Lions-Quest curricula.

- *Skills for Growing* - for students ages five through nine
- *Skills for Adolescence* - for students ages 10 through 14
- *Skills for Action* - for students ages 14 through 18.

All three of the Lions-Quest programs teach young people everyday skills such as:

- learning to accept responsibility
- communicating effectively
- setting goals
- making healthy decisions
- resisting pressure to use alcohol or drugs.

How does Lions-Quest work?

Through classroom and at-home assignments and activities, Lions-Quest students learn to make decisions concerning real-life situations. Teachers, parents and peers help the students make these decisions.

Both the student workbook and the at-home activity guide are important components of Lions-Quest curricula. In school, students participate in open discussions, games, activities, skits and role-plays. At home, the workbook assignments often require student/parent interaction. In this way, parents help guide their children toward good decisions. This is an important step in developing competence. The lessons reinforce healthy behavior for children and parents alike.

"Children who don't learn to make wise decisions may develop feelings of helplessness and fall prey to negative influences," states the Lions-Quest curricula. These negative influences include pressure to use drugs, join gangs, use a gun or become sexually active at an early age.

There are many age-appropriate techniques for introducing students to decision-making. Younger children (ages five through nine) can practice this skill through assignments in their illustrated *Skills for Growing* workbook. Together, parents and students can decide whether to say yes or no to:

- a box of matches
- teeth brushing
- playing with a gun
- accepting candy from a stranger
- accepting a ride from a stranger
- putting on a car seat belt
- setting the dinner table.

Staying away from drugs is another wise decision. In the *Skills for Adolescence* curriculum, teachers ask students to list five of their favorite activities. Then, the teacher asks the students to cross off the list any activity that would be hard to complete if one had: difficulty breathing, difficulty walking, difficulty

remembering or was especially nervous. The teacher then explains that these are common reactions of drug use.

In the *Skills for Action* curriculum, students work as a team to arrive at decisions. In one exercise, the teacher asks the students to create a list of possible service projects. Then, the students must define how the project:

- addresses a real need
- is interesting and challenging
- connects students to their neighborhood
- requires the development of new skills, attitudes and knowledge
- requires little or no money
- can be achieved within the time available
- has a positive effect on the lives of others.

More than drug awareness

The World Health Organization (WHO) has recognized the importance of teaching life-skills to young people. These skills include:

- decision-making
- creative thinking
- communications
- self-awareness
- coping with emotions
- problem solving
- critical thinking
- relationship skills
- empathy
- coping with stress.

WHO states that life-skills education is effective in helping to prevent:

- substance abuse
- adolescent pregnancy
- peer conflicts.

"Life skills education has been demonstrated as effective in the developed world in such areas as the prevention of substance abuse, adolescent pregnancy, prevention of bullying," reported WHO. "There are also life skills programs to prevent HIV/AIDS, for peace education and for the promotion of self-confidence and self-esteem. A number of developing countries have adapted life skills education in the curricula and others have shown keen interest."

Beyond theory

The question, "Does life skills education work?" has been asked by Lions, parents, teachers, and society. The answer, according to testimonials, appears to be, "yes."

In March 1997, Rutgers University researchers published a study that compared the components of the major substance abuse prevention programs in the United States. This study included the *Drug Abuse Resistance Education (D.A.R.E)*, *Here's Looking at You, 2000*, and *Growing Healthy* programs. The study revealed that there are 11 necessary elements for a good prevention program. These elements are:

- planning and design
- timing
- social factors
- school policy
- staff training
- implementation
- family and community involvement
- individualized curriculum
- instructional features
- support services
- educational guidelines.

Of the six most recognized programs, **only Lions-Quest featured all 11** of the elements needed for a successful substance abuse prevention program.

Taught in 36 countries

When United States Lions realized that teaching life skills was effective in preventing drug use, Lions in other countries requested the program. Yet, before Lions-Quest curricula can be translated and culturally adapted, both the ministry of education and the local school district must approve its contents.

Then, Lions can start sponsoring the training of teachers at two or three-day Lions-Quest workshops. Each curriculum has its own training program.

As of January 1999, Lions have sponsored the training of teachers in 36 countries worldwide. **This makes Lions-Quest the most widely used life-skills/drug**