



CITY OF ORLANDO

July 7, 2009

To Whom It May Concern,

It is a privilege to write this letter of support for Community Concepts Services, Inc. (CCSI), an organization I have gotten to know well over the past 6 years. In my capacity as Director of Families, Parks and Recreation for the City of Orlando, I have overseen contracts with CCSI for hundreds of thousands of dollars, reviewed the effectiveness of services they provide, and worked alongside them to plan and implement the City's Parramore Kidz Zone (PKZ) program. CCSI has been an indispensable partner in the success of this program from day one.

CCSI was there when all we had was the dream of "moving the needle" on juvenile crime, teen pregnancy, and high school drop out rates in Orlando's highest crime, highest poverty neighborhood - Parramore. Since then, as a core member of our coalition, CCSI has performed the role of community organizer, building a strong relationship with youth and their parents in a neighborhood plagued by street gangs, drug dealers, prostitutes, high school drop outs, and youth shooting each other and being shot.

We aim to enroll all 2,000 Parramore children in Parramore Kidz Zone. At first, we thought this would be difficult because the neighborhood is notoriously mistrustful and apathetic. Nevertheless, remarkably, by the end of year three, CCSI had enrolled virtually 100% of the neighborhood's children in the program. This is due to the extraordinary talent of CCSI, its director and staff. These talents are described below.

CCSI has the gift of grassroots marketing. Tactics they have successfully employed include organizing neighborhood events, "hooking up" vehicles that become "mobile billboards" in the neighborhood, knocking on doors and stopping to talk to people in the streets, hiring neighborhood youth to spread the word about programs to other youth, and so forth. Most social service organizations are bewildered when it comes to reaching underserved populations and there is no "How To" book that teaches them how to do it. From what I've seen, CCSI could write the book.

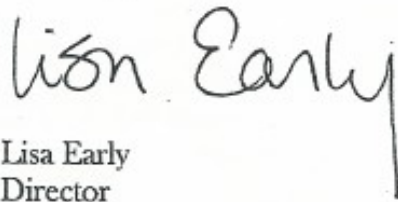
CCSI is also remarkably talented at listening to, understanding, and acting upon the needs of youth who live in neighborhoods like Parramore. CCSI operates teen peer groups and lets youth guide adults in developing programs. As a result, CCSI has engaged hundreds of Parramore's most at-risk teens in a wide range of programs, and worked with youth to develop a new teen hang-out in the neighborhood, designed by the teens themselves, and funded by a donation from Orlando Magic NBA Forward Dwight Howard.

Finally, CCSI's staff is deeply committed to this cause. The following quote, taken from the American Youth Policy Forum's 2006 publication entitled *Whatever It Takes: How Twelve Communities Are Reconnecting Out-of-School Youth*, sums up what CCSI is all about:

Committed adults, steadfast in their support of young people's success, are the key element of dropout recovery: the teachers, mentors, counselors, coaches, and others who commit themselves with passion to direct involvement in the lives of the young people and who make themselves available around the clock. Adults must honestly believe that they can help young people to overcome the ego-smashing effects of past failure and trauma. Repeatedly, in the face of seemingly overwhelming contrary forces, they simply refuse to give up on young people. They search relentlessly for more effective ways to reach and teach even the least promising and most recalcitrant.

It is with absolutely confidence that I recommend CCSI for your support. By supporting CCSI, you will create a world of good for our community's most at-risk youth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lisa Early". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lisa Early
Director
Families, Parks and Recreation Department
City of Orlando

LE/vs



CITY OF ORLANDO

OFFICE OF
BUDDY DYER
MAYOR

January 5, 2008

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in recognition of the highly esteemed efforts of Community Concepts Services, Inc. (CCSI), a partner in the City of Orlando's Parramore Kidz Zone (PKZ) program.

When I first became Orlando's Mayor in 2003, I made a public commitment to revitalize the City's historic Parramore neighborhood, which at that time was challenged by the City's highest child poverty and juvenile crime rates. CCSI stepped up to the plate as one of the earliest partners in our efforts. I have personally witnessed the amazing work they accomplished over the past 4 years, by engaging older youth in positive, often life changing activities. In one example, CCSI organized neighborhood teens to "hook up" an old donated car with a custom sound system, custom pearl paint job, and PKZ logos on the hood, trunk and doors. The car is now recognized throughout Parramore as a moving advertisement for PKZ and its programs.

On many occasions, CCSI has brought youth to City Council meetings, City events, and even to my office, so they can advocate for programs that will keep themselves and other neighborhood youth on the right track. Because of CCSI, Parramore's youth have found their voice and are turning their community around.

In fact, juvenile crime decreased 28% in Parramore between 2006 and 2007, since PKZ began. CCSI has played a major role in making this possible, by increasing the engagement of older youth in positive activities and providing positive adult role models who do whatever it takes to help neighborhood youth succeed.

Children do better when communities support their success, and CCSI is doing this by operating programs that positively impact children's lives. The organization has been an invaluable – in fact, indispensable – partner in the City's efforts to develop a model of juvenile crime prevention. We hope to replicate these efforts in other City neighborhoods some day.

CCSI is an exceptional non-profit that has played a pivotal role in the Parramore neighborhood and has made a huge difference for the City of Orlando. It is an honor to have worked with them, and this recognition is greatly deserved.

Sincerely,

Buddy Dyer
Mayor