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Project helps communities help themselves

Louisville is one of 22 cities chosen for pilot program

By BUTCH JOHN
The Courier-Journal

For what could become a decade-long commitment to Louisville's disadvantaged youths, one of the nation's largest charitable organizations is asking just one thing of its local partners:

Let it help.

Louisville is among 22 cities chosen for the demonstration phase of the Annie E. Casey Foundation's "Making Connections" project, a program de-

signed to help youths in troubled neighborhoods.

Casey, the 10th largest private foundation in the nation, will spend three years and more than a half-million dollars in Louisville, Indianapolis and each of the 20 other cities to study and help local agencies try to strengthen programs in targeted neighborhoods, said Sammy Moon, senior consultant for the Baltimore-based charity.

If the foundation and local officials agree that the partnership and programs have been successful, Casey will commit at least 10 years and several million dollars in 2002 to a long-term deal to continue the initiatives, Moon said.

"It's based on a fairly simple

premise — that kids are only as healthy and well-off as families they live in, and families only as healthy and strong and well-off as the neighborhood they live in," Moon said.

The impetus for change has to come from within the community, he said.

That's why, while offering roughly \$600,000 to \$700,000 in cash and technical assistance over the first three years, with no guarantee of results, the foundation is not trying to dictate local policy, Moon said.

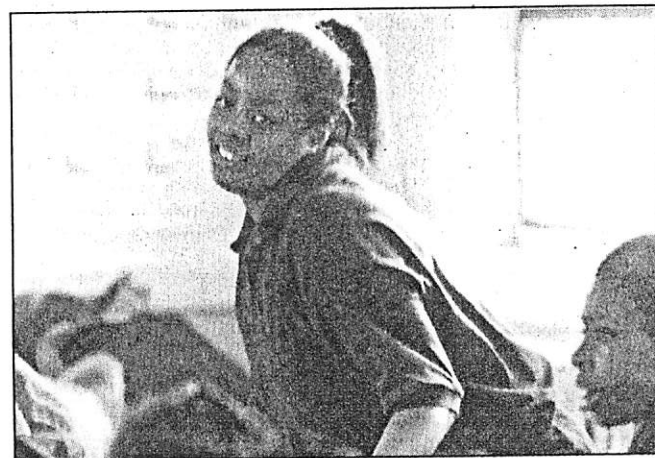
"It will bring a new aspect that hasn't been done before. We'll have to see how well it works," said Ella Roberts, president of the Shelby Park Neighborhood Association. "But they will be listening, I

think and I hope, rather than be telling."

The Casey Foundation selected the 22 cities based on what it considered a city's need and its willingness to cooperate, as well as previous experience in the cities, Moon said.

The foundation has a long history of working with University of Louisville statisticians and education officials on projects like its annual and special "Kids Count" reports on the well-being of children.

The cities are not competing with each other for long-term grants from the organization, which has nearly \$3.5 billion in assets. All or none could quali-



BY ARZA BARNETT, THE COURIER-JOURNAL
Ki'Toria Holloway, 15, participated in an African dance class at the Presbyterian Community Center in Louisville.

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