

Operation Capital



As a strong supporter of Junior ROTC and the role it plays within American society, Sports Network International has followed the progress of an exciting program entitled *Operation Capital*. This initiative, explained here by Army ROTC Cadet Command, provides a fighting chance for schools to break the spiraling problems that are currently mounting within our educational systems.



In September of 1988, Major General Robert Wagner, then the Commanding General of the U.S. Army ROTC Cadet Command, visited the Junior ROTC program at an inner city high school. What he saw there had a profound impact on his view of the world in our nation's schools. He found many students out of class for no apparent reason. He saw hallways littered with trash. The most telling point was the school memorial, commemorating the founding of the school. It had been obviously defaced and neglected for quite some time. The only section of the school reflecting student pride was the area kept by the Army Junior ROTC cadets.

From this visit, the concept for "Operation Capital" was born. General Wagner felt that, in certain cases, inner city school districts were under siege. Decreasing budgets, street and drug related crimes, and degeneration of their local neighborhoods had all dealt crippling blows to these schools' ability to accomplish their most important task: to educate children and help prepare them to succeed as adults.

Under General Wagner's guidance, Operation Capital was developed to promote the prevention of substance abuse, improve graduation rates and promote character and values education in selected inner city schools. With his assumption of command in the spring of 1990, Major General Wallace C. Arnold has continued to emphasize the strengthening of those selected inner city programs and the continuation of Operation Capital.

Operation Capital began in Washington, D.C. in the fall of 1989 and has since expanded into eight additional cities. These include Dallas, Denver, Baltimore, Chicago, Honolulu and Detroit as well as Caddo Parish Schools in Shreveport and Ysleta Independent Schools in El Paso. These schools maintain more than 20,000 cadets in 116 high schools.

Through Operation Capital, Army Junior ROTC has synchronized its efforts with the Department of Education's America 2000 Strategy. As President Bush has said, "If we want America to remain a leader, a force for good in the world, we

must lead the way in educational innovation. And if we want to combat crime and drug abuse, if we want to create hope and opportunity in the bleak corners of this country where there is now nothing but defeat and despair, we must dispel the darkness with the enlightenment that a sound and well-rounded education provides."

Operation Capital is in concert with America 2000 with its three main goals: to increase the rate of students graduating from high school; to ensure all students learn to use their minds well, so that they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning and productive employment; and finally, to offer a disciplined environment, free of drugs & violence, that is conducive to learning.

The Operation Capital action plan focuses efforts and resources into inner city Army Junior ROTC units to improve the quality of existing programs. The intent is to increase enrollment levels and retention rates. Inner city school systems tend to have a high density of programs; therefore, a large percentage of the student population is exposed to Junior ROTC. This high exposure rate allows Army Junior ROTC cadets to have a positive influence on large numbers of their peers.

Resources for Operation Capital support a comprehensively designed program. The main component is a Program of Instruction that directly and indirectly addresses the importance of remaining drug free and graduating from high school. The major subjects taught are leadership, citizenship and American history, effective communication, and physical fitness. Goal setting and team building skills, the prevention of substance abuse, the promotion of self esteem and career opportunities are interwoven through the curriculum. In addition, resources for audio-visual materials and equipment to support the program, additional instructors, a coordinator for each targeted school system, and advertising are committed based on availability. Funding in many cases is matched or supplemented by the school system or community to provide resources for Operation Capital activities.

The action plan for Operation Capital depends on developing and implementing initiatives that integrate the community, school administration, and federal agencies in partnership to meet the goals of the program. These initiatives thus far have included a number of exciting and innovative projects.

The kick-off ceremony for Operation Capital in Dallas was held in conjunction with the Take Action '90 Youth Conference and coincided with the beginning of the 1990 Texas Red Ribbon campaign, Texan's War on Drugs. In El Paso, Army Junior ROTC cadets have developed a presentation for local sixth grade students. These peer presentations focus on detrimental effects of substance abuse and sexual promiscuity. Because of the success of the program, the school district is including more schools and more time for the presentations.

This past summer in Detroit, Army Junior ROTC sponsored a free program for non-cadet students. This "Summer Challenge Program" introduced students to various activities in which Junior ROTC cadets participate. The program was very well received and is expected to become an annual event.

This spring, through Operation Capital, Army Junior ROTC is very proud to be sponsoring the inaugural National Capital Drill Classic, hosted by national event manager Sports Network International. The NCDC is open to all Junior ROTC units in the Washington D.C. regional area and will be held at the D.C. National Guard Armory on March 21, 1992. This drill meet will be a focal point for the Operation Capital efforts in Washington D.C. for school year 1991-1992.

Through these and similar Operation Capital initiatives, Army Junior ROTC seeks to become part of the solution to the problems that plague our nation's inner city high schools. Junior ROTC has a positive impact upon cadets that lasts far beyond their actual term of enrollment. It is because of this that Army Junior ROTC is "Your Army, serving America's societal interests, in partnership with our nation's educators."