

PENNSTATE



Resiliency and Thriving in Families and Youth

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Salutations!

This is second of the *Resiliency and Thriving in Families and Youth*. Already, I have made some changes to the newsletter due to the feedback that I received. First, I have added a section on family activities. Second, starting with this issue, I will send this newsletter out by three mediums: email, web, and hard copy. Finally, in upcoming newsletters, I will address some of other concerns/issues mentioned in the feedback forms. I want to acknowledge those 4-H and Family Living agents that provided me with feedback. I encourage all of you to send comments or suggestions related to improving this newsletter. As a sidenote, I want to say thank you to all for the warm welcomes that I have been receiving as I travel to the counties and the regions.

Thanks.

Daniel F. Perkins, Ph.D.
Associate Professor



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FAMILY ACTIVITY

Families are very busy today. Parent(s) are working; children are involved in activities and are spending time with their friends. Yet, spending time together as a family is important for the family's functioning and family members' well-being. One way that families can spend time together is to assist in the same volunteer project. Volunteering together gives family members a chance to have a common experience and an opportunity to contribute to their community as a family unit. Set aside some time--maybe a Saturday morning or afternoon--to volunteer as a family. Possible volunteer projects include: Habitat for Humanity, helping an elderly person with yard work or odd chores around the house, roadside or park cleanup, and many other projects.

Down in their hearts,
wise men know this truth:
The only way to help
yourself is to help others.
-Elbert Hubbard

RESEARCH BRIEFS

✓ Youth Programs

From a dozen years of conversations with youth in challenging urban and rural settings, Milbrey W. McLaughlin and colleagues have learned what motivates youth to participate in community-based organizations that serve them.

The researchers found that youth need and want support in community settings that fit their interests and needs. However, they want more than just a safe place to go—they also want exciting learning opportunities. The study provides strong evidence that involvement in effective out-of-school programs helps young people do better in school and in life. According to this research, youth participating in such programs: (a) achieve at higher academic levels and hold higher expectations for themselves; (b) demonstrate greater self-confidence and optimism about what the future holds; (c) express a strong desire to “give back” to their communities; and, (d) go on to be productive, employed, and active members of their communities.

This study challenges communities to rethink how they design and deliver after-school youth services. The study recommends several ways for communities to help and support youth: (a) engage all youth-serving institutions, particularly schools, to encourage and support youth organizations that focus on content, not just services; (b) support a variety of smaller, innovative programs that offer youth a menu of learning opportunities; (c) listen to youth and treat them as a resource, not as a problem; (d) focus on diverse and well-trained staff; and (e) build on community assets.

Found in: McLaughlin, M. (2000). *Community Counts: How youth organizations matter for youth development*. Found at <http://www.publiceducation.org>. Washington, DC: Public Education Network.

**“Kids can walk around trouble,
if there is some place to walk to and
someone to walk with.”
(Tito, from the book entitled *Urban
Sanctuaries*, p. 219)**

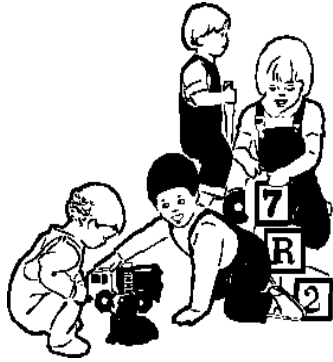
✓ Fatherhood

American fatherhood, like the American family, is undergoing rapid and contradictory changes. At the same time a “new fatherhood” is emerging and an appreciation is growing for the father’s role in children’s lives, fewer men are experiencing fatherhood, at least in the traditional sense. Indeed, recent demographic analyses show that 60% of adult males were living with children in the mid-1960s, but only 45% by the late 1990s.

A recent Penn State University study examined the impact of fatherhood on men. The study utilized data from the National Survey of Families and Households, drawing a sample of 5,226 men aged 19 to 65. This survey included extensive data regarding personal, family and socioeconomic histories, as well as kinship and social networks. According to this study, those men who live with their biological or adopted children were more likely to belong to service clubs and school-related organizations. Because of their children, many men became a 4-H leader, cub scout leader or master, community league basketball coach, little league coach and school board member. In addition, as parenting becomes paramount, fathers tend to be less involved in organizations that focus only on personal recreation, leisure pursuits or self-improvement. They will also be less inclined to visit friends or co-workers, go to a bar, or play on sports teams.

As children arrive and fathers are faced with teaching values to children, fathers are more likely to engage in religious practices and reevaluate priorities in one’s life. This study found that men who live in the same household with their children, except men who are fathers of adult children, are more likely to attend church than non-resident fathers, stepfathers and men who are not fathers. However, physical and psychological health was not found to be affected by fatherhood.

Found in: Eggebeen, D. J., & Knoester, C. W. (2000). *Does Fatherhood Matter to Men?* A paper presented at the annual meeting of the Population Association of America in Los Angeles, CA. This brief was adapted from Penn State Newswire, a service of the University’s Department of Public Information.



✓ **Most Children Entering Kindergarten Are Prepared**

According to a new national study, most children enter kindergarten with beginning reading skills, good social skills, and good health. America's Kindergartners, released in February 2000 by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), provides first-time national data on 22,000 children attending public and private kindergarten, their families, and their classrooms.

The study found that 94% of children begin school knowing their numbers to ten and basic shapes, and 82% have print familiarity skills, such as knowing that print reads from left to right. Also, 97% of all children are in good to excellent health when they enter kindergarten.

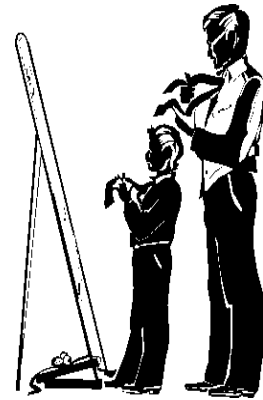
Although the findings were positive for the population as a whole, the study found differences in children's reading, math, and social skills related to poverty, parents' education, and race and ethnicity. Although there were exceptions, on average, children of African American and Hispanic descent, children from welfare homes, and those whose parents were less educated had significantly fewer early reading and math skills, exhibited more problem behaviors, and were less healthy.

Look for more from this study, as it will continue to follow the same sample of children through the fifth grade. The study will examine whether differences in students' reading and math achievement, social skills, physical development, and school experiences persist or change over time.

Source: West, J., Denton, K., & Germino-Hausken, E. (2000). *America's Kindergartners*. Rockville, MD: National Center for Education Statistics. Available online at <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo.asp?pubid=2000070>

✓ **Importance of Adults in Youth's Lives**

A new study found that adolescents who have a parent or a trustworthy adult to confide in are less likely to participate in risky behavior such as drug use. According to the study of 294 suburban New Jersey youth and young adults ages 12 to 23, two-thirds of adolescents said they had an adult in their lives that they could usually turn to for help and advice. The majority identified the person as one of their parents.



The study further found that adolescents with mentors were "significantly less likely" to participate in risky behaviors, compared to the one-in-four adolescents who said they had no adult to turn to for help and advice. The study revealed, however, that the rate of alcohol use was about the same regardless of whether a mentor was available. According to the report, 15% of all participants said they had consumed three or more alcoholic beverages in the past month.

The study's authors conclude that the utilization of adult mentors should be supported as a key strategy in working with adolescents to decrease certain risk behaviors. Three things are needed in order for a strong relationship to exist between the adolescent and the mentor: the adolescent must believe that the person (mentor) really cares, is there to help them, and will treat them with respect.



Found in: Beier, S. R., Roenfeld, W. D., Spitalny, K. C., Zansky, S. M., & Bontempo, A. N. (2000). The potential role of an adult mentor in influencing high risk behaviors among adolescents. *Archives of Pediatric & Adolescent Medicine*, 154, 327-331.

WEB RESOURCES

✓ **Web Site for Extension Educators**
<http://www.cyfernet.org/>

CYFERNet (Children Youth and Families Education Research Network) Web Site is a complete and easy-to-use site for parents, teachers, and extension educators. The practical research-based information section includes activities and information about children (infancy through junior high), youth (junior high into the 20s), families and communities. Each of these categories contains at least 12 topics, such as "Parenting education" and "Out of school time" and within each of these topics are several resources. CYFERNet is trademark of the National Children, Youth and Families At Risk Initiative sponsored by Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service at USDA.



✓ **Web Site for Extension Educators, Teachers, and Volunteers about Integrating Computers into Non-Formal Education**
<http://www.cyfernet.org/curricul/index.html>

The CYFERNet Technology Team has developed a set of informational papers and lesson plans titled "What You Need to Integrate Computers into Non-formal Education." The site provides detailed lesson plans for using computer software and the Internet in youth programs.

Activities are available for youth grades K-12 and cover topics including science, communities, and developing life skills.

✓ **Web Site for Youth and Adults about Healthy Eating**
www.usda.gov/cnpp/

Interactive Healthy Eating Index (IHEI) is a new on-line dietary assessment tool that provides a quick measure of a person's diet quality. This user-friendly web site provides consumers with an opportunity to carefully examine their own dietary habits and receive encouragement to improve diets. Designed for use by the general public and nutrition professionals, the IHEI shows Internet users how well they are meeting current dietary guidance. The index is based on 10 aspects of a healthy diet for persons 2 years of age and older, as defined by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and USDA's Food Guide Pyramid. Consumers can analyze their dietary status and maintain a cumulative record so improvements in their diet can be observed. Nutrition messages targeted to the user's score provide helpful information on diet and health with links to websites for those individuals with specific health concerns.



✓ **Web Site for Youth, Parents, Teachers, and 4-H Leaders to Encourage Better Understanding of Congress**
<http://www.congresslink.org/>

"CongressLink" is an educational web site that is committed to exploring new ways of educating students about how Congress works, its leaders and members, and the public policies it produces. The web site contains lesson plans that engage students in decision-making and problem-solving activities to give them an understanding of how government works and what its capabilities and limitations are. The site allows educators, parents, and 4-H volunteers to communicate with their colleagues and with experts on Congress, including journalists, commentators, and some members of Congress. The site also contains basic information explaining how laws are made, congressional procedures and how they differ between the House and the Senate, and the different duties of the people on a congressperson's staff.

"CongressLink" is produced by the Dirksen Congressional Center, a not-for-profit, nonpartisan organization that seeks to improve civic engagement by promoting a better understanding of Congress and its leaders.

✓ **Web Sites for Extension Educators about Engaging Youth in the Community**

Take the initiative in your community to establish a community coalition/council of youth and adults working with other groups and organizations to collaborate in community development. There are a variety of resources to assist you in helping make sure youth voices and action are recognized:

—National 4-H Council has a variety of materials on youth/adult partnerships and community youth development, check out their site:
www.fourhcouncil.edu

—America's Promise on Building Communities of Promise. You can also check out their web site for information on how to get involved:
www.americaspromise.org

✓ **Web Sites for Parents about Talking with Their Kids about Alcohol and Drugs**
<http://www.mediacampaign.org>

In 1998, with bipartisan support and through the united efforts of the Congress and the President, ONDCP created the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign, a multi-dimensional effort designed to educate and empower youth to reject illicit drugs. From network television advertisements to school-based educational materials, from playground basketball backboards to Internet Web sites, and from parenting skills brochures to ads in movie theaters, the Campaign's messages reach Americans wherever they live, work, learn, and play.

<http://www.health.org>

In addition to the above website, the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI) offers free information about illegal drugs that parents can share with their children. Contact NCADI at 800-487-4889 (phone), 800-729-6686 (TDD).

✓ **Web Site for Adults and Youth about Making a Garden Grow**
<http://www.kidsgardening.org/>

The National Gardening Association has just launched a Web site geared toward those whose green thumbs are not fully grown yet. This site contains tips for captivating even the youngest gardener, plus activities searchable by topic, and a gang of cartoon "Treetures" designed to teach students to treat nature responsibly. It is called the "Parent Primer," but this link has useful information for educators, too, such as Chapter One, "Gardening at Every Age," which explains which gardening activities appeal to different age groups. Chapters Three and Six deal with garden design and choosing plants that kids will especially like.

Follow the "Millennium Project" link to "Treetures," to meet these characters who have lots of information to share about tree care and tree planting. Each treeture represents a different natural process that allows a tree to grow and flourish. Several of the treetures come with a more in-depth lesson explaining these processes—for example, click on "Blossom" to learn more about pollination. Other lessons tackle root systems, composting, and photosynthesis.

This site does include pitches for products for sale from the National Gardening Association, but there is enough free information to make it well worth a visit for anyone who is interested in beginning a school garden.



POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

\$ Grable Foundation (Southwestern PA) <http://www.grablefdn.org/>

The Grable Foundation's goal in making grants in this area is to improve educational opportunities so that children can achieve their potential. In 1998 the most numerous and significant of The Grable Foundation's grants were focused on three areas: Education, families, and communities. Grants in the education area reflected the Foundation's interest in educational leadership, teacher training and curriculum development. In addition, the Foundation made grants to support early childhood education, mentoring, and out of school programs for youth, policy development, workforce training, and arts in education. Another goal for the Foundation is to strengthen families so they can serve as the core support for children. The Foundation supports programs to prevent teen pregnancy, coordinate services to families in need, provide parent education and training, and encourage family literacy. Finally, the Foundation supports community efforts that create an environment in which children can succeed. The Foundation is particularly interested supporting community programs related to education.

\$ Resources to Help Write Grants Related to Children in Poverty <http://www.childtrends.org/PDF/povwelf.pdf>

Child Trends Research Brief has published "Poverty, Welfare, and Children," a summary of the data contained in its report, "Working Poor Families with Children: A Statistical Portrait." This is policy information on children living in poverty. The report contains figures and other information that may be helpful in grant writing.

\$ Looking for Potential Funding Sites <http://fdncenter.org/searchzone/>

The Foundation Center Grantmaker Web site provides a fast, easy way to search many grantmakers' sites (1,500) on the web, whether they be private, corporate, community, or a grantmaking public charity. Their search includes 1,500 possible sources for funds.

Please don't forget to e-mail me with any comments or suggestions: dfp102@psu.edu

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