

PENNSTATE



# *Resiliency and Thriving in Families and Youth*

March 2001

Volume 2, Number 1

Hi!

I enjoyed seeing so many of you at the March inservice. This newsletter marks the start of volume two of the *Resiliency and Thriving in Families and Youth* newsletter. I want to thank all of you for completing the newsletter feedback form. Out of 134 we had 62 returned to us--a 47% return rate. I want to congratulate Don Tanner and Cheryl Miller, who each won a \$25 gift certificate to Barnes and Noble. In the next issue, I will include a summary of information gathered. Thanks for participating.

I don't know about you, but I feel like this year is flying. I cannot believe that it is April already. Where does the time go? I think that Mahatma Gandhi said it best when he said, *there is more to life than increasing its speed.*

As spring approaches, take the time to notice the signs of new life beginning to crop up all around you. Thanks for your continued support and have a great spring! Best regards.

Sincerely,

Daniel F. Perkins  
Associate Professor  
Family and Youth Resiliency and Policy



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## **FAMILY ACTIVITY**

With spring just around the corner, now is a good time for families to plant flowers or vegetables. This is a simple indoor activity for families with children of all ages—all you need are seeds, soil, and plastic cups. Help children fill cups with soil, then dig a shallow hole for the seeds. Cover the seeds with soil and then water them. Place cups on a windowsill where the plants will be able to get sunlight. While children are planting seeds, parents can discuss how seeds grow or what flowers or vegetables come from the seeds. Once spring arrives, families can transplant the plants outside. If space is not available outside, the growing plants can be moved to larger pots and kept indoors.

# RESEARCH BRIEFS

## Mentoring

This study evaluated the Big Brothers Big Sisters (BBBS) program to examine whether mentoring relationships help teenagers become responsible adults. In addition, this study also examined whether mentoring relationships deter some of the negative effects that a high-risk environment often has on teens. The BBBS program is designed to provide adult role models to teenagers living in single-parent households.

More than 900 adolescents participated in this study. Half of the participants were assigned to a Big Brother or Sister mentor, while the others were not assigned a mentor. Approximately 50% of the participants were minorities, and nearly 50% of the respondents came from homes where parents were divorced or separated.

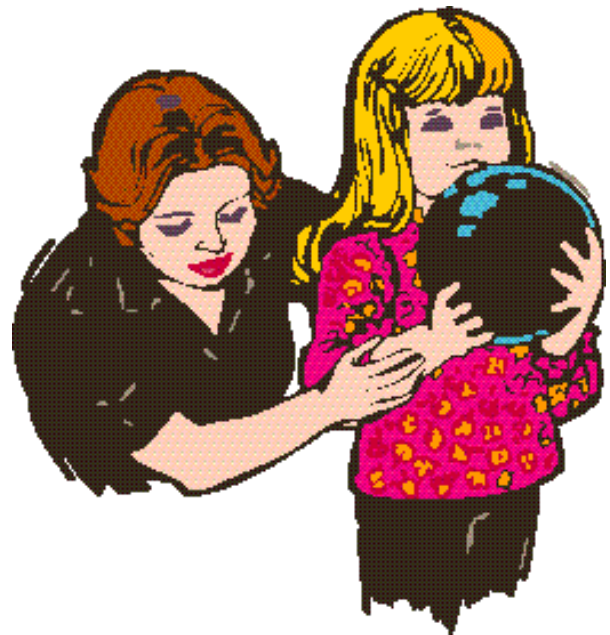


The study found improvements for the participating teens in school performance, school attendance, family relationships, and peer relationships. In addition, teens having a BBBS mentor were 46% less likely to use drugs and 27% less likely to consume alcohol than teens that did not have a mentor. In fact, minority teens that participated were 70% less

likely to take illegal drugs. Those youth involved in BBBS were significantly less likely to rely on violent behavior (e.g., hitting others) than the youth who did not have a mentor.

Researchers suggest that the success of the BBBS-mentor relationship was due in large part to the careful screening process implemented by the BBBS organization. Before a teen is accepted as a Little Brother or Sister, he or she is interviewed to ensure that he or she desires an adult mentor. Likewise, the parent or caregiver of the teen is interviewed to ensure that they approve of a potential mentor relationship. Finally, the potential Big Brother or Sister is interviewed and trained before being matched with a teen. After being carefully interviewed, mentors and teens are matched by BBBS staff. Once a match has been made, it is monitored by staff throughout the first year in order to be sure that it is an effective pairing. Establishing a similar screening and matching process is recommended for other mentoring projects.

Found in: Grossman, J. B. & Tierney, J. P. (1998). Does mentoring work? An impact study of the Big Brothers Big Sisters program. *Evaluation Review*, 22(3), 403-426.





## **The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children**

The author of this comprehensive literature review contends that the most dramatic change in family life during the 20th century has been the sharp increase in the rate of divorce. For example, between the middle of the nineteenth century and the end of the twentieth, the rate of divorce for first marriages has risen from about 5% to roughly 50%. Remarriages following divorce are common, but these second (and higher order) marriages have even higher rates of divorce than do first marriages. As a result, one of every six adults endures two or more divorces, more than one million children experience parental divorce every year, and about 40% of children will experience the divorce of their parents before adulthood.

The stressors that can occur in the lives of divorced individuals include disruptions in parent-child relationships, continuing discord between former spouses, loss of emotional support, economic hardship, and an increase in the number of other negative life events, such as moving. Although some adults and children adjust relatively quickly to divorce, others exhibit long-term loss of well-being. The protective factors that help adults adjust to divorce more easily include resources such as education and employment, support from a new partner, and being the spouse who initiated the divorce. For children, protective factors include the use of active coping skills, support from family and friends, and having access to therapy. There is no evidence to show whether divorce is more traumatic for males or females, either adult or children, although studies consistently show that, in terms of economic well-being, women suffer far more from divorce than do men. For adults as well as children, the end of a highly conflicted marriage is likely to be followed by improvements in well-being.

Found in: Amato, Paul R. (2001). The Consequences of Divorce for Adults and Children. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 62, 1269-1287.



## **Marketing 4-H Programs**

A recent study examined effective marketing strategies for recruitment of youth into 4-H programs. The data was drawn from a descriptive survey of 400 West Virginian 4-H members between the ages of 13 and 18. Information collected on this survey included reasons for joining 4-H, opinions on most effective marketing methods and messages, and demographic information of participants.

The most popular reason for joining 4-H, reported by 65% of the respondents, was that it "sounded fun." "Because friends were in it" was another important reason, reported by 62% of the respondents. The youth respondents suggested two marketing methods they thought would be effective--the Internet and word of mouth.



The findings from this study suggest that 4-H leaders should create a marketing message that screams fun in order to attract young people's attention. Given the importance of word of mouth, volunteers and 4-H youth development educators should encourage current members to talk about the program to their friends. One might consider having a bring-a-friend-to-club event. Furthermore, attractive and interactive websites that emphasize friends and fun might be useful marketing tools. Maybe a club project could be to design a website.

Source: Wingenbach, G., J., Nestor, C., Lawrence, L., D., Gartin, S., A., Woloshuk, J., & Mulkeen, P. (2000). Marketing Strategies for Recruiting 4-H Members in West Virginia. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 41(1), 88-94.

## WEB RESOURCES

### Science and Technology Curriculum <http://www.extension.iastate.edu/e-set/Kit/iowakits.htm>

The Iowa State University Extension Service has created four science and technology kits: Robotics, Engineering, Aerospace and Electricity/Magnetism. The kits contain all the materials and curricula needed to provide a fun, educational learning experience for youth. All activities are hands-on, learner based, and use the experiential format. All kits have been field tested by formal and non-formal educators and have been used in several other states. Limited quantities of each kit will be produced and distributed. Orders will be accepted March 1 through May 15. Shipping is included in the price of each kit. This is a great opportunity to purchase a fully packaged, reusable curriculum.

### How Trauma Affects Children <http://scholastic.com/bruceperry>

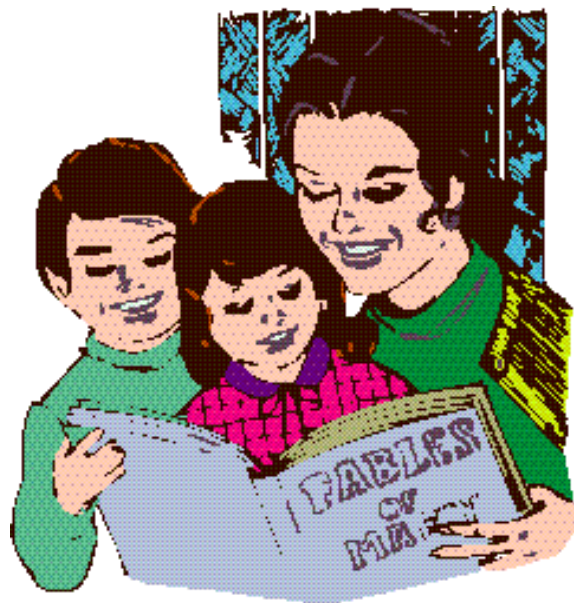
Scholastic is offering a free online resource for professionals interested in learning more about child development, the brain, and the impact of trauma and violence on children and families. "Meet Dr. Perry" features articles by Dr. Bruce Perry, child psychiatrist and expert on child development and children in crisis. The site offers in-depth information on a variety of topics, including:

- The Child's Loss: Death, Grief, and Mourning;
- Biological Relativity: Time and the Developing Child;
- The Impact of Abuse and Neglect on the Developing Brain;
- Principles of Working with Traumatized Children;

This site provides online audio/visual lectures and seminars on different aspects of brain development and research.

### Promising Practices [www.promisingpractices.net/](http://www.promisingpractices.net/)

This website provides information on a variety of programs intended to help children, families, and communities deal with a host of issues. Nine program and practice areas are included on this page, covering topics such as children's health, school readiness and success, after school programming, strong families, strong communities, and more. Bibliographies for each program area are also available at this address.



### Parents to Raise Readers <http://www.ala.org/alsc/born.html>

Helping parents raise children with healthy bodies and minds is the goal of *Born to Read: How to Nurture a Baby's Love of Learning*. *Born to Read* builds partnerships between librarians and health care providers to reach out to new and expectant at-risk parents and help them raise children to be readers. They have practical materials in both English and Spanish. For example, the brochure entitled *How to Raise a Reader* contains an excellent reading list of books found at most libraries.

✦ **Children's Health**  
<http://kidshealth.org/index.html>

KidsHealth offers health information about children from before birth through adolescence. Created by The Nemours Foundation Center for Children's Health Media, a non-profit organization dedicated to improving the health of children and the elderly, the site's mission is to provide the best children's health information on the Internet. KidsHealth has separate areas for kids, teens, and parents--each with its own design, age-appropriate content, and tone. Each area has articles, games, stories, and other resources.



✦ **Community Development**  
<http://ctb.lsi.ukans.edu/tools/CWS/Trouble/>

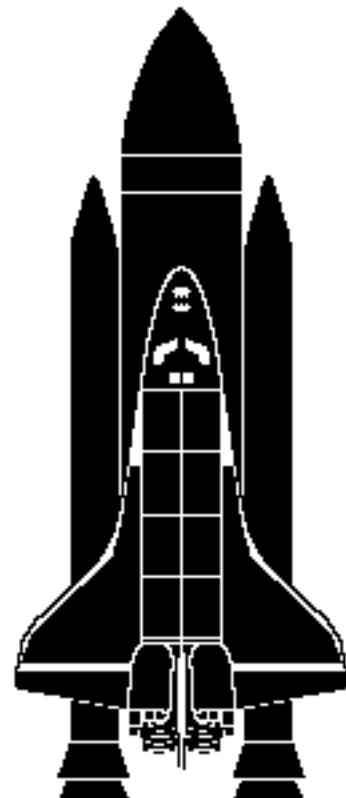
Community Toolbox's mission is to promote community health and development by connecting people, ideas, and resources. The *Community Toolbox Troubleshooting Guide: Help with Common Problems in Working for Community Change* is a tool for anyone working to promote community vitality. It offers practical advice and resources to help overcome the many challenges to positive community action.

✦ **Software Review for Parents**  
<http://www.childrensoftware.com>

This website provides comprehensive reviews about children's software, either on the Internet or in magazine form. This information is very helpful when evaluating potential purchases on limited resources. Software is judged on six criteria: Ease of use, educational merit, design features, childproof, entertaining, and good value.

✦ **Government Sites for Youth**  
<http://info.gov/kids/kids.htm>

"Kids Corner" is a collection of great sites for youth related to U.S. government institutions. It includes: The National Zoo, CIA for Kids, The Presidential Libraries, Justice for Kids, NASA, the Environmental Protection Agency and many others. The sites are presented in a youth friendly format. Many have curricula and activities, along with interactive games and quizzes. "Kids Corner" contains valuable information for education, civics, entertainment and career development.

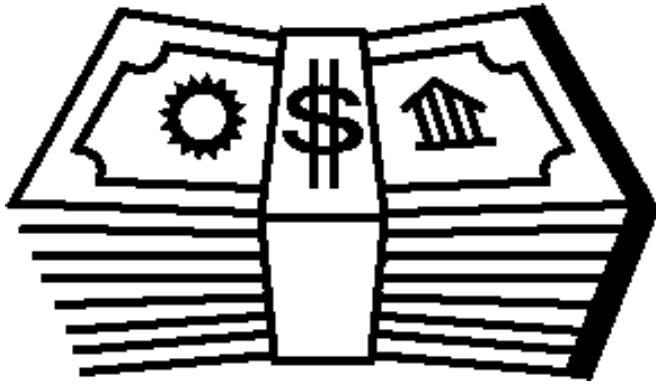


## POSSIBLE FUNDING SOURCES

### \$ **New Kit Provides Ideas for Funding**

[http://www.connectforkids.org/content1549/content\\_show.htm?attrib\\_id=299&doc\\_id=45947](http://www.connectforkids.org/content1549/content_show.htm?attrib_id=299&doc_id=45947)

Connect for Kids has created an online toolkit that offers general information on funding resources. The tool kit includes tips on getting external funding as well as general funding sources. The site also includes specific section funding for such things as childcare, out of school programs, education and literacy, and technology.



### \$ **Building Better Rural Places**

<http://www.attra.org/guide/index.htm>

This website includes the “Building Better Rural Places,” resource guide to federal programs offering assistance in agriculture, forestry, conservation, and rural community development. The guide provides descriptions and contact information for 80 federal programs-- primarily in USDA but also in the EPA and Fish and Wildlife Service-- that offer support to farmers, land managers, entrepreneurs, community developers, conservationists, organizations, and businesses seeking technical assistance, information, or financial resources on topics, like sustainable agriculture, forestry, entrepreneurship, conservation, community development, and more.

*Please check out the links for strengths-based programs  
on the FYRP Website:*

*<http://AgExtEd.cas.psu.edu/fcs/dp/fyrrp.html>*

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