

PENNSTATE



Resiliency and Thriving in Families and Youth

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Introduction

Hello and welcome to the first edition of the *Resiliency and Thriving in Families and Youth*. The purpose of this newsletter is to provide current information and resources related to resiliency, strengths-based programming, and policy issues facing children, youth, families and the communities in which they live.

Resiliency is the ability for a family/youth to bounce back from stress or adversity. For families, resiliency is the ability of a family to develop and/or maintain healthy functioning and successfully adapt to life's challenges and risks. For individuals, resiliency is the ability to do well despite facing adversity in their lives.

Resiliency is very important but it is not enough. Ultimately, we want more for our families and youth than survival--we want them to thrive, that is, to flourish in society. We want families to be loving, caring, and compassionate toward one another and their neighbors. They need opportunities to be successful and be civic-minded. We want youth to experience positive relationships with peers and adults that foster their positive development. In addition, we want youth to have opportunities for development of skills and competencies thereby increasing their likelihood of success.

This newsletter will provide current information related to resiliency and thriving. It will include research briefs with a practical bent, possible funding sources, and useful websites. I expect that as the year progresses the look and content of this newsletter will change and improve. I encourage you to contact me if you have any suggestions about issues that could be addressed by this newsletter.

Thanks,

Daniel F. Perkins, Ph.D.
Associate Professor

. . . What's Inside . . .

- **Research Briefs**
- **Possible Funding Sources**
- **Web Resources**
- **Feedback Form**



RESEARCH BRIEFS

✓ RESEARCH ABOUT PARENTS PROMOTING CHILDREN'S INVOLVEMENT IN COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

This study identified several strategies that parents can use to influence the likelihood of their children becoming involved in community activities (e.g., sports, 4-H, and other after school clubs). Parents can model the behavior; that is, they themselves can become involved and invest in their community. Children who see their parents investing energy and time in the community are likely to get involved also. However, sometimes parents are unable to get involved in their community because of a variety of reasons. For these parents, it is very important that they form a strong and warm relationship with their children and that they purposely encourage and explicitly reinforce their children's participation in community activities. Youth are more likely to be engaged in community activities during their school years if they have warm and loving relationship with their parents and if they know that their parents believe it is important to be involved in those activities.



Found in: Fletcher, A. C., Elder, G. H., & Mekos, D. (2000). Parental influences on adolescent involvement in community activities. *Journal of Research on Adolescence, 10*, 29-48.

✓ RESEARCH ABOUT YOUTH AN THE IMPACT OF PROGRAMS

This study examined the relationship between Search Institute's 40 assets and seven thriving behaviors. Thriving behaviors are not only the absent of problem behaviors but also the signs of healthy development. The seven indicators were: (1) school success, (2) leadership, (3) helping others, (4) maintenance of physical health, (5) delay of gratification, (6) valuing diversity, and (7) overcoming adversity. The study included 6,000 youth (grades 6-12) randomly chosen from a larger sample of 99,462 youth. A subsample of 1,000 youth from each of six racial-ethnic groups

that make up the full sample (i.e., American Indian, African American, Asian American, Hispanic, Multiracial, and White youth) with equal gender and grade distribution.

The researchers found that time spend in youth programs had the most pervasive positive influence on thriving. It was a significant and meaningful predictor in five of the seven thriving behaviors: school success, leadership, helping others, maintenance of physical health, and overcoming adversity. This finding provides strong evidence of the importance of youth programs like 4-H. The validity and reliability of data are strong as evidence by the location of this article, that is, in the scholarly journal of *Applied Developmental Science*. Therefore, I encourage Family Living and 4-H Youth Development agents to cite this finding when writing about impacts.

Several other findings of this article have implications for programming for youth. First, cultural competence (defined as a young person having knowledge and comfort with people of different cultural-racial-ethnic backgrounds) was found to be a significant predictor. It predicted: valuing diversity, maintenance of physical health, delay of gratification, and leadership. Second, personal power and high self-esteem in youth contributed meaningfully to school success, maintenance of physical health, and overcoming adversity. Finally, planning and decision making was an important predictor of maintenance of physical health and delay of gratification for youth. These three findings provide direction for youth programming. As noted earlier, time in youth programs matters, yet it also important that we spend some of that time providing youth with opportunities to develop cultural competence, personal power, self-esteem, and planning decision making skills.

**"He who does not
cultivate his field
will die of hunger"**
African Proverb

Found in: Scales, P. C., Benson, P. L., Leffert, N., & Blyth, D. A. (2000). Contribution of developmental assets to the prediction of thriving among adolescents. *Applied Developmental Science, 4*, 27-46.

✓ **PARENTS DO PLAY A ROLE IN ADOLESCENTS' LIVES**

Many adults in America believe that peers have more influence on adolescents' values than do parents, and that teen culture accepts and promotes unhealthy adolescent values and behavior. Steinberg (1999) finds that peers are an important source of influence in the lives of youth; however, their influence is more likely to pertain to clothing or music tastes rather than fundamental values. Indeed, research continues to provide evidence that youth are more likely to share common values with their parents and select peers with similar values (Resnick, et al. 1997).

Found in: Russel, S. T., & Andrews, N. S. (In preparation). Adolescent sexuality and positive youth development. In D.F. Perkins, L. M. Borden, F. A. Villarruel, and J.G. Keith (Eds.), *Positive Youth Development: Beacons, Challenges, and Opportunities*. -Steinberg, L. (1999). *Adolescence*. Boston: McGraw-Hill College.



-Resnick, M.D., Bearman, P.S., Blum, R.W., Bauman, K.E., Harris, K.M., Jones, J., Tabor, J., Beuhring, T., Sieving, R.E., Shew, M., Ireland, M., Bearinger, L.H., & Udry, J.R.. (1997). Protecting adolescents from harm: Findings from the National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health. Journal of the American Medical Association, 278(10), 823-832.

PO\$\$IBLE FUNDING \$OURCE\$

\$ The Ben and Jerry's Foundation offers competitive grants to not-for-profit, grassroots organizations throughout the United States which facilitate progressive social change by addressing the underlying conditions of societal and environmental problems. All Foundation funding decisions are made by a team of Ben and Jerry's employees that meets three times a year to review proposals. They do not offer grants to support basic or direct social service programs.



Though the Ben and Jerry's Foundation doesn't prioritize any particular issue area for funding, they do focus on the types of activities and strategies an organization uses for creating social change in any number of areas. The Foundation will only consider proposals from grassroots, constituent-led organizations that are organizing for systemic social change. Programs and projects that are examples of creative problem solving are supported. Grant applicants need to demonstrate that their project will: (a) lead to societal, institutional, and/or environmental change, (b) address the root causes of social or environmental problems, (c) lead to new ways of thinking and acting.

There are two types of grants awarded by Ben and Jerry's Foundation. First, there are *full grants*: ranging from \$1,001-\$15,000. Second there are small grants. During each funding cycle the Ben & Jerry's Foundation may fund a small number of material grants for \$1,000 or less for innovative programs that fit into our general guidelines and that are infused with a spirit of hopefulness. Applications for small grants are reviewed within regular funding cycles.

The initial application process is a one-page letter of interests that consists of (a) a description of the organization and indication of competence in the area of this proposal, (b) an outline of the project, including who it will benefit, design of the project, and outcomes expected, and (c) a brief (2 or 3 lines) overview of your budget, income sources and expenses for this project.

Go to Ben and Jerry's Foundation web site to learn more about them and their application process: <http://www.benjerry.com/foundation/index.html>

WEB RESOURCES

✓ **OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS RE-SOURCE GUIDE**

<http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/99ResGuide>

This guide lists programs organized around several broad issues that the Office of Justice Programs seeks to address such as preventing family violence, preventing and responding to youth violence, and building strong communities. Each section of this online resource guide includes information about funding resources, training and technical assistance programs, publication sources, online resources, and places to turn for more detailed information about specific programs.

✓ **WEB SITE FOR YOUTH —WHAT'S DRIVING YOU?**

www.whatsdrivingyou.org

This web site takes young adults into a virtual party where they can role play as one of the party's guests and make decisions about drinking, drugs and driving. The story line is well done and realistic. Interspersed throughout the story are fact boxes on related topics such as alcohol addiction and blood-alcohol content. There is also a section where young people can submit questions about drinking and driving to a doctor, trainer, psychiatrist or judge. This is an opportunity for young people to learn the consequences of drinking and



✓ **WEB SITE FOR PARENTS ABOUT TALKING WITH KIDS ABOUT TOUGH ISSUES**

<http://www.talkingwithkids.org>

Talking with Kids About Tough Issues is a national public service campaign designed to alert parents and other caring adults to the importance of talking with children early and often about some of today's most difficult issues. The campaign offers a free booklet (available in English and Spanish) with common sense help for parents in discussing sex and sexuality, AIDS, drugs and alcohol, and violence with their child in an age appropriate way. The booklet is available by calling 1-800-CHILD-44 or by email: talk@talkingwithkids.org

✓ **TUTOR/MENTOR CONNECTION**

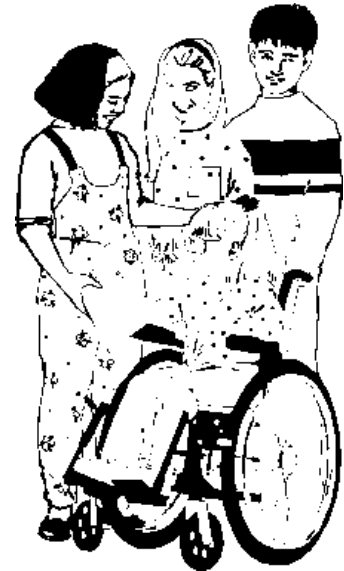
<http://www.tutormentorconnection.org>

This web site has an exchange of ideas and resources for tutor and mentoring programs. The information is divided into two categories. One category is information to help build a tutor/mentor program, improve an existing program, or help volunteers become more effective. The other category is events to build public awareness and to help activate volunteers, donors, leaders and business partners to support tutor/mentor programs. These events are specific to the Chicago area but can be duplicated elsewhere. Also check out the ten sections to the web site represented by spokes around a wheel. For example, the Best Practice section allows the browser to look at Total Quality Mentoring Chart, which is a blueprint for what a comprehensive, long-term program might look like.

✓ **CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**

www.childrenwithdisabilities.org

This web site offers information and resources to disabled children, their families and service providers. The site, part of a joint effort by several Federal agencies to promote a national agenda for children and foster positive youth development, will provide information on learning disabilities, debilitating conditions and physical disabilities. The site includes information on advocacy, education, employment, health, housing, recreation, and training.



FEEDBACK PLEASE

Educators, this is the first of many newsletters to come. In order to make it a productive use of our time, I am encouraging you to provide me some feedback about this newsletter. I want to make it a practical tool that assists you and provides you with the type of information you would like to see. Please share any ideas you have about improving this newsletter with me. I promise to respond to your concerns whenever possible.

Daniel F. Perkins
Department of Agricultural and Extension Education
323 Agricultural Administration Building
The Pennsylvania State University
University Park, PA 16802-2601
E-mail: dfp102@psu.edu

Name: _____

Position: _____

County: _____

1. What type of information are you looking for in a newsletter about resilient families and youth?
2. What information in this current newsletter did you find useful? Is there another way you would like to see the information presented?
3. What information in this current newsletter did you not find useful? Is there another way you would like to see the information presented?
4. What are some major current topics that you would like to see addressed?

This publication is available in alternative media on request.

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