



Family and Consumer Sciences Extension

Children, Youth & Families At-Risk 2007

Learning for Life

The University of Georgia Cooperative Extension

The Problem

- Many Georgia children are living in at-risk environments. Nationally, Georgia ranks 41st in overall child well-being, based on 10 indicators tracked by Kids Count 2007. Some indicators include teen deaths, births to teen parents, juvenile violent crime, and percent of children in poverty.
- Georgia ranks 43rd for rate of teen childbearing with 53 births per 1,000 females ages 15-19 in 2004 (Kids Count Data Book 2007).
- The percentage of children living in extreme poverty (income below 50% of poverty level) in Georgia is 9%, higher than the percentage of children living in extreme poverty in the U.S. (8%) (Kids Count Data Book 2007).

Research-based Solutions

- Programming that emphasizes positive youth development builds resiliency in at-risk children and youth.
- The most effective interventions target children at young ages and provide long-term support and education.
- Effective programming for children at risk intentionally involves their families and communities at all levels.

Extension's Role

- Conduct educational programs for parents, helping them to acquire skills in positive parenting to foster resiliency.
- Use the 4-H youth development delivery system to provide positive development opportunities for youth in high-risk circumstances.
- Collaborate within the community to design programs which target children, youth or families at risk and provide education, support and services which lead to positive outcomes.

Extension's Contribution to Solving the Problem

- Family and Consumer Sciences Extension programs focused on Child, Youth and Family Development reached over 14,000 Georgians and provided over 28,000 hours of education.
- From 2003 through 2007, Family and Consumer Sciences Extension initiated two *New Communities Projects* in Candler and Colquitt counties, "Building Our Youths Skills", and "Voz de la Familia" (Voice of the Family). These projects integrate the children, youth, and families at risk (CYFAR) programming philosophy into the UGA Cooperative Extension programs. A \$500,000 grant from USDA funded these projects for the five-year period.
- The Candler County CYFAR project "Building Our Youths Skills" provided educational and enrichment opportunities to 39 low-income pre-adolescents to help increase academic success and leadership development, working with the youth, their parents/guardians, teachers, and community leaders to create a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment.
- The Colquitt County CYFAR project "Voz de la Familia" created a comprehensive family-centered community outreach program especially designed to help migrant farm workers build healthy, strong, and self-sufficient families in rural Georgia. "Voz de la Familia" is a collaborative program of UGA Cooperative Extension, Ellenton Farm Workers Health Clinic, Moultrie Technical College, and Communities in Schools. In 2007, there were 71 families in the "Voz de la Familia" program who

participated in learning sessions that addressed topics ranging from parenting to home ownership.

- Poverty simulation workshops, designed to help service providers and community leaders better serve the needs of people living in poverty, were presented to more than 495 individuals.

Impact on Georgians

- The “Building Our Youth and Skills” program in Candler County focused on building life skills and addressing problem behaviors. Teachers reported an overall reduction in problem behavior among program participants, and the youth themselves reported more positive perceptions towards learning, school and teachers.
- Evaluation data from parenting education provided to “Voice of the Family” participants indicated that 100% intend to help children stand firm during times of hardship, 100% intend to give clear messages about tobacco, alcohol, and drugs, and 92% intend to ensure that their children live in a protected environment.
- Of the 39 Latinos who attended homebuyer education programs through the “Voice of the Family” program in 2007, 17 initiated the application process to obtain first-time homeowner incentives, and 4 families are waiting on the final closing of their loans.
- 92% of the educators, service providers, and community leaders who participated in the *Welcome to the State of Poverty* simulation workshop indicated that the program was helpful in providing them with a better understanding of the problems faced by working poor families. Additionally, comparison of pre- and post-session evaluations indicated that on average, participants reduced their negative attitudes toward people living in poverty, with 53% indicating that the simulation helped them develop a more positive attitude toward working with poor families. Participants, on average, also indicated that the simulation made them more confident that they can make a positive impact on poor people in their community. And, 92% said they are better able to serve people in poverty’s needs and 88% said they plan to share this information with others in their communities.

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