



4-H

NEW JERSEY

CUMBERLAND COUNTY

CHILDREN DO WELL WHEN THEIR FAMILIES
DO WELL, AND FAMILIES DO BETTER WHEN
THEY LIVE IN SUPPORTIVE COMMUNITIES

2005 FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

PARTNERS IN EDUCATION

When parents play an active role in their children's academic progress, successful and positive results often follow. For this reason, 4-H programs—which always emphasize the involvement of the whole family—have been a natural partner for communities nationwide working to improve their schools.

Such is the case with the Millville (New Jersey) Regional Safe Schools/Healthy Students Collaborative, a comprehensive effort that joins 16 schools, five of which are in rural New Jersey communities, with the Cumberland County 4-H Program of the Rutgers Cooperative Research and Extension.

“While we don't use the usual club setting,” notes Cumberland County 4-H Agent Jeannette Rea-Keywood, “we get the entire family and the community involved in strengthening the young person's support system and improving communications between the family and the schools. That's as important for the school systems we work with as it is for the families.”



THE COLLABORATIVE HAS MET ITS GOALS.
WE'VE SEEN AN 86% INCREASE IN PARENTAL
AND FAMILY INVOLVEMENT AND A 95%
'POSITIVE IMPACT' RATING AMONG PARENTS.

Ginny Powell, Chair, Department of 4-H Youth Development

IMPOSING CHALLENGES

Cumberland County families face imposing challenges. Cumberland has been ranked first among New Jersey counties in domestic violence, third in alcohol abuse and last in student achievement. The Millville Regional Safe Schools/Healthy Students Collaborative addresses these challenges by engaging parents in day-to-day school activities and by helping parents support children's academic achievement. The Collaborative also connects families to services that can help them succeed, such as family mental health services, GED classes and substance abuse counseling.

Rea-Keywood, who chaired the education reform committee for the federal grant establishing the Collaborative, helps each school engage families. An initial training session brought together parents and PTA leaders, community members, school administrators and faculty, social workers and guidance counselors, Communities in Schools staff and Whole School Reform facilitators. An action plan to support family involvement emerged from this training, and follow-up stakeholder meetings monitor the school community's progress.

Rowan University collects ongoing data to formally evaluate Collaborative efforts. Approximately six months after the initial training and implementation, parents and stakeholders completed questionnaires about accomplishments.

"This program has been successful, because it's a perfect fit for 4-H," says Rea-Keywood. "Family involvement has always been an important component of 4-H club work and member project work."

FAMILIES COUNT FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

Through a joint venture of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the National 4-H Council, the FAMILIES COUNT Family Strengthening Awards recognize outstanding 4-H programs that work to give children in rural communities what they need most—strong, capable and economically successful families. Responding to the varied needs of the families they serve, these organizations improve the economic prospects of working men and women and create the services and networks of support that all families need to realize their aspirations for themselves and their children.

4-H is a community of more than 7 million diverse young people across America learning leadership, citizenship and life skills. Through clubs, camps, school-based and after-school programs, 4-H makes a positive impact on the lives of urban, suburban and rural youth and their families. Youth learn and grow through participation in fun, hands-on learning experiences in areas including science, engineering, technology, healthy lifestyles and citizenship. “4-H connects families to programs and resources to help them succeed and grow stronger,” says National 4-H Council President and CEO Donald T. Floyd, Jr. “With the FAMILIES COUNT Family Strengthening Awards 4-H is able to reach rural families who often find themselves isolated from opportunities and supports to help secure their children's futures.”

CUMBERLAND COUNTY, NEW JERSEY 4-H

Award-winning Program: Millville Regional Safe Schools/
Healthy Students Collaborative

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