



4-H

NEVADA

PROJECT MAGIC

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

2006 FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

ENGAGING PARENTS IN EARLY INTERVENTION

When teenagers skip school or run away from home, it can be a warning sign that alerts their families and communities to help these young people take a more positive direction. Project MAGIC (Making a Group and Individual Commitment), a 4-H program of the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension Service, works to support parents in responding at this critical juncture in their children's lives. Since 1989, the program has helped more than 3,000 families support good life choices for their children—all of whom are 12- to 18-year-old first-time, minor offenders or middle school students referred by school administrators—leading to a better future.

“A family together is best able to recognize and mobilize their strengths,” says Marilyn Smith, the 4-H Youth Development Specialist who directs Project MAGIC. “When teenagers see their parents involved, they might be embarrassed at first. In the long run, though, knowing their parents care helps them talk about problems and motivates the entire family to find solutions.”



WE'RE A BRIDGE BETWEEN PARENTS AND THEIR CHILDREN AND BETWEEN 4-H'S TRADITIONAL COMMUNITY ROLE AND THE SPECIAL CHALLENGES SOME FAMILIES FACE. PARTNERSHIPS—IN BOTH OUR FAMILIES AND OUR COMMUNITY—ARE THE KEYS TO SUCCESS.

—Marilyn Smith, 4-H Area Youth Development Specialist; Program Director, Project MAGIC

FINDING COMMON GROUND

Parents and children participate in Project MAGIC over eight weeks, working toward a common goal: creating positive interactions, so that young people will call on their families for help in overcoming challenges and parents can respond effectively. “These young people need to learn that growing up isn’t something you have to succeed at all by yourself,” Smith says.

In addition to learning the value of asking for help and talking about the long-term consequences of their actions, young people role-play good decision-making, especially related to drugs, alcohol and tobacco use. At the same time, parents learn how to give help, resolve conflicts and establish positive discipline with teenagers.

The result is improved—sometimes brand-new—relationships that strengthen entire families. Smith explains: “By teaching related skills to fathers, mothers, sons and daughters, we’re making sure that when situations do arise, both sides listen more effectively. At the least, parents will now be in tune and be equipped to step in when needed.”

The program’s outcomes demonstrate the power of early intervention. Families report increased participation in their children’s school lives and a noticeable decrease in serious family arguments. Only 10 percent of Project MAGIC graduates find themselves back in the juvenile justice system, compared to a 30 percent rate for non-participants. Over its history, the program has saved Nevada an estimated \$5.4 million in incarceration expenses, and replications are underway in at least 17 other states.

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.”

4-H NEVADA

Award-winning Program: Project MAGIC

Karen Hinton, Dean and Director, University of Nevada Cooperative Extension

Marilyn Smith, Area Youth Development Specialist

University of Nevada Cooperative Extension

701 Walnut Street

Elko, NV 89801

775-738-1990

www.unce.unr.edu