

Camp Fire USA serves more than 750,000 young people and their families each year in hundreds of neighborhoods, towns and rural communities nationwide. To realize its mission of developing caring and self-confident youth, Camp Fire places a high priority on strengthening families so they can help their children succeed. Family-based programs complement an approach that involves families in the full range of Camp Fire activities. "In our councils, families share a respite from life's demands and gain other families' support to move forward," says Jill Pasewalk, Camp Fire's National CEO and President. "We give them a place where they can connect with each other and their communities in a meaningful and lasting way."



CAMP FIRE USA LONE STAR COUNCIL

DALLAS, TX

CAMP FIRE USA LONE STAR COUNCIL

Award-winning Program: Apartment-based Community Family Club Program

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

2006 FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

A CONTINUUM OF SUPPORT

Four years ago, Dallas' Camp Fire USA Lone Star Council saw an opportunity to build on its thriving after-school Kids Clubs to engage parents in family-strengthening activities. Today, parents whose children take part in Kids Clubs at 14 low-income apartment complexes benefit from the information and skills-building they gain in Community Family Clubs. Organized at convenient times for working parents, the Clubs have brought together 200 families to advance their goals and strengthen their connections to each other.

"We've come to understand that youth development can be a starting point for a continuum of support," says director of program services Pete Chavez. "By working with parents, we're ensuring that what we're doing after school is carrying over into the home and helping these parents do the best job possible in raising their families."

PARENTS TAKE THE LEAD

Parents set the content of Community Family Club meetings by filling out needs assessments before the first session. Lone Star Council staff then go into the community to identify and recruit speakers that match parents' interests. "We don't anticipate or make assumptions about what parents want. They know what their families require to succeed, and that's what we respond to," says Chavez.

Speakers have included bankers discussing household budgeting and savings options that support parents in building assets; policemen guiding families in organizing a neighborhood watch; and community health experts offering free immunizations along with practical medical advice. At parents' requests, Clubs have addressed difficult topics such as child abuse and prevention, resulting in meetings that focus on parental stress and conflict resolution skills.

Staff also link each Club to resources within the Lone Star Council, such as leadership and workforce development programs for teenagers. Plans for next year include expanding this model to 14 additional apartment complexes, helping more parents and children take the next steps to promising futures.

Executive director Tony Roberts, Ph.D., notes that the social element of the meetings, which begin with potluck dinners, cannot be underestimated: "These families begin to watch out for each other and to start talking about what they can do together to meet the needs of their community. That's a big step forward."

FAMILIES COUNT FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

Through a joint venture of the Annie E. Casey Foundation and Camp Fire USA, the **FAMILIES COUNT** Family Strengthening Awards recognize Camp Fire USA councils with outstanding programs that work to give children 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.



CONNECTING FAMILIES WITH
COMMUNITY RESOURCES GIVES
PARENTS A STRONG SENSE OF SELF-
SUFFICIENCY. THEY REALIZE THEY CAN
TAKE CONTROL OF THEIR FAMILY'S FUTURE.

—Tony Roberts, Ph.D., Executive Director, Camp Fire USA Lone Star Council