

4-H PENNSYLVANIA AND IOWA



PROMOTING SCHOOL-
COMMUNITY-UNIVERSITY
PARTNERSHIPS TO
ENHANCE RESILIENCE
(PROSPER)

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

2007 FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

RALLYING THE COMMUNITY TO HELP YOUTH PROSPER

For six years, 14 rural school districts in Pennsylvania and Iowa have used a unique 4-H program that coordinates a community-wide effort to reduce alcohol, tobacco and other drug use among youth. The PROSPER program—which stands for PROMoting School-community-university Partnerships to Enhance Resilience—offers communities a selection of programs that are proven to prevent youth substance use. In each school district, teams made up of educators, counselors, parents and youth choose programs best suited for their communities. “PROSPER is more than a program—it’s a model for making a difference,” says Claudia Mincemoyer, associate professor and extension specialist on 4-H youth curriculum development for the Pennsylvania State University Cooperative Extension, which operates PROSPER. “Communities determine their needs and select programs. We provide the support they need to build strong family and community environments.”

In Pennsylvania and Iowa, PROSPER reaches 12,000 middle school youth and their families through two avenues: school-based education for seventh-graders and interactive out-of-school time sessions for sixth-graders and their parents.



FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES HAVE GREAT
IMPACT ON YOUTHS' DECISIONS ABOUT

WHETHER TO USE DRUGS AND HOW THEY LIVE
THEIR LIVES. PROSPER IS PROVEN TO HELP COM-
MUNITIES THROUGH EVIDENCE-BASED PRO-
GRAMS THAT CAN BUILD A POSITIVE ENVIRON-
MENT FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES TO MAKE A
REAL DIFFERENCE IN THEIR FUTURES.

—Richard L. Spoth, F. Wendell Miller senior prevention scientist and director, Partnerships in Prevention Science Institute, Iowa State University

THE IMPORTANCE OF FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

All 14 Pennsylvania and Iowa communities have chosen the “Strengthening Families Program 10-14” curriculum for sixth-grade students and their parents to strengthen family bonds and improve parent discipline practices and conflict-resolution skills. During seven weeks of evening classes, families participate in role-playing, group discussions and video presentations to learn skills in setting and achieving goals, resisting negative peer pressure and maintaining healthy home environments. So far, PROSPER parents report better relationships with their children. Students report that their parents use less harsh discipline. They also say they are better prepared for the future and have improved skills to refuse drugs and alcohol.

“We’ve seen tangible changes in families through our family strengthening classes,” says Daniel Perkins, professor and extension specialist on family and youth resiliency and policy for the Pennsylvania State University Cooperative Extension. “Parents and children, who on the first day sit on opposite sides of the room, come together by the end of the seven weeks. Parents now hold family meetings with their kids and know what they are doing. And youth who have experienced PROSPER are delaying use of alcohol and drugs compared to their peers.”

The effects of PROSPER reach the broader community as well. According to research, youth living in communities with PROSPER are not using drugs or alcohol as early as youth in other communities. “What we’re seeing is a change in community norms – not just among our families,” Mincemoyer says.

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.

Through local clubs, camps and after-school programs, 4-H strengthens family relationships and community networks for more than 6.5 million young people across the nation. 4-H supports youth and their families through research-based programs at 106 state universities and extension offices. In 4-H programs, youth in rural, suburban and urban communities experience hands-on learning in healthy living; leadership; citizenship; and science, engineering and technology while gaining valuable life skills. "For more than a century, 4-H has worked to empower the nation's youth with a sense of independence, confidence and community service," says National 4-H Council President and CEO Donald T. Floyd, Jr. "By involving parents and families, we are ensuring that youth are supported as they reach their fullest potential."

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4-H IOWA

Award-winning program:

Promoting School-Community-University Partnerships to Enhance Resilience

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