

Introduction

Since 1994, the St. Joseph Youth Alliance has been striving to positively impact issues relating to children and youth. Over the years, each of the programs and services have systematically fallen into five emphasis areas, which now serve as the drivers for the organization's decision-making. The areas are: Community Awareness and Education, Crisis Intervention, Early Childhood, Youth Mentoring, and Youth Asset Development.

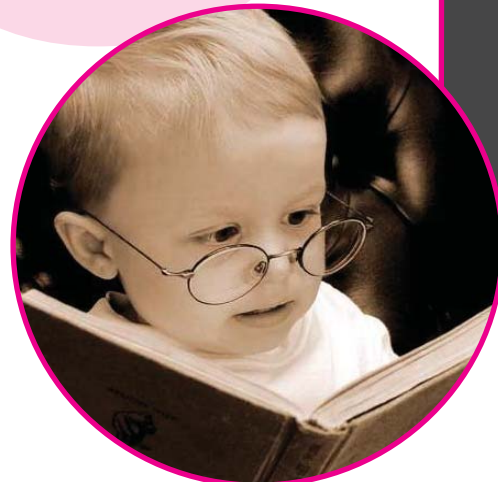
Community Awareness and Education

It is important for any organization to invest in community awareness and education, but more so for the Alliance in our efforts to address complex social, behavioral and environmental change for families, children and youth. Efforts in this area vary over time, depending on community priorities and availability of resources. Community awareness efforts include media campaigns, such as the Look Again campaign that takes a comprehensive media approach to create awareness around youth asset development. Community awareness is also created through billboards, involvement in locally sponsored events, and in promotion of the many programs and services addressing critical issues for families, such as substance abuse, child abuse and neglect, youth employment, kindergarten readiness and so much more. Education is provided in many forms – from community and town forums, youth summits and provider training, to web-site postings on Teen-Talk, a local resource for adolescents.

Crisis Intervention

Crisis intervention services provided by the St. Joseph Youth Alliance are some of the most critical services provided by the organization. The Alliance provides families and youth with support, resources,

and hope for a better future through many avenues, but primarily through the Family Resource Advisory Council and Provider Network, mentoring programs, and home visits provided through the Family Connections Program. Often early intervention results in a better outcome. Therefore, the St. Joseph Youth Alliance serves as a resource to link families to appropriate and timely services and resources to help families avoid major crises.





Early Childhood

Early childhood development has been a core element of the St. Joseph Youth Alliance from the beginning, with a focus on improving the education and general life experiences of young children. The St. Joseph Youth Alliance has two priorities in this area – professional development of child care providers and school readiness. To ensure that these issues are addressed, the Alliance organizes and/or sponsors child care provider training, provides scholarships to individuals pursuing early childhood care career paths and aids child care facilities in meeting early accreditation requirements. The Alliance also supports efforts to identify ways to assess school readiness and to create awareness in the community about the roles that child care providers can play in preventing child abuse and neglect.



Youth Mentoring

Youth mentoring is about providing young people with positive adult role models in the community and in the workplace. The St. Joseph Youth Alliance has two programs that have a youth mentoring focus – Journey to Unite Mentors and Parents (JUMP) and Northwest Missouri Mentoring Partnership (MMP). Both programs have core elements that: provide young people with a sense of belonging; give them a sense that the community cares about them; and supports them in identifying and capitalizing on their potential. Key objectives of the programs are for youth to achieve academic success and have positive, long-term employment experiences. It is believed that by achieving these objectives, youth will have a strong foundation for future social success and will contribute back to society and the community.

Youth Asset Development

Youth asset development requires a long-term investment in youth. It begins at birth and continues on into adulthood. The St. Joseph Youth Alliance is committed to supporting programs and services that empower

youth, while at the same time setting boundaries and expectations. Core elements of the programs and services in this emphasis area are designed to instill positive values and commitment to learning, as well as assist youth in using their time constructively to build social competencies and a positive self identify. The St. Joseph Youth Alliance has been instrumental in orchestrating the St. Joseph Drug Free Communities Coalition, which focuses heavily on changing social norms around substance abuse by youth. The Alliance is also actively engaging youth in service learning opportunities through Youth Empowerment through Service and the Youth Action Coalition.

Highlights of the events, activities and programs for 2006 are shared in this report, along with data demonstrating progress toward identified results and benchmarks.

Community Awareness & Education



Training and Education

Training is a large component of community awareness and education. As such, the St. Joseph Youth Alliance has hosted several community education training sessions, particularly related to child abuse and neglect prevention efforts.

One highlight for St. Joseph was the training conducted on Dr. Ruby Payne's book, *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*. Since 1972, Dr. Ruby Payne has been involved with education as a teacher, principal, consultant, and administrator. In her book, Ruby discusses the hidden rules that govern how each of us behaves in our social class. Those rules, because they are hidden and only known to those within the group, prove to be a major stumbling block for individuals trying to move to a new social class. Students from poverty often languish in classrooms run by members of middle class because those are the rules that govern.

(Source: <http://www.lecturemanagement.com/speakers/ruby-payne.htm>)

The topics covered in the training included how economic class affects behaviors and mind sets, why students from generational poverty often fear being educated, the "hidden rules" within economic classes, discipline interventions that improve behavior, and the eight resources that make a difference in success.

Two other education sessions of significance were provided for the community in the area of early childhood development. The first was the Creative Curriculum® training provided by a certified trainer from Washington D.C. The second was the Conscious Discipline® training, attended by 86 individuals.



Creative Curriculum®

Creative Curriculum® is a program of Teaching Strategies, and is a nationally accredited program. Thirty-two child care providers received 14 hours of training and received the Creative Curriculum® for Infants and Toddlers book. Participants attending leave the training:

- Understanding the impact of quality care on development
- Defining curriculum for infants and toddlers
- Defining the role of the early childhood professional
- Knowing infants and toddlers
- Building relationships with children
- Building partnerships with families
- Observing: Looking through children's eyes
- Planning and individualizing
- Creating a welcoming environment
- Keeping infants safe and healthy
- Promoting learning through routines
- Promoting learning through activities
- Planning and evaluating the curriculum: Meeting individual and program needs.



Conscious Discipline®

The Conscious Discipline® training, a full-day session was conducted by a certified trainer from Columbia, providing participants with 6 training hours. Conscious Discipline® is evidence-based, and was named a national model for character education by the Character Education Partnership in 2005. Becky A. Bailey, Ph.D., award-winning author, renowned teacher and internationally recognized expert in childhood education and developmental psychology developed the Conscious Discipline®. It is a social-emotional program that facilitates early childhood and elementary

About Creative Curriculum® . . .

Creative Curriculum® is based on the latest research on how children learn best and has been shown through experimental and quasi-experimental studies to improve classroom quality and promote the school readiness of preschool children. The Creative Curriculum® meets all of the standards put forth for effective early childhood curricula by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) and the National Association of Early Childhood Specialists in State Departments of Education (NAECS/SDE). (Source: www.teachingstrategies.com)

Ongoing community education and awareness efforts are promoted through:

Volunteer St. Joseph, a web-based volunteer information system designed to improve access and delivery of volunteer service opportunities, particularly for youth, in the St. Joseph community.

St. Joseph Drug Free Community Coalition, which works to positively change community attitudes and behaviors surrounding drugs, alcohol and tobacco, ultimately encouraging youth to choose substance free lives.

Teen-Talk, an interactive site for youth that provides information about issues concerning youth, a calendar of events, current news and links to other youth-friendly sites.

Best at Birth, which is a long-standing collaborative focused on reducing teen pregnancy and supporting students who experience a pregnancy during the school year.

teachers in creating “school families” where children and teachers can reclaim joy, helpfulness and caring as a foundation for the educational process. Research conducted in schools and centers using Conscious Discipline® shows that it decreases aggression, increases academic scores on state tests, decreases impulsivity/hyperactivity in “difficult” children, increases collegiality of staff, and creates a positive school climate. (Source: www.beckybailey.com)

America’s Promise — Top 100 City for Youth

In the fall of 2005, the City of St. Joseph was named one of the “100 Best Communities for Young People” by America’s Promise. Nearly 1,200 communities registered to take part in the competition. Research shows — and experience proves — that children need five fundamental resources in order to thrive, also known as the Five Promises: caring adults, safe places, a healthy start, effective education and opportunities to help others.

St. Joseph was selected for its collaborative approach to addressing the needs and concerns of young people, and for providing youths with innovative and empowering opportunities for growth and

achievement. The St. Joseph Youth Alliance continues to work with community partners and key leadership to provide every child an opportunity to receive every promise.

A Decade of Difference

Community Partnerships celebrated a Decade of Difference in 2005. Their mission was and continues to be for children to have strong families, communities where parents are working, children are succeeding in school, growing up healthy, safe, and prepared to enter productive adulthood. Phyllis Brunson, Senior Associate, Center for the Study of Social Policy, spoke at the event. The community partners each set up displays that highlighted the impact of their partnerships over the past ten years and an evening banquet was held where each partnership was recognized for their service.



Teen-Talk: www.teen-talk.org

Highlight

In 2006, the St. Joseph Youth Alliance partnered with the new minor league baseball team, the Blacksnakes, to have an alcohol free game at which 2,000 youth were in attendance. Ball players provided training in conjunction with the game. This project was a great success and will be repeated in future years to create awareness about prevention of youth substance abuse.

Volunteer St. Joseph: www.volunteerstjoseph.org