

## **Together for Jackson County Kids 2004 Successes**

Together for Jackson County Kids was the recipient of a Drug Free Communities Grant. A public celebration and grant kick-off was held at the end of 2003 to increase awareness of the grant in the community.

TFJCK began publishing and distributing a quarterly newsletter

Sister organization, Jackson County Tobacco Free Coalition, lost it's funding in January of 2004. TFJCK agreed to provide support and staffing to insure the continuation of the effective work done by this organization.

Study Circle program was implemented in Jackson County. A total of five groups were formed, with the discussion topic of "A Community for All Generations". Each group was comprised of youth and adult members.

A Study Circle Action Forum to prioritize group ideas was held on February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2004. At the event, participants signed up to discuss specific action ideas and follow up on group recommendations to form an action plan.

The community action ideas are as follows:

- Increase youth and adult volunteerism and positive youth activities by offering more opportunities and coordination while utilizing the local Teen Court office.
- Implement a student driven task force to combat alcohol, tobacco and other drug use as well as to promote the Study Circles concept in the school setting. Study Circles may operate under the name YACO standing for Youth & Adult Community Opinions. This group would possibly navigate positive youth activities in the future. This action would be carried out using the resources of Together For Jackson County Kids and falls under the DFC grant proposal for 2004 -2005.
- Create a strong career-counseling network. Almost thirty percent of area high school graduates list miscellaneous as their post graduation plan as opposed to employment, college, tech. school or military opportunities. Members of Study Circles believed that youth should be aware of all of the opportunities available to them upon graduation. The local school systems, guidance counselors and community members will be the primary planning and implementation team for this action item.
- Provide a community / county reproductive health service for youth and adults who need assistance in this area. Over 40 children were born to single mothers in Jackson County last year. This service would be in a friendly, comfortable and confidential environment and benefit the county greatly by providing an alternative to teen / unwanted pregnancy. Currently Health and Human Services provides such services, the services are not well advertised in the school systems and in outlying communities. Area schools, Jackson County Health and Human Services and local advertising entity input is needed to complete this goal.

- Organize a community job bank for each town in the county. A central location could host or organize and match individuals (youth) looking for jobs with individuals who require labor or assistance.
- Evaluate teacher to student and student to teacher communication in the schools along with improving the parental involvement in the School District and with-in the individual classes. Parents, teachers and youth could then take ownership for positive improvements in the school systems.

Youth Risk Behavior Survey was administered to grades 7, 9, and 11 at Black River Falls Middle School and High School and Lincoln Junior/Senior High. The results were used to report on the Coalition's effectiveness, to plan future programming and to support applications for state and federal grant dollars dedicated to prevention of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

A Summer Teen Carnival was held on June 16, 2004.

- 12 local businesses contributed to the event.
- 8 agencies displayed information about summer programs available to kids in Jackson County during the summer. 3 of these agencies were new partners cooperating in a TFJCK event.
- 24 people, who are not regular participants in TFJCK events, donated volunteer time to this event.
- 46 youth attended the event.

Three DARE Parent Nights were held. Parents and DARE students were invited to a family meal and activities addressing peer pressure issues, building refusal skills and encouraging health lifestyle choices. DARE Officer, Kris Gacek spoke to parents about what their children were learning in DARE and how they could reinforce the message.

Parents participated in two DARE graduation ceremonies, recognizing the importance of what the students had just learned as well as the important part parents play in implementing the healthy lifestyle choices to which the students had just committed.

Two sessions of the 7-week Strengthening Families program were held. One group met in Black River Falls. One group was held in Alma Center.

Two members of TFJCK attended the Adolescent and Families Conference in Cable, WI.

TFJCK helped fund several activities in the county which had goals that supported the coalition's mission:

- Tobacco prevention billboard, designed by local TATU students.
- Post-prom trip to Kalahari for Black River Falls High School students.
- Training day with Mike McGowan for Western Wisconsin Workforce Board for Drug and Alcohol Prevention.
- D.A.R.E. graduation cakes and roller skating trip for students
- Lights on After School Program

Across Ages mentoring program was initiated. The program matches adult volunteers, 55+, with students in need of extra attention and guidance. Kelly Falzone traveled from Nashville, TN and trained 8-10 members on two days in April. Recruitment was ongoing throughout the year, with limited response from adults. Organizers persevered. By year-end, 3 adults mentors were trained to participate in the program.

Youth In Governance presentations were given to Jackson County Law Enforcement Committee, Merrilan village board, BRF City Council and BRF School Board. Law Enforcement Committee incorporated youth into their board by year-end.

Together for Jackson County Kids held training for adult members and one for new youth members. By year-end, 4 BRF High School Students were attending meetings regularly.

TFJCK was awarded with a Black River Foundation Grant. The funds were designated to support operation of TFJCK and the Tobacco Free Coalition and to purchase a set of pig lungs to use as a visual aid in tobacco prevention efforts in the schools.

Three middle school students and one adult advisor from the Boys and Girls Club attended the Wisconsin Regional Teen Institute in Elkhorn, WI.

Two members attended the CADCA (Community Anti Drug Coalitions of America) national conference in Chicago, IL. They were able to meet federal grant administrators and came back with much information and enthusiasm to share with the coalition.

Hosted Mike McGowan for an informational brown bag lunch event for parents and community members. McGowan discussed current local trends in ATOD abuse and prevention.