

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 3,100 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.”



4-H

NEW YORK

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT THROUGH YOUTH (CITY) PROJECT

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Award-Winning Program: Community Improvement Through Youth (CITY) Project

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

2008 FAMILY STRENGTHENING AWARDS

THE POWER OF EMPOWERMENT

When young people in poverty are empowered and supported by their families to serve and lead their communities, they can dramatically change their futures. In the Community Improvement Through Youth (CITY) Project, a Children, Youth and Families At Risk program of the Cornell Cooperative Extension, youth are doing just that. The CITY Project is a five-year program for youth ages 13-18 in three New York communities where poverty, crime and other factors put them at risk of juvenile delinquency, academic failure and substance abuse. The program's 40 participants meet after school for trainings on team building, civic engagement, public speaking and other topics in preparation for leading their own community improvement projects. As a key part of this project, parents support their teens throughout the year by attending community forums and family nights. During the summer, students are guaranteed paid part-time jobs and continued support as they work on their projects.

"We provide the training, opportunities and supports. But youth are the driving force behind the projects changing their communities," says June P. Mead, senior extension associate.



MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES OFTEN SEE PROGRAMS END WHEN FUNDING ENDS. THAT IS WHY OUR PARTNERS ARE SO IMPORTANT. THEY NOT ONLY PROVIDE A PLACE TO MEET AND CONNECTIONS TO SERVICES, BUT ALSO TAKE CHARGE OF SUSTAINING THE CITY PROJECT IN THE LONG TERM.

—June P. Mead, senior extension associate, Department of Human Development, Cornell University

PARTNERING FOR SUCCESS

The CITY Project partners with established agencies in Binghamton, Manhattan's Lower East Side, and the Bedford Stuyvesant area of Brooklyn to holistically serve families in their neighborhoods and link them to Cornell Cooperative Extension programs and services. The Binghamton Housing Authority Gang Prevention program, Broome County Urban League, Henry Street Settlement House and Police Athletic League/Wynn Center provide meeting space and staff to support the CITY Project and act as liaisons for youth and their families to access services available through their organizations. Partners have also helped youth carry out 38 community improvement projects, which have ranged from organizing a youth and law enforcement summit to putting on an interactive play to raise awareness about risky behaviors affecting youth.

"By virtue of being closely linked with our partners, the CITY Project helps youth and parents build trusting relationships with community agencies and more easily connect with supports they need," Mead says. "We've built such successful community collaborations that many other community organizations are eager to join us in this work."

Throughout the school year, the CITY Project holds open houses, community forums, health fairs and Family Night events where families share a meal and youth present their projects. "These events open the door for the parents to learn about resources available right in their neighborhood," Mead says. "Parents, grandparents and caregivers discover opportunities they didn't know about before, such as GED classes, parenting education and senior services."

The CITY Project approach already has had considerable effects. In 2008, all of the program's 11 seniors graduated, with one entering the military and 10 entering college. Of those 10, five received full scholarships.

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