

impact

of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences



Economic Development and Quality of Life for People and Communities **The Family & Community Connection**

Issue

When families are torn by fighting, abuse, alcohol or drug addictions, with parents too young or too tired to take care of children, they need help. The Family & Community Connection, sponsored through the Arizona Cooperative Extension, trains paraprofessionals to teach parenting to high-risk families.

What has been done?

More than 40 paraprofessionals from the Department of Economic Security, Head Start and other agencies are joining with extension volunteers to work one-on-one with at-risk families. The Extension-developed curriculum includes child development, parenting skills, home management techniques,

life skills and resource referral. Partnering of families and volunteers works because they can relate to each other. Volunteers range between 16 and 75 years of age, and are of all ethnic backgrounds. They come from the same communities as the family with whom they work. The program has expanded to include court-referred truancy cases, about-to-be-released prisoners, who will be returning to parenting roles, and welfare-to-work (TANF) participants.

Impact

During 2000, a total of 1,698 families participated in Family & Community Connection. Statewide surveys returned by 300 participants show

there were significant improvements in the parents' ability to control their children's behavior in a positive manner. Eighty-nine percent of the participants reported that the discipline they use at home with their children is less harsh and has improved. Ninety-four percent reported that their lives have changed in a positive way as a result of the classes.

The Family & Community Connection program in Pinal County has worked closely with the local court system to implement a series of educational classes attended by the offending youth and their guardians. In 2000 the overall recidivism rate has been very low (5-10 percent), and in the town of Eloy, the recidivism rate was 0 percent.

Funding

Department of Economic Security
Head Start
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