



Cooperative Extension
Racine County

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UW-Extension Brings Strengthening Families Program to Burlington

Racine County UW-Extension along with 13 parents and 11 youth recently celebrated the successful completion of the Strengthening Families Program. For seven weeks, parents and youth gathered at Karcher Middle School for a family meal followed by two hours of activities designed to strengthen their ability to communicate, set limits, and resolve problems together as a family. As a result of the program, youth gained skills in handling stress and resisting peer pressure especially related to alcohol, drugs, and delinquent behavior.

The program responds to a community need for prevention programs for parents of middle school youth in Racine County. “In May 2011, Racine County UW-Extension collected information on parenting programs and resources in the county. We found that there was a gap in prevention programs for parents of middle school students particularly in western Racine County,” said Sarah Hawks, Family and Community Educator for Racine County UW-Extension.

Strengthening Families is a family-focused program for youth ages 10 to 14 years old and their parents. The goal is to reduce substance use and behavior problems in youth during their teen years. The program was conducted as a part of the U.S.D.A.’s Children, Youth, and Families At Risk (CYFAR) Project, a grant to expand outreach to Hispanic youth and families in Burlington. Strengthening Families is an evidence-based program that has been recognized as an exemplary prevention program by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, National Institute of Drug Abuse, Department of Education, and the Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration.

The program was facilitated by UW-Extension Educators Bev Baker, Sarah Hawks, Nelly Martinez, and Tracy Strother. Walmart, Subway, and Domino’s Pizza of Burlington gave donations to support the program.



Youth participants gather for a photo on the last night of the Strengthening Families Program.