

## The Science of Supporting Local Youth!

The *Communities That Care*® process engages the community as a whole in altering the social environment to change attitudes, behaviors, and the conditions that place children at risk for adolescent problem behaviors. Community members and existing organizations work cooperatively to plan, implement, and evaluate research-based programs with the goal of reducing substance abuse, teen pregnancy, school dropout, delinquency, violence, and depression and anxiety.

Centre County *Communities That Care*® (CTC) serves the communities of Bald Eagle Area, Bellefonte, and Penns Valley. Data driven, the collaborative has supported the administration of the Pennsylvania Youth Survey to students in 6<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> grades since 2001. The data is utilized to assess local risk and protective factors and to change the conditions that put our youth at risk before adolescent behavior problems develop.

Through the commitment of community members, Centre County CTC® has grown and has played a vital role in strengthening the support systems that promote positive youth development. By successfully garnering \$1,789,560 in grant funding since 2001, Centre County CTC® has created a Prevention Coordinator position in each of its three representative school districts and is implementing prevention programs including *Olweus Bullying Prevention Program*, *Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies*, *LifeSkills Training*, *Project Towards No Drug Abuse*, and *the Strengthening Families Program*. Newly secured funding will be used to initiate *Reconnecting Youth (RY)* in the fall of 2007 in Bald Eagle and Bellefonte Area School Districts. RY has been proven effective in helping high-risk high school youth improve their academic performance and manage emotional distress, while decreasing substance use, depression, and suicide risk.

What is the benefit to collaboration and investing in nationally recognized proven effective programs in our communities? Research has shown that for every dollar invested in these programs, communities can save between \$2 and \$20 in future health, criminal justice and social service spending. In just 5 years, the local investment in prevention is demonstrating significant changes in targeted risk and protective factors and substance use among local youth. The most recent 2005 PAYS data indicated that all of the 2000 targets set for locally prioritized risk and protective factors by Centre County CTC® have been met with improvements ranging between 10 and 27%. In addition, over the last 5 years, strides have been made in substance use reductions. For example, among seniors, the following reductions have been seen in past 30-day use: a 10% reduction in alcohol use, a 15% reduction in cigarette smoking, and a 6% reduction in marijuana use.

Every community member can play a role in changing our community and ensuring that together we support youth, families, and each other. To become involved, contact Centre County CTC® at 814-404-9511 or visit us online at: [www.centrecountyctc.org](http://www.centrecountyctc.org).