



Reaching Out

Norristown Area Communities That Care for Youth

Keeping Youth Safe & Drug Free

FALL 2007

The Keys to School Success

By Alissa McBride, MSW, Community Prevention Coordinator

Study after study has shown that parental involvement is the number one determinant of how well all children, regardless of their background, perform in school. What counts most is what we say and do at home, not how rich or poor we are or how many years of school we have finished. When children can count on getting attention at home, they have a greater sense of security and self-worth. This will help them not only in school, but also when they grow up.

Create an environment that encourages learning. Set fire to their imagination by providing them with a wide variety of

experiences and materials, from puzzles to paints to computers. Celebrate their curiosity by answering their endless questions, even if you have to consult out-



side resources to do so. Read to them, let them see you read, insist that they read independently, take them to the library and make sure they have their own

library card. Most of the learning your children do in school involves reading, so this is an important skill to have. Let them know that their educational performance is important to you. At the conclusion of each day, ask them what they did in school and ask questions about papers they bring home. When a problem occurs, work with them to find a solution.

Provide them with a well-balanced life. A stable home filled with love serves as a solid foundation for good grades. Establish routines so that your children get enough sleep, eat regular nourishing meals, and get plenty of exercise. Limit TV time and the playing of video and computer games. Show them how to be organized; children who have organizational skills find it much easier to succeed in school. This involves keeping an assignment book, having notebooks for each class and maintaining an orderly backpack that

Daytime Curfew/Truancy Update

The Daytime Curfew Ordinance is still in effect in the municipality of Norristown, making it against the law for school-aged children enrolled in elementary or secondary schools to be in any public place in Norristown during school hours. Citations will be issued to parents and business owners that serve truant youth.

State and local truancy laws are being vigorously enforced to ensure that our youth receive the best possible education.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this legislation, please call Meaghan Kerper at 610-270-0977.

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is filled and by the door before bed each night. Help them develop effective study skills for their particular learning style. Encourage them to have a regular time for homework and provide them with a study place that is free of distractions. Check their homework and insist that they redo it if it is incomplete or incorrect.

Maintain a strong and positive connection to your children's



school. Attend open houses and conferences. Volunteer to help in their classrooms. Develop a

good relationship with your children's teachers. Good communication between home and school helps children perform to their potential and makes it easier to address problems. Express your appreciation to teachers for all they do for your children.

Your children's educational achievements will play a large role in determining what sort of life they will have. Do your part to ensure that they perform to their potential.

College Bound?

By Jennifer Yeager, Youth Services Specialist

With college costs rising at such a fast rate, many parents are questioning whether their children will be able to continue their education beyond high school. In reality, there are many different institutions of higher learning and ways to pay for them so that any child in the country can attend college if they want to. Some options include:

Financial aid—Awards are largely based on financial need; the greater the need, the larger the award.

Scholarships—While most people believe that these are given only to those who shine in sports or the classroom, there are scholarships for a wide variety of other attributes and interests. Every

year awards are given to students who play musical instruments, have artistic talent, plan to major in underrepresented subjects, or have minority status. Financial need is also taken into account when awarding scholarship packages.

Type of School—State schools are less expensive than private schools. Community colleges and specialized training or trade schools are lower in cost and usually provide an associate's degree in less than four years.

Military—All branches of the armed forces are currently recruiting and offer educational packages to those who are interested.

Student Contribution—

Requiring your child to contribute toward their education not only helps with costs, but has the added benefit of teaching them to be both responsible and appreciative of the experience.

Educational savings accounts—

It is never too soon to start saving for college. Our state has several types of savings accounts that allow you to start paying for tuition now at the current rates with monthly payments as low as \$50 a month.

The most important step is the first one—get more information! The key ingredient to receiving an education beyond high school is desire, not cash on hand.

Truancy Has Teeth—Don't Let It Bite You!

By Oglatha Ingram, MSW, Parent Outreach Specialist

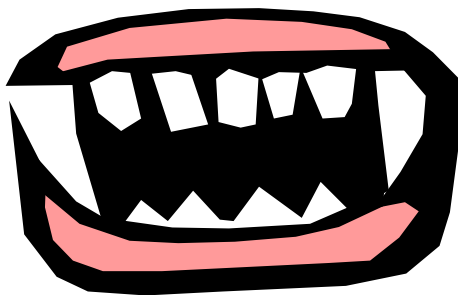
Truancy has teeth. “Truancy is not being tolerated in Norristown Area School District (NASD) and a new ordinance has...given authorities some teeth in dealing with truant behavior.” This quote, taken from the November 12, 2006 edition of *The Times Herald*, demonstrates the local push to have all students attend school on a consistent basis. That push is back in full force as the 2007-2008 NASD school year begins.

Do you know a truant student? The legal consequences that are now being enforced can be scary, especially when you don't know the process. Here is a look at what happens:

- **Absent three days without a written notice** makes a student truant. Those three unexcused absences are viewed as unlawful in the state of Pennsylvania and will be recorded as such.
- The **local district justice is notified at the fourth** and any future unexcused absences. At this point the parent and truant student could be subject to a fine, the parent could be mandated to attend a parenting education program, the student could be assigned to a court-appointed alternative school

program or the student (age 15 and older) could lose driving privileges.

- The **Montgomery County Juvenile Court** becomes involved with students who are **habitually absent**. Fines, community service, a five-day stay in the county jail are all possible sentences for students and/or their parents, whose habitual absences have led them to the juvenile court.



Don't let it bite you! Parents can help avoid these problems by:

- **Remembering that two things must occur in order for your child's absence to be lawful** — A call to the attendance clerk and a note sent to the school the day of return explaining your child's absence.
- **Communicating to your child the importance of an education**. Explain to your child that their school attendance on a regular basis will give them consistent expo-

sure to important information that will eventually lead to life sustaining employment.

- **Communicating to your children that you will not support truant behavior**. If your child knows that you are intolerant of habitual school absences and that there are consequences in place, appropriate attendance behavior may occur.
- **Becoming aware of your children's academic curriculum, athletic programs and social activities**. If parents understand what their children should be learning, know their athletic interests and involvement and/or their social contacts, then parents can effectively partner with their child's teachers, coaches and advisors to help their child be successful in the classroom, in the sports arena and in the development of healthy peer relationships—a full circle of support.

If absenteeism is a problem in your family, keep in mind that the NASD and the community want to help. A list of the “helping agencies” is available. For information, please call Oglatha Ingram at 610-630-2111, ext. 226.



KEEPING YOUTH
SAFE
&
DRUG FREE

Communities That Care
3125 Ridge Pike
Eagleville, PA 19403
Phone: 610-630-2111
Fax: 610-630-4003
info@norristownctc.org

Communities That Care (CTC) is a risk-focused approach to reducing adolescent problem behaviors through community mobilization and planning. Local citizens and community leaders work together to identify the risk factors that increase the likelihood of problem behaviors developing, and enhance the protective factors that can shield youngsters from problems. The risk and protective factors are used to implement a comprehensive plan to step ahead of the problems with far-reaching and long-lasting solutions.

For more information, visit our website at www.norristownctc.org.

Kid Time

By Rob Dallas, Youth Services Specialist

One of the many challenges that parents face today is finding the time to truly interact with their children. In fact, studies show that children who have parents that are involved in their lives tend to be more successful inside and outside of the classroom. It is possible to make it happen. Several easy ways to do this are:

- Make sure your child gets your “OK” when leaving the house, going somewhere new, or making plans. This keeps you in charge of your child’s activities and schedule.
- Limit TV, video game and

computer time. This creates more time for family interaction.



- Have family dinners as often as possible. (NO TV DURING DINNER!) Eating together is an excellent way to open the lines of communication.
- Try to make enough food so that there are leftovers for

another meal. Why? Reheating leftovers is not only easier, but much less time consuming which allows for more time with your child when you are having a particularly busy day.

- Start family rituals and participate in seasonal events. Pick apples together in the fall, go sledding in the winter, and have family picnics in the spring!
- Schedule family fun nights. These can consist of playing games, renting movies, making special meals together and much more.