

The mission of Youth First is to strengthen youth and families through evidence based programs that prevent substance abuse, promote healthy behaviors, and maximize student success.



FALL 2011 • VOLUME 7, ISSUE 2

## Strengthening Families Helps Make Good Families Even Better

### Upcoming Programs:

#### **Strengthening Families 6-9**

Lowell Elementary – Sept. 13  
Ft. Branch Schools – Sept. 13  
Lynnville Elementary/Lynnville UMC – Sept. 15  
Loge Elementary – Sept. 27

#### **Strengthening Families 10-14**

Resurrection – Sept. 12  
North Posey Jr High – Sept. 14  
Holy Redeemer/Thompkins Middle School – Sept. 14  
Tennyson Elementary – Sept. 20

Strengthening Families is a program designed to help make good families even better families by boosting parenting skills, youth social and life skills, and family communication skills. Programs are offered for parents/caregivers and their children ages 3-5, 6-9 or 10-14, and are appropriate for single-parent, blended, or traditional families.

Strengthening Families is designed for **EVERY** family! Raising a child can sometimes be difficult and finding quality time to spend as a family is challenging. Strengthening Families gives participants the opportunity to share their parenting successes and struggles with other parents who are experiencing similar situations. Each week participants are given new tools and strategies to take home and try. Parents are encouraged to build on what they are already doing that works well for their family.

Every week the program begins with a family meal. After the meal parents and youth are divided into separate groups. Trained facilitators work with parents on topics that include rewarding positive behavior, giving clear directions, setting limits, problem-solving, and parent/child communication, and with children on topics that include social skills, following directions, communication, dealing with peer pressure, and problem-solving. The evening closes with families coming back together for family time where they work on activities and play games that help reinforce the lessons taught earlier in the evening.



*The Koenig family*

Strengthening Families is provided FREE to all families thanks to funding from the Safe Schools Healthy Students grant, the Division of Child Services, Welborn Baptist Foundation, and Old National Bank Foundation. The program provides child care and/or homework help for children younger/older than the programs age range. Weekly and program completion incentives are provided and assistance is available for those who need transportation to the program.

To learn more about Strengthening Families or to register for a program, call Laura Wathen, Youth First Program Director, at 421-8336 x4.

### **Here's what families are saying about their experiences with the program...**

*"The Strengthening Families program has helped us to interact better, taught the kids valuable skills like listening and being respectful, and taught me techniques for parenting. All of this was extremely valuable to our family."*

*"Thank you for providing an opportunity for my daughter and me to learn some new ways of communicating and how to deal with circumstances that occur in all families. Our relationship has and will continue to benefit from this program."*

*"Strengthening Families taught me how to communicate with my 14 year old son. I learned how to listen to him versus just getting mad at him."*

*"This program was very beneficial to our family. We are being more active in finding ways to spend more time together having fun and seem to have less arguing at home."*

*"Our family really enjoyed the Strengthening Families sessions. We learned to be better listeners, to be patient, and to focus on the good qualities our children share."*

*"Just a note to say how important and life changing the Strengthening Families program was for my family and me. As a single mother the classes were so very beneficial for me and the instructors were amazing."*

*"As a parent of a special needs child I cannot even begin to tell you how invaluable this program has been to me. Instead of nights filled with frustration we are now able to truly enjoy each other. We have seen some great improvements with her behavior which is such a blessing."*



Wok n Roll's owner Jane Tang supports Youth First by donating 20% of her sales on the first Saturday of each month.

311 South Green River Road,  
Evansville, 812-479-3118  
Hours: Mon-Sat 10am-9pm

### **Save the date!**

Passport to Adventure Benefit Auction – Thursday, April 12, 2012

If you would like to receive our newsletter electronically please send your email address to: [info@youthfirstinc.org](mailto:info@youthfirstinc.org).

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# A Community That Cares

Youth First constantly works to build relationships with youth, parents, schools and communities. Community collaboration is one of the most important components in the Communities That Care (CTC) process that Youth First leads in Warrick County.

The CTC process was developed by University of Washington professors of social work, J. David Hawkins, PhD and Richard F. Catalano, PhD. It is a way for community members to work together to prevent problem youth behaviors which include substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy, school dropout, violence and behavior health issues such as anxiety and depression. The process is based on research which identified risk factors that predict these problem behaviors and the protective factors that can buffer children from the risks and problem behaviors.

Youth First, working in collaboration with Youth Service Bureau, was awarded a CTC grant for implementation in Warrick County. The grant is funded through the Indiana Division of Mental Health and Addiction (DMHA) and the Indiana Prevention Resource Center (IPRC).

Through the work of Youth First, other area organizations and community members, the Warrick County Communities That Care Coalition (WCCTCC) has been developed. The WCCTCC includes the Warrick County Sheriff Department, the Warrick County School Corporation, YMCA of Southwest Indiana, Deaconess Healthcare, Southwestern



Behavior Health, Warrick County Courts, the Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative, local centers such as Studio Bee in Boonville, St. Mary's Warrick, Camp Brosend, Bernie's Market in Lynnville, Warrick County Chamber of Commerce and local faith based organizations, community members and area youth.

Currently there are 14 CTC communities in Indiana with plans for this process to be implemented statewide.

The first step of the CTC process was to utilize the 2010 Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug survey administered each year to Warrick County students in 6th-12th grades, along with other archival data, to identify the risk and protective factors. Identified risk factors are: Interaction with Anti-social Peers, Family Conflict, and Favorable Parental Attitudes toward the Problem Behaviors.

The second step of the process was to identify resources that already exist in Warrick County. Gaps in service were also identified and recommendations were suggested. Using the recommendations and outcome goals, the coalition has chosen evidence-based programs, policies and practices to fill the identified gaps. The final step will be for DMHA and IPRC to review the

Action Plan, and then the WCCTCC will implement and evaluate the strategies.

Through the Communities That Care process, Warrick County has a powerful tool to meet its vision of a community of healthy, productive families, free of drug and alcohol-abuse and Youth First is leading the way!

**CTC Board of Directors:**

Chair: Richard Lance, Tecumseh Jr/Sr High School Principal

Chair-Elect: Tim Pierce, School Resource Officer Castle High School

Recorder: Carla Kidwell, Purdue Extension

Laura Wathen, Youth First Program Director

Janie Chappell, Manager, Community Services Deaconess Crosspoint

Diane Braun, YMCA Senior Youth Development Program Director

Gene Raber, Lynnville Elementary School Principal

CTC Coordinator: Margery Gianopoulos, Youth First Program Coordinator

CTC Technical Advisor: Colleen Tessoroff, Afternoons ROCK in Indiana Director, Youth Service Bureau

To learn more about how to get involved with Communities that Care contact Margery Gianopoulos 812-421-8336 x3.

## Congratulations Davi Stein!

Youth First is proud of Davi Stein, our Director of Social Work, who recently received a statewide award. The Indiana Play Therapy Association recognized Davi with the Yvonne Williams Award for her innovative service to the profession of play therapy. Davi's peers in Indiana surprised her with the unexpected but much deserved honor.



Youth First staff surround the newest Youth First family members.

## Meet Our Newest Team Member



**Ben Smith, MSW** has joined Youth First as a school social worker at EVSC's Lodge Community School. He was a Youth First School Social Worker at North High School in 2006 and has recently worked as a facilitator with our Family Connections program.

**School Social Workers**

- Laura Arrick**  
New Harmony School & Mt. Vernon High School
- Kathy Baker**  
Castle High School
- Mary Ruth Branstetter**  
Holy Redeemer Elementary
- Joan Carie**  
Academy of Innovative Studies
- Elizabeth Christmas**  
North Posey High School
- Valorie Dassel**  
Mater Dei High School
- Lori DeLeo**  
Mt. Vernon Middle and High School
- Alissa Eastham**  
Central High School
- Dena Embrey**  
North & South Terrace Elementary (North Posey)
- Sherry Fisher**  
Castle North and South Middle Schools
- Tiffany Harper**  
Reitz High School
- Sasha Kendall**  
Bosse High School
- Laura Keys**  
Washington Middle School
- Vicki Kirkman**  
Gibson Southern High School & 3 Catholic Elementaries
- Lauren Leshner**  
Memorial High School
- Teresa Mercer**  
Wood Memorial High School
- Sarah Swartz**  
Princeton Middle School & Princeton High School
- Dianna Miller**  
Ft. Branch, Haubstadt & Owensville Schools (South Gibson)
- Alice Munson**  
Corpus Christi, Holy Spirit, Westside Catholic
- Kate Murray**  
Evansville Day School & Joshua Academy
- Sarah Postlewaite**  
Thompkins Middle School
- Amber Russell**  
Tecumseh Jr. & High, Elberfeld & Lynnville Elementaries
- Theresa Schneider**  
McGary Middle School
- Ben Smith**  
Lodge Community School
- Amy Steele**  
Resurrection
- Christine Weinzapfel-Hayden**  
West Elementary (Mt. Vernon), St. Philip Catholic
- Linda Walters**  
North High School
- Nichole White**  
Harrison High School
- Donna Wolter**  
Holy Rosary and St. Ben's Catholic

To e-mail Youth First employees, use the first initial and last name followed by @youthfirstinc.org (for example, pblack@youthfirstinc.org).

## Thank You to our Supporters

### Gifts to Youth First (May 1, 2011 - August 31, 2011)

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Anonymous  
Diocese Of Evansville  
Flanders Electric Motor Service  
Springleaf Financial Services  
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*In memory of Ernest Charles Chapman*  
Drs. William and Mona Wooten

#### *In memory of Tim Dodd*

Drs. William and Mona Wooten

#### *In memory of Thomas Hargett*

Dr. Mel Faw  
Drs. William and Mona Wooten

#### *In memory of Barbara Johnson*

Robert and Mary Tiemann

#### *In memory of Tom Matlock*

Drs. William and Mona Wooten

#### *In honor of Ron Romain*

Drs. William and Mona Wooten

#### *In honor of Marjorie Soyugenc*

Drs. William and Mona Wooten



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at Youth First, Inc.



Use your smartphone to click on the QR code to link to the Youth First Facebook page.



A QR Code is a matrix barcode (or two-dimensional code), readable by QR scanners, mobile phones with a camera, and smartphones. The code consists of black modules arranged in a square pattern on white background. The information encoded can be text, URL or other data.

[www.youthfirstinc.org](http://www.youthfirstinc.org)

## Life Saver...by definition:

- *Something that saves or preserves a person's life*
- *One that is timely and effective in time of distress or need*
- *To keep afloat, support*



The youth of our community face a wide variety of stressful situations every day. They are struggling to keep their heads above water as they search for something or someone that will offer them support.

Youth First is committed to being a lifeline for them through the tough situations they deal with on a day to day basis: divorce, death of a loved one, peer pressure, substance abuse, bullying...the list goes on and on.

### **We can't do it alone.**

We invite you to join a lifesaving team of community leaders as a Youth First Life Saver. Working together, using Youth First's evidence-based programs and practices, we will build a lifeline of community support for our youth and their families.

Please call **Melanie Atwood**, Director of Strategic Alliances at 421-8336 x5 today to find out how you can make an impact; young lives are depending on us!



## Thank You to our Life Savers

These donors are making it possible to provide Youth First Social Work services in the Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation.

#### Partnering Life Savers

Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Indiana  
Vectren Foundation

#### Sustaining Life Savers

Springleaf Finance Foundation  
Vandco

#### Other Life Savers

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## Thank you D-Patrick Mercedes Benz for benefiting Youth First through healthy competition!

This was the first year for the D-Patrick Mercedes Benz Tennis Championships at Tri-State Athletic Club. The winners, Craig Bottorff and Chris Clements, received a trophy and a trip to compete in the Mercedes Benz West Sectional Championship at the Scottsdale Fairmont Princess in Scottsdale, Arizona. Both of the winners happen to be high school tennis coaches: Craig at Castle and Chris at Mater Dei. All of the competitors donated their entry fees to Youth First. A similar golf championship at the Evansville Country Club also benefitted Youth First, and we'll share more about that in our next newsletter.



Pictured above (L-R): Don Martin (Tri-State), Ray Farabaugh (D-Patrick), John VanHoy (Runner-Up), John Reid (Runner-Up), Craig Bottorff (Men's Winner), Chris Clements (Women's Winner), Beth Washuta (Runner-Up), Shellee Starks (Runner-Up), Mary Ellen Farabaugh (Youth First Board), Steve Brockriede (Tri-State), Richard Cooley (Tri-State).



Two of the volunteers who helped at the event are pictured here: Rachel Bottorff, a student at Memorial High School, and Rachel Swartwood, a student at Castle High School.

### Kanpai's Youth First Day!

On Sunday, October 2, Kanpai restaurant will donate 15% of the day's sales to Youth First. The restaurant features sushi and Asian food, and you can dine in or carry out.

Address: 4593 Washington Avenue, Evansville  
 Phone: 812-471-7076  
 Website [www.mykanpai.com](http://www.mykanpai.com)  
 Sunday hours: 11am – 9:00pm



## Why I Support Youth First

**Theresa Berendes, Principal, Resurrection School:**

*Youth First has been a tremendous support for my school. We are extremely grateful for the extra support during the tragic losses of two students in recent months. No school should have to go through this much grief. Thanks to Youth First, our students, families, and teachers have been cared for and supported during the grief process.*

**Sheila Huff, Principal, Bosse High School:**

*I am a very strong advocate for Youth First, Inc. Youth First Social Workers are caring, compassionate, as well as passionate people. They are able to connect with children and families in ways that no one else can. They put themselves on the line each and every day for the sake of children. I truly believe that schools cannot function*



*Principals Huff and Berendes are pictured above with the Youth First Social Workers who serve their schools, Sasha Kendall and Amy Steele.*

*to their full potential without the presence of social workers. There should never be a question as to their worth and impact on the lives of students and their families as well as staff and faculty.*

## Did You Know?

**In 2009-2010, the top student and family concerns addressed by Youth First School Social Workers were:**

- **School Behaviors**
- **Depression**
- **Anger Management**
- **Parent/Child Conflict**
- **Anxiety**
- **Relationship Issues**
- **Substance Abuse**



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# Partnership Salute!

Youth First salutes the **School-Community Council (SCC)**, a collaboration of over 70 community organizations and schools in the **Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation**. Through the SCC, schools and agencies combine their resources and expertise to work together in support of children and families. Among other things, the council leads initiatives that promote the health and well-being of children and families. These efforts include the placement of Youth First Social Workers in 11 EVSC schools and our Strengthening Families programs.



*Youth First is proud to be a part of the School-Community Council and to serve the EVSC's students, families, schools and communities.*