

- Building Strong Communities
- Helping Youth Succeed
- Building Healthy Families

MSU Extension's Children, Youth and Family Programs help families succeed by improving life in homes, schools and communities. Educational opportunities are designed to meet the needs of people at all stages of the life cycle.

Positive Youth Development During the Out-of-School Time

* Support for Young People *

Issues

Out-of-school time brings both risks and opportunities.

Nationally, approximately 8 million children aged 5 to 14 spend time without adult supervision on a regular basis. In Michigan, nearly half of all elementary students report caring for themselves before or after school, and the numbers of unsupervised youth increase when children enter middle schools. This time that young people spend out of school – before and after school, on weekends and during the summer – involves potential for both risks and opportunities. The risks may involve juvenile crime (which triples in the after-school hours between 3 and 6 p.m.) and experimentation with tobacco, alcohol, drugs and early sexual activity. The out-of-school time can also involve opportunities for positive experiences through structured activities that provide safe environments, caring adults, and opportunities for recreation and educational enrichment.

(National Institute on Out-of-School Time, January 2003, *Making the Case: A Fact Sheet on Children and Youth in Out-of-School Time*: <http://www.wellesley.edu/WCW/CRW/SAC/>; Urban Institute, February 2001, *State Child Care Profile for Children with Employed Mothers: Michigan*: <http://www.urban.org>)

Out-of-school programs offer many opportunities for enrichment, including academic achievement.

There is significant research which shows that participation in afterschool programs is positively associated with better school attendance, more positive attitudes toward school work, higher aspirations for college, finer work habits, better interpersonal skills, reduced drop-out rates, higher quality homework completion, less time spent in unhealthy behaviors, and improved grades.

(U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Department of Justice, 2000, *Afterschool Programs: Keeping Children Safe and Smart*: <http://www.ed.gov/pubs/afterschool/>)

MSU Extension's Response

Models for Out-of-School Time Programs

MSU Extension works collaboratively with local partners across the state to address local needs in this area. One example is the 4-H Fun Zone Project: Positive Youth Development During Out-of-School Time. Since 2000, this multi-county program model has focused on using VISTAs (Volunteers in Service to American) to work with MSU Extension staff and partners to build the capacity of low-income communities to productively engage young people aged 5 to 19 in safe, meaningful activities during the out-of-school hours. MSU Extension 4-H Youth Development is also involved with *4-H Afterschool*, a collaborative effort of the national Cooperative Extension System (state land grant universities, state and county governments and the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, United States Department of Agriculture) and the National 4-H Council, and supported by funding from the JCPenney Afterschool Fund.

Positive Youth Development Resources

MSU Extension offers a variety of materials and training designed to enhance the positive youth development focus of out-of-school time programming. Topics include putting guiding principles for positive youth development into practice, creating developmentally appropriate experiences for kids aged 5 to 19, and using character education and bullying prevention to create climates that are physically and emotionally safe for young people.

Experiential Learning Curricula

MSU Extension 4-H Youth Development is a key resource for hands-on educational activities that incorporate the experiential model of helping kids *do* activities (experience, explore discover), *reflect* on these experiences (by sharing and processing what they've learned), and *apply* what they've learned to their own lives. Many of the curricula that are available can be linked to subject areas that kids are exploring during the school day. Examples of curricula content areas include math and science, (such as aerospace, entomology, animal science, horticulture and gardening), creative expression (arts and crafts, theatre arts, woodworking), technology and communications, community service and leadership, and health and nutrition.

* Support for Families and Communities *

Issues

Opportunities for staff development are needed across community organizations.

In order to develop and implement the highest quality youth development programs during out-of-school time, many scholars and national programs have identified the need for increased opportunities for high-quality education and training for youth development workers – and for those considering entering this field.

(Hahn, A.B., & Raley, G.A., 1998, "Youth development: On the path toward professionalization," *Nonprofit Management and Leadership*, 8,, 387-401).

Volunteer development is a critical aspect to addressing out-of-school time.

Volunteers are a fundamental resource for building sustainability of out-of-school programs – this investment of human capital fuels much of the infrastructure that maintains programs for young people. Research has shown that many volunteers stop volunteering because of poor volunteer management practices, and many youth-serving organizations are interested in assistance that will help them build and maintain a strong corps of community volunteers.

(Association for Volunteer Administration, 2002, *A Guide to Investing in Volunteer Resources Management*.

<http://www.avaintl.org/>)

Family support and education is a valuable component of this work.

Michigan's 2.5 million families make choices and decisions every day—about time, money, child rearing, health, aging parents and public issues. They make these choices and decisions in the context of a complex, rapidly changing society and hard economic realities. Connections with families of youth involved with out-of-school time programs can be helpful links for addressing some of these issues.

MSU Extension's Response

Professional training and development

MSU Extension is involved in a tri-state collaboration with The Ohio State University Extension and Penn State Cooperative Extension to address out-of-school time with a particular focus on enhancing staff knowledge and skills around this issue. One outcome of this initiative was the Hours of Opportunity Conference: Positive Youth Development During the Out-of-School Time, which was held on March 25-26, 2003, in East Lansing. The conference was attended by 187 people from nine states, including people representing 26 youth-serving organizations. The conference offered speakers and sessions focusing on research and practice related to developing effective out-of-school programs; building community capacity to address this issue; addressing need, impact and research; and exploring public policy and advocacy. MSU Extension also offers the Better Kid Care Project, a statewide initiative that works with current child care providers to increase their knowledge and skills related to appropriate child development practices. This project also targets individuals who are interested in becoming licensed child care providers.

Building the volunteer base

MSU Extension provides expertise in several areas related to helping communities strengthen their volunteer base. These encompass the areas of volunteer development (the work of expanding and realizing the potential of volunteers), volunteer management (the organizational processes and systems used to support volunteers and achieve consistent program results), and volunteer administration (accountability related to the larger processes of program planning and organization, staffing, risk management and financial management of volunteer-driven efforts).

Strengthening the capacity of families

MSU Extension's Family and Consumer Sciences program is committed to helping families succeed through educational programs and resources, inservice education for family professionals and by preparing paraprofessionals to work with families. Examples of programs that may be helpful to families of youth involved with out-of-school time programming include Building Strong Families: Parenting Young Children (a program that teaches the parents of children up to age 3 how kids develop, behave, play to learn and develop "smart living" skills), Building Strong Adolescents (an assets-based parent education program designed to facilitate positive growth in adolescents), RETHINK: An Anger Management Program, and SMILE (Start Marking It Livable for Everyone) (a program for divorcing parents).

for more information please contact:

Cyndi Mark, Ph.D.

Program Leader, Out-of-School Time
markc@msu.msu.edu, 517-432-7602

Sheila Urban Smith

Asso. Program Leader, 4-H Afterschool
smithsh@msue.msu.edu, 517-432-7612

Bringing Knowledge to Life!

MSU Extension helps people improve their lives through an educational process that applies knowledge to critical issues, needs and opportunities. This organization provides access to research, knowledge and programming in all 83 Michigan counties. It is funded jointly by county boards of commissioners, the state of Michigan through Michigan State University, and federally through the U.S. Department of Agriculture.