Arizona: Working for Youth

The University of Arizona, Norton School of Family and Consumer Sciences, Cooperative Extension employs strategies to build capacity and establish policies that foster the supports and opportunities required for the successful transition from adolescence to young adulthood:
- Succeed educationally and professionally
- Earn a livable wage
- Have positive personal and social relationships
- Be active in civic engagement in their community and state

Challenges Facing Arizona Youth
- Arizona is home to more than 850,000 youth ages 12-21
- Arizona is ranked 39th in the 2008 Kids Count Data Book (Annie E. Casey Foundation)
- Arizona is ranked 49th for a young person’s chances of success (Educational Research Center, 2007)
- 21% of youth under 18 live in poverty (Kids Count, 2008)
- 11% of teens age 16 to 19 are not attending school or working (Kids Count, 2008)

Strategy
Our work is driven by the belief that Arizona’s youth deserve a better future than current statistics promise them. By working with our partners at the national, state, and local levels, across sectors, and with diverse youth populations, we strive to promote positive youth development. Our projects include:
- Arizona Youth Collaborative
- AZ-REACH (DoD)
- Building Partnerships for Youth (CDC-DASH)
- Children Youth and Families At Risk (CYFAR) (USDA)
- CYFERnet Evaluation (USDA)
- CYFERnet SEARCH (USDA)

Partnerships
- Arizona Center for Afterschool Excellence
- Arizona Department of Education Division of 21st Century Learning
- Centers for Disease Control
- Governor’s Office of Children, Youth and Families
- National 4-H Council
- National Institute of Food and Agriculture
- Navajo Nation
- North Carolina State University, Pennsylvania State, Texas A & M, University of Minnesota, Virginia Tech
- U.S. Department of Agriculture
- U.S. Department of Defense
- United Way of Tucson and Southern Arizona

Youth and Communities Served and Outcomes

National:
- Build evaluation capacity at a systems level
- Assessment and enhancement of youth program quality
- Provide technical assistance, professional development, and trainings
- Encourage and support multi-sector collaboration

State:
- Develop infrastructure to support and implement positive youth development strategies
- Build organizational and leadership capacity
- Engage youth representation and promote youth voice
- Advocate on behalf of youth and educate policy makers
- Improve youth outcomes and achievement
- Provide professional development and training opportunities
- Assess to ensure high quality programming
- Establish communities of practice

Local:
- Partner with Cooperative Extension County agents to promote positive youth development
- Provide professional development and technical assistance
- Serve diverse youth populations including:
  - Homeless
  - Juvenile Justice
  - Hispanic
  - Native American
  - Low-Income
  - Disenfranchised

Program Spotlight: CYFAR Spirit of the Sun (USDA)

Goal: To promote civic engagement and youth voice among disenfranchised youth

Tucson and Pima County:
- Skrappy’s/Tucson Youth Collective
  - Youth-identified issues:
    - Homeless youth
    - Youth in the juvenile justice system

Navajo Nation: Teens Out Loud
- Youth-identified issues:
  - Teen Pregnancy
  - Increase out-of-school time activities

Lessons Learned
- The role of cultural competency in developing effective programs
- The importance of program participation and youth voice in developing youth who are active and engaged citizens
- The importance of well-trained youth development staff with access to high quality professional development opportunities
- The importance of program evaluation of both program quality and program outcomes
- The importance of collaborative efforts at the community, state, and national levels