

Project Overview: New Communities Project Evaluation

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The Center completed evaluations of three community youth development programs offered by the Cooperative Extension System and funded through a USDA *New Communities Project* grant. Data collection started in 2001 and was completed in 2006. Collaboration between the Center and project staff produced quantitative and qualitative data that supported the effectiveness of the programs. The results were disseminated through two journal publications and a presentation at a national conference.

- ◆ Mutchler, M., Anderson, S., Taylor, U.R., Hamilton, W., & Mangle, H. (2006). Bridging the Digital Divide: An Evaluation of a Train-the-Trainer, Community Computer Education Program for Low-Income Youth and Adults. *Journal of Extension*, [On-line], 44(3). Available at: <http://www.joe.org/joe/2006june/a2.shtml>
- ◆ Mutchler, M., Anderson, S., Grillo, M., Mangle, H., & Grimshaw, M. (in press). Opening Doors: A Qualitative Evaluation of the Waterbury Youth Leadership Project. *Journal of Extension*.
- ◆ Mangle, H., Anderson, S.A., Mutchler, M.S., Gray, P., Grillo, P., Yaylor, U., Grimshaw, M., Hamilton, W. (May, 2006). Collaborative Evaluation of Community-Based Youth Development Programs: Taking the Pain Out of the Process. Pre-Conference Workshop presented at the Children Youth and Families at Risk National Conference, Atlanta, Georgia.

In **New Haven**, the Center evaluated the *Parents, Children, and Computers* program. This program followed a train-the-trainer model of pedagogy in which Extension staff trained adolescents who then went into the community to train adults and young children in computer use. In the period between 2001 and 2006, this program showed consistent effects on participants' reported levels of Computer Self-Efficacy.

In **Waterbury**, the Center evaluated the *Waterbury Youth Leadership Program (WYLP)*. This program targeted at-risk teens in the Waterbury area and focused on improving academic performance, peer relations, and employability of participants. Due to the small number of participants, qualitative focus groups were used to demonstrate the success of the WYLP. Interviewees were uniformly positive about their experiences in the program.

In **Willimantic**, the Center evaluated the *4H-Learning, Interaction, Friends, and Talents (LIFT) Program*. Based at Windham Middle School, 4H-LIFT targeted children in grades 5 through 8 who had been identified by the school as being at-risk. The program focused on improving academic skills, school behavior, and peer interactions. The program served approximately 100 youth annually. Using a waiting list of youth wishing to participate as a comparison group, the 4H-LIFT evaluation showed the program's impact in many areas, including increases in Math and Language Arts Grades, improved school attendance, and fewer incidences of detention and school suspension.