

2017 Year Executive Summary: The Family YMCA's Española Teen Center

*New Mexico Department of Health reports show that many of Española's children live in a critical state of existence. Historical poverty, multi-generational drug abuse, familial violence, and resource challenges facing the rural community, school district and local governance have combined to essentially leave behind 15 percent of the area's children. **

But a partnership that started in 2007 between the City of Española and The Family YMCA has started to turn the tide for these youth. The plan was to create an out-of-school time resource, a teen center, for community youth. Goals of the Center are to support mastery of education, mentor teens toward higher education, and foster healthy lifestyles/positive community connections.

The overarching goal of the Espanola YMCA Teen Center (EYTC) is to keep teenagers engaged in school and away from gangs and destructive behaviors.

In 2017, EYTC was a safe haven for **863 youth throughout the year**. At an annual budget of \$209k, supporting 863 youth, the cost per child per year is \$242.18.

Key evidence of EYTC being able to affect a key health indicator specifically related to education follows. Since opening in 2007 through the present (2017), staff members have tracked these results, with youth unique to each level, or unduplicated:

- 1) Assisted **42** youth to achieve their **reading-grade** level
- 2) Assisted **57** youth to achieve their **math-grade** level
- 3) Assisted **54** youth to obtain their **GED**
- 4) Assisted **54** youth to **re-engage in school that had dropped out** and/or assisted to graduate
- 5) This totals **207** individuals assisted to reach educational goals since 2007.
- 6) Youth who identified EYTC as the deciding influence to attend college (October 2007 - December 2017): **38**; 33 of these young adults are currently attending college classes, 5 of whom have finished college and now have careers.

Demographics

The Española YMCA Teen Center is open to all youth ages 12 to 19. The Teen Center offers educational and recreational resources to the entire sixth grade, middle and high school population, a target audience of 2,138 according to 2016-17 state enrollment reports.

However, as known through Center registration and attendance records, in 2017 we primarily served 7th-10th grade students in traditional and/or charter, non-private school for a potential reach of 1,211.

In 2017, the Center served 253 members and an additional 610 youth who attended as frequent visitors without filling out membership paperwork, for a total reach of 863 youth served, or 40% of the 6th -12th grade population. Of the 863 youth served, approximately 35% were in high school, 55% were in middle school and 10% were in sixth grade.

Membership is at a ratio of 60 percent male and 40 percent female.

Breakdowns in ethnicity of members and visitors are: 75 percent native Hispanic only; 15 percent Mexican immigrant, 5 percent Native Americans; and 5 percent mixed race/other/Caucasian.

The **mission** of the Center is to strengthen community teens through educational support and character development programming.

ESPAÑOLA'S NEED:

New Mexico's Española Valley is a rural community of 9,688 that serves a county of 40,000, both of which have critical needs for services. The county and community have nearly double the national average of families and individuals below the poverty level. Approximately 80% of community children are on free/reduced lunch. The school dropout rate is 7% compared with the state average of 4%. Also, a 2007 New Mexico Public Education report said 73% of Española high school graduates in college need remedial classes. The county population is 72% Hispanic and 14% American Indian.

A November 2009 NM DOH Epidemiology report, "Unintentional Illicit and Prescription Drug Overdose Death Trends, 2008," cited Rio Arriba County with the highest drug overdose death rate in our state at 52.2 per 100,000, comparable with the 7.1 in the United States (Center for Disease Control report, February 9, 2007, citing 1999-2004 statistics). A 2004 NM DOH drug abuse trends report cites the county as having severe multi-generational drug-addiction problems and fractured community services.

Additionally, city and county governments face economic and personnel shortages that affect their ability to adequately meet public safety and community service needs.

CHANGING A SYSTEM

The last 10 years of operation have provided a baseline for measurements in relation to our goals and objectives and provide data on how we impact health.

The Española YMCA Teen Center was named the Nonprofit of the Year in 2016 and in 2012 by the Española Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber named EYTC as the Youth Organization of the year 2008.

In 2015, US Senator Martin Heinrich nominated the Center for a Bright Spot in Hispanic Education award for its Robotics programs and academic support.

In 2010-12, the Federal Department of Education awarded the Teen Center an educational support grant of \$125,000. The grant tracked key connections between amount of youth tutored, amount of tutoring sessions offered, and amount of educational programs offered and youth impacted. The finding showed that the impact to youth is directly tied to funding support and funds invested in youth.

The most unexpected outcomes, upon final review of the numbers served during this grant period, was the amount of pure mathematical data that showed growth in numbers served and effective outreach. The main reason attributed to this is that during the two years of the grant that funding was secured, programs could be created to meet the needs of the youth. The year prior to this (2009) due to budget constraints, staff had severely cut back on tutoring hours and programs.

Numerous evidence-based studies support that out-of-school time enriching activities can keep youth on a track to graduate.

A 2012 Pittsburgh Post-Gazette article by John Heller summarized research on the cost to society for the "rescue of an at-risk" youth over time.

- One youth who drops out of high school costs taxpayers between \$268,133 and \$428,130
- One youth who becomes a "career" drug abuser deprives society of between \$408,268 and \$1,070,324
- One youth who makes a career out of crime instead of a profession, in effect steals between \$1,434,455 to \$1,655,140 from other, more beneficial uses (source: The Costs and Benefits of After School Programs).

Heller's article quoted University of Illinois at Chicago professor of community health researcher David DuBois, as saying that at quality after school programs,

“The staff members play a pivotal role by helping kids feel encouraged and by giving them practical skills to cope with life in general.” When asked about adults in the lives, DuBois says, the kids rank program staff above teachers: “In after-school settings where they can go every day, sometimes over many years, there’s really potential for deep relationships and connection to the setting itself.”

Of course the benefit to graduation is that individuals are more likely to gain access to employment with health insurance and thus less likely to rely on social service health care systems. Evidence-based research also shows that youth development programs connect youth to their community and help foster them to become leaders and connect positively to their community.

Research numbers support the thought that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Looking beyond the impact on the society, NM DOH data strongly indicates that resources are needed to help the individual.

***2008 Rio Arriba County Juvenile Justice Advisory Board study.**