Dryden Youth Commission 2009 Youth Needs Assessment Summary

The Dryden Youth Commission serves as an advisory group to the Town of Dryden and Villages of Dryden and Freeville. The Commission is responsible for assessing the needs and priorities of Dryden youth and developing programs to meet these needs. The Commission allocates state, county and local funds to support these programs. During early 2009, the Commission invited presentations by local youth workers, educators and experts to learn what issues and trends are affecting Dryden youth. The identified needs and issues, listed below, will be used during the next 3 years to set Commission priorities and guide funding decisions.

Strengths

- Synergy between youth and community
- Lots of smart, involved kids in the community

Needs

- Earlier intervention for children in high risk environments
- Expanded programming that focuses on younger youth but can include adolescents as well
- Centralized activities with access to public transportation
- More outreach – getting program information to people who need it
- Mechanism for people to make donations to programs
- Activities that target specific gender related issues/needs
- Teen center and/or hang-out space in a central, convenient location
- More after-school programming options for youth
- Service projects to engage teens in their community
- More teen jobs in the Dryden area that involve minimal travel

Challenges

- Size of Dryden creates transportation challenges to out of school activities and services
- 41% of youth in the Dryden School District live in poverty. Poverty contributes to other individual and family problems including drug use, physical abuse, inadequate access to health, mental health and other services, and less overall stability.
- Diminishing program funding
- Unsupervised youth after school

Trends

- Increase of all the following by children at younger ages
- Increase in risky behaviors
- Increase in violent behavior and levels of violence by children of all ages
- Increase in number of juvenile arrests
- Increase in mental health issues for juveniles
- Misuse of technology by youth
- Use of alcohol by youth of all ages, including elementary students; and youth use of marijuana and tobacco products
- Half of town's recreation funding goes to youth sports

These findings are based on 2009 presentations to the Dryden Youth Commission by:
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