

**Juvenile Assessment Center
of Lee County**
2117 Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd.
Fort Myers, FL 33901
(239) 344-5100
www.swfjac.org

November 2007

The JAC Perspective



*The Juvenile Assessment
Center of Lee County ...
assisting youth and their
families to seek the treat-
ment and programs they
need to lead productive,
crime free lives.*

CALENDAR

Juvenile Sanctions Team

November 1
12:00 p.m.
D'Alessandro Office Complex
2295 Victoria Ave., Room 165
Fort Myers, FL

Lee County Juvenile Justice Council

November 1
1:30 p.m.
D'Alessandro Office Complex
2295 Victoria Ave., Room 165
Fort Myers, FL

Circuit 20 Juvenile Justice Board

November 14
1:00 p.m.
Southwest Florida Workforce Board
9530 Marketplace Road, Suite 104
Fort Myers, FL

Prevention Network

November 29
10:00 a.m.
Lee County Human Services
2440 Thompson Street
Fort Myers, FL

Law enforcement should call ahead to

**344-5161
or 344-5171**

**when bringing an ar-
rested youth
to the JAC.**

Youth Homelessness

If you don't personally know a youth that has been living on the streets, it is easy to overlook the problem of youth homelessness. To promote more awareness of the problem, the U.S. Congress has designated November as "National Homeless Youth Awareness Month." Although it is estimated that each year as many as 2.8 million youth in the United States and 33,155 youth in Florida are homeless for at least one night, it is an issue that largely goes unseen for a number of reasons. Most youth that become homeless are not homeless for long periods of time. Some youth considered homeless are "couch surfers," rotating between homes of their friends. 63% of runaway and homeless



youth are never reported or sought after by their parents or guardians. Some end up staying on the streets or in youth shelters. Most homeless youth eventually return home or find relatives to live with. A few youth make it on their own.

Why should youth homelessness be of concern to a community? Youth homelessness is often associated with other youth risk behaviors including truancy, running away, ungovernable behavior, substance abuse, and unprotected sex. While home-

less, youth are vulnerable and are at high risk of becoming victims of crime. Their homelessness is most often associated with underlying personal or family problems. For many youth there is a family breakdown due to family dysfunction or a
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YouthBuild Coming to Lee County

The Southwest Florida Workforce Development Board has been awarded a federal YouthBuild grant. YouthBuild programs assist low-income, at-risk youth ages 16-24, to attain their GED or high school diploma while learning job skills by building affordable housing for homeless and low-income people. The new YouthBuild program will concentrate its efforts within Lee County. Youth will attend classes for both academic and construction skills at the Tri-County Apprenticeship Academy. They will practice construction skills at the Michigan Court construc-



tion site. Participants will receive a stipend plus bonuses for attendance, GED attainment, and certification attainment. The program is slated to begin working with youth in January.

Homeless Youth (cont.)

troubled situation. Some of the youth are fleeing an unsafe home. Some are running away after physical, sexual, or emotional abuse by their parents or guardians. Many have parents with drug or alcohol problems. Some youth become separated from parents due to death or divorce. Some youth are kicked out of their homes due to family conflict. Some youth become homeless due to lack of finances



and housing as they exit juvenile corrections programs or foster care.

Without access to supportive services, homeless youth may resort to stealing, selling drugs, or selling their own bodies to buy food or pay for shelter. Homeless youth are at high risk of dropping out of school and for entering

the criminal justice system. Homeless youth and youth at risk of

becoming homeless (and their families) are often unaware of supportive services that are available. In Southwest Florida, Lutheran Services of Florida provides counseling for runaway, ungovernable, and truant youth and their families. The Oasis Youth Shelter in Fort Myers, which is operated by Lutheran Services of Florida, provides temporary shelter for runaway and homeless youth. To access their services call (239) 278-5400.

FACTS ON YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

- In Lee County, the one-day homeless count for 2007 found 119 unaccompanied youth under age 18 who were homeless.
- 12 to 17 year olds are more at risk for becoming homeless than adults.
- One of every seven youth will run away at some point in their lives.
- Florida ranks among the top ten states for factors creating homelessness in children.
- 25% of youth in foster care become homeless within two to four years after exiting foster care.
- 31% of homeless male youth have experienced sexual abuse.
- 42% of homeless female youth have experienced sexual abuse.

FACTS ON LOCAL YOUTH SHELTER SPACE

There were 24 youth shelter beds in Southwest Florida in 2002. There are **9 youth shelter beds in Southwest Florida today.**

There is one youth shelter bed for every 10,818 at-risk youth in Southwest Florida compared to an average for the rest of Florida of one shelter bed for every 5,926 at-risk youth.

The Bridge Street Team Spruces Up Fort Myers



The Bridge Street Team removes trash from the streets in downtown Fort Myers on Monday afternoons as a community service. The Street Team is a project of The Bridge youth center located in Fort Myers (phone: (239) 337-3798).



The JAC of Lee County is operated by the Lee County Sheriff's Office in partnership with the Lee County Board of County Commissioners and the Department of Juvenile Justice.