

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

April 2009

The JAC Perspective



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

CALENDAR

Lee County Juvenile Justice Council

April 2
1:30 p.m.
Joseph P. D'Alessandro
Office Complex
2295 Victoria Ave., Room 165C

Prevention Network

April 3
10:00 a.m.
Lee County Human Services
2440 Thompson Street

Circuit 20 Juvenile Justice Executive Board Conference Call

April 15
1:30 p.m.

Juvenile Justice Resource Fair & Canned Food Drive

April 23
10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
Joseph P. D'Alessandro
Office Complex
2295 Victoria Ave., Rotunda



*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.*

Youth Success Week April 19th - 25th

Headlines remind us almost daily that juvenile crime exists in Lee County. With much of the media focus on the bad things that youth do, it can be easy to miss that there are also success stories. Youth Success Week, from April 19th through the 25th, focuses on the successes of youth who stay out of the juvenile justice system and the youth who turn their lives around while in the juvenile justice system. In conjunction with



Hunger Impacts Youth

"Food insecurity," that is, having limited or uncertain availability or inability to acquire nutritionally adequate food due to financial constraints, affects 16% of all households with children in the United States. The consequences of hunger and food insecurity for children include poorer overall health, increased school absences, impaired cognitive functioning, poorer school achievement, greater likelihood of repeating a grade, higher levels of aggression and hyperactivity, difficulty getting along with others, increased need for mental health services, and school suspension. According to a national study, teenagers from food insecure families were nearly twice as likely to be suspended from school than teenagers in the general population.

Youth Success Week, the Lee County Juvenile Justice Council will host a Resource Fair on April 23rd at the D'Alessandro Office Complex Rotunda at 2295 Victoria Avenue in Fort Myers from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Juvenile justice prevention and intervention programs will provide information about their programs and examples of youth success stories. A canned food drive will also be held (see article below).

*95% of Lee County youth
stay crime free.*

JJ Council Food Drive

The Lee County Juvenile Justice Council is sponsoring a food drive as part of Youth Success Week. In the spirit of this year's theme, "Part of the



Community, Part of the Solution," youth programs are encouraged to participate in the food drive. Non-perishable food items will be collected at various agencies throughout the community until

April 23rd, including at the Resource Fair on that date. (See article above for time and location.) Youth volunteers will assist with pickup and delivery of the food to a local food bank. For more information, contact Bill Naylor, Lee County Juvenile Justice Council Chair, at (239) 344-5101.

Talk to Teens About Dating Violence

Domestic violence is not just an adult problem. Teens also may experience violence in their dating relationships. Dating violence, like domestic violence, is a pattern of controlling and abusive behaviors of one person over another within a romantic relationship. It can include verbal, emotional, physical, sexual, and financial abuse. It crosses all lines of race and socio-economic status. Victims include both males and females. It is estimated that one in three teens experience some kind of abuse in their romantic relationships. Yet



54% of parents report that they have never talked to their teen about dating violence. Teen dating violence is often hidden. Many teens are inexperienced in dating relationships and may not recognize that they are in an abusive relationship because they believe it is normal. Some teens confuse jealousy or possessiveness from their dating partner as being romantic. More than 30% of teens don't tell anyone that they have been a victim of dating violence. Parents and those working with teens can

help by discussing with them the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships and being alert for warning signs that a teen may be in an abusive relationship. The National Youth Violence Prevention Resource Center outlines warning signs of teen dating violence for parents at www.safeyouth.org/scripts/faq/datingwarning.asp. Abuse Counseling and Treatment (ACT), the local treatment center for domestic violence and victims of sexual assault, also has helpful information on teen dating violence for parents and others working with youth on their web site at www.actabuse.com/teen/dating.html.

Victim Protection Law

In the past, the Florida laws that provided protections for victims of domestic violence did not apply to dating violence. A new law came into effect October 2008 that now provides for victims of dating violence to petition the court to

get a restraining order against an abusive boyfriend or girlfriend. (Florida Statute 784.046) However, minors need a parent or legal guardian to file the petition for protection on their behalf.

The JAC 2009 Annual Report is now available at www.swfjac.org/09AnnualReport.pdf

Teen “Sexting”: Flirting or Child Porn?

A recent survey showed that 20% of youths under the age of 17 admitted that they have received sexually suggestive photos of other youths on their cell phone or computer. Called “sexting” when it is done by cell phone, the behavior can take on the forms of a prank, a flirtation, bullying, harassment, or even revenge. It has become somewhat of a national legal conundrum, as some say that laws have not kept pace with youths’ use of technology. If adults share revealing pictures of adults with other adults, it is not a crime. If youths share similar revealing pictures of themselves or of other youths, it may be a crime. A growing

number of youths across the country have been charged with child pornography for texting revealing pictures of themselves or of other youths, or for posting them online. As many laws are currently written, if convicted, the youths may have to register as a sex offenders. There is growing debate whether the sharing of revealing pictures of youths with other youths merely represents bad judgment or is equivalent to the crime the child pornography laws were designed to punish. Regardless, it is one more example of the need for adults to monitor how today’s youth are using technology.

