

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

August 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

Circuit 20 Juvenile Justice Executive Board

August 5
1:30 p.m.
Southwest Florida Workforce Development Board
9530 Marketplace Rd., Ste 104
Fort Myers

Lee County Juvenile Justice Council

August 6
1:30 p.m.
D'Alessandro Office Complex
2295 Victoria Ave., Room 165
Fort Myers

Prevention Network

August 14
10:00 a.m.
Lee County Human Services
2440 Thompson Street
Fort Myers

Law enforcement should call ahead to

**344-5161
or 344-5171**

when bringing an arrested youth to the JAC.

Disproportion in Juvenile Arrest Rates

In the past month, following the arrest for Disorderly Conduct of a black Harvard professor who was suspected of breaking into his own home and the subsequent dropping of charges, national media has focused attention and dialogue on Disproportionate Minority Contact with the justice system. Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC) has been identified as an issue in jurisdictions across the nation, and the juvenile justice system in Lee County is no exception. DMC refers to the disproportionate number of minority youth who come in contact with the juvenile justice system compared to white youth. Beginning in 1992, a focus on the reduction of DMC became a core requirement for states under the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency



Prevention Act. Typically the DMC reduction initiative focuses on designated decision points within the juvenile justice continuum, including

arrest, diversion, detention, petition/charges filed, delinquent findings, probation, confinement in secure correctional facilities, and transfer to adult court. Lee County's civil citation program,

which began in 2007, is an example of a pre-arrest diversion program that was funded through the federal and state initiative to reduce DMC. It is widely accepted that DMC is a very complex, multi-faceted problem and that the factors that contribute to DMC are not the same in any two communities. (Continued on page 2)

Developmental Assets Surveyed

The Fort Myers Youth Coalition, in collaboration with the City of Fort Myers, the School District of Lee County, and the Search Institute, recently conducted a survey of developmental assets of 761 youth in grades 6 through 12 in Fort Myer's schools (see page 2). Developmental assets are positive experiences and qualities that youth need to grow up to be healthy and responsible. The more assets a youth has, the less likely he or she will make harmful or unhealthy choices, such as problem alcohol use, violence, illicit drug use, and sexual activity. The more assets a youth has, the more likely he or she is to exhibit leadership, maintain good health, value diversity, and to succeed in school. The results of the

survey serves as a "report card" to adults in the community on how well we are doing in supporting local youth. The Fort Myers Youth Coalition will utilize the developmental asset framework to guide its multi-agency collaboration to promote positive youth development. For more information or to get involved, contact Shannon Lane, Program Coordinator, City of Fort Myers Recreation Division by phone at (239) 321-7526 or by email at slane@cityftmyers.com. More information is available on the scientifically based model, *The Asset Approach, 40 Elements of Healthy Development*, by the Search Institute at www.search-institute.org.

Disproportion in Juvenile Arrest Rates (cont.)

The success of any DMC reduction effort requires individual communities to look at themselves critically. This generally requires collecting and analyzing data for use in a community's self evaluation. The JAC analyzed the relative rate of arrest of juveniles in Lee County charged with Breach of the Peace/ Disorderly Conduct over five-and-a-half years (from 2004 through June of 2009). Black youth in Lee County were six-and-a-half times

more likely to be arrested for Breach of the Peace/Disorderly Conduct than white youth over the five-and-a-half year timeframe. While this relative rate is able to show to what level disproportion may exist, it sheds little light on why there is disproportion. It does suggest that there is room for dialogue, community self evaluation, and targeting of prevention resources to address this issue locally.

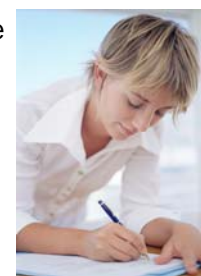
In 2008, black youth were arrested at a rate that was more than two times the rate of arrest of white youth in Lee County.

School-Based Arrests

During the 2008-09 school year, there were 407 school-based arrests for law violations in Lee County. This represented 8% of the total juvenile arrests in Lee County between July 2008 and June 2009. The most prevalent charge, or 25% of all school-based arrests for law violations, was for Breach of the Peace/Disorderly Conduct.

Application Challenges

Many youth who have been through the juvenile justice system struggle with how to answer questions on job applications about a past arrest and/or adjudication. There are no easy answers as it often depends on how the question is worded and on the outcome of the youth's case. The JAC has developed some general guidelines for answering criminal history questions on job applications for youth who have been involved with the juvenile justice system. It is available on the JAC web site at www.swfljac.org/application.pdf.



Survey of Student Resources and Assets – Fort Myers Schools			
Percent of students indicating that they experience these assets			
External Assets		Internal Assets	
	%		%
Support		Commitment to Learning	
1. Family Support	59	21. Achievement motivation	66
2. Positive family communication	48	22. School engagement	40
3. Other adult relationships	34	23. Homework (1 hr every school day)	30
4. Caring neighborhood	33	24. Bonding to school	50
5. Caring school climate	20	25. Reading for pleasure	27
6. Parent involvement in schooling	23	Positive Values	
Empowerment		26. Caring (values helping others)	37
7. Community values youth	18	27. Equality and social justice	42
8. Youth as resources	20	28. Integrity (stands up for beliefs)	57
9. Service to others	42	29. Honesty	55
10. Safety	43	30. Responsibility	51
Boundaries and Expectations		31. Restraint (avoids risky behavior)	42
11. Family boundaries	36	Social Competencies	
12. School boundaries	66	32. Planning and decision making	31
13. Neighborhood boundaries	41	33. Interpersonal competence	40
14. Adult role models	22	34. Cultural competence	46
15. Positive peer influence	56	35. Resistance skills	45
16. High expectations	45	36. Peaceful conflict resolution	30
Constructive Use of Time		Positive Identity	
17. Creative Activities	13	37. Personal power	31
18. Youth programs	38	38. Self esteem	53
19. Religious community	53	39. Sense of purpose	54
20. Time at home	54	40. Positive view of personal future	68

Source: America's Promise and Search Institute, June 2009



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.