



**CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION**  
*A SAMHSA Supported Drug-Free Community Coalition*  
*Led By Centre County Drug and Alcohol*



**ARTICLE 5 – APRIL 14, 2008 - PROTECTIVE FACTORS**

***Popcorn With Extra Butter!***

Kimberly Cassidy is the Community Mobilizer for Centre County *Communities That Care*®. This weekly column, published on Wednesdays, is a collaboration of Centre County *Communities That Care*® serving Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Penns Valley, and Philipsburg-Osceola Area School Districts, and Care Partnership: Centre Region *Communities That Care*® serving the State College Area School District.

Have you ever watched a young child and marveled at their innocence, energy, and enjoyment of the smallest pleasures. When watching a child actively at play, their imagination and zeal melts cynicism and opens one's adult mind to the potential of youth. The hopes and dreams of youth, still untainted and energized, are ours – every community members – to nurture and support. As a community, we can create a caring environment that helps youth blossom and we can touch the lives of the youth we know in simple, but profound ways.

Care Partnership and Centre County *Communities That Care*® recognize that there are protective factors in each youth's life - factors that help to buffer them from risks and that promote healthy development. In Centre County, the following protective factors have been identified as being a strong positive influence on local youth: family attachment, family rewards, school opportunities for positive, prosocial involvement, religiosity, and a belief in a moral order. Those that could be enhanced include: community and school rewards for positive, pro-social involvement. Enhancing protective factors ensures that the talents and abilities of youth are nurtured, which not only ensures a bright future for individual youth, but ultimately a stronger and better community. Youth are our future and an investment in their potential promotes their success as an adolescent and as a future worker, citizen, parent, and community contributor.

You can help a child you care about develop their talents and abilities. Below is a short activity adapted from 10-Minute Life Lessons For Kids written by Jamie Miller to help the children in your life understand the importance of honing their talents.

1. Show a child unpopped popcorn. Ask them how the kernels smell and might taste.
2. Together pop the popcorn. Have the child smell and taste the warm, buttered popcorn. Explain that when heat and energy is applied to the kernels that they burst into 'blossoms' of delicious popcorn.
3. Explain that the popcorn is similar to individual potential and name some talents and abilities, such as playing an instrument or sport, painting, writing stories, dancing, being compassionate, or doing well in school. Explain that if talents are not developed they remain useless like the unpopped kernels and if energy is applied they become useful. Ask, "What in life can be compared to the heat needed to make the kernels become popcorn?"
4. Talk with the child about their individual talents and abilities and how they can be developed. Also share, that by developing their talents it will benefit them as individuals and they will also bring pleasure to others around them, like the smell and taste of the popcorn.

This exercise is an opportunity to encourage a child to grow and blossom. Every caring adult can play a role in nurturing the talents of local youth and encouragement, love, and support - like the butter that makes popcorn even more delicious - protects and perfects the potential of a youth's abilities. So, please pass the popcorn!

Care Partnership: Centre Region *Communities That Care*®  
*Serving State College Area School District*  
Dawn Taylor, Community Mobilizer  
814-861-7424  
dtaylor105@gmail.com  
Web address: carecentreregion.org

Centre County *Communities That Care*®  
*Serving the School Districts of Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Penns Valley, and*  
*Philipsburg-Osceola*  
Kimberly Cassidy, Community Mobilizer  
814-404-9511  
centrecountyctc@yahoo.com  
Web address: centrecountyctc.org