



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



ARTICLE 9 – MAY 12, 2008 – Transition/Mobility/Neighborhood Attachment

Dawn Taylor is the Community Mobilizer for Care Partnership: 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.

“When I was growing up, I didn’t dare get into trouble. If I got into a fight down the street, my mother would know about it before I got home because one of our neighbors would have already called her.”

A lot of us remember a time like this, when, for better or worse, people knew their neighbors. Things are often different now. Centre County is growing and neighborhoods change quickly. We’ve seen housing developments spring up where farmers’ crops once grew. Neighbors come and go so often that it hardly seems worth the while to initiate more than a nodding acquaintanceship.

Communities That Care® and local school districts regularly survey students to see how they feel about changes in their neighborhoods and a wide range of other issues. Findings show that low neighborhood attachment along with transition and mobility are risk factors for Centre County children.

What are risk factors?

Growing up, children are exposed to various conditions which may increase their risk of engaging in risky behaviors, such as drug use and delinquency. While risk factors may increase the likelihood of problem behaviors, protective factors encourage healthy behaviors and decrease the chance of risky behaviors.

Research (Hawkins and Catalano, 1995) shows that in communities where there is high transition and mobility, there is increased risk to youth. The more often people in a community move, the greater the risk of criminal behavior and drug-related problems. Even normal school transitions, such as when children move from middle school to high school, are associated with increases in problem behaviors. In communities where people have little attachment to their neighborhood, rates of drug problems and delinquency are higher.

In a community such as ours, where growth is likely to continue, the challenge becomes creating conditions that promote neighborhood attachment. A lot of us want to know our neighbors. We welcome that phone call alerting us when our child is in trouble, or better yet before serious problems occur.

Local *Communities That Care*® programs help meet this challenge. With assistance from Care Partnership, Youth Service Bureau’s StreetWorks, Calvary Baptist Church, and others, families living in Ashworth Woods will be planting a neighborhood garden once again this spring. By harvest time, they’ll be reaping not only fresh produce, but the benefits of new friendships and stronger community ties. McGruff Houses provide safe havens for children who find themselves in a frightening or dangerous situation. Neighbors watch out for children as they go to and from school and play in the

neighborhood. To learn more about these programs and others, contact the *Communities That Care*® group serving your community.

What else can you do? Get to know your neighbors and make sure they know your children. Organize a neighborhood picnic where families can get to know each other better. Do things that show you care, like shoveling an elderly neighbor's sidewalk. Look out for each other and all children in your neighborhood. In other words, be a good neighbor.

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