

# HORIZONS

*of Health and Hope in Montezuma and Dolores Counties*

SEPTEMBER–OCTOBER 2008

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## Health Care Advocacy at the Piñon Project

*By Missy Miller, SCYC; Diana Buza and Steve Brace, The Pinon Project*

What is Colorado doing to ensure that all children have access to health-care? What can we do to improve our children's health? These basic questions concern many families in Montezuma and Dolores counties. Accessing health care services is challenging for a variety of reasons: not having health insurance or coverage, not having established a primary care physician, not having adequate resources to access health care, or not having appointments available at a clinic.

Poverty is one of the largest obstacles for families to obtain health care. Between 2000 and 2006, Colorado had a 73 percent increase in the number of children living in poverty, the highest rate of increase in the nation, according to a report released by the Colorado Children's Campaign. According to the 2008 KidsCount in Colorado report, about 180,000 children in Colorado were living in poverty in 2006, nearly 76,000 more children than were living in poverty in 2000. At the same time, the total number of children in the state increased only six percent.



Rural communities like Montezuma County are generally lacking sufficient numbers of primary care providers due to 1) lower reimbursement rates for Medicaid, Medicare and CHP+, 2) higher costs of delivering health services, and 3) lack of employers who have the resources to pay health insurance for their employees. In Montezuma County

263 children who qualify for CHP+ and are not currently enrolled in the program.

The Pinon Project, located in Montezuma County, is working to help improve the health of our children by providing a CHP+ enrollment site and documents verification site. The Child Health Plan *Plus* program helps ensure all eligible children in Montezuma and Dolores counties have access to health care. However, enrolling children in the CHP+ program is a cumbersome process for many families. The Pinon Project identified the need to support families in the enrollment process and hired a health care advocate to help enroll all eligible children in Montezuma County. Steve Brace, the health care advocate at the Pinon Project, helps families complete the paperwork and verify all the necessary documents to enroll children in the CHP+ program. Steve works with the schools, social services, medical services, and other service providers to educate and share resources to help families access health care.

The benefits of quality health care for all families in Montezuma and Dolores counties are vast. More access to health care will help the health of our communities, for example quality health care allows an increased rate of immunizations for children, helps to lower birthrates, and helps to reduce cigarette smoking and drug use by Colorado teens.

For more information call Steve Brace at the Pinon Project 564-1195.

### INSIDE

Changes to State Tobacco Law.....Page 2	Calendar.....Page 6
Counselors' Corner.....Page 3	Make a Difference- Become a Mentor!.....Page 6
Recovering Together Program.....Page 4	Character Choices.....Page 8
Early Childhood Council Broadens Goals...Page 5	On the HORIZONS: <i>Lowering the</i>
Positive Parenting Tips.....Page 5	<i>Drinking Age, Youth Advisory Council</i> .....Page 8

*Our Youth Are Healthy*



*We listen to our community!*

# Changes to Colorado Tobacco Laws Affect Youth Access

*By Julia Hesse, Tobacco Education and Prevention Program Director  
Montezuma County Public Health*

On July 1, 2008 the Youth Access to Tobacco Law took effect in Colorado. This law upgrades the existing Colorado laws regarding sales of tobacco to youth. It is now against the law:

- To give, sell, distribute or offer for sale cigarettes or tobacco products to anyone under 18 years old;
- For anyone under 18 years old to purchase, attempt to purchase, or possess cigarettes or tobacco products;
- For anyone to use tobacco products on school property.

In addition, retailers must check a photo ID prior to sale unless the buyer looks 30 or older.

There is no question that youth access to tobacco is a major problem and reducing that access is one of the more effective strategies in lowering the overall tobacco use rates. Each year 10,800 Colorado youth under the age of 18 become daily smokers and 1 out of 7 high school students in Colorado smoke cigarettes. Ninety percent of smokers tried their first cigarette as minors and recent studies have shown that adolescents are physiologically more susceptible to nicotine addiction.

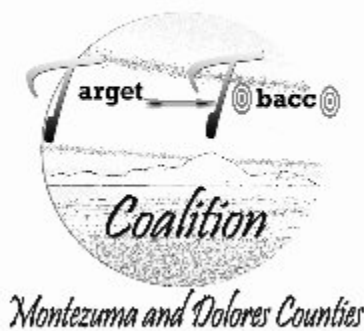
So why are the majority of tobacco control advocates against this youth possession law? On the surface youth possession laws have the potential to diminish the social acceptability of youth smoking and send a consistent message that youth tobacco use is unacceptable. In reality they direct both public and political attention away from more effective interventions and focus on penalizing youth rather than the stores where youth buy the products. Enforcement of youth tobacco possession laws is expensive and difficult and law enforcement officers are reluctant to pursue them. Perhaps most importantly, youth possession laws are supported by the tobacco industry. Finally, there is no scientific evidence from controlled studies that demonstrate their effectiveness in inhibiting youth tobacco use.

Proven methods of lowering youth tobacco use rates use a multi-pronged approach which includes:

- Increasing the price of tobacco products by raising taxes;
- Licensing tobacco retailers which provide a tool to pull the license from retailers who sell tobacco to youth;
- Restrictions on tobacco advertising and marketing;
- Counter-advertising campaigns to prevent and reduce tobacco use among youth;
- Offering cessation support to teens who are addicted to tobacco rather than penalizing them.

This new law may be a small tool to use in our efforts to reduce the youth tobacco use rate but it should not be considered a fix-all to the problem nor should we reduce our efforts to work on these other proven methods to achieve the same goal.

For more information call Julia Hesse 565-3056 ext 233 or see the "Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids fact sheet: Penalizing Kids for Buying, Possessing, or Smoking Cigarettes": <http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/research/factsheets/pdf/0074.pdf>



# Helping Your Middle Schooler

*By Barb Rightly, Cortez Middle School Guidance Office*

Middle school is an exciting time! It is filled with rapid changes, self-discovery, new friendships, and new interests. As a parent, you want your child to grow into a responsible young adult. You are the most important person in your child's life, and can help in many ways.

- Enforce a regular routine to ensure your child is in school, on time, every day.
- Touch base with the teachers, counselor, or principal if you have any concerns or questions about how your child is doing. We are here to help your child get the best education possible!
- Homework will be part of your middle schooler's life. Talk with her about her classes and assignments. Ask to see her school planner. Help your child develop a homework routine, and insist she be responsible for meeting deadlines.
- If your child tends to be messy and disorganized, help him keep his papers and schoolwork in order. Backpacks, homework, and supplies should be assembled the night before, and placed in a designated place where they are easy to grab on the way out the door!
- Help your child understand that middle school is a time to develop new friendships, and work on "people skills". Talk with her about the importance of learning to resolve conflicts peacefully. It is an excellent time for young people to learn how to negotiate, listen, apologize, and express needs and feelings in a positive, constructive manner.
- Encourage involvement with school-related activities.
- Talk with your child about the importance of following school rules. Teach him to speak in a way that shows he values the listener. Profanity or disrespect will not be tolerated at school.
- Above all, encourage your child to treat others with kindness and respect.

## Making a Fresh Start

*By Kristen Taylor, Mancos Guidance Counselor*

Maybe your last year was not what you wanted it to be. Perhaps you got yourself involved in a peer group that wasn't good for you or maybe your study habits and grades were not what you wanted them to be.

A new school year is the time to set new goals for yourself and a chance to start over!

If you start to stray from your goals or feel that you are being pressured to do things you feel are not right for you, talk to your parents about what is going on.

You can also come to the school counseling department to talk to your counselor.

We can help you set goals and work with you so you can achieve those goals throughout the school year.

**Take this opportunity to make a fresh start!**

# Recovering Together Program Expands into New Mexico After Successful Pilot Project in Montezuma County

*Partners in the School Community Youth Coalition are expanding beyond the horizons here in Montezuma and Dolores Counties. Clarity Counseling is testing the RTP model in New Mexico as a result of its successful pilot project here in Montezuma County, where the feedback and participation of residents made a difference in how this problem is being approached across the nation. The addition of the kinship caregiver's group is a direct result of community feedback from Montezuma county residents and human service workers. The community's feedback and support were instrumental in many changes in the program design. Their comments and feedback were heard and valued by the Children's Bureau as well.*

*By Donna Sue Spear, Clarity Counseling*

The San Juan County implementation of the Recovering Together Program (RTP) began last week with the first multi-family group meeting. This RTP replication is made possible by a grant to Clarity Counseling P.C. to establish and test the model of service after the program's pilot project in Montezuma County provided promising results. Clarity partnered with Childhaven as well as the New Mexico Children, Youth, and Family Department (CYFD) and the San Juan Safe Communities Initiative to successfully compete for one of the U.S. Children's Bureau Regional Partnership Grants to provide a five-year, two and a half million dollar grant to provide these services and test the effectiveness of the RTP service model.

The Recovering Together Program provides treatment for mothers with substance abuse problems and their affected children. This outpatient treatment model includes group therapy, family skill building classes and a multidisciplinary team. The multi-disciplinary team includes the following components: Substance abuse treatment providers and mental health counselors from Clarity Counseling; Childhaven is providing a Comprehensive Community Support Services (CCSS) worker for case management, childcare workers, and transportation to multi-family group meetings for the families; CYFD is providing meeting space weekly for case management meetings with case workers and also hosting a monthly "Impact on Child Welfare" training series. The Impact series provides training to CYFD staff, foster parents and other interested community providers on the impact of substance abuse on child well-being, addictive disorders, mental illness and interpersonal family violence.

The primary purpose of the Recovering Together Program (RTP) is improved child safety and improved treatment quality for women and their families affected by the mother's substance abuse. The basic strategy of the Recovering Together Program is to treat both the mother with substance misuse problems, her affected children and support other family members who are helping with the children's care. Above all, the basic tasks of parenting and the children's needs are taken into consideration in the *design* of the Recovering Together Program. Women, their current partners (in kinship caregiver's group), and their children are given tools and knowledge for rebuilding a drug- and alcohol-free lifestyle.

The group therapy follows three different 16-week curricula that are specifically designed for mothers, children, and other related caregivers for the children. The kinship caregiver's group is a new addition to the RTP service model. Grandparents, spouses or other family members who have made room in their hearts and homes to help care for the children are eligible to participate in the kinship caregivers support group. Support of this kind is rare for the many friends and family who fit child-rearing into their lifestyles unexpectedly. The therapy classes are focused on helping family members with emotional regulation skills and learning about addiction and its effects on families. Once the family has finished the 16-week therapy curricula, they immediately begin the Celebrating Families! skill-building classes to improve their family management and communication skills.

For more information about referring a family to the Recovering Together Program or to find out more about the Impact training series, contact Donna Sue Spear at (505)215-9896.

# Montelores Early Childhood Council Joins Statewide Coalition

By Donna Weise, Montelores Early Childhood Council

The Montelores Early Childhood Council (MECC) has been serving Montezuma and Dolores counties for the past 10 years. In July of 2007 MECC received a two-year grant from the Colorado Dept. of Education and Colorado Department of Human Services. This grant allowed MECC to hire a council coordinator and join the state-wide coalition of early childhood councils, Early Childhood Council Leadership Alliance (ECCLA). The focus of MECC has now broadened to recognize the needs of the whole child and family and to include the domains of health, mental health, family support and education, and early learning in the strategic plan for the next three years. The goal of MECC is to build on the strengths of our families and our community, and as a council to recognize variations in cultures, languages, and abilities. The use of data informs all decisions. MECC promotes coordination of services and community and business partnerships and recognizes the importance of acting at a local and state level.

In June, MECC conducted a family and provider forum as well as a “business leader luncheon.” The information gathered at these meetings as well as at the regular Council meetings will help guide work in the coming year. The next forum will be the first week in November. At that time, MECC will look at the priorities outlined in the strategic plan and the work needed to move to the next steps. Council membership is open to families, care and service providers, business and the community. The Council is actively seeking members from the four domains mentioned above. If you are interested in membership or want to be on the e-mail list, please contact Donna Wiese, Council Coordinator at [meccis4kids@yahoo.com](mailto:meccis4kids@yahoo.com).

As part of our commitment to quality care and education, as well as our commitment to support families, a variety of trainings are available. Please contact Donna Wiese at [meccis4kids@yahoo.com](mailto:meccis4kids@yahoo.com) for a complete schedule of trainings.

After the New Year, the Quality Improvement Team of MECC will also coordinate a series of trainings provided by the OMNI Institute with Rebecca Larson facilitating. These trainings will be based on the book: ***Bridges Out of Poverty***. These will be exciting and informative trainings for those working with children and families who are economically disadvantaged. Each training will build on the previous one, so participants will be expected to attend each training in the series. Look for more information on these trainings in the near future.

Our vision is a community where children are thriving and families are supported and valued. Please join the Montelores Early Childhood Council, MECC in serving children and families.

## *Be A Good Role Model for Your Teen*

Remember when your kids were toddlers and they mimicked everything you said and did? Things are not so different today. You may not realize it, but your actions communicate a great deal to your teenager. Parents who set a good example through their relationships and social skills have kids who do better in the areas of school, employment, relationships, communication, coping and other life skills.

Setting a good example is especially important when it comes to substance use.

### DO

- Have family gatherings and parties that don't include alcohol. Show your teens that you can have fun whether or not alcohol is served.
- Share “funny” stories about your past substance abuse in front of your kids.
- Enlist other family members or friends to serve as positive role models for your teen.
- Get help if you think you have a problem with alcohol or illicit drugs

### DON'T

- Don't smoke. Quit for your own health and your family's.
- Don't allow your teen to drink or smoke in your home.
- Don't provide alcohol for teens in your home. It sends the wrong message and you could be breaking the law.
- Don't involve your teen in your own use, such as asking him or her to get you a beer or a cigarette.
- Never drink and drive.

from *Navigating the Teen Years...A Parent's Handbook for Raising Healthy Teens* View the entire document at [www.TheAntidrug.com/parentresources](http://www.TheAntidrug.com/parentresources)

## CALENDAR

**Grant Writing and Evaluation Workshop** hosted by the School Community Youth Coalition. The workshop will focus on: Request for Proposals decoding and interpretation; appropriate community statement of need/community assessment; writing quality goals and objectives; defining program / project design, services and management; evaluation plan; and budgets. For more information contact [missy@scycinc.org](mailto:missy@scycinc.org)

### Ongoing

#### **Fatherhood Classes**

5:30-8pm, Wednesdays

Training Annex at 105 E Arbecam, Cortez

### September

#### **9<sup>th</sup> Expanding Quality Infant and Toddler Care**

5:30—9pm, Tuesdays

16-week training for parents, teachers, and providers. Can be used to obtain ECE111 credit from Pueblo Community College. To register, contact Kathi Sutton [annabellesez@yahoo.com](mailto:annabellesez@yahoo.com) Or the Pinon Project 564-1195

#### **15<sup>th</sup> School Community Youth Coalition Meeting**

11:15am at Cortez Welcome Center.

District Attorney Candidates Forum on Underage Drinking

#### **15<sup>th</sup> Incredible Years Parenting Class**

5:30—8pm at Pinon Project, Cortez

12-week parent training with Vangi McCoy and Kathi Sutton. These classes will help to build positive relationships between parents and children ages 2-10. Parents will get new skills and strategies to help their children grow and learn, as well as effective discipline strategies when children say "no", refuse to listen, or hit. *Free dinner and childcare!* Call Joanne or Adrienne at The Pinon Project 546-1195 ext 21 for more info or to register.

# Share What You Know...

*By Crescent Rossiter, Montezuma County Partners*

Ever wish you could change the world? Well here's your chance!! Start by making a difference in a kid's life. Montezuma County Partners is asking you to become a mentor for one of many area youth seeking a friend.

Partners is a non-profit organization that promotes prevention and positive change in youth (Junior Partners) through year long, one-to-one relationships with adult volunteers (Senior Partners).

**Junior Partners** are male and female youth, 8-18 years of age, of different ethnic backgrounds, who have been referred to the program by a number of community agencies such as Social Services, school counselors, and mental health professionals. These referring agencies have identified these youth as in need of the support and guidance that a caring adult can provide. These youth are variously described as "at risk", or "troubled youth". Now, don't let the "label" "at-risk" scare you! They may be victims of abuse, lack of supervision/support systems, low economic status, poor self-esteem, social withdrawal, negative peer pressure, rejection, inconsistent parenting and family environment, poor academic performance or a physical handicap. Because of these risk factors these youth may be at risk for continuing or future problems in any number of areas: delinquency, drugs-alcohol, school dropout, pregnancy, suicide etc. Many youth encounter difficulties growing up. Some lack the necessary skills and experiences to cope with the pressures at home and in school. Many of them experience conflict situations because of past or present problems or losses. They may get in trouble with the law, have behavior problems at school, turn to negative influences such as alcohol and drugs or they may withdraw. The common denominator for these youth is a low self-esteem. Experience shows that a Senior Partner can help raise a child's self-esteem, and show them ways to maintain it on their own. Parents support their children's participation in the program and the program is voluntary on the youth's part.

**Senior Partners** are adult volunteers interested in the youth of their community. They are men and women of all

*Continued on page 7*

*Continued from page 6*

# AUTUMN 2008

## *Join Partners Today and Mentor a Child*

ages, and from different backgrounds. Volunteers serve as a friend, an advocate, and a role model. They provide support, advice, reinforcement, and constructive examples, to support the efforts of the parents. They may assist in the areas of education, finding jobs, health, family conflict, and helping the Jr. Partner stay out of trouble. Sr. Partners do not replace the parents' role, but act as additional support in the youth's life. To become a Sr. Partner the volunteer completes a Screening Process. Once you've completed the screening process you are ready to be matched. You are provided with supervision, guidance, training, and crisis intervention counseling as needed. Life skills and recreational activities are also made available to the Partnerships. All of these are provided free of charge in an effort to help the Partnership succeed. Senior Partners make a commitment of time and energy that often evolves into a deeper emotional investment. Partnerships are matched upon compatibility.

Montezuma County Partners Mentoring Program is focusing its attention on the need for mentors as well as how each of us—individuals, businesses, schools, faith communities, and nonprofits—can work together to increase the number of mentors, so we can insure brighter futures for our area youth. One-to-one mentoring is a simple concept that works – a dynamic friendship that allows youngsters an opportunity to take positive action to better their lives.

Please contact Crescent Rossiter @ 565-4926 x13 to learn more on becoming a mentor.



### CALENDAR

#### September (con't)

24<sup>th</sup> **HORIZONS On Air**  
KSJD 8:30am  
Interview with Ellen Roberts on the Colorado Youth Advisory Council

#### October

4<sup>th</sup> **Montezuma Early Childhood Council Meeting**  
12 - 2pm.  
Colorado Welcome Center  
Please RSVP to Donna @ meccis4kids@yahoo.com

21<sup>st</sup> & 28<sup>th</sup> **Social/Emotional Relationship Enhancement**  
(must commit to both classes)  
6-8 pm at Trinity Preschool with Casie La Munyon. Call the Quality Improvement Team at 565-6337 to register.

9<sup>th</sup> **County Commissioner Candidates Forum**  
hosted by Leadership Montezuma.  
11am at County Commissioners Chamber.  
Call Susan Hakanson for more info 379-3303.

22<sup>nd</sup> **HORIZONS On Air**  
KSJD 8:30am

#### November

4<sup>th</sup> & 18<sup>th</sup> **Social/Emotional Relationship Enhancement**  
(must commit to both classes)  
6-8 pm at Trinity Preschool with Casie La Munyon. Call the Quality Improvement Team at 565-6337 to register.

11<sup>th</sup> **Playground Safety**  
6-8 pm at Trinity Preschool  
Contact the Quality Improvement Team at 565-6337 to register.

# On the HORIZONS

*Look for more on these topics  
in the next quarterly issue of HORIZONS:*

## **A Look at the New Initiative to Lower the Drinking Age**

**Bill Sponsored by Rep Ellen Roberts  
Creating Youth Advisory Council  
Signed by Governor Ritter:**

*“Young people obviously have a big stake  
in our future and are affected by what  
we do in [the capitol]...”*

*This law will give the youth of Colorado a  
formal voice in the public discourse.”*

*-Gov Ritter*



# CHARACTER CHOICES

## September

Be a person of good character through

### **TRUTHFULNESS**

Earn future trust by accurately reporting past facts; avoid being deceptive.

## October

Be a person of good character by showing

### **OBEDIENCE**

Quickly and cheerfully carry out the direction of those who are responsible for me; avoid being willful.

*Provided by the Character Council*

**HORIZONS** is funded by state Title V funds through Montezuma County Partners and the Target Tobacco Coalition. Focused on issues related to supporting healthy lifestyle choices for the youth of Dolores and Montezuma counties, please send submissions including: calendar items, health news, ideas, and corrections to [info@scycinc.org](mailto:info@scycinc.org)

## **HORIZONS**

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