



Keep Kids Safe

Partnerships Keep Kids Safe

STRONG COMMUNITIES believes that child protection must become a part of the institutions of everyday life in order to be effective. Thus, the success of STRONG COMMUNITIES is due, in part, to its relationships with a diverse group of partners.

Among STRONG COMMUNITIES partners that have contributed in a significant way to increased supports for families with young children are faith communities and healthcare settings. Findings reflected in articles in the April – June 2008 edition of *Family and Community Health: The Journal of Health Promotion and Maintenance* (see story p. 2) support the value of these partnerships to the STRONG COMMUNITIES initiative.

Activity reports show that STRONG COMMUNITIES has crossed the spectrum in engaging faith-based groups in the important work of keeping kids safe. Previous research tended to show community action to be typical of larger congregations in more liberal denominations. However, a large majority of the churches that STRONG COMMUNITIES has engaged in the initiative are Baptist and Pentecostal, denominations generally considered

theologically conservative, data shows. Moreover, very small congregations of fewer than 50 members have found the premise of STRONG COMMUNITIES – neighbors

(continued on page 4)

The vision of STRONG COMMUNITIES is for every child and every parent to be confident that someone will notice and someone will care whenever they have cause for joy, sorrow, or worry. You play a role in making this vision a reality in your community.

Inside this issue:

Family and Community Health features STRONG COMMUNITIES	3
A huge THANKS to our volunteers.	3
How can you get involved?	4
Riley Community Garden Groundbreaking	5

Interested in getting involved?



Look for the star inside to find ways you can volunteer to support STRONG COMMUNITIES.

We want to hear your comments and suggestions about our newsletter. Please direct them to our editor at strongcommunities@clemson.edu or call 864-688-2247.

Family & Community Health features STRONG COMMUNITIES

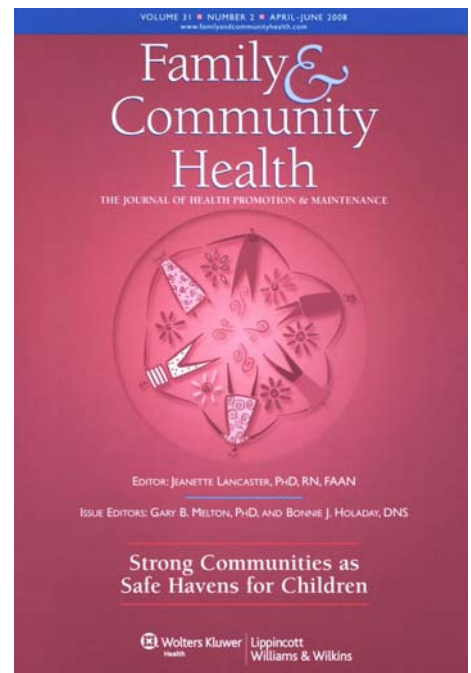
The April – June 2008 edition of *Family & Community Health: The Journal of Health Promotion & Maintenance* features STRONG COMMUNITIES as Safe Havens for Children. All eight articles are focused on the initiative. The latest research findings can be found in the journal issue with focuses on volunteerism, churches as safe places for children, and the concepts behind a community-wide approach to prevention.

Introducing the issue, Dr. Richard Krugman, dean of medicine and vice chancellor for health affairs at the University of Colorado in Denver, commented, “The goal (of STRONG COMMUNITIES) is

fabulous: should any child or family have reason to celebrate, reason to worry, or reason to grieve, someone in the community will notice, and someone will care. That five years into the project STRONG COMMUNITIES for Children is beginning to show success is even more fabulous.”

The journal editor, Dr. Jeanette Lancaster, dean of nursing at the University of Virginia, added, “What we see is that not only are community efforts to protect children effective, but that communities are enlivened and renewed through their collective efforts to protect their most precious and vulnerable resources, their children.”

Dr. Lancaster described STRONG COMMUNITIES as “the first large-scale initiative to address child abuse through research and community-based prevention and intervention concepts.”



Did You Know...

In 1990, the U.S. Advisory Board on Child Abuse and Neglect declared a national emergency in the child protection system. The Board called for a new approach to child protection, a universal system of family support, grounded in the creation of caring communities. STRONG COMMUNITIES is the first initiative to attempt a comprehensive, large-scale implementation of the Board's proposed strategy.

“Strong Communities has raised my consciousness. There are a couple of young men in our neighborhood who don’t have dads and who are my son’s age. I have become involved in their lives in ways that I wouldn’t have had it not been for Strong Communities.”

- Strong Communities Exceptional Volunteer and Minister

A huge THANKS to our volunteers!

The success of the STRONG COMMUNITIES initiative is due, in large part, to the extraordinary dedication and creativity of our volunteers. During the first six years of the initiative, about 5,000 volunteers have contributed over 60,000 hours of service to STRONG COMMUNITIES.

Churches and neighborhood groups were the biggest sources of volunteers. Public safety agencies, especially firefighters, have also been especially reliable volunteers in STRONG COMMUNITIES. In addition, scores of businesses and civic organizations have participated, as have all of the local governments in the service area.

Dr. Gary Melton, Director of STRONG COMMUNITIES and the Institute on Family and Neighborhood Life, describes our volunteers as “a cross-section of the community. Bringing the Golden Rule to life, they are ordinary citizens making extraordinary contributions.”

The 44 leading volunteers in the initiative were especially likely to be motivated by religious beliefs. Almost all reported being regular church-goers, and more than one-fourth were church employees.

Research interviews of these exceptional volunteers showed a general belief that volunteering in STRONG COMMUNITIES has been a

distinctive and transforming experience for both the volunteers themselves and the communities at large. One volunteer, an apartment manager, told researchers, “I have grown tremendously. I feel that I can conquer a mountain!...Each year working with STRONG COMMUNITIES volunteering, I just get more energy. My wife tells me I can’t save the world, but I can sure try!”



How can you get involved?



*“All that you touch,
you change.*

*All that you change,
changes you.”*

- Octavia E. Butler

STRONG COMMUNITIES seeks to build systems of support for families of young children in southern Greenville County and nearby communities in Upstate South Carolina. Large-scale community initiatives like STRONG COMMUNITIES require the combined energies and resources of multiple community partners. To achieve the goal of assuring that needed supports are available for all families, there must be a collaborative effort among communities of faith, businesses, civic organizations and individual community members to work together toward a community goal to **“Keep Kids Safe.”**

Community groups can:

- Collaborate with STRONG COMMUNITIES in building Safe Families, an alternative to the formal foster care system.
- Coordinate a host site for Building Dreams, a mentoring program for children of prisoners.
- Develop components of a Family Activity Center that would provide ongoing support for families with young children within the local community.

Individuals can:

- Provide a temporary home to a child whose family is in crisis.
- Mentor a child whose parent is incarcerated.
- Provide material support to families participating in Safe Families or Building Dreams.
- Host parent-child activities or playgroups.
- Provide child care for parents participating in STRONG FAMILIES activities.

For more information about these or other volunteer opportunities with STRONG COMMUNITIES, please contact our volunteer coordinator at (864)688-2247. We look forward to hearing from you.

Partnerships...(cont. from page 1)

helping neighbors – one that is not dependent on church size.

STRONG COMMUNITIES has successfully brought together religious groups of different theologies, races and classes. Neither organization of nor participation in activities appeared to be hampered by divisions that some observers may have anticipated, reported

data reveals.

Since almost all young children receive some health care, the health system is a logical avenue to young families. STRONG COMMUNITIES has recruited 17 pediatric healthcare practices and a hospital pediatric residency program to enroll families in Strong Families. After one year,

almost 2500 families had joined this program of free support resources and many more participated in its activities, data shows.

For STRONG COMMUNITIES, faith-based and health organizations represent but two of the partners who are playing critical roles in the initiative's success.

Riley Community Garden Groundbreaking

A groundbreaking ceremony and work day were held on April 19 to celebrate the Riley Community Garden as a new gathering place for residents of southern Greenville County. The garden, located on the grounds of the Riley Child Development and Family Learning Center at 9130 Augusta Rd., now contains trees, plants, flowers, play space, an outdoor classroom, and many more wonderful amenities.

STRONG COMMUNITIES is coordinating the project in conjunction with the Riley Center of Greenville County Schools. C.A.L.L., a local association of lawn and landscapers, provided many of the donations, resources and manpower to make the project a reality.



Wielding shovels at the groundbreaking for the Riley Community Garden are (l-r) Susannah Horton, Clemson student and garden designer; Holley Stokely, project advisor; Beth Bagwell, Strong Communities garden coordinator; Sec. Dick Riley; Rep. Eric Bedingfield; Mamie Reid, community volunteer; Mario Walker, president, C.A.L.L.; Terry Creamer, project manager; and Tina Haley, Riley Center director.

To learn more about the Riley Community Garden Project and how you can be involved, contact Beth Bagwell at 864-243-9568.



Terry Creamer, project manager and member of C.A.L.L., works in the garden. He has donated time and materials to the garden project.



Susannah Horton, Clemson student and garden designer, lays bricks in the garden labyrinth. She created the design in the Landscape Design Class of Horticulture Professor Mary Haque.



Students of the Riley Child Development and Family Learning Center perform at the groundbreaking ceremony.



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THE NEWSLETTER OF
STRONG COMMUNITIES

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STRONG COMMUNITIES seeks to build systems of support for families of young children in southern Greenville, eastern Anderson, and southern Laurens counties in Upstate South Carolina. Principally supported by a grant from The Duke Endowment, the initiative is designed to give new strength to application of the Golden Rule in communities as they care for their youngest members.

STRONG COMMUNITIES is based on the premise that for children to be safe and families to be strong, they must be able to count on others' noticing their needs and reaching out to help. A community effort to incorporate family support into the everyday life of neighborhoods where children live, study, and play will not only increase child safety, but will also enhance neighborhood quality of life, strengthen family well-being, and facilitate children's healthy development and readiness for school.



Volunteers make a difference in STRONG COMMUNITIES.

STRONG COMMUNITIES is available to help you initiate or expand projects that serve children and families. We are happy to provide resource information and ongoing assistance regarding one of the ideas found in this newsletter, or we can work with you to determine project ideas tailored to your unique interests and talents.

Please contact us for more information.

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