

- ▶ GRANT OVERVIEW 1
- ▶ HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS AND THE NEIGHBORHOOD PLACE. 1
- ▶ SPOTLIGHT ON SOUTH CENTRAL 2
- ▶ NOTES FROM A RESEARCH MANAGER 2



Relationship Education

REAL Grant Takes Off! *Across Louisville*

Much research has shown the importance of healthy relationships for adult and child well-being. Adults tend to experience better physical and emotional health, financial security, and lower levels of violence in healthy and committed relationships. Youth are less likely to experience abuse/neglect, mental health and substance abuse issues, or engage in crime when their parents are in healthy relationships.

In order to promote these positive outcomes, the Kent School of Social Work will lead an effort to provide healthy relationship education programs for adults and youth in the Louisville community. The Kent School will work with the eight Neighborhood Places in Metro Louisville, Kentucky, to deliver the *Within My Reach* (WMR), a research-based curriculum designed for

economically disadvantaged individuals, to approximately 864 adults. For the youth population, the Kent School will work with the Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU) Program of the Jefferson County Public Schools to deliver the *Love U2: Communication Smarts* curriculum to approximately 450 at-risk students over the five years of the project.

Key project outcomes include participant satisfaction, learning, increased communication and conflict resolution skills, improved relationship quality, and a decrease in interpersonal violence. Training sessions for these programs officially kicked off in April. For more information regarding this project, go to:

www.louisvillereationships.org

Healthy Relationships and the Neighborhood Place

Written by George Holmes, Neighborhood Place Northwest

Through the windows of our several programs here at Neighborhood Place Northwest, we see daily the multitude of challenging issues that our residents face. We also see how the energy expended in defending themselves against the impact of unhealthy relationships. So much is needed to address many, if not all, of the daily struggles of our customers. So, when we first learned about a program partnering with the Kent School of Social Work and the Neighborhood Place, we believed it to be a fitting endeavor. Now that the program is up and running, we are not disappointed.

In presenting the first “Within My Reach” training, which consisted of five sessions for a total of fifteen hours, we observed several points. Perhaps, the most important point was that we needed to continually guard against making unfounded assumptions. One participant asked, “Do we have to confess being in an unhealthy relationship to attend these classes?” The answer to that question is “No”. We also recognized that the participants were continually excited about the materials and what they were “learning”. Even though all these women came with an array of coping and relationship skills, each begged equally for weaving in new and revisited information. They accepted different points of view, and of course, insisted on the hard data.

Before the series ended these women were referring friends and family members. They also suggested that men be recruited in any given series, as they felt men needed to be there to make some of the conversation richer and offer their points of view as well. In addition, to note the extent to which healthy relationships do not thrive in a vacuum, we were often asked about a variety of resources. From that, we were able to make subsequent referrals for additional assistance.

Finally, many of the women who participated in this training are experiencing or have experienced in the past, unsafe relationships. The program emphasis of physical, emotional, and commitment safety addressed in the lessons, did not go unheard!



Spotlight on South Central

Written by: Jodi Thompson, Facilitator

As a social worker, I was concerned the incentives for this workshop would interfere with the number of appropriate referrals we would receive. Targeting low income individuals with financial incentives can draw out participants simply needing the extra money. I was both delighted and saddened however at the appropriateness of the participants who registered.

Nearly all have significant relationship concerns in their current relationships, or have recently ended bad relationships. Many have experienced domestic violence in the past or are currently at risk for domestic violence. It has been a challenge to hear some of their struggles and inspiring at the same time to know that the information we share could lead

them to have more successful relationships for themselves and for their children. It has been rewarding to witness the participants' eagerness to learn the information, and to hear their comments of wishing someone had shared it with them sooner in life.

As a facilitator, it has been difficult at times to keep the group on task. Many of these individuals harbor a great amount of frustration and disappointment from their experiences, and seem to have found an avenue within our group to express that pain. I have struggled with conflicting feelings about this, as the workshop is not intended to be group therapy. At the same time I say that, I wonder if these individuals have any other avenues in their lives to express

these emotions. I feel compelled to allow them to utilize this group to meet their needs as long as the group is cohesive, all are in agreement, and we can accomplish the educational goals that we have in place.

Our group has been a real success and I think our retention rate is confirmation. I think all have enjoyed the experience, and as much as I hope I have taught the participants some helpful information, they have taught me a great deal as well. I am looking forward to facilitating future groups.

Notes from a Research Manager

Written by Althea Dryden

When we came up with the acronym R.E.A.L. for Relationship Education Across Louisville, I don't think any of us realized how much relationship building we would be doing as a team and how many people across Louisville would be involved!

We were awarded this grant last October and hit the ground running. We purchased curriculum, met with partners, held two trainings of trainers – one where our team did the training – created marketing materials, established an Advisory Council, held focus groups and piloted the data at nearly all sites, and even celebrated with UofL President Jim Ramsey, who hosted a reception to acknowledge our being awarded the largest grant in the history of the Kent School of Social Work.

The research managers learned quickly that there are many details to keeping this ship afloat; some of which involve the dirty work of catering and childcare! So many groups are involved in this important endeavor from the site administrators, training facilitators, childcare workers, evaluators, principal investigators, federal officers, Kent School Masters students, research managers, project coordinators, training participants and even the pizza guy! It's no wonder our team slogan is *Make it specific and keep it generic!* -- meaning always consider the unique needs of each of our individual training sites when planning the details of the trainings but ensure everyone is operating in the same way with regards to the curriculum and incentives as well as basic protocol.

On the youth side of the grant, we have partnered with the Youth Opportunities Unlimited Program of Jefferson County Public Schools. In February 2007, we trained four of their staff to be facilitators of the Love U2 curriculum, a program for teens adapted from PREP. This training teaches youth communication and conflict resolution skills to apply to their relationships in all areas, including families, friends, employers, co-workers, and romantic relationships. Since May 2007, three trainings have been held for students at the YOU program and three more are scheduled for the rest of the year. The facilitators are dynamic and allow the students to learn relationship skills in a safe and engaging environment. Students have reported applying the principles to their lives with success.

The challenges of doing eleven trainings in three months were remarkable but the rewards were even greater. The greatest reward was the overwhelming enthusiasm of our training participants. I guess when it comes down to it, all we need to do is *Keep it REAL!*

ADVISORY BOARD MEMBERS:

- Nazenin Assef**, Louisville Health Department
- Reila Bailey**, Canaan Community Development Corp.
- Charlene Brown**, Jefferson County Public Schools
- Judith Cumber**, Jewish Family and Vocational Svcs.
- Lesa Dae**, St. Stephen Church
- Marsha Esarey**, Maryhurst
- Dennis Enix**, YMCA Safe Place
- Arlene Dumas-Fuller**, JCPS Adult Education Unit
- Jerome Garrison**, Family and Children First
- Tina M. Johnson**, So. Jefferson Neighborhood Place
- Cindy Kamer**, Brooklawn Child and Family Services
- Elizabeth Kaznak**, Kentucky Refugee Ministries
- Kevin Knochenmus**, Roosevelt-Perry Elementary
- Lorena Lasky**, Jefferson County Public Schools
- Nancy Lasky**, Neighborhood Place South Central
- Edgardo Mansilla**, Americana Community Center
- Polly Mayer**, South Jefferson Neighborhood Place
- Kathy Mongeon**, DCBS
- Rod Napier**, Cabbage Patch Settlement House
- Susan Rhema**, Kentucky Refugee Ministries
- Tom Robbins**, Archdiocese of Louisville
- Debbi Rodahaffer**, St. Matthews Episcopal Church
- Jodie Tingle-Willis**, Brooklawn Child & Family Svcs
- Keith Van de Veer**, JADAC