



## **Measuring the Impact of Caring Communities in Jackson County A Report by the Local Investment Commission January 1998**

### **Overview**

The Caring Communities initiative has been implemented in 16 school and neighborhood sites across four school districts in Jackson County. Included are 14 elementary schools and two high schools. Each site's implementation plan has been designed and directed by a School and Neighborhood Advisory Council, and assisted by a site-based coordinator. The Local Investment Commission (LINC) facilitates coordination, networking, training, and reporting by the sites.

LINC is a citizen-driven community collaborative involving efforts by the state of Missouri to work with neighborhood, business, civic, and labor leaders to restructure traditional human services and employment programs and improve the lives of children and families in Kansas City and Jackson County.

In January 1998, LINC surveyed each of the Jackson County Caring Communities sites and asked for their observations about "the difference that Caring Communities has made in their communities" as well as specific results that have been achieved. The following sections highlight their responses.

### **Overall Effects**

- Far more parents and neighbors have been recruited to volunteer time as tutors, mentors, and activity leaders than ever took part in school activities prior to Caring Communities.
- Parent involvement with their students and the schools has increased dramatically, as evidenced by parent/teacher conference attendance and participation in regular school events.
- Children with special academic, social, or family needs are receiving specialized attention through such programs as counseling, tutoring and remedial classes, and self-esteem building activities.
- To deal with the challenges of working parents, 13 sites have created before and after-school child care programs, providing over 900 children each day with opportunities to learn, grow, and avoid being alone during crucial hours before and after school.
- Seven of the sites have created school and neighborhood health centers. Through these facilities and cooperation with area health care organizations, children, parents, and neighbors have immediate access to primary health care and screening.

- Site Councils and on-site staff have leveraged Caring Communities funding by attracting the no-cost participation of other community agencies and securing donations of dollars and materials from local businesses.

### **Selected Results**

The following tables list a few of the tangible outcomes achieved at individual school and neighborhood sites for each of the Caring Communities core results.

<b>Parents Working</b>	
Bancroft	A “Treat Yourself Right” program offers support for working mothers through skills classes, opportunities for networking and support from others, and a break from the children for up to 35 women.
Ladd	An ongoing computer training class enrolls 7 adults per session to learn basic computer skills.
McCoy	A job placement and assistance training program by Bishop Sullivan Center assisted 12 parents and residents to find employment.
James	34 adults take part in an in-school GED and Adult Studies class on a regular basis.  A “WorkNet” job search satellite has been created that allows adults to search for employment available in the community.
Van Horn H.S.	Ongoing computer classes are held three nights per week and attract an average of 5-12 per session.
Woodland	15 parents and residents have enrolled in Basic Computer Literacy classes.

<b>Young Children Ready to Enter School</b>	
Bancroft	Through a Health Fair and personal contact, 100% of students were immunized prior to the start of the 1997 school year.
Bryant	20 three and four years olds receive early childhood education and care at the school’s Early Childhood Center
McCoy	Through efforts of the health center, 100% of the kindergarten students were fully immunized prior to the start of school.
Randall	Family School Liaisons made personal visits to 77% of the families with a child about to enter kindergarten. Attendance in kindergarten is up 3%.

<b>Children and Youth Succeeding in School</b>	
Blenheim	15 parents have signed pledges to spend one hour per month at school reading with and tutoring students.
Bryant	100% of parents attended parent/teacher conferences in November 1997, as compared to only 73% in 1996.
Central H.S.	105 students have completed a drop-out prevention/alternative suspension program. Of these students, 60% improved school attendance and 50% have shown a decrease in disciplinary actions.
Chick	Grade 3 average reading scores (ITBS) increased from a 4.0 grade equivalent to a 4.6 grade equivalent from 1995-96 to the 1996-97 school year. Grade 3 math computation scores increased from 3.9 to 4.6 over the same period.  350 children take part in Summer Village — a safe, structured learning environment to do remedial work and learn new academic & social skills.  Parents visiting the classrooms has increased by 50%, and parents involved as volunteer tutors has increased over 200%.
James	In-School Suspensions have decreased from 91 during the 1996-97 school year to only 21 in the first half of the 1997-98 school year due to the efforts of the Recovery Room and other supportive services.
Ladd	59 students are being tutored in math and 54 in reading skills. The completion rate for the tutoring program is 95%.
McCoy	92% of parents attended parent/teacher conferences, the highest rate among elementary schools in the KCMO district.
Procter	Since the 1994-95 school year, students scoring in the top 2 MMAT quintiles has increased from 52% to 57% in reading, from 57% to 64% in math, from 65% to 82% in science, and from 56% to 68% in social studies.
Randall	School attendance has increased from 93.3% to 94.8% from the 1996-97 to 1997-98 school year.
Santa Fe	84 students are part of the HOSTS (Help One Student to Succeed) structured mentoring program that improves reading, writing vocabulary, study skills, and high-level thinking. Santa Fe has recently received national recognition as an exemplary site for this effort.
Santa Fe Trail	92 students took part in a life skills program (96-97). 84% of the 2nd. to 4th. grade students significantly improved their self-esteem scores and 89% showed significant behavior improvement based on teacher evaluation.  Parent attendance at parent/teacher conferences was increased from 90% to 97% from November 1996 to November 1997.  Monthly attendance for voluntary after-school tutoring and enrichment activities averages 153 students, a 22% increase over last school year.

<b>Children Safe in their Families and Families Safe in their Communities</b>	
Bryant	School district and the city collaborated to install new lighting, paint additional cross-walks, and add more school-zone signs near the school.
Buckner & Cler-Mont	In response to the community's growing concerns over methamphetamine labs, six new neighborhood watch groups were organized and meet regularly.  A Gang Awareness program was presented to 125 parents and residents in response to a growing local problem.
Central H.S.	Food baskets were prepared for over 400 needy families.
James	An average of 225 children and adults take place in structured recreational programs offered from 5-8 PM every weekday.  The social worker and parent liaison discovered 20 students who were subject to "educational neglect" and five who were being abused. Three of those were removed from their homes and the remaining families were linked to support services.
Procter	Through "Dad's Gym," 10 fathers regularly play basketball with their children at the school and have begun to plan family activities at school.
Santa Fe Trail	Family activities are provided once a month; a family resource center is open daily during school hours and one evening per month; the Back-to-School BBQ attracted 410 people.  A neighborhood block watch has been organized and 30 block captains have been recruited. In comparing Police statistics from Sept. '97 and Dec. '97 for 1000 homes in the neighborhood, assaults have decreased from 2 to 1 and larceny has decreased from 8 to 1.  Suspensions due to incidents on school buses have decreased from 38 during the period of Sept.- Dec. 1996 to only 4 during the same period in 1997.
Randall	83% of all families participated in at least one parent support or safe neighborhood event such as Safety Day, Dinner Playhouse, and Chili Night.
Van Horn H.S.	Due to the efforts of the Clinical Social Worker, a suicide pact among students was discovered and disbanded.
Woodland	School suspensions have decreased by 26% (23 to 17) when comparing the first semester of 1996-97 with the first semester of the 1997-98 school year due to implementation of a student recovery room.

<b>Healthy Children and Families</b>	
Bryant	<p>All kindergarten, 1st., 3rd., and 6th. graders had vision screenings and 14 received free eyeglasses donated by LensCrafters.</p> <p>A review of immunization status on 475 students during the 1996-97 school year found 23 students in need of further immunizations. A review of the same number of students in 1997-98 found only 7 students in need of immunizations.</p>
Central H.S.	75 uninsured families have been enrolled in Medicaid or the low-cost "Caring Program for Children" health insurance program.
Chick	98% of asthmatic students attended a school Asthma Fair. As a result, only one child in 1997 had an asthma attack at school.
Cler-Mont	<p>The nurse practitioner at the school health center detected a student's brain tumor through a sports physical screening.</p> <p>During 1997, 1784 patients visited the Cler-Mont Health Service Center - 483 adults and 1301 children. The center performed 34 Healthy Children and Youth (EPSDT) screenings, 321 immunizations were given, and 114 community members were served by the nutritionist.</p>
James	The school nurse provided health screenings and blood pressure tests for 350 residents at a neighborhood carnival.
McCoy	140 students received dental screenings and oral care kits from the Missouri Department of Health and the Kansas City Free Health Clinic.
Santa Fe Trail	<p>All 510 students received visual dental screenings by a dentist (96-97). 65 of these children received follow-up services including fillings, exams, cleanings, extractions, and root canals. Dental sealants were offered to all second grade students.</p> <p>Head lice cases, which often lead to frequent school absences, have steadily decreased from 27 cases in Sept., 14 in October, 11 in November, and 6 in December '97 due to bi-weekly classroom checks and follow-up treatment.</p> <p>All students in the 21st. Century pre-school program were given developmental screenings by a parent educator.</p>
Woodland	328 students who lack access to dental care have been provided dental exams, cleanings, extractions, fillings, and prevention education through a partnership with Samuel Rodgers Community Health Center.

<b>Youth Prepared to Enter Productive Adulthood</b>	
Bancroft	11 adult males and 14 boys completed a 7 week “Boys to Men” curriculum. Of the fathers who participated, 5 are now volunteering in the classrooms.
Blenheim	“Men on the Move”, a volunteer group, have started a Cadet Corps with 12 students focusing on academic success, leadership, and community service.
Central H.S.	A full-time job developer has made 34 classroom presentations and assisted 232 students prepare resumes and 326 conduct job searches.  30 males, ages 14 to 17, participate in a CADET program focusing on academics, leadership development, self improvement, military education and drills, counseling, and field trips.
Chick	150 volunteers from the United States Department of Agriculture and other government agencies serve as mentors for children in the school.  Volunteers from the business community, medical field, and other professions provide career education to expose students to non-stereotypical careers for African-Americans.
Cler-Mont	100 fifth graders have attended career awareness programs with local business partners.  12 high school students serve as tutors and mentors for 22 elementary school students. An additional 15 children are provided with adult mentors through the “Youth Friends” effort.
James	15 youth from Central Middle School were recruited to teach computer skills and motivate their use among elementary children.

### **Testimonials**

“Having the Caring Communities program in our school has meant being able to finish my reading books for the first time in five years. It has meant being able to teach with few, if any, interruptions. It has meant having someone in the building who knows where to go to get help for those in need. Probably the best thing about this program is that we have trained personnel who can work with those students who are having severe disciplinary problems. I have seen a major change in the overall atmosphere of the school. Children are calmer. They are more respectful.”

*Carolyn Kimbrell, James Elementary School*

“Caring Communities has done a lot of things for me and my family. Sometimes I think if this program wasn’t at the school then I wouldn’t have the help I need for my 2 boys. They also get you involved in what’s going on in the school. I think a lot more schools should have this program because it really works. Without it I would be lost. Thank you Caring Communities.”

*Patricia Hill, Parent*