

## A healthy community: Look who's watching

Each and every one of us has a responsibility to those that we live and work with. We need to be considerate of how our actions may affect someone else.

Because we know that a caring neighborhood (including the home) and a caring school have a major impact on the success of young people, we decided to ask the question, "How has another person's behavior impacted you?" The question was asked and answered by both adults and young people. Their responses follow but before we go there, it might be a good idea for you to think about the question. How would you have answered it? Would this be a good topic for the dinner table tonight? If something you are doing is having a negative impact on your family (like smoking, drinking, or being messy or not understanding), are you willing to change? If it is having a positive impact will you continue to do it? You'll never know until you ask the question.

**Christina, age 14:** "Adults in my life have influenced me positively to always care about my schoolwork. They enforce homework and good grades and make sure it is a top priority in my life. They support me in the challenges of homework."

**High school student, age 14:** "Adults influence my life a lot including how they promote not to use cigarettes, cigars and alcohol."

**Jacqueline, age 15:** "My parents are serious when it comes to getting schoolwork done. They always tell me that there will always be time to play but work has to be done when it should. I have adopted their values and now I can focus on my schoolwork as well as pass their values along to my brother."

**Courtney, age 15:** "My grandmother is very much involved in the church she belongs to. Because of her involvement, my family and I attend church frequently and are willing to help out with the fundraisers of the church."

**Clark, age 15:** "I am extremely influenced by adults and these influences have had positive influences on me. My parents worked tirelessly when they were young studying to get a college education in China. Their work ethics have truly inspired me to perform my hardest in school."

**Katie, age 15:** "I am positively influenced by an adult in school regarding schoolwork and exercise. It has affected me to work hard in school and exercise."

**Mary Beth, age 15:** "My parents have always been

high achievers. Because of their influence on me, I have developed a need to achieve. I always push myself to do my best and accomplish my goals."

**Megan, age 16:** "My parents have always taught me that religion is very important and that it is a basis to living a good life. Because of this, I have decided that I will only apply to a college that is affiliated with the Catholic Church."

**Brandon, age 16:** "My parents are dentists and they strongly say to stay away from chewing tobacco and other tobacco products because they destroy your teeth. By using tobacco products you stain and destroy your teeth and are making you look horrible."

**Kristen, age 16:** "Involvement in my school's music program has really helped me become more focused and involved in my school. I am very grateful because music has opened so many doors and opportunities."

**Ashley, age 16:** "My parents greatly influence my family to stay active by participating in extracurricular activities and sports."

**Lauren, age 16:** "If adults can set a positive example for their children, it can help kid's lead healthier lives. In my family, faith is an important aspect of my parents' lives, therefore religion has become important to me too."

**Avery, age 17:** "When adults in my life are involved in healthy lifestyles and understand its importance, it is easier for me to choose a healthy lifestyle. When I look up to an adult, I am more likely to pay attention and follow their lead."

**Tyler, age 17:** "I feel that adults' attention to children has a very positive affect on their family and the community."

**Lauren, age 17:** "At my high school, adults are highly perceptive to academic achievements and attentive to students who are struggling. The attention and interest they show in academics promotes harder work among my fellow students and me."

**Adult:** "As a child of immigrant parents, I was consistently reminded (by both words and behavior) that there was much to be thankful for. The gratitude my parents felt for things, both earned and given, was pervasive. To this day they believe hard work and op-

portunity are gifts that are not to be taken lightly nor diminished by a sense of entitlement. I am convinced this attitude instilled in my and my brother a sense of pride in our heritage and country as well as a profound responsibility to give back to our community."

**Adult:** "Both parents smoked and approved of my smoking at home after age 18. Alcohol was also used in excess in our home."

**Allison:** "As a parent in the field of health and wellness, my children consider exercise and sports involvement a part of their daily routine. With the support of families, teachers and coaches and establishing open communication between all - parents and child (children) are aware and involved in making appropriate choices."

**Adult:** "Habits form expectations — consistency has always been part of nature's norm. We depend and count on what is expected. Rather like making your church financial obligation a monthly bill as opposed to what loose change you have in your pocket. Lack of rules, habits and guided direction for our youth makes for loose behavior. Kids need to model behavior, clear rules and habits beginning in early years."

**Kate, adult:** "Soccer has always been very important to me. I started playing when I was around 6 and I still play as an adult. Growing up, one or both of my parents came to all of my games. The support and love I felt from my parents was amazing."

**Sherri, adult:** "My mother-in-law recently died due to complications with advanced lung cancer. Her deepening illness had a profound impact on my children (ages 11, 14, 16). They saw how her life was stunted by her smoking and her inability to stop, even when she was dying. No one in our home smokes and my children vow to be smoke-free."

Here is a challenge for the dinner table. Talk to your children and ask them what behaviors you have that they don't like or agree with. Make the conversation go both ways though so that you all have something to work toward for your next conversation.

Your comments and suggestions are welcome. If you have an idea for a topic, please let us hear from you. Send a note to the Amherst Task Force, 4255 Harlem Road, Amherst, NY 14226 or e-mail Sally@eccpasa.info.



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