**Perry County Community Task Force**

The **Junior/Senior Conference** originated in 1998, as a prevention program to help eliminate/reduce the high number of vehicular accidents among youth during the high risk time of prom/graduation.  Every year the Task Force coordinates this conference for all of the junior and senior students in Perry County.
Teens from the community also assist in the planning of this yearly event, which is held at the Perry Park Center, during the early spring. The conference usually consists of a variety of guest speakers, videos, and a docu-drama, where a mock crash scene is set up in the city park.  The aim is to assist youth in making responsible choices during this high-risk time in

The **CHAMPS Mentoring Program** for in-school (grades K-12) Perry County youth was established in 1999.  This program allows adult volunteers, who have successfully completed a background check and mentor training, to offer support and guidance to youth on a weekly basis.  During this time the volunteers are encouraged to help build the youth's self-esteem, and help them make educated decisions about their future.  To promote healthy, fun interaction between the youth and mentor, the CHAMPS Program has supplied passes to Knights of Columbus Bowling Center and the Perry Park Center.  Other opportunities include crafting, culinary arts, and life skills training.  Youth and mentors are involved in activities which provide service to others, such as the Fall Leaf Raking Project and the Summer Service Project.  During the Fall Leaf Raking Project, the youth and their mentors rake the yards of the elderly or disabled.  During the Summer Service Project, the youth and their mentors participate in a service project that allows them to give back to the Perry County community.  These projects provide both youth and mentors with the pride and satisfaction of helping others less fortunate than themselves.

In 2001 the Perry County Community Task Force was expanded to offer services to youth who have dropped **out of school.**  The focus of this group is to give support and guidance by helping youth believe in themselves, set goals, complete their education, learn soft skills to get a job, and acquire the people skills to move forward in employment and life.  This program has expanded to also work with those who are still in school.

The benefits of attending **the Out-of-School Program**:
    - learn skills to improve your life
    - learn about career options
    - improve your job readiness (interview skills, resume, etc.)
    - plan for a successful future
    - do fun and helpful activities
    - have a support group
    - help in identifying your dream
    - evaluation of your interests and abilities
    - practical assistance to reach your goal
    - people skills
    - information on resources
    - connection with job opportunities

In 2002 **Seeking Answers** was organized and added to the programs provided by the Perry County Community Task Force.  It gives support and assistance to 16-21 year old youth who are seeking answers to substance use issues.  This group not only provides support to the individuals involved, but also causes them to answer questions which may help them think twice before using substances again.  Topics include:
            Addiction                    Stress Management
     Effects on the Body           Taking Responsibility
         Self-Esteem                        Peer Pressure
         Goal Setting        Making Choices/Problem Solving
         Change Plan                Relapse Prevention Plan
       Guest Speakers                Alternative Lifestyles
Youth are provided with Perry Park Center passes to assist them with finding alternative behaviors to substance use.  Many youth are court mandated to attend the Seeking Answers Program.  Others attend at the parents' request, because of a friend who is attending, or just because they feel they need the support the program provides.  A Mental Health/Substance Abuse Counselor is available for professional assistance when needed.

**With the Seeking Answers program, there are answers to questions like:**
Is there a difference between alcohol and drugs?
What is the difference between a heavy drinker and an alcoholic?
Is addiction an illness?
How do I stop?
**With the Seeking Answers program, there is a support group where you can:**
Interact with other young people facing the same type of problems.
Have the benefit of trained counselors.
Learn from the experiences of others who have control of their addictions.
Obtain accurate information about substance abuse.
Discover healthy alternatives to substance use.
Find ways to gain control of your life.

The **Seeking Answers About Situations program** was started in 2003, after a 12 year old came to the Seeking Answers Program.  SAAS is a support group for 12-15 year olds who are seeking answers, not only about substance abuse issues, but also about many other socialization concerns.  Youth are provided with passes to use the Perry Park Center at any time as an alternative to substance use and other trouble-causing activities.  Some youth are court mandated; but others attend at their parents' request, because of a friend who is attending, or just because they feel they need the support the program provides.  A Mental Health counselor is available when needed.
Topics covered in sessions include:
        Peer Pressure                            Bullying
    Effects of Drugs/Alcohol        Anger Management
        Self-Esteem                    Taking Responsibility
    Best Ways to Learn               Stress Management
     Conflict Resolution                   Setting Goals

**YAP** was started in November 2004 in an effort to help youth be successful with life changes.  Youth have an increased rate of success when they receive support and encouragement from their families.  Youth of all ages are encouraged to attend if their parents are also in attendance.  Parents and youth are involved in determining the topics to be addressed.  Only the **youth and parents** themselves know what they need assistance with, therefore they are given the opportunity to express these needs. Information is shared at each activity.  This information includes topics such as:
            Personality Types                    Anger Management
        Balancing Responsibilities                    Bullying
      Understanding ADD, LD, etc.            Sibling Rivalry
            Positive Discipline              Creating Family Traditions
      Raising Responsible Youth              Stress Management
              Communication               Healthy Eating & Activities

In 2006 **the 8th Grade Prevention Conference** was started.  This conference is for all Perry County eighth graders, with an emphasis on helping them acquire additional resistance skills prior to entering the larger arena of high school.  This highly interactive conference utilizes skits, guest speakers, and videos to inspire youth to make positive choices.

In 2008 the **LifeSkills Prevention Program** was started.  This evidence-based program is available for grades seven through twelve, in all the schools in Perry County.  It provides students with knowledge and skills to: develop a positive self-image; think clearly and make informed decisions; cope with pressure from the media; manage anxiety; communicate effectively; build healthy relationships; handle social situations; resist peer pressure; and say NO to tobacco, alcohol, and other drugs.These lessons are delivered in the classrooms, using a combination of science-based curriculum, coaching with peer interaction, and provider-led activities.  At present, four sessions are provided for the seventh graders, a 14-week program is available for the eighth graders, followed with a 9-week program for the ninth graders, and concluding with four sessions for the tenth graders.  The **SOS Signs of Suicide Program** was added in 2008.  This suicide program is presented in all the schools in Perry County in seventh/eighth grade and in tenth grade.

Lessons Cover in LifeSkills Training
Drug Abuse and Violence
Making Decisions
Media Influences
Coping with Anxiety
Coping with Anger
Communication Skills
Social Skills
Assertiveness
Resolving Conflict
Resisting Peer Pressure

**Healthy Alternatives for Little Ones (HALO)** started in 2013.  This is an evidence-based, developmentally-appropriate health education and prevention program for 4-6 year-old children.  the 15-week program is designed to strengthen protective factors and reduce risk factors by helping children develop resiliency skills: self-discipline, problem-solving strategies, and tolerance of people and situations different from their own.  It is available for preschools, daycares, and kindergarten classes in Perry County and sessions are held at their sits. Through HALO children:
- acquire a strengthened sense of self
- learn to say "no" to things that are harmful
- learn to recognize, label, and express feelings in appropriate ways
- practice communication skills
- obtain information about the harmful effects of tobacco and drugs
- learn safety precautions for medicines
- practice techniques to reduce stress
- increase acceptance of cultural diversity

**The Girls' Circle** was formed in Perry County in 2014 and is open to girls ages 13-16+.  This program uses evidence-based curriculum to provide opportunities for girls to lead a life that includes being informed; making positive choices; experiencing shared power; and having positive options for a safe, healthy, and productive future.  Weekly sessions are held on Wednesday from 3:30-4:30 pm, at the Perry County Community Task Force office.