

ROW WITH EXTENSION

Empowering Youth & Families promotes resiliency



Haylee Allen

As I sat at my kitchen table recently, color coding homeschool calendars, scheduling zoom meetings, and trying my best to extinguish a disagreement between my children because, really, we're all a little stir crazy, I took a moment to pause. I felt tired, not from the ordinary busy schedule I had become accustomed to, I was mentally and emotionally drained. What fills my cup with energy, had been depleted. I realized that I missed regular social interactions with my community, and I knew that now, more than ever, our community needs to be filled with support for sustainability. North Carolina Cooperative Extension services are geared to assist with such support and finding ways to do so on a virtual platform became a mission of our offices.

Many of the programs offered through NC Cooperative Extension in New Hanover County are provided in person. The Empowering Youth and Families Program (EYFP) was first offered in New Hanover County during the spring of 2019 and has continued to grow in

attendance over the past year. EYFP is an evidence-based program aimed at promoting resilience, by encouraging improved parenting behaviors, healthier communication and decision-making skills. Through a partnership with the Wilmington Housing Authority, EYFP sessions have been held weekly during previous spring and fall cohorts. Participating youth have demonstrated positive leadership skills and caregivers have shared that their families are able to communicate more efficiently utilizing the skills learned during EYFP programming.

Melanie Medlock, Wilmington Police Department, reflects, "I have been a part of the Empowering Youth & Families Program since the beginning of the cohort in Hillcrest. Parents were coming in each week telling which techniques of communicating helped them with their child. We had one child state that their mom didn't yell as much that week and how they sat down as a family to eat. Those comments were huge to me. I knew at that point, what was offered could help so many people.

This class built bonds for all the families and for me with my families in the community. It built trust where I have been able to help them get further assistance from resources that they were not aware they qualified for. From a police perspective,

this is what building relationships with communities is all about."

The Empowering Youth & Families Program is a program that aims to encourage self-determination and parenting skill building to strengthen youth and families in an effort to promote community resilience. The primary focus of the program is opioid prevention, with emphasis on healthy decision making and building resilience. This fall, we look forward to offering the in person twelve-session program that is designed to strengthen relationships and empower families to lead community change.

Throughout this time of physical distancing, we welcome all community youth, ages 10-14 and their caregivers to participate in weekly webinars offered on our website to promote resilience in your home and the community. We invite you to visit <https://opioidpreventionnc.org/webinars> to view the webinars and follow NC Cooperative Extension - New Hanover County on Facebook.

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Families work on understanding stressors and healthy coping skills.

[CONTRIBUTED PHOTO]