

Thriving During the Teenage Years - After the School Day Ends

By Dr. Jan Hittelman

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The most recent Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2007) indicates that while the majority of high school students are doing well, we continue to have challenges with a significant percentage of adolescents in our community engaging in risky behaviors. You can review the current and previous surveys by going to: www.bouldercounty.org/health/yrbs.htm. We know that for adolescents, the time that they are often most at risk is after school between 3pm and 6pm Monday through Friday. Conversely we also know that adolescents who participate in structured after school activities engage in fewer at risk behaviors (e.g. substance abuse, delinquency, victims of crime, sexual activity, etc.) and do better in school. For this reason there are two new community projects currently underway to provide adolescents with increased access to quality after school programs. These are the Community Access Mentoring program and Break Thru Arts at September School.

Community Access Mentoring (CAM):

A couple of years ago, Dr. Chris King and I met and discuss this issue. As a result of that conversation, we developed the CAM program and eventually received \$500,000 from the U.S. Department of Education to launch it. CAM recruits well screened and trained volunteer community mentors who are housed in the middle schools. Through school and parent referrals, the mentors, known as Access Coaches, meet and develop relationships with youth to connect them with fun after school programs in their community. The Access Coaches also connect with the student's parents and community program staff to ensure that the match is successful. CAM is currently being piloted in Casey and Manhattan Middle Schools and will be expanded into all of the BVSD middle schools over the next two years. Another benefit of the program is the availability of a community map of after school programs on the BVSD web site that any parent can use to learn about specific programs that may be of interest to their child. For more information go to: www.bvds.org/mentor or contact Dr. Patti Ashley, the CAM Program Director at 720-203-6844.

Break Thru Arts at September School: In a great example of collaboration, September High School and the YMCA's Break Thru Arts program have joined forces to offer a wide range of after school programs for teens. In partnership with the City of Boulder's Youth opportunity Advisory Board and the Community Foundation of Boulder County, The Boulder Arts Commission, The Colorado Council on the Arts, The National Endowment for the Arts, The Jared Polis Foundation, J.C. Penny and Foothills United Way, they are able to offer these amazing 8-week classes for FREE. Current class offerings include: Stained Glass, Graphic Design, Breakdancing, Billiards, Cooking, Screen printing, Table Tennis, Graffiti Art, Ultimate Frisbee, Modern Dance, Natural Highs, Pottery, Adobe Flash Animation, and even Belly Dancing! To learn more about this incredible resource go to: SeptemberSchool.org and click on "After Hour Arts" or call the Class Information Hotline at 303-443-4474 x4651.