



WEST VIRGINIA'S PROMISE
THE ALLIANCE FOR YOUTH

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“Promise Place” February 2011-February 2012 Report

Organizations:

Children’s Home Society of Parkersburg
Mission West Virginia
Family Resource Network of the Panhandle
DAYMARK, Inc.
Marshall County Starting Points
Volunteer Action Center
Valley Health Systems, Inc.
For Love of Children Outdoor Education Center
Arts In Action
The Youth Club of Marshall County
Musselman Middle School
Morgan County Starting Points
Youth Services Systems, Inc.
Ohio Valley University
Hometown Elementary
ABLE Families
Kanawha Institute for Social Research & Action, Inc.
Pressley Ridge White Oak
WE CAN Mentoring Program-CHS Kanawha
Taylor County Project Hop2e
Rock Lake Community Life Center
Golden Girl Group Home
Tucker County FRN
Pocahontas County FRN
Children’s Home Society of Princeton

Summary of commitment and progress:

Total number of Children who have received access to 4 of the 5 Promises: 6,788

1. Caring Adults, personal, ongoing relationship with a caring adult—parent, mentor, tutor or coach;
7,051
2. Safe Places in which to learn and grow with structured activities during non-school hours;
7,184
3. A Healthy Start toward adulthood;
7,004
4. An Effective Education that builds marketable skills;
7,704
5. Opportunities to Help Others through community service to others.
6,561



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Best Practices or **programs** that have worked and could be replicated by other organizations or individuals:

Adolescent Health Initiative; Workshop constructive use of time for parents and workshop avenues to Support Teen Parents

Youth Services Systems, Inc. in Wheeling; SleepOut raised awareness about youth who are homeless and raised \$27,360

Starting Points partnered with the Berkeley Springs High School to implement the “School of Hard Knocks”. All Juniors prepared for the event during English class by choosing a career, identifying required education, marital status and number of children. At the event, community business representatives were present to assist students with “choosing housing and insurance, paying for child care, choosing transportation-which included buying insurance, buying groceries, choosing vacations, applying for bank loans and paying for medical expenses. At the end of the day they were to calculate expenses against their income and start making cuts in expenses if they were over budget. It was a great learning experience for the students and the volunteers.

Taylor County Project HOP2E Back to School Back Pack Giveaway, Christmas at Camp Towels and Community Awareness Day at our local Social Center. Grafton High School Summit

Musselman High School Faculty and Staff support their students through many levels; through positive mentee relationships through Music, Sports, Service and Leadership Organizations, afterschool programs, highlighting positive choices in regards to drugs, alcohol, social interactions and providing good role models. Educating the whole student is their goal. Students give back through Leo Club, Student Council, Bible Club and the entire school on “Musselman Gives Back Day”.

Arts In Action forms community partnerships, particularly in outreach programs, by partnering we better reach and engage the community. The result is a better overall experience for the child and community-wide support that can extend beyond the specific program.

Family Resource Network of the Panhandle, Inc. reports having community dialogues within any organization or program is a simple, effective way to get feedback about community issues.

DAYMARK, Inc. in an effort to assist even more youth and their families, Patchwork Street Outreach team takes information, food, drinks, hygiene products and other emergency items to the streets of the community two days each week.

Volunteer Action Center is proud to operate one of the few 2-1-1 systems in WV. The 2-1-1- system is a statewide program which contains a statewide database of thousand of health and human services. In addition the VAC and other agencies, post volunteer opportunities for individuals and families on the VolunteerWV.org website. This website allows families and individuals from all over WV to find opportunities where they can volunteer and give back to their communities.

FLOC OEC one of their focuses for the students is community outreach and community awareness. Since the beginning of the 2011/2012 school year the students have participated in 3 community projects; a canned food drive, river clean up and visiting a local nursing home. Although, all projects are important, the visit to the nursing home proved to be the most impactful. Upon debriefing and reflection, it was incredible hearing how much the students enjoyed talking to and spending time with the residents.



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Ohio Valley University created a model by which all incoming students before they graduate must complete a service-based project, called the OVU Experience, earning a minimum of six credit hours as part of their requirements for graduation. Other best practices or programs are Blood Drives, Family Matters-speaker series, College Matters-College Readiness Class, Childhood Matters-Tutoring and Mentoring Project, Healthy and Safe Holidays, Work Camp, and Global Connection.

Hometown Elementary School at the beginning of each year we have all the students from the previous year mentor all of the incoming new children to develop and encourage a positive relationship with each other demonstrating all of these best practices of the program.

ABLE Families reports their summer camps provide opportunities for our children to be in a safe, educational and fun environment during summer vacation. We run six one week camps on a variety of themes. We include music, reading, science, math, environment, and creative skills. They provide opportunities for children to have experiences not otherwise available to them.

Kanawha Institute for Social Research & Action, Inc. reports effective communication with parents; addressing prevalent issues like bullying is a best practice.

“**Great Stories**” or personal examples of the impact your commitment is having on individual children, youth, members, the organization or the community:

Arts In Action, Inc.

Learning Confidence and Improving Grades. Hannah, a second grade girl, joined the dance classes at the Hurricane studio. A year later, her father was concerned that Hannah’s grades were dropping. He planned to pull her out of dance to allow her to focus more on school. Through discussions with Joni Cantrell, founding director, the father learned how important an arts education can be to learning, confidence and overall success. He decided to keep Hannah in the dance classes. Her grades steadily improved. Now a high school student, Hannah is an all A/B student, active in the community service and in dance. She attributes her success to studying arts and being involved in dance.

Managing Anger. One boy, Kenneth, who is in 5th grade is in the all boys class. He recently said that he loves to come to dance because it helps him get his anger out and calm down. He said that he always gets upset in school and dance helps him control his anger. Kenneth wants to be a dancer. He has natural skill and passion. He now studies dance at the Urban Stage program and is transported to the Arts in Action in Hurricane studio by an AinA volunteer for additional training.

Impact on a family. Below are the comments received from a grandmother and her three grandchildren when asked: "What does Arts in Action mean to you?" These comments illustrate the real impact Arts in Action is making in children's lives.

- From the 12-year-old: "Arts in Action is like a gift, a privilege. I want to dance here my whole life, become an actress and dancer and then teach at Arts in Action. My life has changed... I am not afraid to talk in front of people anymore, my grades have improved... "



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- From the 11-year-old: "...I love it here, I have made wonderful friends and I feel safe. I feel like I belong and I do belong. I don't do bad things anymore... "
- From the 8-year-old: "Arts in Action is everything to me. I mean EVERYTHING. ... I was really messed up before I came to Arts in Action... Now that I dance I haven't been that crazy. It really helps me. I am doing so much better..."
- From the grandmother: "Arts in Action saved my granddaughter's lives! The love of Miss Joni is not something I would want my granddaughters to live without, not sure they could. I can't begin to explain the difference in their lives since becoming involved with Arts in Action. Their attitudes, excitement, zeal for life and dance have changed everything about them. I thank God everyday for the blessing of Arts in Action."

The Youth Club of Marshall County:

Every Friday night we average about 50 to 75 teens that come to our *Friday Nights program* to listen to music, play pool or foosball, use our computer lab, get a snack, and enjoy positive socialization with their peers. We hold dances and parties during the holidays, and have special events throughout the year. The youth have a place to be teens, while those youth looking for guidance develop constructive relationships with caring adults. For many of these youth, this is their only outlet. They can't afford the activities most teens get to enjoy or are unable to take part because of life situations out of their control. Our program gets them off the streets, keeps them out of trouble, and lets them enjoy some time in a positive atmosphere. Sometimes we are the only helpful influence these children receive in a day. Several teens who have 'aged out' often return as peer mentors and chaperones thus giving back to the program that made such a difference to him/her and had an impact on the direction of their life.

ABLE Families

"My name is Matthew. I go to a school called Kermit K-8. I am in 4th grade. I have been coming here for two years. I live with my Mom, my Dad, my brother, and my dog Sugar. I like to come here because the teachers are nice, we get help with our homework, and it's just a lot of fun. Yes, it does help with school work and you learn about different holidays, how to read, how to make stuff, and we learn to be respectful, be honest, be kind, be our best".

Matthew is a veteran of ABLE Families after school. During our new director's first week here, he was the first student to hug her and say "You're going to love it here!" Matthew's positive energy and willingness to discover and explore new territory motivates our other students. He is one of those children who will always raise his hand to help, even though he doesn't quite know what he is volunteering for. ABLE Families' afterschool provides Matthew with the opportunity to involve himself with the surrounding community. Matthew jumps at the chance to be surrounded by his peers, takes pride in helping others, and relishes receiving one-on-one attention – something many of our students need a lot more of. Through active engagement with the community, and access to educational experiences with his peers, we hope to provide Matthew with the one-on-one support he needs to gain the guidance and education he needs to give back to the people he loves so much – his local community.



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“My name is Ashley and I am in the 5th grade in Kermit K-8. I have been coming here for 4 years. I live with my mom, my brother and sister, my aunt, and two cousins. I come to Afterschool because I get to do my homework here, instead of doing it at home, and to talk to Gina because she is fun. At Afterschool we learn good manners: be nice, and don't fight. If you read a book you get a spider leg, and if you get eight legs we get a pizza party. When you do good things you get a light, and if you get five lights you get a prize. I also learned my fractions and more of my times tables.”

Ashley is one of our students who attend Afterschool that truly need a place to go at 3pm. The stability Afterschool gives her is something constant, something she can count on. Afterschool gives Ashley the stability she needs to succeed, not only in school, but also in life. Gaining homework assistance, and help with math especially is something that Ashley does not receive when she misses a day here. Coming to Afterschool, one can tell Ashley has improved both her behavior and her attitude. She strives to meet our expectations: to be honest, respectful, kind, responsible and to be your personal best.

Ohio Valley University

As part of a project for their Women in Christian Service class, several young women decided to team up to make an impact on the homeless population in Parkersburg. They went to a location known to have homeless people around, and befriended a young woman. They invited her to lunch and were surprised when she stated that she did not get in the car with strangers. They in turn brought her some lunch and visited with her. They asked her, “What do you really need?” As a result of her response, they sponsored an “Anything Warm” drive on campus, collecting blankets, coats, sleeping bags, etc. They personally went to “Tent City”, delivered the items, and befriended many of those residing in this marginal area of town. Their courage and commitment to this project changed not only the lives of those they served, but each young woman was changed forever, as was their professor.