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20% of Fort Collins Kids Need Transportation to Safe Places

Fort Collins, CO – Twenty percent (20%) of children and youth living within the Poudre School District (PSD) boundary area are in need of transportation to safe activities when they are not in school, according to a new report based on local data. And given that most violent juvenile crime, substance abuse and teen pregnancies occur between the hours of 3-8 p.m., helping to provide that transportation should be a community priority.

In October 2006, a random sample of 5,000 homes (believed to have school-aged children) with ZIP codes in the PSD boundary received a survey in the mail asking parents if they need help getting their kids to and from activities, and if so, what that help might consist of. The survey was conducted by the YoGo (“Youth on the Go”) Task Force, a group convened by the Healthier Communities Coalition of Larimer County (HCC).

The task force initiated the survey under the assumption that the Fort Collins community needed and would use a youth transportation system, which in turn would increase the number of youth who have access to safe non-school hour activities. After tabulating the data three different ways, each time taking a more in-depth look at the responses, the group had to conclude that most families manage their kids’ transportation needs.

“The percentage of people who said they need help transporting their kids was much lower than we expected...we were surprised by the results,” said Sam Jack, director of operations for the Boys & Girls Clubs of Larimer County, and YoGo task force member. “But the survey did document a very high need among 20% of the population. If you figure that’s 20% of the 21,200 students enrolled in PSD schools, there are or more than 4,200 kids who could use help.”

Respondents living in ZIP code 80521 experienced the highest incidence of transportation hurdles prohibiting program attendance - 29.3% - followed by residents living in ZIP code 80524, which had an incidence of 25%.

With policymakers currently making transportation decisions, the YoGo Task Force hopes they will take the needs of youth into consideration.

“Although measurable transportation costs vary from state to state, it is undeniable that the cost of providing children access to safe places with caring adults is dramatically less expensive than processing and incarcerating young offenders in the juvenile justice system,” said Jack.

The YoGo survey report can be viewed online at www.healthylarimer.org or a copy can be obtained by calling HCC at (970) 495-7503.

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Healthier Communities Coalition of Larimer County works with child, youth and family serving entities to ensure that every child and youth in the county will be supported by having in their lives: caring adults; safe places to be during non-school hours; healthy lifestyle habits; an effective education; marketable skills; and opportunities to serve others.

POUDRE VALLEY HEALTH SYSTEM FOUNDATION

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