

### **Excellence in Healthy Living**

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### **Category: Excellence in Healthy Living Award**

**Title: "Building Resilient Communities: Strengthening School, Community, and University Partnerships for Healthy Living"**

#### **Define the Goals and Objective of the Program**

The PROSPER (PROmoting School-community-university Partnerships to Enhance Resilience) model, sustaining evidence-based programs for youth and families. With drug abuse and addiction among rural America's top health concerns (Harvard School of Public Health, 2018), PROSPER aligns with the Extension Opioid Crisis Response Workgroup's call for strategic, research-based prevention (EOCRW, 2018; Brennan et al., 2018; Spoth et al., 2021). University faculty and Extension specialists secured RHSE grant funding for a second time to expand these efforts.

PROSPER promotes healthy lifestyles by equipping youth and families with skills to resist peer pressure, make informed choices, and build resilience. Lessons from the Botvin LifeSkills Training (LST) program reinforce PROSPER's focus on decision-making, self-efficacy, and positive youth development. Volunteer and youth involvement are key, with volunteers providing mentorship and youth taking leadership roles to sustain and expand program impact. Through community-driven engagement and evidence-based strategies, PROSPER strengthens protective factors and fosters long-term well-being in rural communities.

#### **Identify the target audience and recruitment strategies.**

The target audience are families and youth in Hamilton, Madison, Taylor and Lafayette Counties. Each county had support to implement two evidence-based curriculums: Botvin Lifeskills and Strengthening Families 10-14 in each county. Because of the bridge of support between 4-H faculty in these rural areas and the UF state management team these programs are now sustained utilizing Opioid settlement funds.

#### **Explain the program content, delivery methods and program significance**

The extension agents partnered with county school districts to provide the Botvin Life Skills Training (LST) program to all sixth-grade students (Taylor County n=231 and Madison County n=102 students). Agents, program assistants, and classroom teachers scheduled to provide instruction attended an in-depth training on the LST program. After 4-H agents and school administrators scheduled the 15-week program, instruction began in each 6<sup>th</sup> grade classroom. Extension agents also partnered with local teams to

implement Strengthening Families 10-14 program (SFP) and reached over 17 families in the first year of implementation which was proven to enhance relationships between parents and children and build skills in resisting peer pressure to use substances.

### **Describe outcomes evaluation results**

The PROSPER program as a whole has produced favorable outcomes and impacts promoting sustainability of these programs in the rural counties. Strengthening Families 10-14 youth participants reported an improved future orientation, ability to change behavior, improved family communication, and family problem solving. The Life Skills program has currently reached 325 6th graders. Participants (n=103) of Botvin Life Skills Training (BLT) training completed a pre (m=7.96) and post (m=8.45) test on life Skills knowledge gain showing a difference of means of >49. The increase in knowledge is significant with a p-value of .00.

As a result of the team an impact beyond the specific programs of BLS and SFP 10-14 is that of sustainability of these evidence-based programs in these rural counties. Through networking and resource awareness one county has recently secured \$25,000 and another county secured \$30,000 in funding allocated through their local Board of County Commissioners from federal Opioid settlement funds, and third county is also in process of securing these funds as well for future program implementation.

### **Describe partnerships, collaborations, volunteer and youth involvement**

The team's extraordinary commitment helped to build the foundation for local team sustainability of programming in rural counties; and provided opportunities to reach new community members/stakeholders to partner in providing prevention programs. The engagement of faculty across UF IFAS Extension levels has increased awareness of resources, funding sources, local community needs, evidence-based program opportunities, and a myriad of expertise and strengths that each team member has contributed.

New partnerships at the local county level include: Chamber of Commerce, Disc Village, Health Departments, district school personnel, law enforcement, church pastors, Kiwanis members, county managers, parents, and youth. Through the partnership model, county agents created new partnerships with local leaders and organizations giving all a voice as a valued team member in the overall success of the project.

### **Explain lessons learned**

The PROSPER model actively integrates community stakeholders, school personnel, and State Extension Faculty to collaborate in support of program goals and objectives. A key strength of this approach is its emphasis on volunteer and youth involvement in both program implementation and sustainability. Volunteers play a crucial role in organizing activities, providing mentorship, and ensuring the program remains community-driven.

Youth engagement is fostered through leadership opportunities that empower participants to take an active role in promoting program initiatives among their peers.

Additionally, lessons learned from the Botvin LifeSkills Training (LST) program highlight the importance of evidence-based prevention strategies that focus on enhancing decision-making skills, building resilience, and promoting positive youth development. These principles are integrated into PROSPER's framework to equip youth with practical skills for managing peer pressure, making informed choices, and developing healthy behaviors. By incorporating these research-based strategies, PROSPER ensures that youth receive comprehensive support that fosters long-term success.

This collaborative approach strengthens community ties and enhances the effectiveness of prevention programs by leveraging the contributions of dedicated volunteers and engaged youth leaders.

# HOW WE WORK



## WE PARTNER WITH YOU, FOR YOU

You are the experts on your community. We partner with extension agents and local leaders to strengthen youth and families.



## STRENGTHENING YOUTH

We use positive youth development to focus on strengths, well-being and skills that will support youth for a lifetime.



## STRENGTHENING FAMILIES

We aim to give families the tools they need to succeed in our changing world through programs that focus on healthy communication and emotion management.



## BUILDING NETWORKS

We aim to build mutual trust, accountability, and sustainability in your community through partnerships that matter.

*Find out more*

For more information or to sign up for programming, please contact your local Extension Agent.



*Florida*  
**PROSPERs**

Strengthening Youth and Families

The PROSPER Partnership Model in Florida is a partnership of the Florida Cooperative Extension System, county Extension systems, local school districts, and community volunteers.

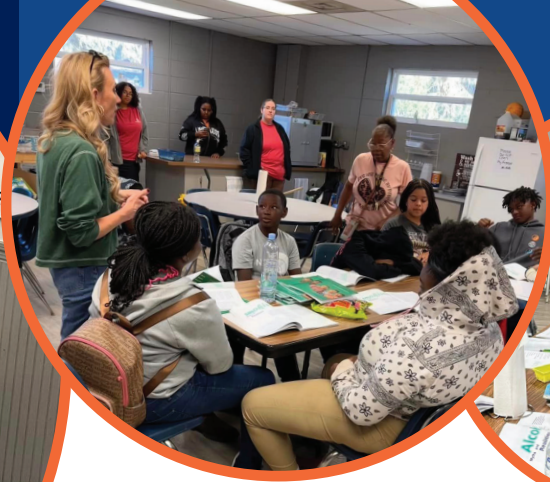
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## OUR MAIN FOCUS:

*Strengthening  
Communities*



COMMUNITY PRACTICE



STRONG FAMILIES



POSITIVE YOUTH  
DEVELOPMENT



COMMUNITY  
PARTNERSHIPS

## AVAILABLE PROGRAMS



Evidence-Based Prevention Programs for Schools, Families, and Communities

The classroom-based **Botvin LifeSkills Training (LST)** curriculum is one of the most effective universal prevention programs available to middle school students today. The primary goal of LST is to prevent youth from engaging in behaviors that will put their health and well-being at risk.

**STRENGTHENING  
Families PROGRAM**  
FOR PARENTS AND YOUTH 10-14

### **Strengthening Families Program for Parents and Youth 10-14 (SFP 10-14)**

is a universal prevention program, which means it is designed for all families, not just those at higher risk. It includes sessions for parents/caregivers and their children age 10-14 to participate in together.

## WHERE DO WE WORK?

We currently offer programming in four Florida counties through **UF/IFAS Extension Florida 4-H Youth Development Program**.

## PROSPER HUB IN FLORIDA:



HAMILTON COUNTY



LAFAYETTE COUNTY



TAYLOR COUNTY



MADISON COUNTY

Photos from county programming  
courtesy of Abbey Tharpe

PROSPER Website

<https://programs.ifas.ufl.edu/florida-prospers/>