

from the Heart



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The Need: Keeping teens safe

Today's headlines often include startling realities about the risks teenagers face every day in Martin County—from gang-related violence to tragic car accidents to problems leading to suicide. At the Children's Services Council of Martin County, we are committed to the local programs that help reduce the number of preventable, premature deaths. The Council's Research Analyst tracks the teen violent death rate and the causes of teen death as a method of measuring success and determining which programs make an impact. The main causes of teen death in Martin County are: motor vehicle crashes, poisoning (which includes drug and alcohol overdose), suicide and homicide. Many of these causes of death are connected to drug and alcohol abuse in teens, which has declined since 2000 but is still high compared to the state. Programs funded by the Council are working to make a difference—and save precious lives.



Arnold, right, has been a friend and mentor to 18-year-old Alex for five years through Big Brothers Big Sisters of Palm Beach and Martin Counties.



Big Brothers Big Sisters
of Palm Beach and Martin Counties, Inc.

Mentoring:

Start Something

Individualized mentoring is a proven method for keeping kids on track for success in school and life, and it's even more important for children and teens whose parents are overwhelmed or absentee. What makes the Big Brothers Big Sisters' Start Something! program so special is that the "Bigs" are thoroughly screened and commit to a year of volunteering with their "Littles." The two meet at mutually convenient times, usually once a week or more, and do activities they both enjoy. This mentoring relationship provides teens and children with another caring adult, who can always make time to talk. This agency is always looking for new "Bigs." Log on to www.csmc.org for contact information today!

The Children's Services Council of Martin County is an independent district, approved by voters by referendum in 1988, to enhance the lives of the children of Martin County and to enable them to attain their full potential by supporting 34 impactful programs for youth in our community. Learn more about your agency at: www.csmc.org and www.facebook.com/csmc.

The Response:

Positive development initiatives

After-school programs:

Boys & Girls Clubs • Martin County Parks & Recreation • City of Stuart

GREAT FUTURES START **HERE.**



Teens have a lot of energy, and it's important for a community to have a variety of opportunities for them to release that energy in a positive manner. But as the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention notes, juvenile arrests spike at 3 p.m.—so it's even more important to make sure those positive activities take place right after school. The Children's Services Council funds many after-school programs located in nearly every neighborhood in Martin County because this ensures teens are making healthy decisions as well as staying safe from accidents. The agencies funded by the Council are also making an increased effort to attract teens so our community's oldest children continue to be safe and happy!



Mental health programs:

Tykes & Teens • Project LIFT

Often overlooked as an effective method for reaching at-risk youth is mental health programs, and yet sometimes therapy sessions are the best way to help teens get through rough times. With suicide as one of the main causes of teen violent death in Martin County, it's vital that our community provides outlets for teens to confide in adults who are trained to work through problems. While Tykes & Teens offers a sliding scale of general mental health therapy, Project LIFT teaches teens occupational skills—automobile maintenance, plumbing, irrigation and more—to provide a lift in self-confidence to match their drug-free, positive lifestyle. Talking out problems, things as simple as feeling bullied or stress from divorced parents can make a big difference for teens, who might otherwise succumb to negative peer pressure and a tragic end.



Parenting skill development:

CASTLE • Helping People Succeed

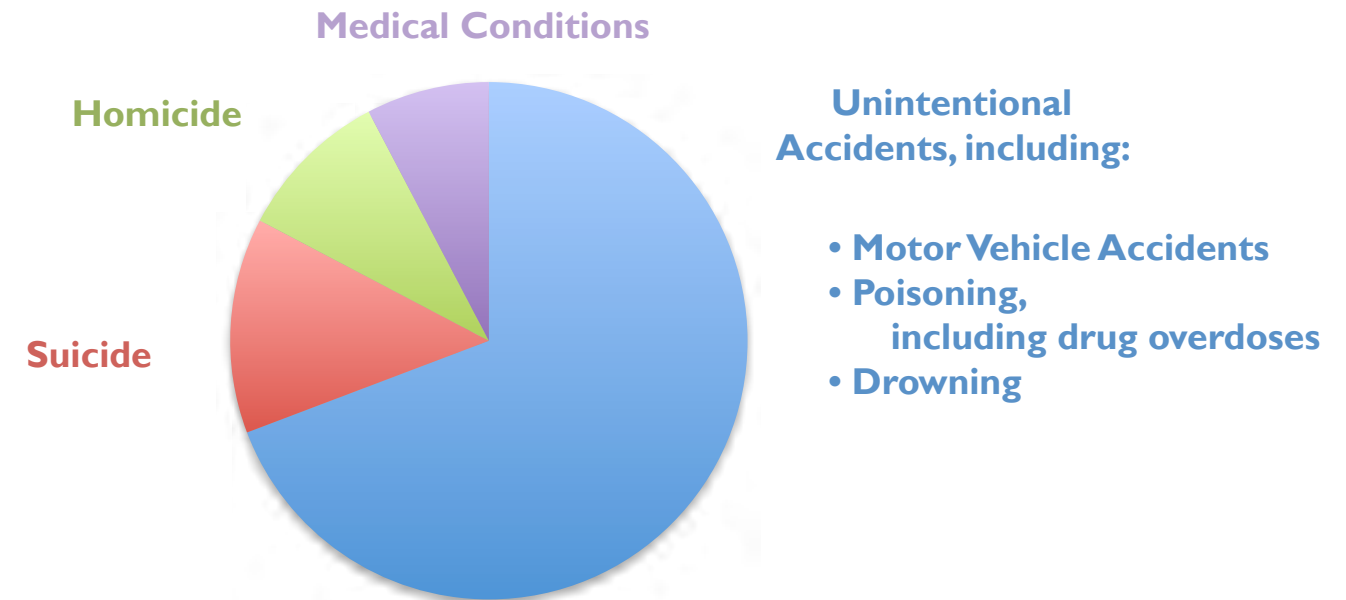


Just as it's never too early to help children overcome struggles so they can become successful students and citizens, it's also never too early to work with parents who may not have the strongest parenting skills. Teens need boundaries and discipline, and some parents struggle to maintain authority without violence. Any parent who raised a teenager knows it's a difficult time for both the child and the parent. That's why the Council funds parenting skill development programs run by CASTLE and Helping People Succeed so we can have empowered, strong families and happy, healthy children and teens.

The Impact:

Happy, healthy teens

Leading Causes of Death, Martin County residents, Age 15-19, from 2002-2011

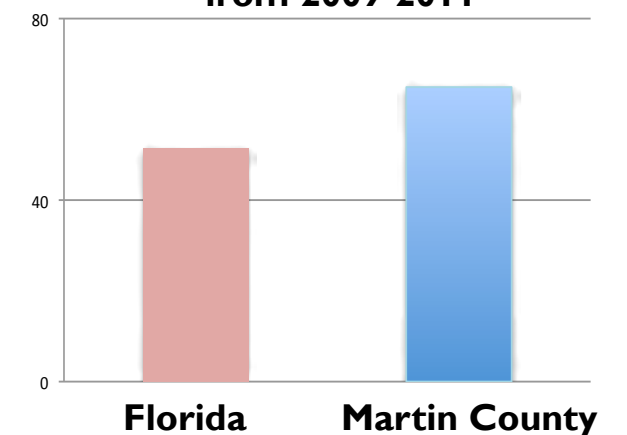


How to help:

Do you have information about gang activity in Martin County? Please contact the Gang Unit at the Martin County Sheriff's Office at: gangunit@sheriff.martin.fl.us

Do you know a teen that needs to talk about a problem? They can also call 2-1-1. Someone is available 24-hours a day to help anyone get through a crisis.

3-Year Rolling Rate of Death, Ages 15-19, from 2009-2011



Did you know? Martin County Sheriff's Office identified 45 named gangs active in Martin County and 550 gang members in the county jail.

Success Story

At age 15, Isaac* was hanging out on the streets of Booker Park in Indiantown, selling and using drugs, scrounging for food while living with just his father, who was all-but absent from his life. He was a terror to his teachers at South Fork High School, acting out in class constantly and even hitting a teacher. He was angry, failing school and didn't have much of a future. That's when the school referred him to Project LIFT. When he first started in the program, he got suspended from school and threatened to quit, but the guidance of Bob Zaccheo, the director of Project LIFT, helped him see for the first time that Isaac had a support system. He stopped using and selling drugs. He began learning skills like automobile repair. His anger started to subside with the mental health therapy that takes place during the after-school session. After the family-style dinners, Isaac would take all the leftovers so that he could have something to eat later.

Two and a half years later, Isaac is a senior in high school, has made up remedial credits and is on track to graduate. He's also stopped getting in trouble—he's off the radar of resource officers in school and deputies on the street. Recently, he was in a photoshoot for Project LIFT after the participants fixed a car and donated to a family in need through SafeSpace. He turned to the director and said, "Mr. Bob, I'm used to stealing cars. I'm not used to giving them away." With a new dose of self-esteem, Isaac now serves as a group leader for other teens in the program. He's also recently taken on a new initiative to fix bicycles and donate them to needy children in the community. Once he graduates, he hopes to own his own business, perhaps in auto or bike repair. *Name changed to protect privacy

Events & Meetings

Sept. 8: ARC of Martin County QR Code Scavenger Hunt for families; starts at Council office, 8:30 a.m.

Sept. 10 : First Public Hearing, 5:01 p.m. at Council office

Sept. 24: Final Public Hearing, 5:01 p.m. at Council office

Oct. 6: Lights On Afterschool at the Treasure Coast Square mall, 10 a.m.

Want to schedule a free Lunch and Learn for your club or homeowners' association? Contact Suzanne Wentley at swentley@cscmc.org!

Council News

In September, the Children's Services Council of Martin County holds its public hearings, which are designed to provide a dedicated opportunity for our community to comment on the budget process, the proposed millage rate and the overall success of our work. We encourage all Martin County residents to attend these hearings, which are located at our office, 101 S.E. Central Parkway in Stuart.

The first public hearing, scheduled on **Sept. 10 at 5:01 p.m.**, has an agenda with no official Council business other than reading the proposed budget and listening to the public. The second public hearing, on **Sept. 24 at 5:01 p.m.**, is combined with a regular Council meeting and includes a final opportunity for the public to comment prior to the adoption of the budget.

For the 2012-2013 fiscal year, Council staff is not proposing any changes to the millage rate.

However, this public hearing process is also a time to discuss unmet needs and challenges facing families and the agencies that serve them, as well as to hear what's working and what isn't. See you there!

Contact Us

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