

2006 Dryden Youth Needs and Trends

The Dryden Youth Commission serves as an advisory group to the Town of Dryden, Village of Dryden and Village of Freeville. The Commission is responsible for assessing the needs and priorities of Dryden youth and developing programs to meet these needs. The Commission allocates state, county and local funds to support these programs. During early 2006, the Commission invited presentations by local youth workers, educators and experts to learn what issues and trends are affecting Dryden youth. The following needs that were identified will be used during the next 3 years to set Commission priorities and guide funding decisions.

Dryden, once a sleepy farming community, is a thriving, growing town with a great variety in its student body. The rural youth today face the many developmental changes of typical modern teens everywhere. **The issues and trends that currently challenge Dryden youth are:**

- Lack of healthy activities for youth outside of their homes (need alternatives for the variety of family situations, after-school, parents/ guardians out of home)
- Lack of safe, accessible places for youth and families to participate in a variety of low- to no-cost programs (youth/community centers needed in villages, mobile home parks, outlying rural areas)
- Lack of social skills (impulse control, conflict & problem resolution skills)
- Ongoing bullying, harassment (inappropriate social skills, peer conflicts)
- Lack of transportation to / from offered programs
- Lack of mentors and people who will listen to young people
- Insufficient opportunities for teen employment and learning job skills
- Increase in anxiety (peer, family, academic stresses)
- Issues navigating relationships
- Increase in kids seeking counseling for grief and loss (family/ peer illness & death)
- Increase of sexual activity at younger ages (earlier development, need for counseling/ education)
- Inappropriate use of technology (internet, cyber bullying, cell phone/photo use)
- Beginnings of gang activity (recruitment and crimes coming in from outside of our area)
- Inappropriate use of prescription drugs
- Ongoing assaults, drugs, weapons, graffiti
- Rise in handicaps and special needs (ADHD, ADD, anger management)

What solutions are being offered? Dryden can continue to provide more opportunities for youth to succeed in a variety of ways. Schools are safe havens for most youth. Parents, teachers, counselors, friends, youth workers and law enforcement address as many of these needs as possible. Youth are encouraged to talk to their families about their problems and concerns. Open communication between youth, youth workers, parents and teachers can help to provide a support network for youth. Schools are expanding in-school programs for character education to counter bullying and to teach conflict resolution. Dryden has a resource officer present in the schools. Parents can stay aware of their youth's activities (real time as well as cyber-time) and parents can help to foster safe activities in the community. Expanded programming can continue to be offered during after-school hours with transportation provided.

These findings are based on 2006 presentations to the Dryden Youth Commission by:

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