

## IMPACT STATEMENT

# Reality Check for DeKalb's Foster Care Youth

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### Issue /Situation:

- About 1,287 teens are served through the Georgia Department of Human Resources Independent Living Program; a transitional living program that prepares teens ages 16-21 to live independently as they approach adulthood.
- Services include financial assistance for college and technical school, help in finding a job and life skills such as housekeeping and budgeting.
- In FFY 2000, 173 teenagers completed some type of high school or post-secondary training or college program.
- In DeKalb County, during 2007-2008, more than 150 teens in foster care custody in DeKalb County will become 17 in the next 12 months.
- The U.S. Secretary of Labor commissioned a report to

examine the demands of the workplace and determine whether young people are capable of meeting these demands. Their product, the SCANS report, lists five Workplace Competencies and three Foundation Skills that are critical to workplace success.

### Research Based Solutions:

- In order to succeed, transitional teens need to be able to lease an apartment, plan and execute a budget, manage a checking and or savings account, know how to grocery shop, how to clean, how to shop for furniture and how to take care of self.
- Transitional teens need a strong sense of their own power, purpose, worth and promise
- Transitional teens need to develop strong values that guide their choices, skills and competencies that equip them to succeed in life
- The world is a place of continuous change. Workers, once secure in skills, must constantly learn new processes and technologies to stay employed.



### Extension's Response:

- DeKalb County 4-H Program formed a partnership with the DeKalb County Department of Family and Children Services Independent Living Program to assist foster care youth in developing and boosting life skills. The main objective is to enhance teen's chances for success.
- 4-H and Family & Consumer Science agents plan and facilitate two three-day conferences at Rock Eagle 4-H Environmental Education Center as a part of a Transitional Living contract with foster care teens who are trying to qualify for the DHR Transitional Living Program.
- During workshops teens are taught how to lease an apartment,

plan and execute a budget, and manage a checking or savings account. They also learn techniques for grocery shopping, housekeeping, and shopping for furniture.

- Real life skills such as values, teamwork, decision-making and personal responsibility are important components of the program. Reality Check, a two-hour simulation for high schools students was introduced to participants of workshop
- Youth and Extension participated in Career Works, a summer youth employment program sponsored by the Georgia DHR and the First Lady's Children's Cabinet to help teens develop knowledge, skills, attitudes, and aspirations needed for long-term workplace success; and to explore the wide variety of youth development and agriculture related career options available. Additional goals included to partner youth with mentors during employment, and to provide opportunities for adult employees to share expertise with and mentor teens.

## Results:

- During FY 2008 forty-five participants attended each of the two conferences at Rock Eagle 4-H Environmental Education Center. Independent Living Coordinator, DeKalb County Family and Children Services select participants.
- Ninety percent (90%) of attendants indicate the experience was very helpful in making decisions about careers, values and budgets.



- Twelve foster care youth were selected as interns to the DeKalb County 4-H office to work as Summer Counselors as a pilot program. One graduate student served as mentor and provided day-to-day guidance to youth in the program.
- Youth received more than 40-hours in structured training in customer service, office etiquette, dressing for success and job expectations of a teen leader. They were trained to help with educational and recreational programs by teaching specified activities.
- 4-H in the City Summer Youth Program was designed and implemented so that

teens would be able to have hands on learning experiences as related to working with youth.

- The Summer in the City Youth Program consisted of daily 2-hour presentations at 10 local park and recreation programs. Youth delivered more than 600 hours of educational programming to more than 350 youth ages 10-14 in parks system summer camp programs.
- DeKalb County Parks and Recreation training partnership for FY 2009 to train teen leaders who are responsible for program delivery at local centers.
- In a statewide survey of youth participating in the program, 85% indicated that job placement was a good experience.
- Youth earned collectively and poured \$ 17,280 into DeKalb County economy. Fifty 50% of youth participated in IDA Savings program.

