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ARP Expands Free Family Classes

ARP Addiction Recovery & Prevention has expanded its Strengthening Families Program, a free 14-week series for families with children ages 6 - 14, to include youth through age 16. SFP will now offer separate groups for families with children 6 - 11 and 12 - 16. This format allows both children and parents to explore the age-specific issues that arise.

Strengthening Families Program (SFP) is a nationally and internationally-recognized parenting and family-bonding skills program proven to reduce problem behaviors, delinquency and alcohol and drug use in children, and to improve social skills and school performance.

SFP has served Buncombe County since 2000, and is located at the offices of ARP at 356 Biltmore Avenue, adjacent to Mission St. Joseph Hospital.

SFP groups meet once a week for 14 weeks from 5:30 PM through 8:00 PM. Each evening begins with a family dinner. Following the meal, youth and parent groups led by certified facilitators meet separately for one hour. Families regroup for the final hour of the program to practice what they have learned.

“One of the outstanding features for youth in these classes,” said SFP Coordinator Linda Kirkman, “is that we teach peer refusal skills. That means how to get out of a sticky situation gracefully without doing something you do not want to do, such as taking drugs. Our families gain empathy for one another, learn to communicate better and most of all enjoy good old fashioned family fun.”

Families eligible for free classes are those with high risk factors including: family substance abuse or mental health issues; youth school truancy or academic problems; youth behavioral issues; or family discipline, communication or income-related issues. The program includes a weekly family meal, child care for younger siblings and help with transportation within Buncombe County, as needed. SFP is partially underwritten by the North Carolina Division of Mental Health, Substance Abuse and Developmental Disabilities, the North Carolina Department of Public Health and community donations.

All families can enroll in the SFP, regardless of whether they qualify for free classes. The SFP is offered on a sliding scale and no one will be turned away.