



UCS Mobilizes Resources to Help People

A city-county partnership to collectively allocate a portion of the liquor-by-the-drink tax to programs and services supporting residents in Johnson County has been in place since 1981. United Community Services of Johnson County (UCS) has facilitated this collaborative process through the Drug and Alcoholism Council of Johnson County, providing the grant review and recommendations for distribution of funds in accordance with Kansas law. By working together, these dollars can be effectively allocated and monitored to ensure maximum impact on programs and services vital to the community. Reconnecting Youth is an example of the type of programming supported by the Alcohol Tax Funds.

The Need: Connecting dollars to programs that can change lives

In 8th grade, Lauren was suspended after making threats toward other girls. As she started high school, she was not invested in her education, was experimenting with drugs and alcohol, failing classes and skipping school. She wore heavy make-up, dark clothes and never smiled.

Lauren was invited to join the Reconnecting Youth class her sophomore year at a local Johnson County high school. This evidence-based program for students at risk of drop-out due to substance abuse and/or other personal and familial difficulties is recognized as a model program by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. Reconnecting Youth addressed the issues Lauren was experiencing and taught her skills related to healthy living, educational success and interpersonal relationships.

The Result

By the end of that spring semester, Lauren was attending school and qualified for the honor roll. Her appearance changed as she gained confidence – the heavy make-up, dark clothes and angry expression were gone.

Over the next two years, Lauren spoke before community and state leaders about how Reconnecting Youth turned her life around. She specifically mentioned the relationships she built with the staff, and developing the skills and the opportunities to help others.

"Reconnecting Youth changed my life. If it wasn't for this program, I would have not made it through high school"

Lauren

Lauren visited the high school social worker during her freshman year of college to say "thank you" for the help and redirection she received during high school. She had finished first semester with excellent grades and was very proud that she no longer had any association with those friends from high school who continued to make poor choices. Lauren is hoping to go into neurosciences and has been going to school and working with a drug-testing company in their laboratory.