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What makes Sarasota County a great place for youth?

Community leaders believe the answers can bring recognition to Sarasota County

A group of community leaders believes Sarasota County is a great place for youth, and hopes to make that recognition official through the 100 Best Communities for Youth award given by America's Promise. The award recognizes communities that use collaboration and innovation to improve conditions for youth. An application is under development to recognize the unique partnerships and programs that have supported thousands of youth in Sarasota County.

"We want to make sure we haven't missed any great stories or ideas that would support our application," said County Commissioner Shannon Staub, who is serving on the application development team. "There is so much good happening out there."

The public is encouraged to participate in the application, which is due June 1. Visitors to www.sarasotacountycares4youth.org can give feedback to the question, "What makes Sarasota County a great place for youth?" This site will be maintained after the application is submitted to share information on youth and serve as a gathering place for those interested in learning more.

"It is exciting to see what people in our community think," said Kari Ellingstad, executive director of Community Health Improvement Partnership (CHIP). "The website allows you to learn how the community supports young people, and we hope it will spark new dialogue on issues."

Many community organizations are participating in this process, including Sarasota County Government, Sarasota County Health Department, Sarasota County Schools, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, Boys & Girls Clubs, CHIP, Community Youth Development (CYD), Early Learning Coalition, Girls Incorporated, Girl Scouts of Gulf Coast Florida, Gulfcoast South Area Health Education Center (AHEC), Jewish Family & Children's Service of Sarasota-Manatee, Laurel Civic Association, Planned Parenthood, Sarasota Family YMCA, Sarasota County Openly Plans for Excellence (SCOPE), South County Family YMCA, Teen Court and the Warehouse.

"We know that Sarasota County is very supportive of young people," said Karen Bogues, Executive Director of Community Youth Development. "We want to understand how the community views the resources available for them."

Organizers hope this information can be used to understand more about the strengths and opportunities for serving youth in the years to come. For more information, please contact the CYD office at 922-5126 or by e-mail at info@cydonline.org.

CYD is funded through grants from the Sarasota Board of County Commissioners, the Community Foundation of Sarasota County and the Gulf Coast Community Foundation of Venice to provide pro-social, drug-free activities for youth. Contact Karen Bogues at 922-5126 for more information.