

success stories

TAOS COUNTY AND THE MORENO VALLEY

Taos Truancy Prevention Task Force

Show up for success

FEATURED SUCCESS STORIES

The goal of the Taos Truancy Prevention Task Force is to create a climate of educational importance in the community as a whole with a positive impact on both students and parents by early identification, intervention and parental involvement as outlined in the Compulsory School Attendance Law.

Truancy and dropping out of school can be detrimental to a person's lifelong earning power. According to national statistics, a college graduate with only a R.A. score approximately 79 percent more than a high school dropout.

Taos is not really any different than other American cities when it comes to truancy. This national crisis contributes to dropout rates ranging from 30 to 75 percent. Truancy has been identified as a significant precursor for dropouts, and poor attendance may be a symptom of other issues. Truancy has also been correlated with future bad work ethics and behaviors.

Along with others, Woody Allen once said, "Half of life is just showing up." The Truancy Task Force agrees that this is a significant fact in success.

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Many parents don't even know that the Compulsory School Attendance Law exists. Potential consequences of non-compliance include contempt of court charges, fines, and incarceration.

Since its creation in 2004 by Karen House, the original truancy prevention specialist, and Teri Wright, a Rocky Mountain Youth Corp representative, the Taos Truancy Prevention Task Force has enlisted key community members representing Taos County Schools, Taos Pueblo, Justice Probation and Parole, the District Attorney's office,



Third Grade Mrs. Chavez School's highest attendance is 100%.

the juvenile Justice Board, Youth Service Organizations and Child Youth and Families division. They come together to discuss issues surrounding the problems associated with truancy and to work together to initiate solutions.

The task force's accomplishments include a countywide summit hosted in 2005 at which current attendance policies were unified and adopted by district schools. In addition, a Truancy Awareness Month resolution was written and approved, and support staff was hired for tracking and enforcing policies.

"March is Truancy Awareness Month"

The task force would like to encourage all members of our community, even those without children, to support our students and their families. It asks businesses to identify if they are compliant with the child labor laws and to consider how long hours and late shifts impact a student's performance in class and at work.

Rocky Mountain Youth Corp Director Ted Allen feels that the future of the Taos Truancy Prevention Task Force is moving towards proactive planning that will reduce its less truancy and more educational success. Currently,

"We exist only to help students succeed. We want parents and children to understand the importance of regular attendance and staying in school and how much difference it will make in their lives."

Necia Ehrhidge, truancy prevention specialist



Leila Faber and the third grade class with excellent attendance.

the Rocky Mountain Youth Corp leadership group partners with high school students to develop, teach and motivate their peers and communities to find solutions to issues that affect today's youth. Nancy O'Byrne, director of Taos Charter School, believes in making good attendance a habit, starting in the lower grades, by using a preventative model in which students are encouraged to attend school and rewarded for their participation. Specialty nights and busines are presented with pomp and ceremony to classrooms with 10 days or more of perfect attendance.

Without O'Byrne's active involvement and concern for the community, none of this might be possible. The Taos Charter School provides the truancy prevention specialist and support staff with an office, computer, and is fiscally responsible. For grant maintenance and distribution.

Parents' vision on the importance of education play a significant role in determining a child's view. The more parents encourage, support and enforce their

children going to school, the more likely the children are to develop good educational values and habits. The goal is to work together to create successful students and a community that benefits from the success of its members.

Angela Vigil, Rancho Elementary School counselor, has been involved with the task force since 2004. She says, "As a result of combined efforts by the Taos Truancy Prevention Task Force, parents have become more aware of the importance of school attendance and of informing the school when their child is absent." It's a good start.

If you need help motivating your child to attend classes on a regular basis, contact truancy prevention specialist Necia Ehrhidge at the Taos Charter School for advice and assistance.

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If you need help motivating your child to attend classes on a regular basis, contact truancy prevention specialist Necia Ehrhidge at the Taos Charter School for advice and assistance.



Left to right... Dave Stapheldt, Paula Kinkaid, Necia Ehrhidge, David Vergas, members of the Taos County Truancy Prevention Task Force.

at a glance

Necia Ehrhidge, Truancy Specialist
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