



## Helping at-risk children succeed

**Monday town hall meeting discussed ways to support at-risk children**

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At 14 years old, Lakyn Deitrick was a new mother and terrified that she and her child would end up in separate foster homes.

The high school student had no one to care for her baby while she attended high school.

Rather than allow the young mother and her daughter, Karamyah, to become statistics, social workers at Northeastern Senior High School and a school-based case worker intervened and helped Deitrick find childcare and encouraged her to earn a diploma.

Today, Deitrick, 16, is a high school sophomore and on-track to graduate with her class.

She plans to attend college and become a pediatric nurse.

On Monday, Deitrick was at Northeastern Middle School for the third in a series of town hall meetings to discuss the work of YorkCounts and its program "Kids, Truancy and a County at Risk."

"I had no hope at all," Deitrick said. "It was just

so hard."

Now, Deitrick said that she feels confident that she can be successful.

"I'm stable," she said. "I have faith. I feel very sure I can do this."

Stephanie Stambaugh, a York County Children and Youth school-based case worker at Northeastern, said she sat in on Deitrick's first truancy elimination plan that ultimately led to getting the girl back into school in a timely manner.

"They don't often know where to turn," Stambaugh said. "There's been no court case involved. We were able to get to it before it got out of hand."

Deitrick is an example of how external support can save children, said Bob Tabachini, superintendent for Northeastern School District.

"We can't control what their family situation is," he said. "You've got to find the support you can to help the kids succeed."

James Debord, director of YorkCounts, talked of recommendations in which to deal with at-risk youth such as Deitrick.

"We are not here to point fingers," DeBord said. "I am the son of two high school dropouts."

At the meeting, Bob Woods, executive director

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of the United Way of York County, presented a Stay in School Report summary.

"We put together a committee to invest in proven programs, (to) increase the graduation rates in York County," he said of the 18-month study.

Many high school dropouts are housed in the county's prisons, he said and added that it's three times more expensive to incarcerate someone than to educate a high school student for a year.

"These are startling statistics that can no longer be ignored."

**MEETING** On Monday, Northeastern Middle School hosted a third in a series of town hall meetings to discuss the work of YorkCounts and its program "Kids, Truancy and a County at Risk."

Here are a few facts about at-risk children:

--- In the last decade, roughly 6,400 students dropped out of York County high schools.

--- Students that drop out of school are eight times more likely to end up in prison.

--- The cost to incarcerate a York County resident is about \$23,000 a year.

--- The cost to educate a student in a York County school is roughly \$7,800. --- York County spends \$27.3 million annually on juvenile delinquency and dependency placements and \$42 million on juvenile and adult correctional costs.

Source: United Way of York County and YorkCounts.

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