



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

James DeBord: office (717) 650-1500 / cell (717) 475-6785 / [jdebord@yorkcounts.org](mailto:jdebord@yorkcounts.org)

Dan Fink: office (717) 650-1460 / cell (717) 818-4072 / [dfink@yorkcounts.org](mailto:dfink@yorkcounts.org)

## YorkCounts heads to Northeastern for third town hall

York, January 21, 2010 – YorkCounts will visit Northeastern Middle School Feb. 22 for the third in a series of town halls to engage York County residents in a conversation about the work of YorkCounts. These town halls, called “Kids, Truancy and a County at Risk,” will focus on the United Way of York County’s Stay in School Report, and especially Judge John Uhler’s Truancy Task Force work.

YorkCounts is partnering with Northeastern School District to present this third town hall, which will start at 6:30 p.m. in the middle school auditorium. Participants include Bob Woods, executive director of the United Way and a board member of YorkCounts; Judge Uhler, whose truancy work is becoming a model for Pennsylvania counties; and interim York Police Chief Wes Kahley, leader of York County’s gang-prevention efforts and organizer of a countywide youth and family conference in April. There will be periods for questions and dialogue. Service providers will be invited to attend and distribute information related to their work with youth.

The United Way spent more than a year researching local programs and examining best practices from around the country to develop a plan to keep more York County youth in school. The study makes the case that a community would be better served by investing in kids early, instead of putting them in jail as adults.

“We learned that there are huge costs to letting these kids drop out,” Woods said. “Obviously, the kids are hurt because a lot of times they get in trouble and end up in the court system. But the entire community suffers, too – more crime, fewer people with employable skills, fewer people paying taxes, higher government costs for prisons and health care. Hopefully, these town halls will help people understand the scope of the problem.”

The Stay in School initiative developed as an engagement with YorkCounts in an effort to reduce dropout rates and improve high school graduation rates in York County. YorkCounts uses more than three dozen statistical benchmarks to try to measure the quality of life in York County. Graduation rates are one measure of the quality of the county’s public education.

“The United Way did a remarkable job putting together the numbers to show how significant dropout rates pose a real threat to our community,” said YorkCounts Director James DeBord. “And it’s a problem to some degree at every district in the county. We want to use the report and the town halls to show the success these local programs have had on a small scale and help them reach more families to keep even more kids in school.”

Among the most important findings in the Stay in School Report:

- For the past 11 years, an average of four students every day dropped out of a York County school.
- Students who drop out of school are more than eight times as likely to be in jail or prison.
- The cost to incarcerate a York County resident for a year is three times the cost to educate a student in the public-school system for a year.

Judge Uhler said reducing truancy and keeping kids in school is the responsibility of the entire community.

“It is critical for York countians to have a heightened awareness of our substantial truancy and dropout rates within our schools,” Uhler said. “The negative impact of missing school and dropping out extends far beyond our students lack of an education. It damages the fabric of our community and its economic well being. We are all stakeholders in this problem. It is mandatory that sustainable collaborative partnerships be launched within York County to promote the value of an education and to address the truancy and dropout concerns.”

###

### **IF YOU GO**

A YorkCounts Town Hall: “Kids, Truancy and a County at Risk”

When: 6:30 p.m. Monday, Feb. 22

Where: Northeastern Middle School Auditorium, 4855 Board Road, Mount Wolf

What: A conversation about the recent work of YorkCounts and the United Way’s Stay in School Report

Cost: Free, but registration is requested

To register: Send an e-mail with name and phone number to [events@yorkcounts.org](mailto:events@yorkcounts.org).

For details: Contact Dan Fink at 650-1460 or [dfink@yorkcounts.org](mailto:dfink@yorkcounts.org).

###

YorkCounts is a community-based coalition working to assess, sustain and enhance York County's quality of life – building alliances, introducing partners, spotlighting issues and facilitating conversations on education, economic development, health and safety and diversity. Partners include Better York, the United Way of York County, WellSpan Health, York College of Pennsylvania, the York County Chamber of Commerce, the York County Commissioners, the York County Community Foundation and the York County Economic Development Corp. Learn more at [yorkcounts.org](http://yorkcounts.org).

YorkCounts · 105 Leader Heights Road, Suite 2 · York, PA 17403 · phone 717/650-1460