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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Healthy Communities Partnership and Evangelical Lutheran Church Partner to Reduce Substance Abuse

Waynesboro, PA – November 26, 2018 - The Strengthening Families Program: For Parents and Youth 10-14 (SFP 10-14) recently completed a third cohort in the Waynesboro community on November 20th. The program is hosted at Evangelical Lutheran Church, 43 S. Church St., Waynesboro, PA 17268 and is offered every spring and fall.

Participants of the program arrive to a freshly prepared meal each week that allows them to be fully engaged in the time spent with their families. After dinner, parents and youth meet separately. Parents and/or guardians participate in an hour long discussion about setting limits, showing affection, encouraging positive behavior, implementing consequences, etc. Meanwhile, youth are participating in games, activities, role plays, and discussion of parallel topics including setting goals, appreciating their parents, managing stress, following rules, and resisting peer pressure. For the second hour, families come back together to practice the skills they learned by participating in family games, activities, and projects.

The program meets weekly for seven weeks. There is no cost to associated with the program and families who successfully complete the program also receive a special family themed gift as a thank-you for their time. “Nowadays families are busy running here, there, and everywhere,” said Jennifer Brown, Program Coordinator. “We acknowledge that seven weeks is a large time commitment and therefore, we want to thank the families for dedicating their time to participating in this program. Providing a thank-you gift to encourage and remind families to spend time together is the least we can do.” In attempts to eliminate all barriers for participation, families with children younger than age 10 are also offered on-site childcare.

The program does not target a specific type of family. Instead, the program is universal, meaning that families of all race, ethnicities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and family structures are welcome. The discussion based curriculum is designed to allow families to learn from each other rather than being educated by the on-site facilitator. “I love being a part of this program and working with the families. It is so exciting and rewarding to watch the families’ progress and learn skills to better communicate and build relationships,” stated Erin Grant, facilitator for SFP 10-14.

Strengthening Families Program: For Parents and Youth 10-14 (SFP 10-14) is an evidence-based program that strives to increase protective factors such as peer refusal skills, effective parent-child communication, age appropriate expectations and discipline, goal setting, strong family values, etc. Research shows that immediately following the program, parents are more likely to set and communicate expectations and consequences about substance abuse, manage their anger and/or emotions during parent-child interactions, and involve their child in family activities and decisions, which improves family bonds. Youth who have completed the program also have been shown to have lower rates of substance abuse, improved academic success, and less violent/aggressive behavior. Unlike most prevention programs, SFP 10-14 does not show a decline in achieved outcomes over time. Research suggests that SFP 10-14 outcomes are not only short-term, occurring immediately after the program, but also long-term and are present several years after completion of the program.

“We have found that this program is transformational for families that have attended and we are thrilled at the support and involvement from the Evangelical Lutheran Church,” said Karen Johnston, HCP Executive Director. “Research shows that families who have gone through SFP 10-14 have youth who have significantly lower rates of alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana use. This program helps families through what can be very transitional and tumultuous years (pre-teen and teen years) and is offered free to all families.”

Evangelical Lutheran Church, members, and staff, have also played an integral role in providing this program to the Waynesboro area. The church was able to offer funding for the program and will continue to do so through an endowment that was created to support the program. In addition to the funding, members of the church also volunteered their time to provide delicious, home cooked meals for the program. “Spending time together by having dinner as a family is a cornerstone of this program. We have been truly blessed that the members of the church have provided such a great support not only in funding the program, but also by providing family meals.” Stated Brown.

SFP 10-14 will be offered in multiple locations throughout Franklin County in 2019 and will be back at Evangelical Lutheran Church in the Spring. “We are always looking for families who want to be part of the experience and learn skills that can help during difficult teenage times as well as groups that want to help provide meals and/or childcare for the program,” noted Johnston. If you are interested in learning more about SFP 10-14, please contact Jennifer Brown at 717-264-1470, ext. 113.