

Spirit Lake launches new partnership

Tuesday, May 22, 2018

An effort is underway in Spirit Lake to support sixth-grade students and their families with a lifetime of practical skills and in doing so, help prevent common problems.

The "PROSPER Partnerships for Student Success Project" is supported by Spirit Lake Middle School, Iowa State University Extension and Outreach Dickinson County and Iowa State University's Partnerships in Prevention Science Institute. The project offers a multi-pronged approach to help preteens learn life skills while also offering new tools and resources for parents that can benefit the whole family.

"The project is designed to support students with a range of readily available prevention programs, while also providing resources for students who might benefit from additional support." Dr. Richard Spoth, director for the Partnerships for Prevention Science Institute, said. "A range of tailored services are available for parents so they can decide what will be most helpful for their family."

The project includes three key components:

- LifeSkills Training classroom curriculum for sixth-grade students that includes topics like communication skills, dealing with feelings and handling peer pressure.
- Empowering Families to Grow Together online series that provides opportunities for the entire family to learn to explore positive ways to relate to each other during the transition to the teen years.
- A web-based community resource directory that houses information about local and state organizations that can provide assistance.

"The preteen years are a time of tremendous physical and emotional change, as students develop unique identities and experience an increasing need for independence," Spirit Lake Middle School Counselor Jill Dielschneider said. "We want to support parents in their effort to equip their preteens with skills that will enable them to develop their expanding world in healthy ways."

Sue Boettcher is a community team facilitator representing ISU Extension and Outreach Dickinson County.

"In the end, we want to help each student be better prepared for their future in school, the workforce and as community members," she said. "This is an investment in children and families that we hope will pay off with stronger communities in the future."

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