

Youth workshops for Gilpin students

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Funding grants to Gilpin County Extension Office will provide leadership training, substance abuse prevention, and life skills

By Esmee Halsted

The Gilpin County Extension office recently won two grants: The Substance Abuse Block Grant and the Tony Grampsas Youth Services grant. All of the awarded money will be put towards youth workshops for Gilpin students. While many details are still in the works for both workshops, they will work to provide leadership training, substance abuse prevention, and life skills.



The Substance Abuse block grant will create a workshop that teaches students the needed skills to avoid substance abuse. Funded by the State Office of Behavioral Health, the workshop will provide evidence based-programs: “Botvin Lifeskills” classes and “Positive Action” curriculum. According to organizer Jacob Rippy, “Both programs provide instruction for general social, self-management, and drug-resistance skills, along with many other topics.” The programs will be taught in licensed childcare and other means. The programs will be taught as follows: “Positive Action” for ages Kindergarten-2nd, lifestyle classes for grades 3-6, and separate lifestyle classes for grades 6-10. While the workshop is likely to be held in the community center, they are also considering the barn lobby, the public health building, the library, and/or Christ the King Church. Currently they are planning to start right around school’s beginning. However, if virtual learning is extended considerably (i.e. for the remainder of the semester, or longer), we will try to offer some of our programs virtually, and maybe do some small group activities if we can abide by social distancing and other current health and sanitation guidelines,” explains Rippy.

As such, in order to keep participants safe during the pandemic, Rippy said, “In addition to following the school’s operations, we’ll implement several health and sanitation policies and procedures based on what other child cares and youth groups are doing, and guidelines from Gilpin County Public Health, CDPHE, CDHS, the CDC, and American Camp Association (ACA). Guidelines are changing every day, so we’ll finalize the specifics once we’re actually ready to start, but a few examples would be requiring masks for staff and participants, daily symptom checks/ questionnaire, social distancing as much as possible, more frequent handwashing (as soon as they arrive, before and after meals, before and after using shared equipment, etc.), curbside pick-up and drop-off, electronic registration and enrollment, etc.”

The other grant, Tony Grampsas Youth Services grant, works to provide leadership to students. Jennifer Cook explains how the program will work. “We will develop a program for young adults called EAGLE. The Excelling At Great Leadership Everyday (EAGLE) program provides recreational and extracurricular activities for youth in the rural mountain community of Gilpin County. We work in partnership with young people to increase leadership opportunities, provide life skills curricula, and foster connections between peers and natural adult mentors.

We plan to provide services and extracurricular activities appropriate for middle and high school students, with some leadership opportunities for recent graduates, in order to engage youth who currently have few opportunities for intentional prosocial interaction and skills development outside of school hours. We therefore plan to provide after school drop-in programming during the school year and intensive program weeks in the summer, developed in partnership with Gilpin youth to meet needs, interests, and schedules, in order to fill these substantial gaps in current youth services.

We plan to recruit five youth for a leadership team at the beginning of each semester that will inform the development of EAGLE programming during the school year and for the following summer.”

Many of the details of the EAGLE workshop are still up in the air. They are currently working to hire someone to help plan and create the curriculum.

These workshops will provide necessary tools for Gilpin students. By teaching drug abuse prevention and leadership skills, our youth will thrive during this hard time. For more details, contact the Gilpin County Extension Office.



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