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## **Families Flourishing FredMO**

Victoria Kemper  
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Provided by Families Flourishing FredMo

Families Flourishing FredMo is a community partnership between MU Extension and the Fredericktown School District aimed at providing families the opportunity to strengthen family connections and increase positive youth development.

"Families Flourishing FredMo is specifically designed to provide the most benefits to families during the transitional period when youth begin their middle school years," Strengthening Families 10-14 Facilitator Shanna Sorg said. "The program will be available to any family with a sixth grader at Kelly A. Burlison Middle School."

When asked why families would want to participate Sorg said, "I think the better questions would be, why would they not want to participate."

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Sorg said the program provides the opportunity for families to spend time together in a fun and interactive setting while gaining new resources to successfully navigate the teenage years.

"Families Flourishing FredMo is actually the combination of two independent programs, Botvin Life Skills Lessons, which are delivered to all sixth grade students during their enrichment period at school, and Strengthening Families 10-14, a seven, 2-hour session, series," Sorg said. "Each of the seven sessions will consist of three parts; time for a family meal which will be provided, parent/caregiver session with a separate session for youth, and a family session for parents/caregivers and youth to learn and work together."

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Sorg said the sessions are not parenting lessons. They are, however, based on parenting concepts.

"Each session is an opportunity for parents/caregivers to increase their capacity to provide a protective parenting environment for their teenager," Sorg said. "The highly interactive parent/caregiver sessions allow parents to expand the parenting toolbox on topics such as setting limits and house rules, using consequences and encouraging good behavior."

Sorg said the youth sessions will focus on teens learning about setting goals for their own future, following rules, parent appreciation, understanding how to resist peer-pressure and dealing with stress. She said the sessions are designed for ample time to be spent practicing skills through role playing and self-expression.

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"As a parent of two young adults and a 16-year-old son, I found myself thinking several times during the Strengthening Families 10-14 training that I wished this program had been available in our area when my children transitioned into their teenage years," Sorg said. "The practical application of the ideas and concepts could have benefited our family."

Sorg said, while the separate parent/caregiver and youth sessions are excellent in their own areas, it is the time where families work together to expand their problem solving abilities or enhance their communication skills that she finds most exciting about the program.

"What parent of a young teen doesn't want to be able to more effectively address problems and improve communication within their family," Sorg said.

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The sessions are administered by local Strengthening Families 10-14 facilitators. A certification class was held at the Madison County MU Extension office a few weeks ago where ten local team members stepped up to become certified in the PROSPER model.

"PROSPER stands for PROMoting School-community-university Partnerships to Enhance Resilience," Sorg said. "This delivery system links university-based prevention researchers with two established program delivery systems within a state, the Cooperative Extension system at the Land Grant University (MU Extension) and the public school system."

Sorg said Strengthening Families 10-14 and Botvin Life Skills are programs included in the PROSPER delivery model.

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"The PROSPER delivery model is built locally by the partnership but is also very reliant on community partnerships," Sorg said. "At this time our only community partner is the Madison County Opioid Task Force which has provided the connection with SEMO Prevention Resources Center who provided the funding for the Botvin Life Skills curriculum for sixth graders as well as the other two grades at the middle school and three grades at the intermediate school and has also been able to provide \$950 for the Galaxia online game that accompanies the Life Skills lessons."

Sorg said Families Flourishing FredMo has received grant funding for the first round of the seven session Strengthening Families 10-14.

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"We are the pilot community for Missouri," Sorg said. "This was made possible by me reporting the efforts of the Madison County Opioid Task Force to my colleagues on campus. They were trying to select a pilot community and due to the prevention efforts

occurring in Madison County, Fredericktown was selected."

Sorg said during her monthly PROSPER update calls, led by Iowa State University, there are teams working in Vermont, Colorado and a few other states.

"We will be looking for additional community partners to help support this effort in the future and hope to have PROSPER in our community for many years to come," Sorg said.

Parents or caregivers of Fredericktown sixth graders will determine the time and date of the seven sessions of Families Flourishing FredMo in an upcoming poll. Sorg said they want to offer the series at a time which gives the best opportunity for participation and are looking forward to feedback from families.

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"As excited as I am for families in our area to have the opportunity to participate in Families Flourishing FredMo, I believe that this program could be beneficial in any community," Sorg said. "With our lives, both parents and youth, so packed with responsibilities, activities and increased technology use, many families have gradually grown apart over the past few decades. This program provides the time and resources to pull our lives back together a bit, as a family and a united team."

An informational event for all sixth grade families is being planned, with a date yet to be determined. More information can also be obtained by contacting the Madison County MU Extension office at 573-783-3303

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**Victoria Kemper**  
Staff Writer

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