



## Strengthening Families Program, 2013-2014 Albany County Cornell Cooperative Extension Albany County, NY

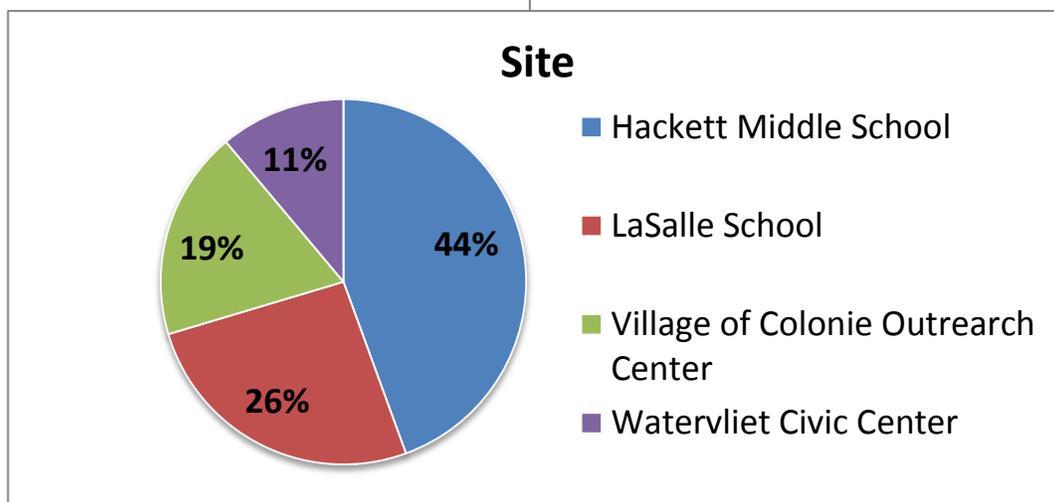
By Eliza Lathrop Cook & Kimberly Kopko

Strengthening Families is a parent, youth and family skills-building curriculum designed to prevent teen substance use and other behavior problems, strengthen parenting skills, and build family strengths. This program was developed by professionals at Iowa State University Extension.

The program is delivered in 7 two-hour sessions<sup>1</sup> where parents and youth meet separately for the first hour and then families practice skills together during the second hour. Sessions are highly interactive and include role-playing, discussions,

learning games, and family projects. Each session contains a variety of activities.

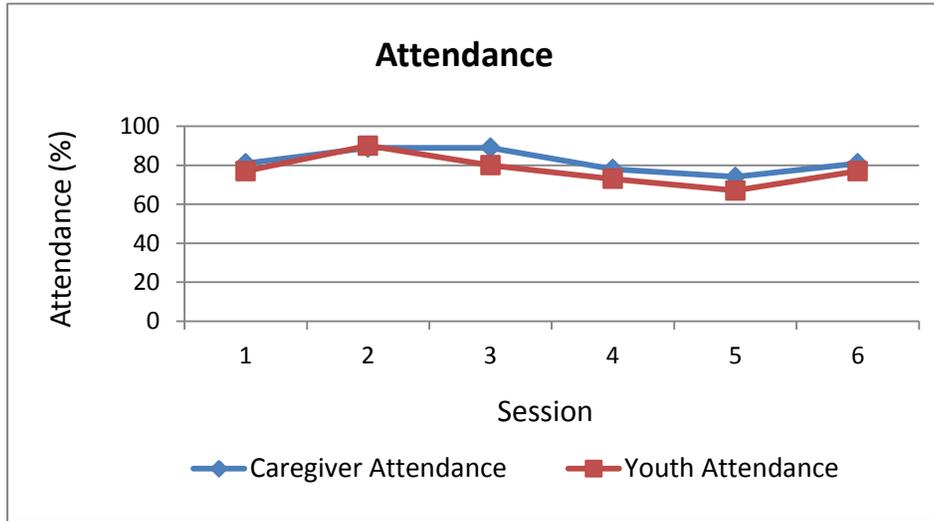
Albany County Cornell Cooperative Extension conducted four series of the Strengthening Families Program at the Village of Colonie Outreach Center, Watervliet Civic Center, LaSalle School, and Hackett Middle School in Albany County, New York. A majority of the participants in the Strengthening Families parent education program were from Hackett Middle School (44%). This report includes results from four series that were conducted between October



<sup>1</sup> Albany combined sessions six and seven into one final session. Thus, the attendance graph does not include caregiver and youth attendance results for Albany in session seven.

2013 and April 2014. Participants in the program consisted of 27 caregivers and 30 youth.

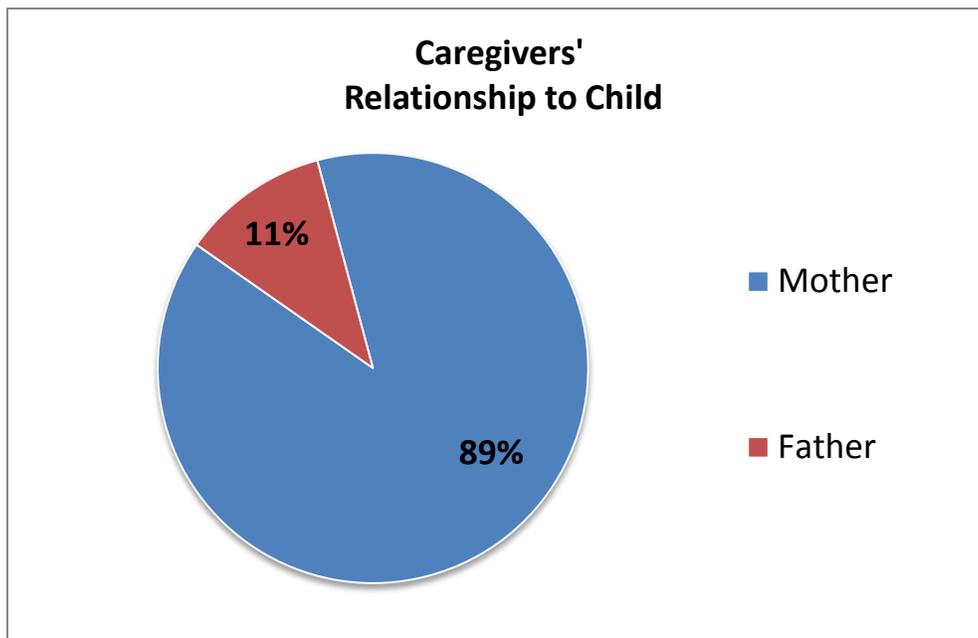
Average attendance for caregivers was 82% while attendance for youth was 77%.



**Caregiver Demographics:**

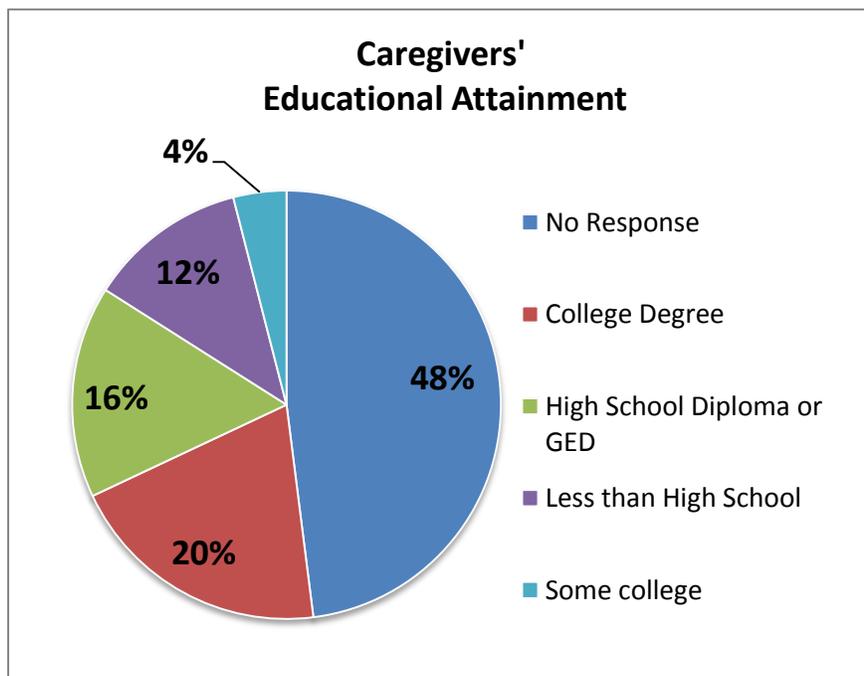
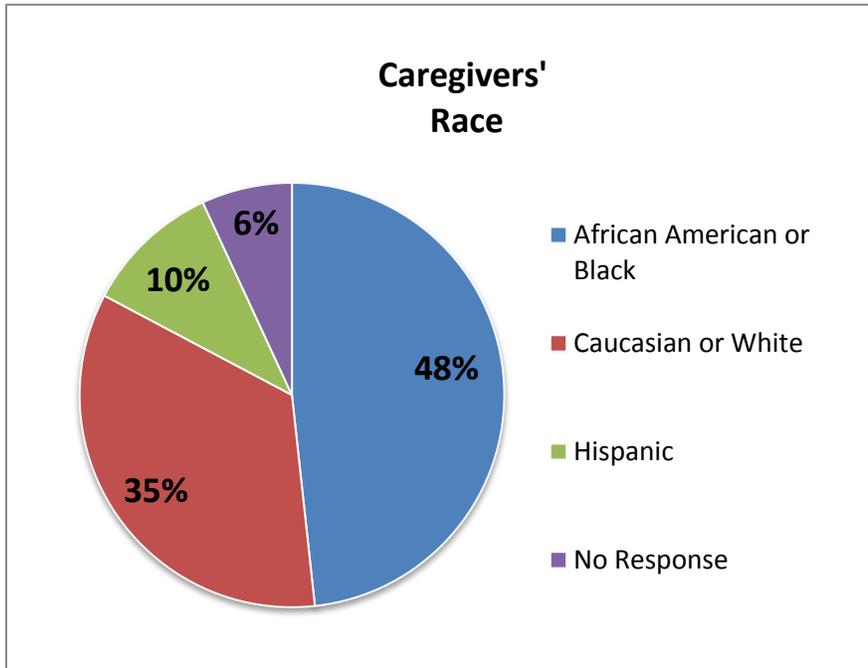
The following summaries use data of the 15 caregivers who participated in

the program. The majority of participants were mothers (89%) and the average age of caregivers was 43 years of age.



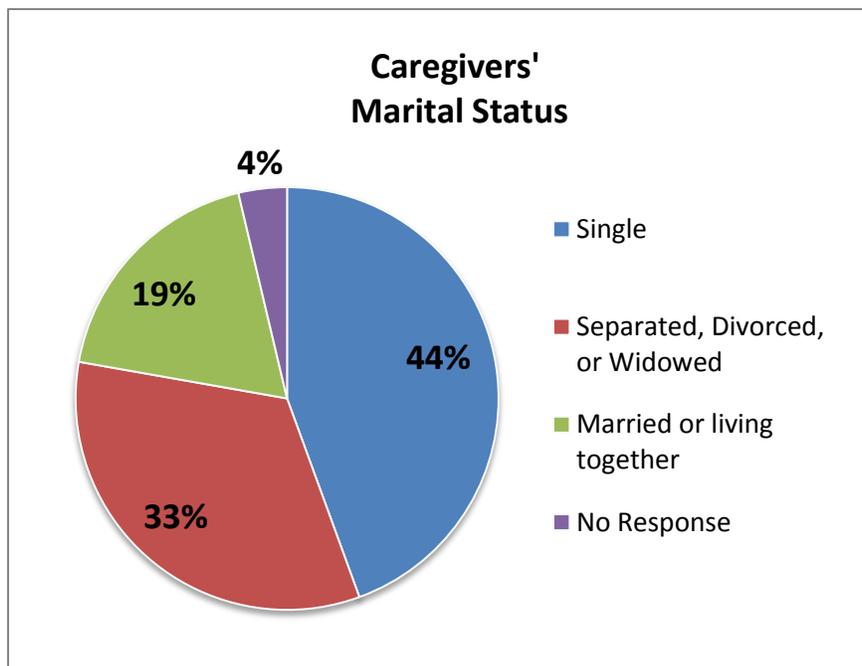
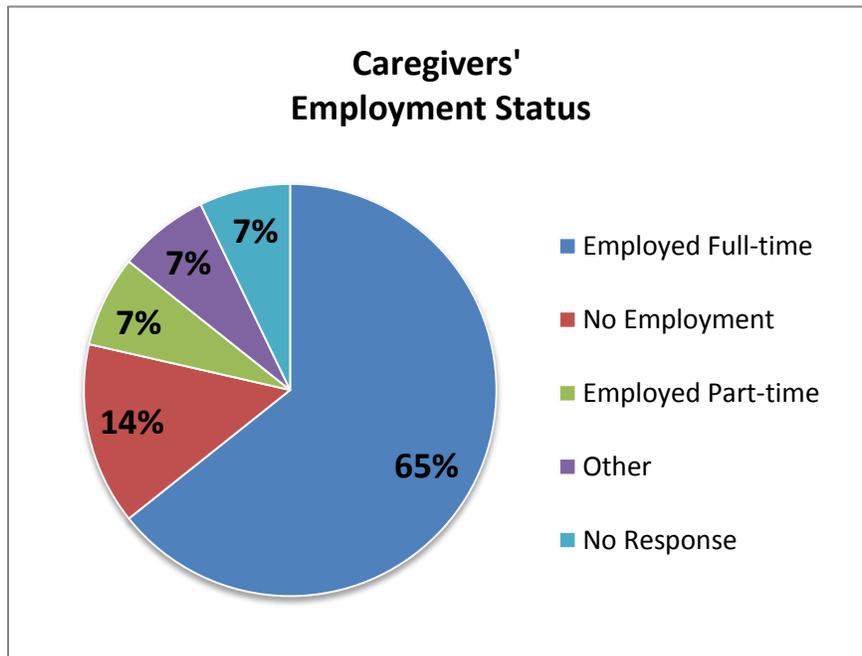
In addition, most of caregivers who participated in the Strengthening Families program were African American or Black (48%) and Caucasian or White (35%). Educational attainment varied, with

the majority of participants withholding a response to this question (48%) followed by those with a college degree (20%). Employment status varied, but a majority of caregivers reported



full-time employment (65%). A majority of the caregivers in the sample (44%) reported being single. Caregivers reported an average number of 1.9 children living at

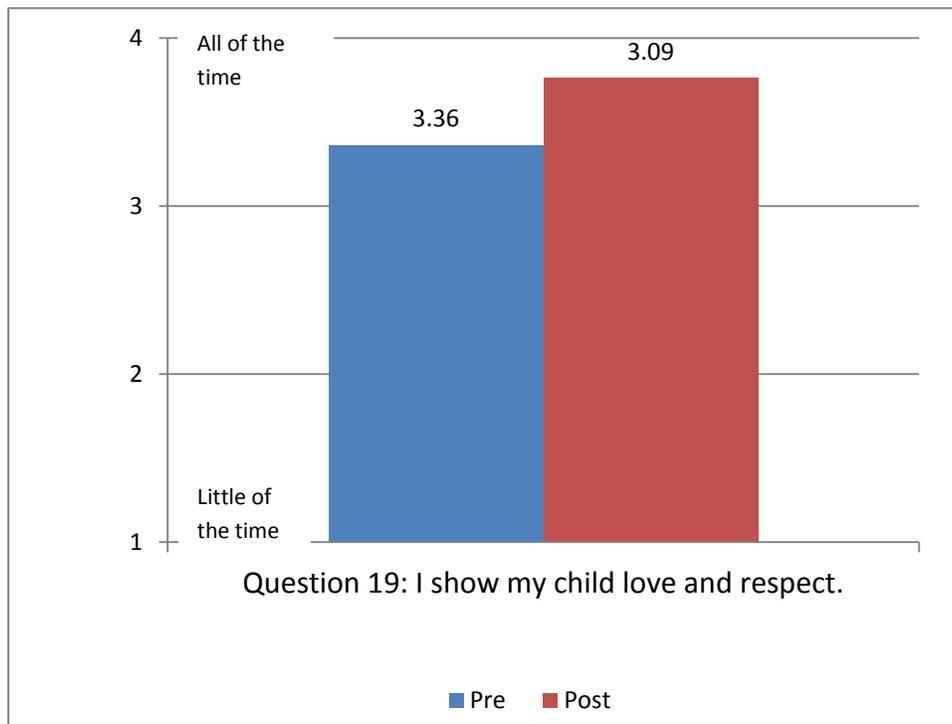
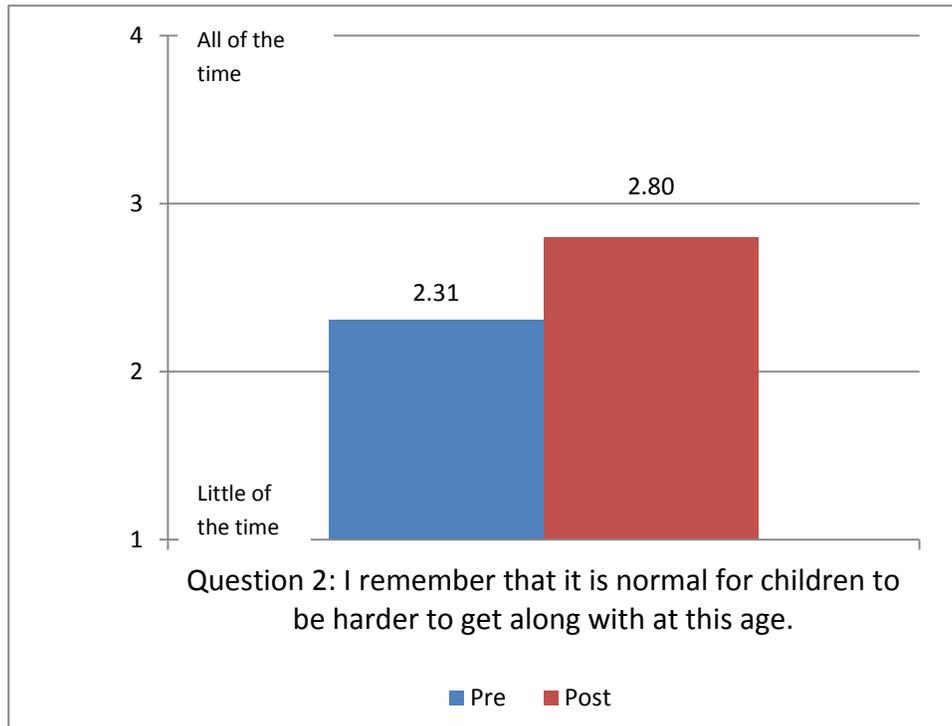
home. The average age of the youngest child was 10 years while the average age of the oldest was 15 years. Children's ages ranged from 3 to 25 years.



**Caregiver Results:**

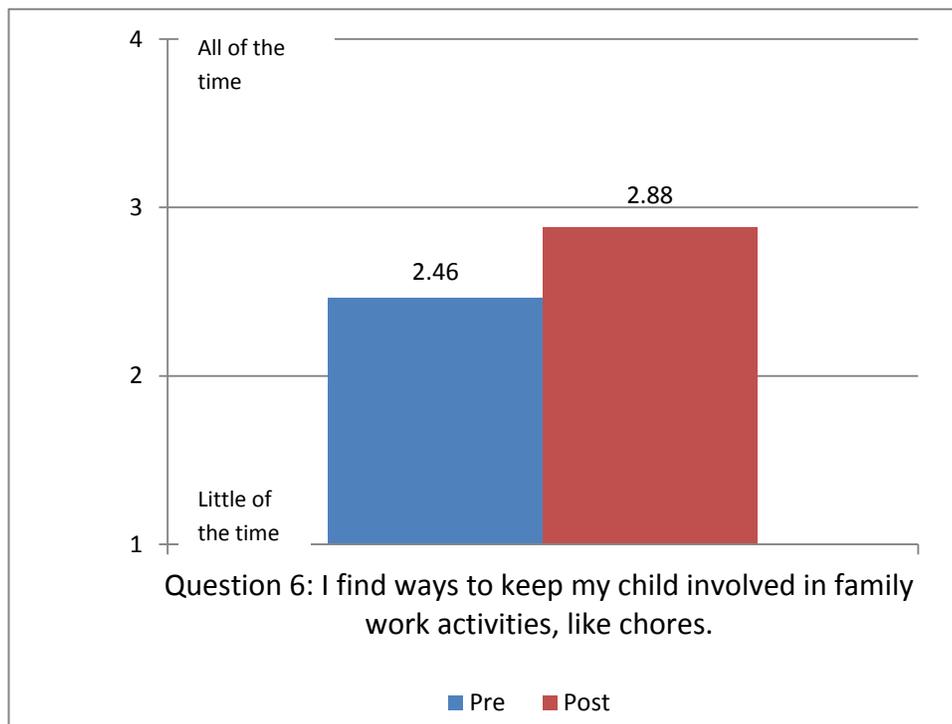
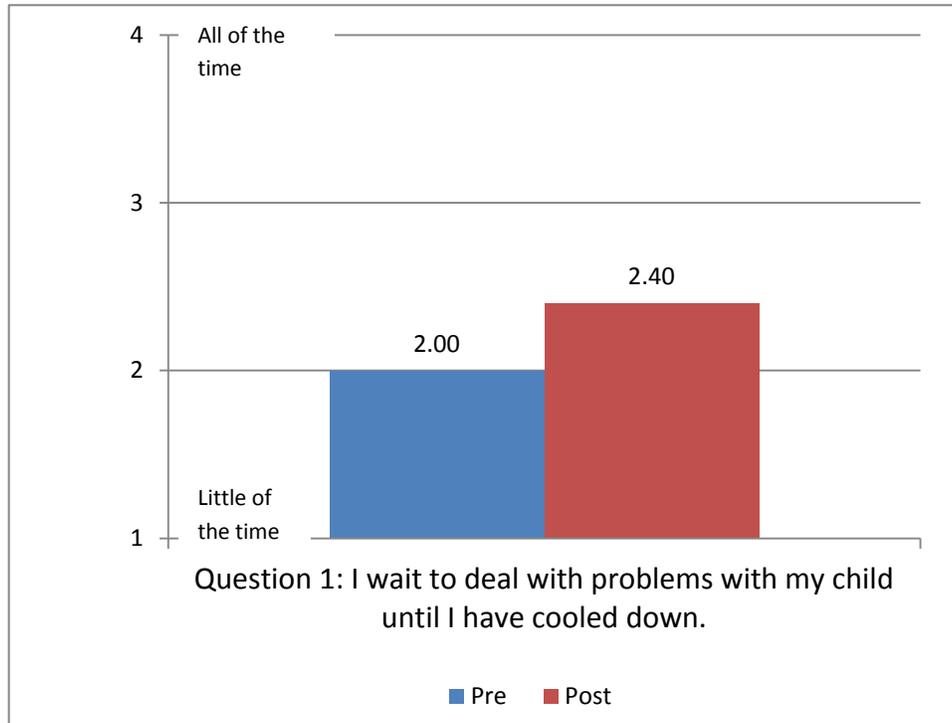
In comparing the pre- and post-test survey results, the following two questions showed a significant

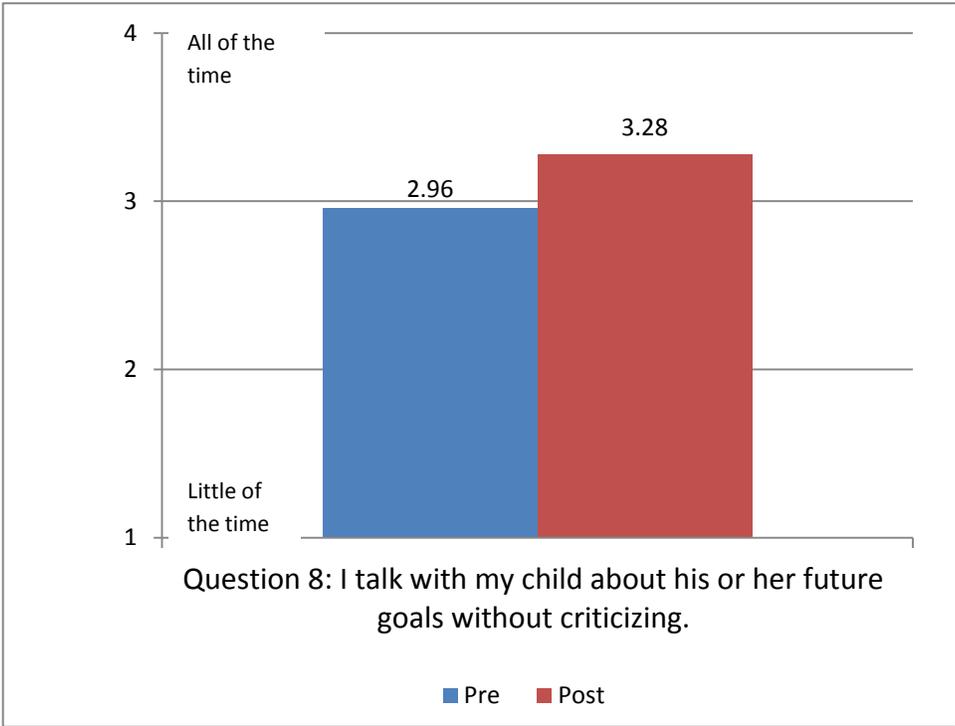
*positive* change at the 1% level, indicating a 99% certainty that the results are not due to chance.



In comparing the pre- and post-test survey results, the following three questions showed significant *positive*

changes at the 5% level, indicating a 95% certainty that the results are not due to chance.





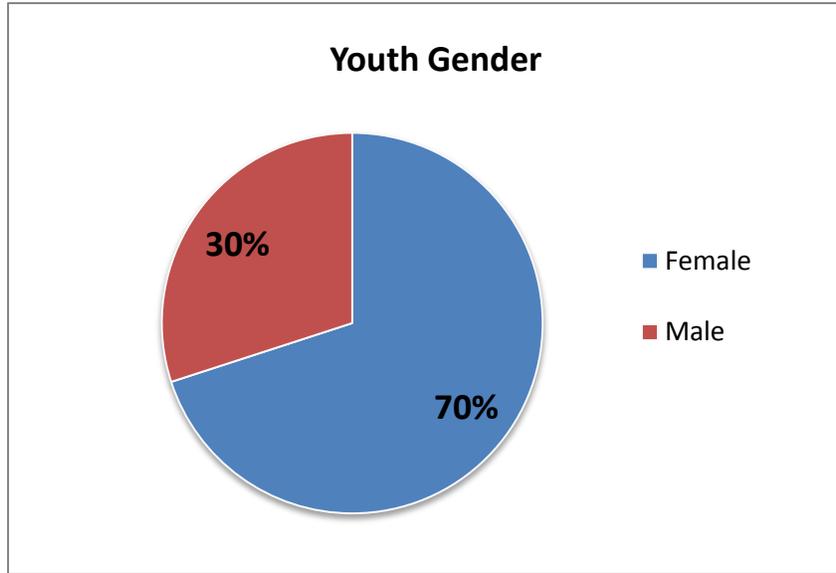
These results are highly encouraging for the Strengthening Families Program in Albany County with 5 out of 20 questions showing

significant positive changes for caregivers. Refer to Appendix for a complete list of Caregiver Questions.

**Youth Demographics:**

Of the 30 youth who participated in

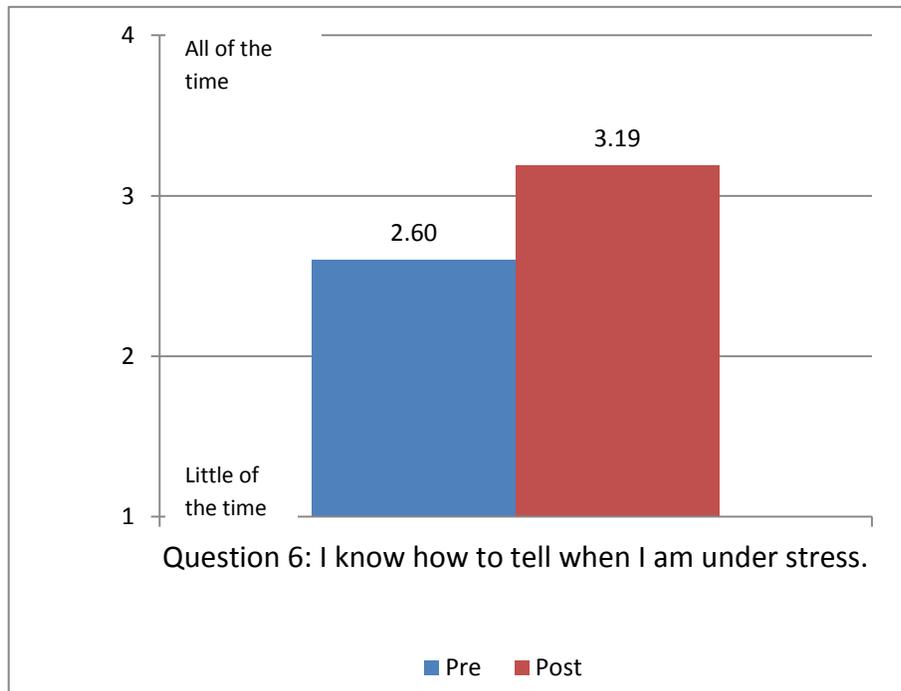
the program, 21 were females (70%) and 9 were males (30%).



**Youth Results:**

In comparing the pre- and post program survey results, the following question showed significant

*positive* changes at the 10% level, indicating that results were highly significant with 90% certainty that the results are not due to chance.



These results are encouraging for the Strengthening Families Program in Albany County with 1 out of 15 questions showing significant positive changes for youth. Refer to Appendix for a complete list of Youth Questions.

**Conclusion:**

Between October 2013 and April 2014, Cooperative Extension of Albany County conducted four series in the Village of Colonie Outresearch Center, Watervliet Civic Center, LaSalle School, and Hackett Middle School in Albany County, New York. Twenty-seven caregivers and 30 youth participated in the program. Both caregivers and youth showed significant positive changes in their results.

Specifically, caregivers reported remembering that it is normal for children to be harder to get along with at their age, showing youth love and respect, waiting to cool down before communicating with youth about problems, finding ways to keep youth involved in family work activities, and talking with youth about future goals without criticizing.

As a result of participating in the Strengthening Families Program, youth reported increased ability to know when they are under stress.

These results from the Strengthening Families Program conducted in cooperation with Albany County Cooperative Extension, indicate positive outcomes for both caregivers and youth.

## Appendix

### **Caregiver Questions:**

1. I wait to deal with problems with my child until I have cooled down.
2. I remember that it is normal for children to be harder to get along with at this age.
3. I help my youth understand what the family and house rules are.
4. I take time to do something fun together as a family.
5. I let my youth know what the consequences are for breaking rules.
6. I find ways to keep my children involved in family work activities, like chores.
7. I follow through with consequences each time he or she breaks a rule.
8. I talk with my child about his or her future goals without criticizing.
9. I often tell my child how I feel when he or she misbehaves.
10. I find ways to include my child in family decisions about fun and work activities.
11. I spend special time one-on-one with my youth.
12. I let my youth know the reason for the rules we have.

13. I listen to my youth when he or she is upset.

14. I set regular times for homework.

15. I work together with my youth to solve problems that come up.

16. I try to see things from my youth's point of view.

17. I talk with my child about ways to resist peer pressure.

18. I give compliments and rewards when my child does chores at home or learns to follow rules.

19. I show my child love and respect.

20. I explain to my child the consequences of not following my rules concerning alcohol use.

### **Youth Questions:**

1. When I have a goal, I make a plan for how to achieve it.

2. I do things to help me feel better when I am under stress.

3. I appreciate the things my parent(s)/caregiver(s) do for me.

4. If a friend suggests that we do something that can get us both into trouble, I am able to get out of doing it.

5. We have family meetings to discuss plans, schedules, and rules.

6. I know how to tell when I am under stress.

7. I listen to my parent(s) or caregiver(s)' point of view.

8. I understand the values and beliefs my family has.

9. I know there are consequences when I don't follow a given rule.

10. My parent(s) or caregiver(s) and I can sit down together to work on a problem without yelling or getting mad.

11. I know the qualities that are important in a true friend.

12. I know what my parents/caregivers think I should do about drugs and alcohol.

13. My parent(s)/caregiver(s) are calm when they discipline me.

14. I feel truly loved and respected by my parent(s)/caregiver(s).

15. I am able to tell when my parent(s)/caregiver(s) are stressed or having a problem.

**Visit the *Parenting in Context* project at:**

<http://www.human.cornell.edu/pam/outreach/parenting/>

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