



## Strengthening Families Program, 2011-2012 Orange County Cornell Cooperative Extension Middletown High School, Middletown, NY

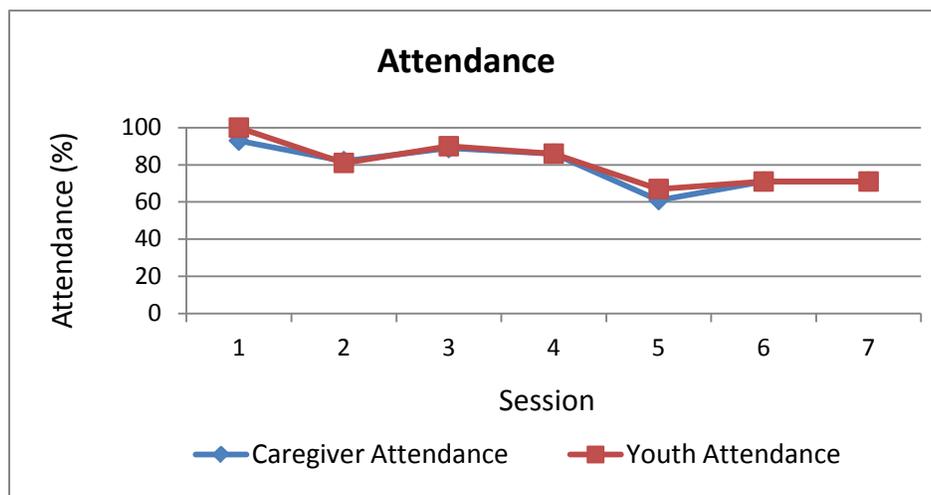
By Eliza Cook, Rachel Dunifon, and Kimberly Kopko

Strengthening Families is a parent, youth and family skills-building curriculum designed to prevent teen substance abuse 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 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.

Orange County Cornell Cooperative Extension conducted two series of the Strengthening Families Program at Middletown High School in Middletown, NY. The program was co-sponsored by Orange County Cornell Cooperative Extension partnered with Alcoholism and Drug Abuse Council and Middletown High School through a 21st Century Grant obtained by the Middletown School District. This report includes results from the two series that were conducted on October 19<sup>th</sup> through

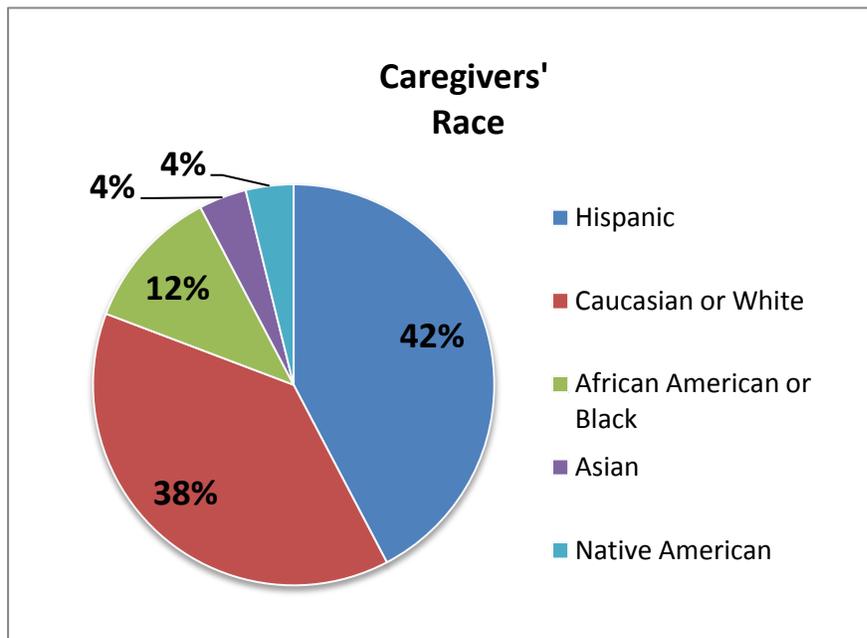
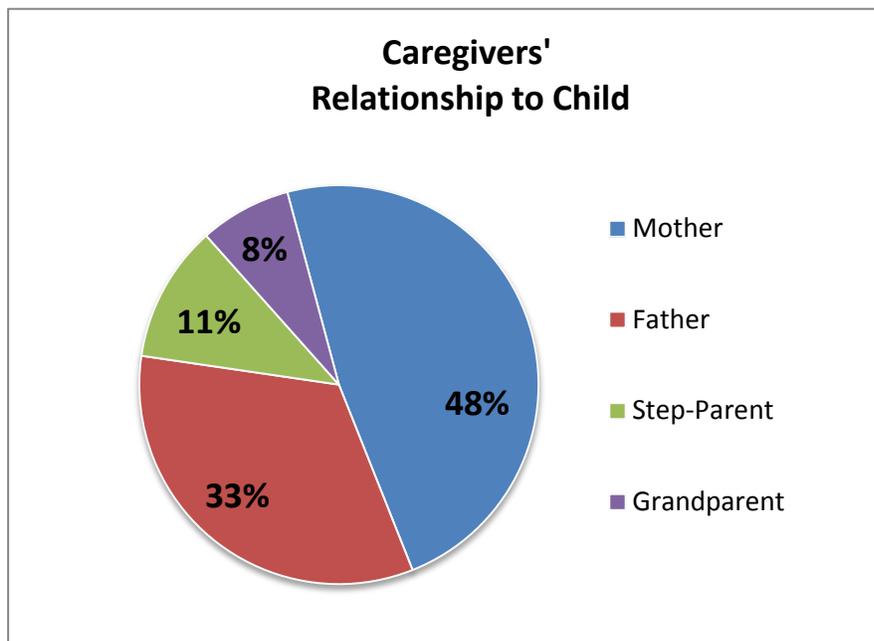


November 21, 2011 and March 7<sup>th</sup> through April 25, 2012. Participants in the program consisted of 28 caregivers and 21 youth. Average attendance for caregivers was 79% while the average attendance for youth was 81%.

**Caregiver Demographics:**

The following summaries use data of

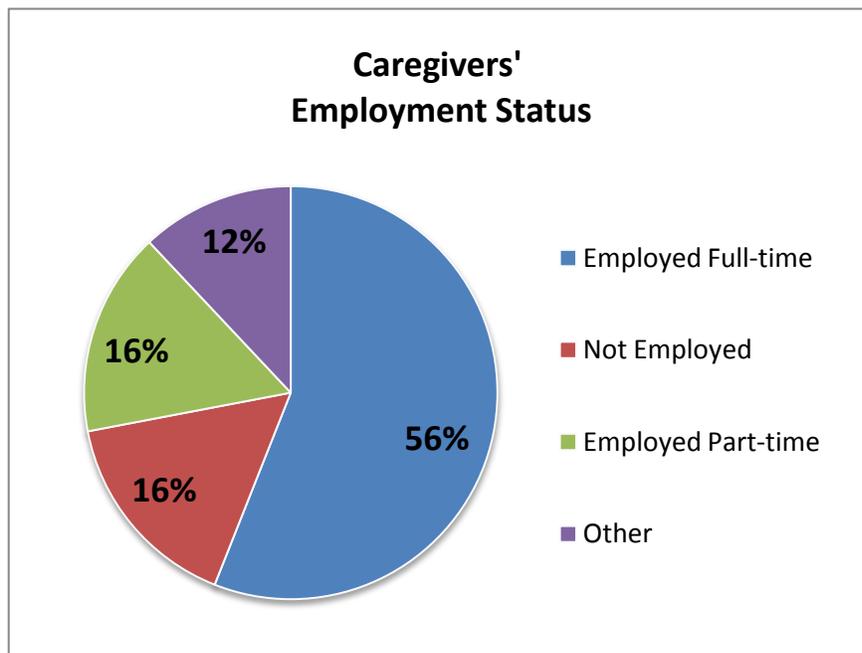
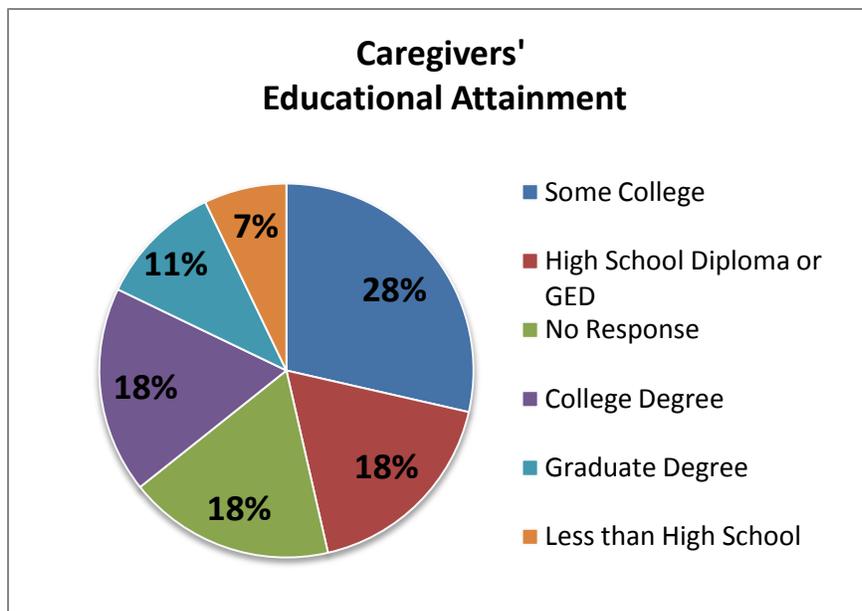
the 28 caregivers who participated in the program. The majority of participants were mothers (48%) and the average age of caregivers was 39 years of age. In addition, most of caregivers who participated in the Middletown Strengthening Families program were Hispanic (42%) and Caucasian or White (38%).

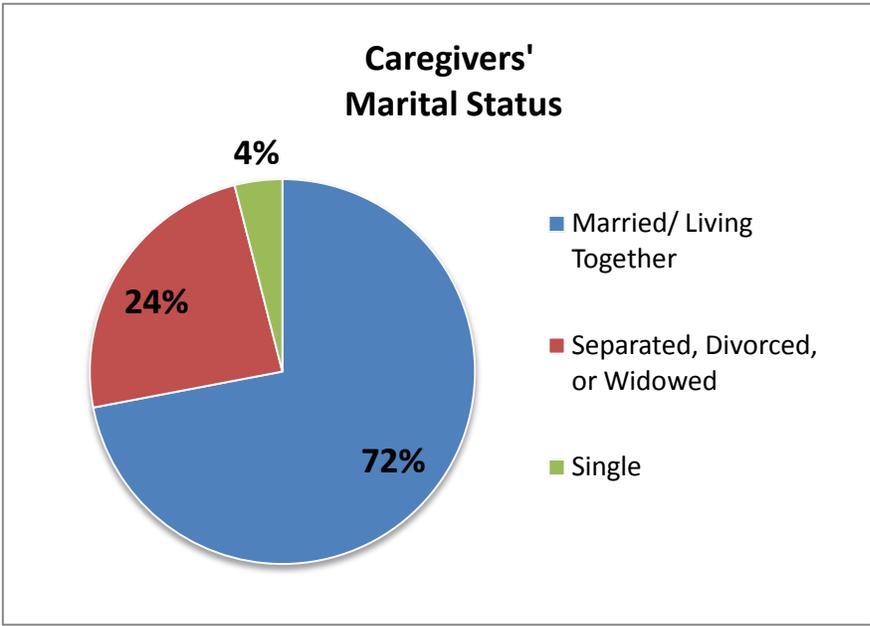


Educational attainment ranged from High School Diploma/GED to obtaining a Graduate Degree with 28% of the sample having some college experience. Employment status varied, but a majority of caregivers reported full time employment (56%). A majority of the caregivers in the sample (72%)

reported being married or living together.

Caregivers reported an average number of 2.7 children living at home. The average age of the youngest child was 8 years while the average age of the oldest was 14 years. Children's ages ranged from 2 to 23 years.

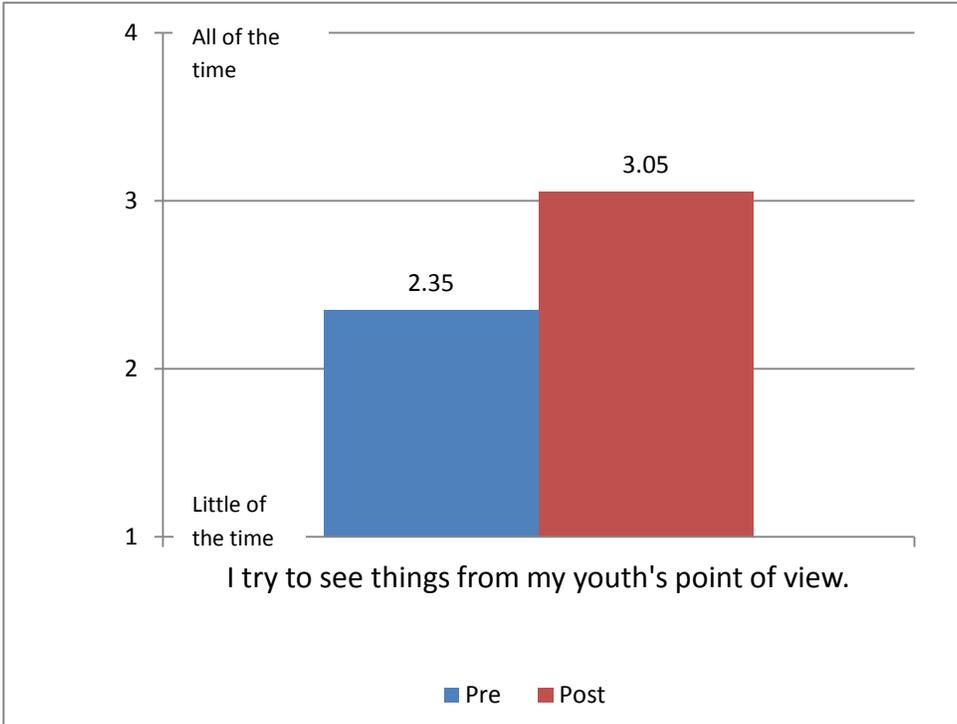




**Caregiver Results:**

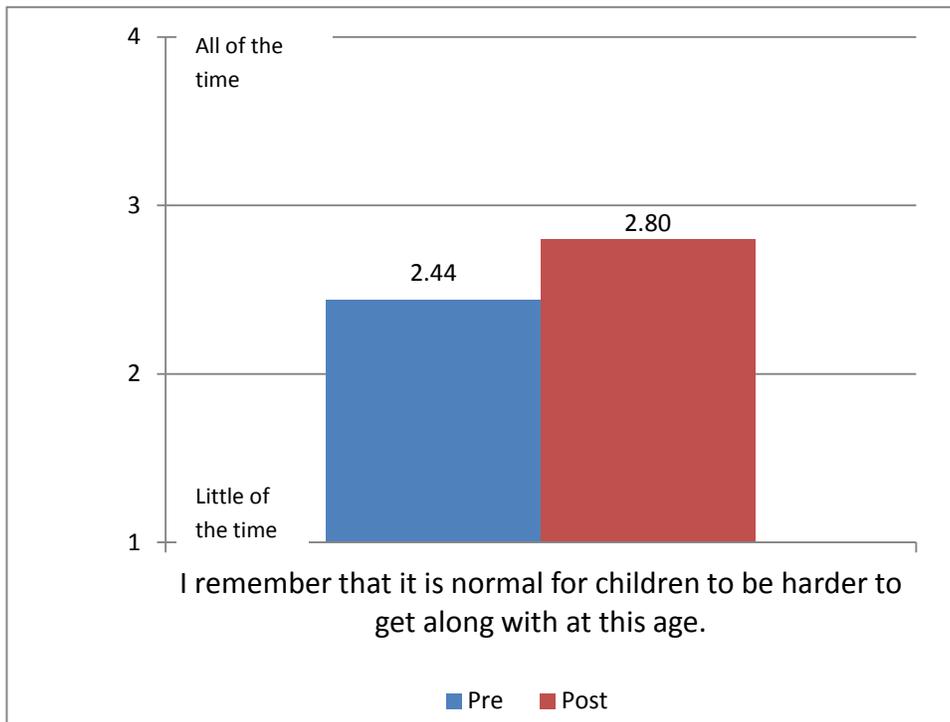
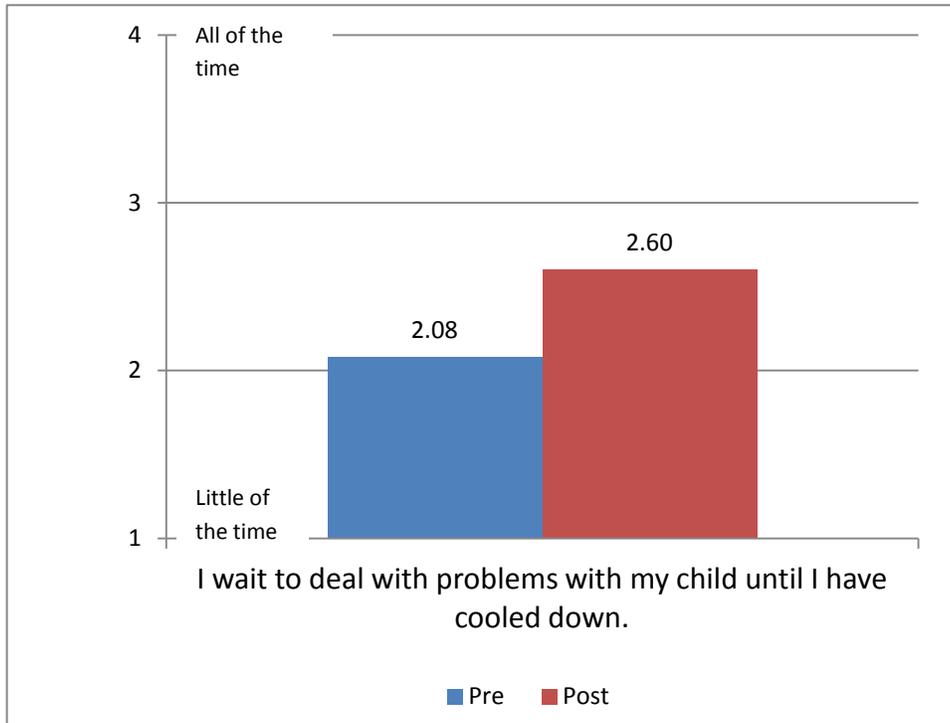
In comparing the pre- and post-test survey results, the following question showed significant *positive*

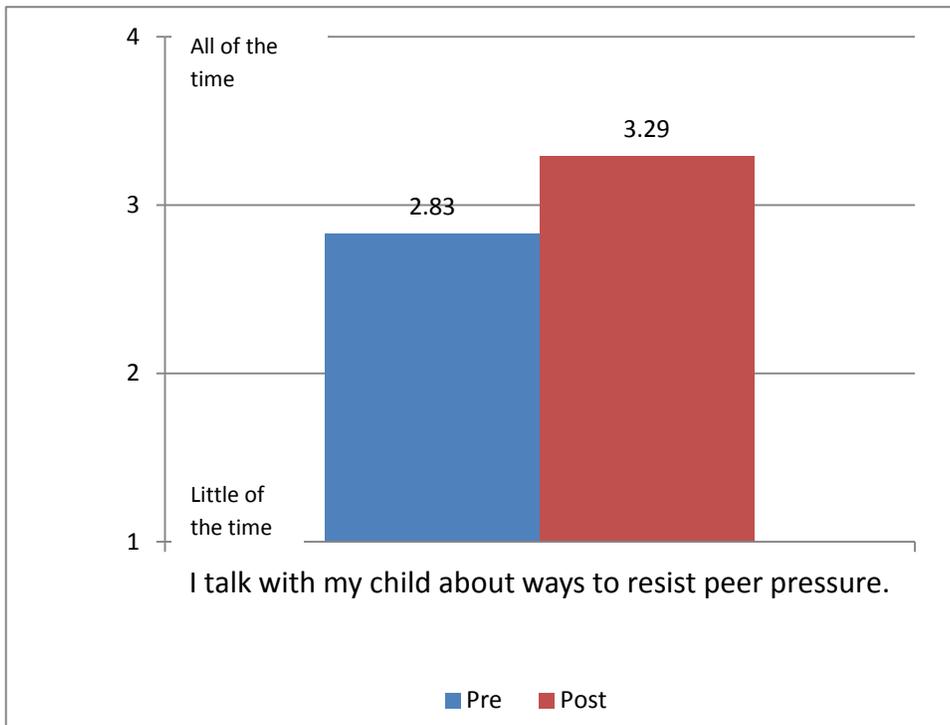
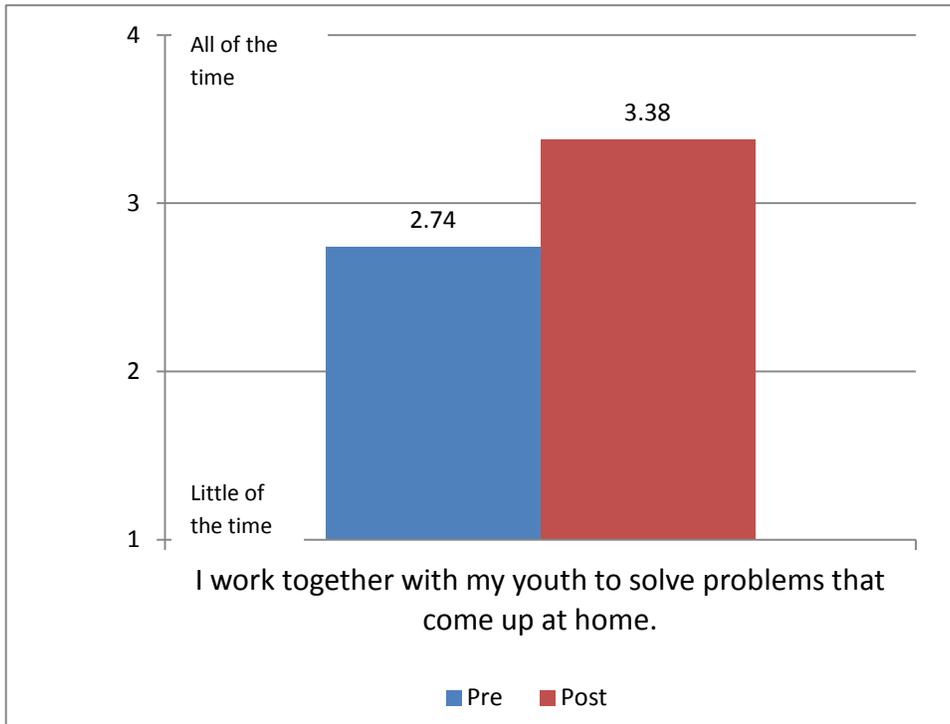
changes at the 1% level, indicating a 99% certainty that the results are not due to chance.



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

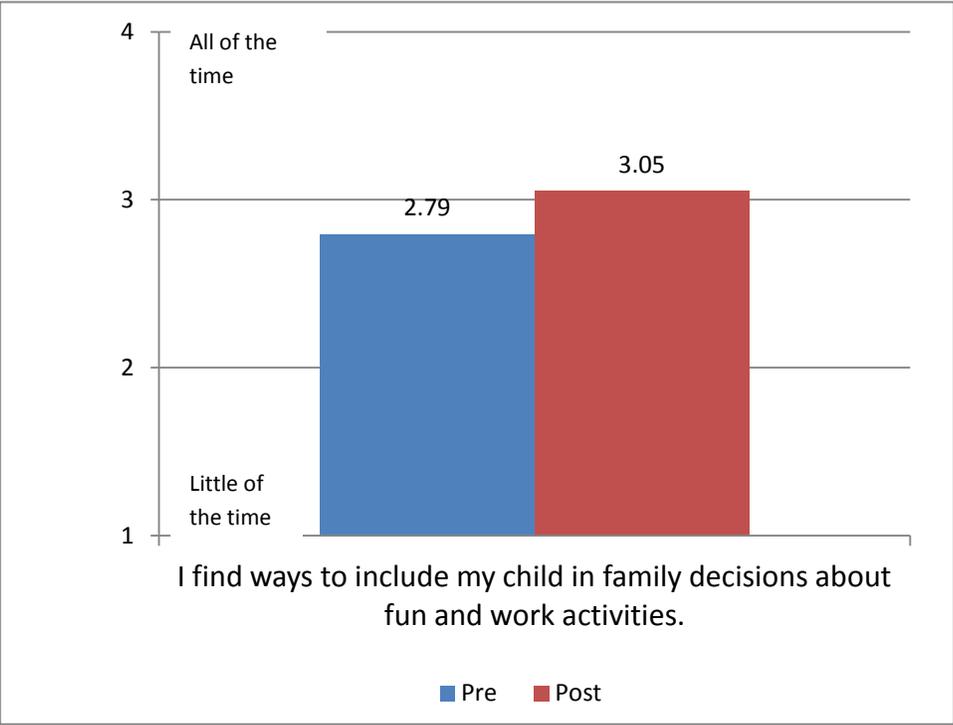
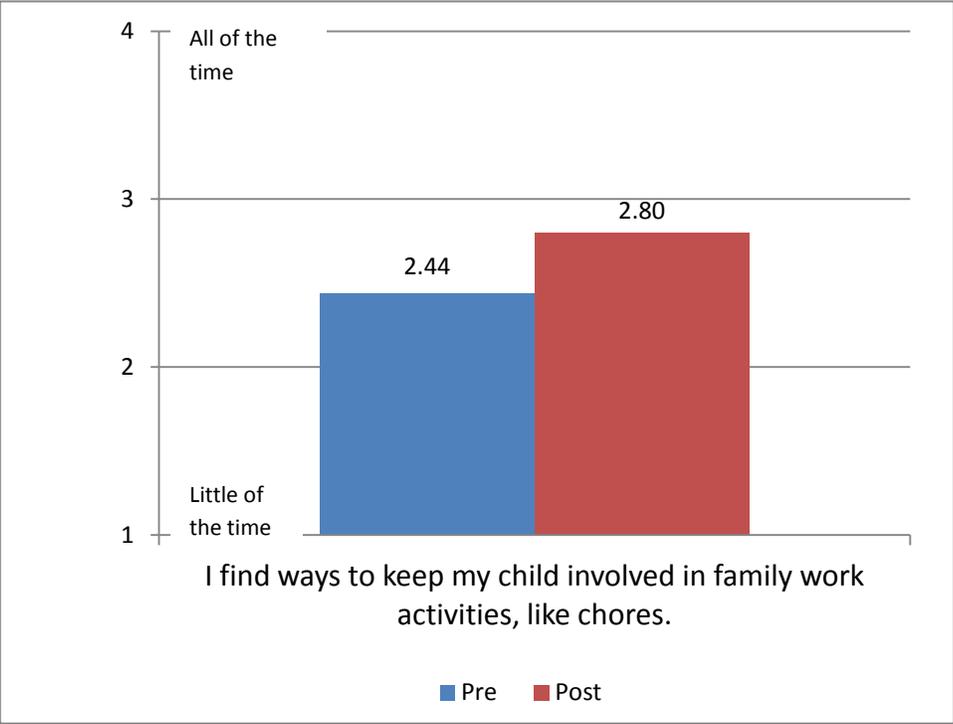
changes at the 5% level, indicating a 95% certainty that the results are not due to chance.





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

changes at the 10% level, indicating a 90% certainty that the results are not due to chance.



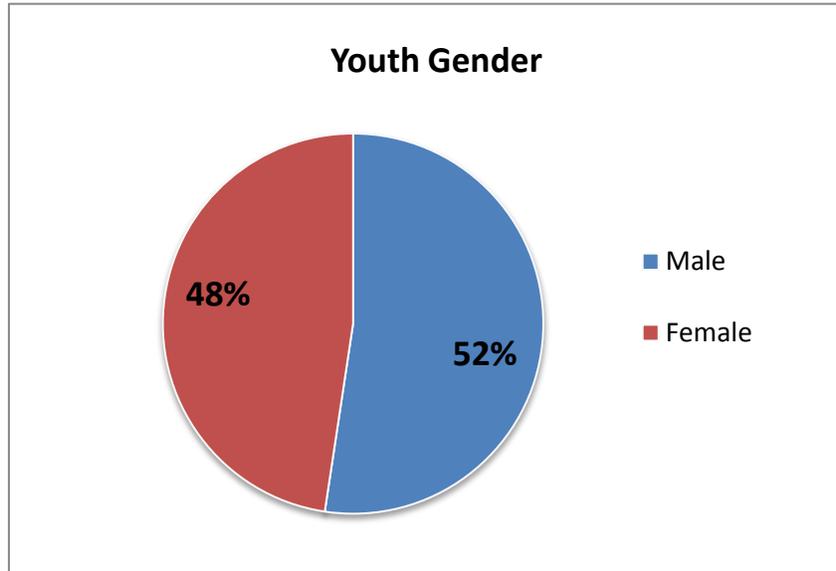
These results are highly encouraging for the Strengthening Families Program in Orange County with 7 out of 20 questions showing significant

positive changes and one additional question approaching positive significance. Refer to Appendix for a complete list of Caregiver Questions.

**Youth Demographics:**

Of the 21 youth who participated in

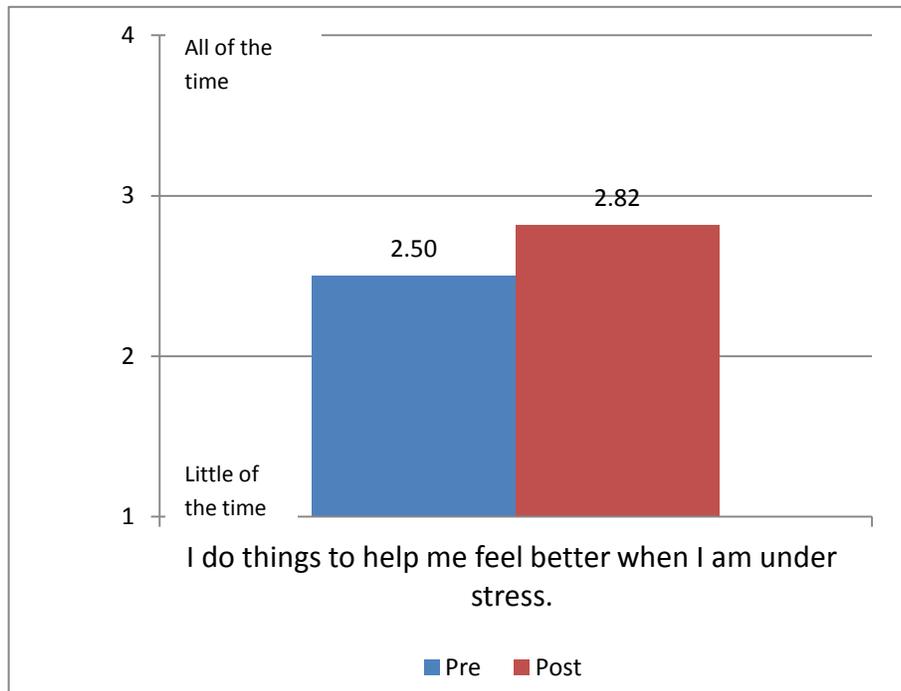
the program, 11 were males (52%) and 10 were females (48%).



**Youth Results:**

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

*positive* changes at the 5% level, indicating that results were highly significant with 95% certainty that the results are not due to chance.



In addition the following questions approached positive significance at the 10% level:

- If a friend suggests that we do something that can get us both into trouble, I am able to get out of doing it.
- My parent(s)/caregiver(s) and I can sit down together to work on a problem without yelling or getting mad.

Refer to Appendix for a complete list of Youth Questions.

**Conclusion:**

During two separate series between October 2011 and April 2012, Cooperative Extension of Orange County co-sponsored the Strengthening Families Program with the Middletown School District. Twenty-eight caregivers and 21 youth participated in the program. Both caregivers and youth showed significant positive changes in their results.

Specifically, caregivers reported increased ability to: involve youth in

family work, see things from the youth's point of view, cool down before communicating with youth about problems, remember that youth can be difficult to get along with at their age, work together with youth to solve problems at home, talk with youth about ways to resist peer pressure, and involve youth in decisions about fun and work activities.

As a result of participating in the Strengthening Families Program, youth reported increased ability to do things that help them feel better when they are stressed.

In addition to the questions with significant positive changes, two questions also *approached* significant positive levels.

These results from the Strengthening Families Program at Middletown High School, conducted in cooperation with Orange 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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