



Eliza Lathrop Cook  
Rachel Dunifon  
Kimberly Kopko  
Guillermina Martino

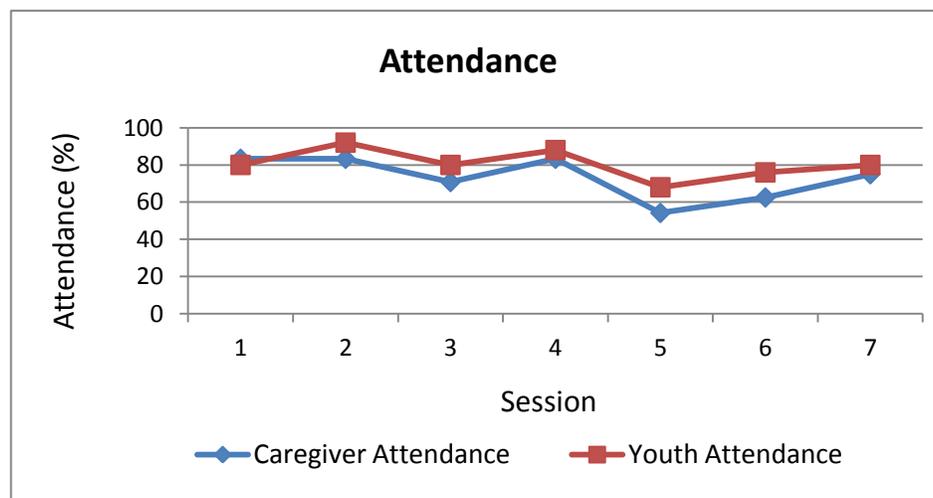
## Strengthening Families Program Middletown High School, Middletown, NY

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 6<sup>th</sup> through

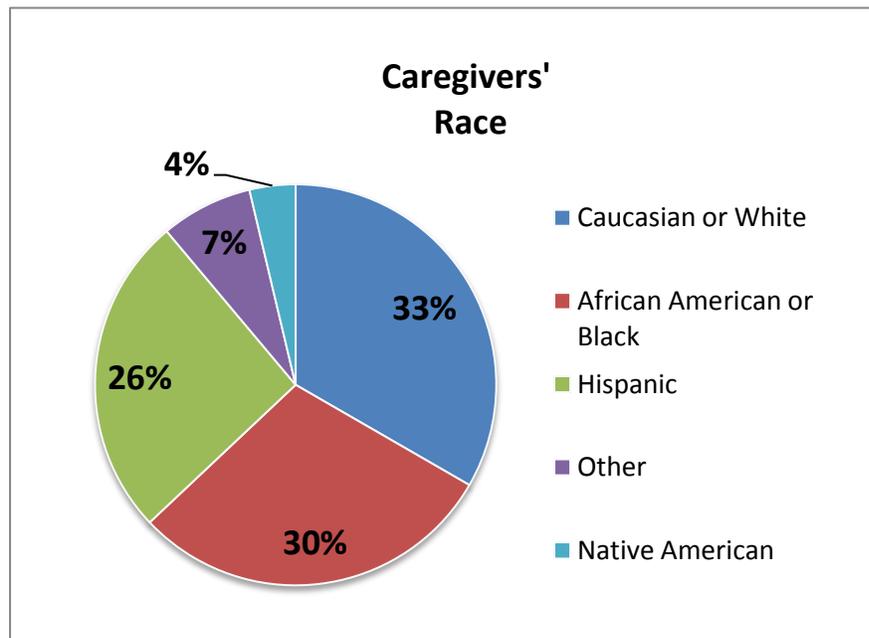
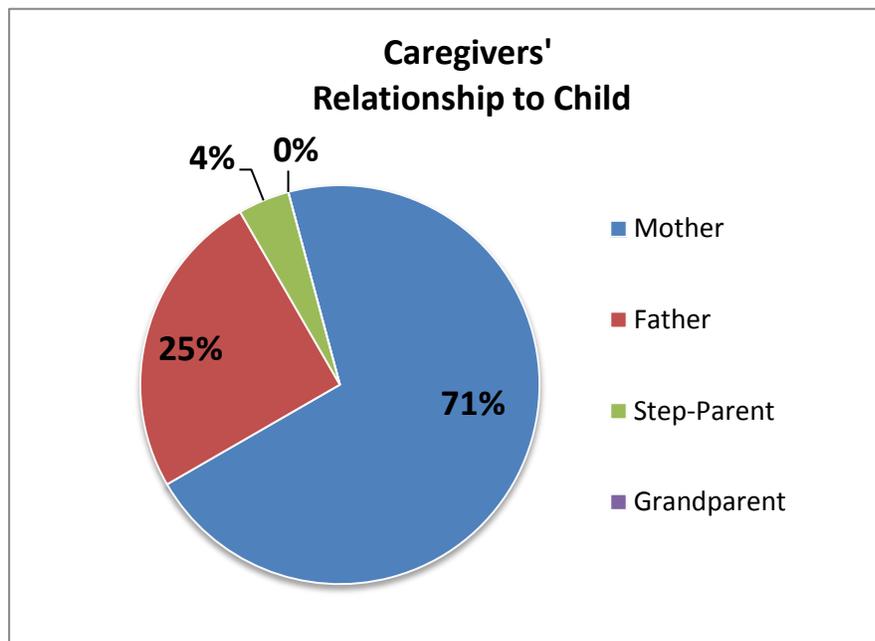


November 15, 2010 and February 9<sup>th</sup> through March 30, 2011. Participants in the program consisted of 24 caregivers and 25 youth. Average attendance for caregivers was 73.2% while the average attendance for youth was 80.6%.

**Caregiver Demographics:**

The following summaries use data of

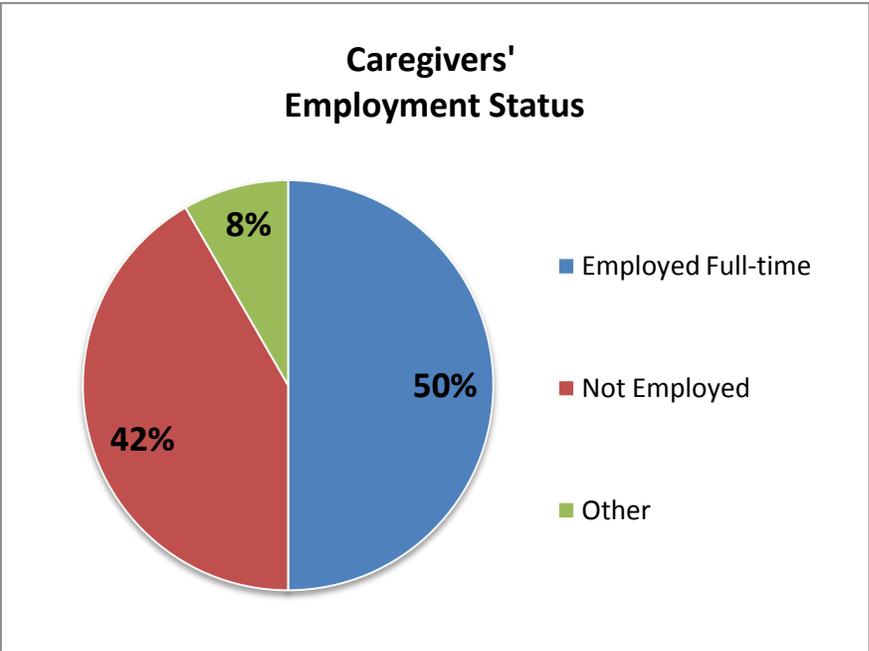
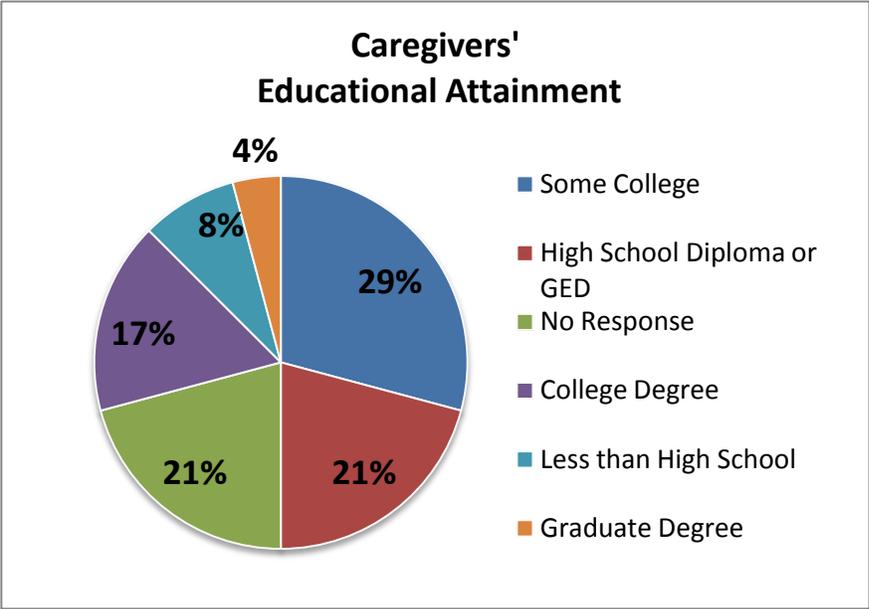
the 24 caregivers who participated in the program. The overwhelming majority of participants were mothers (71%) and the average age of caregivers was 40.9 years. In addition, most of caregivers who participated in the Middletown Strengthening Families program were Caucasian (33%) and African American (30%).

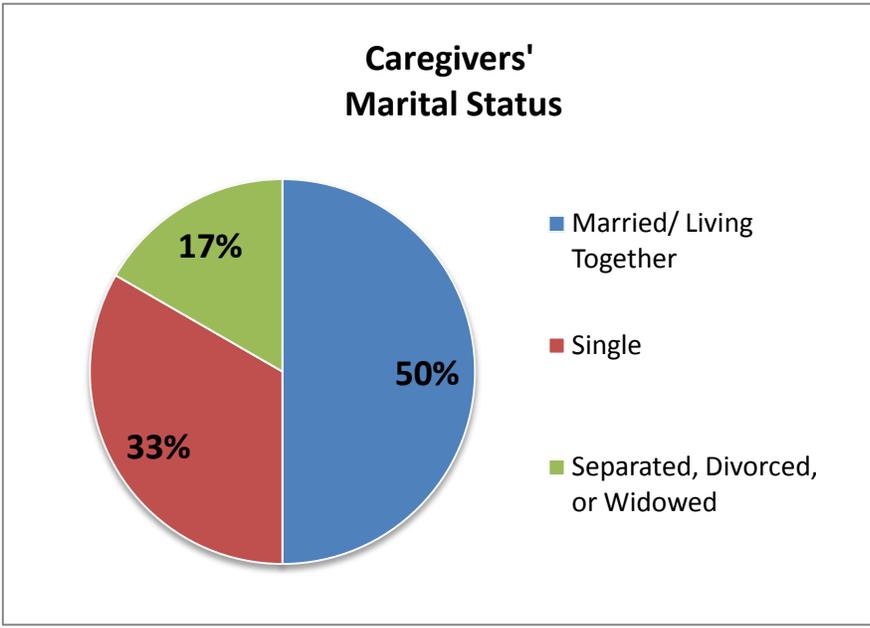


Educational attainment ranged from High School Diploma/GED to obtaining a Graduate Degree with 29% of the sample having some college experience. Employment status varied, but a majority of caregivers reported full time employment (50%), with unemployment being the second largest category (42%). Half of the

caregivers in the sample (50%) reported being married or living together.

Caregivers reported an average number of 2.5 children living at home. The average age of the youngest child was 8.1 years while the average age of the oldest was 14 years. Children's ages ranged from 1 to 26 years.

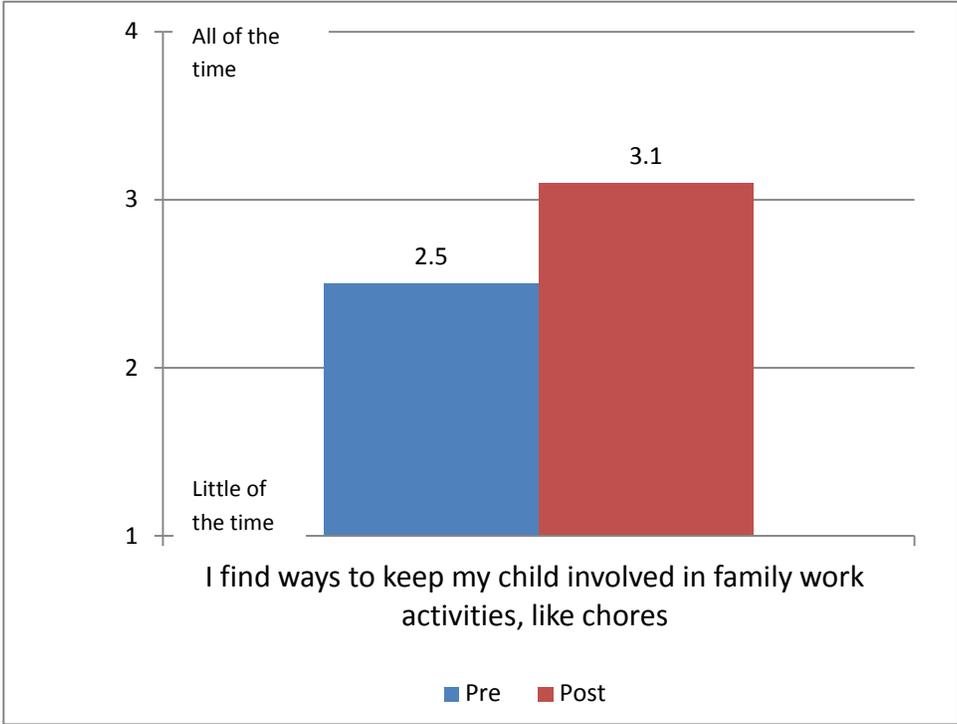


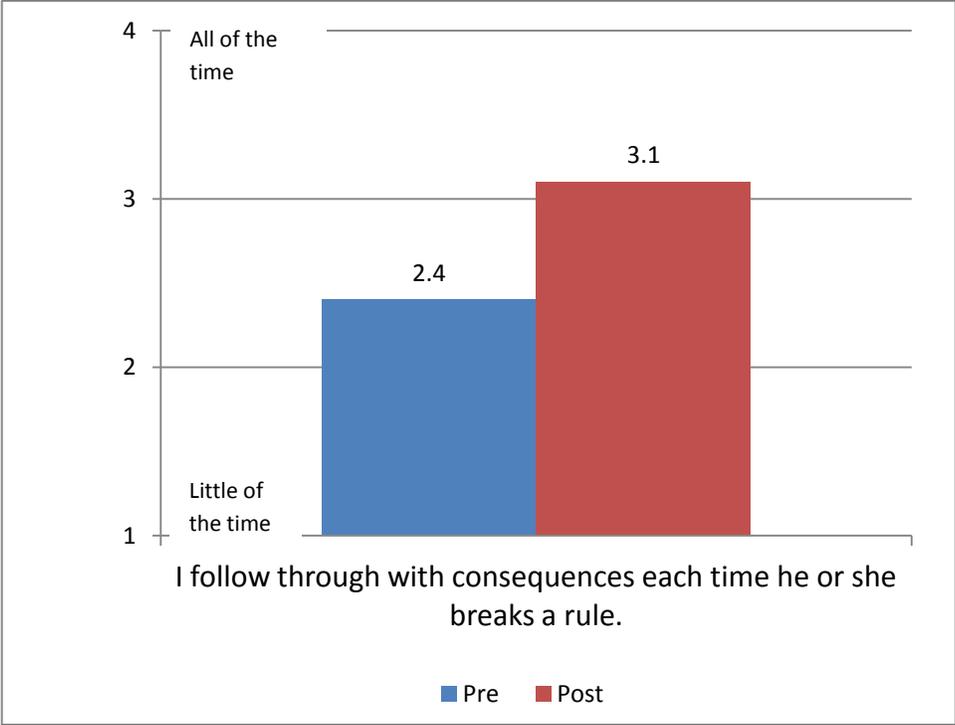
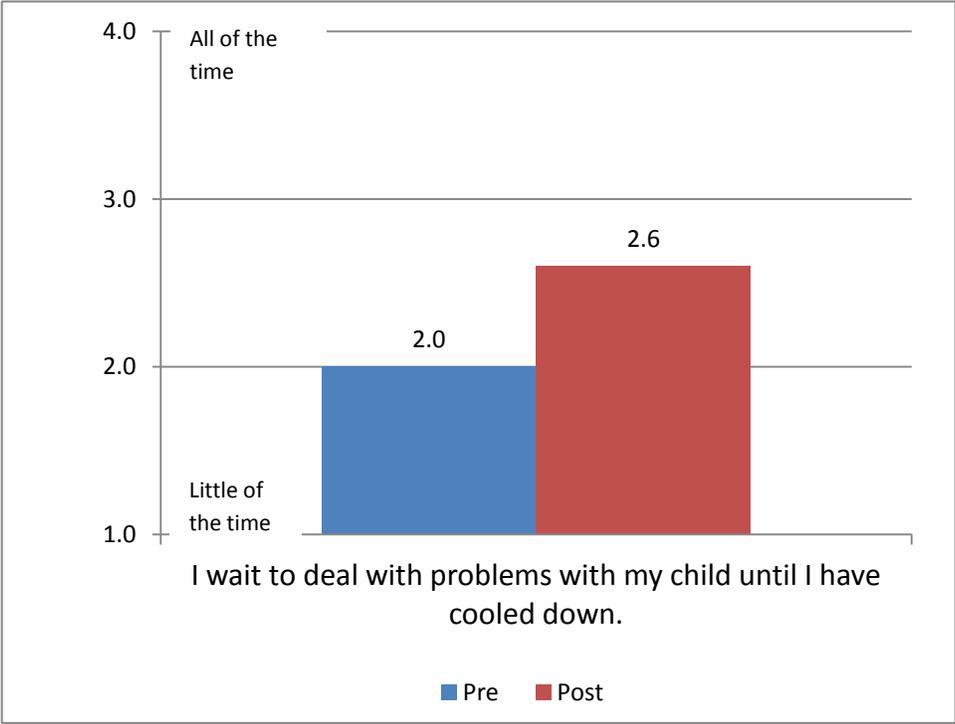


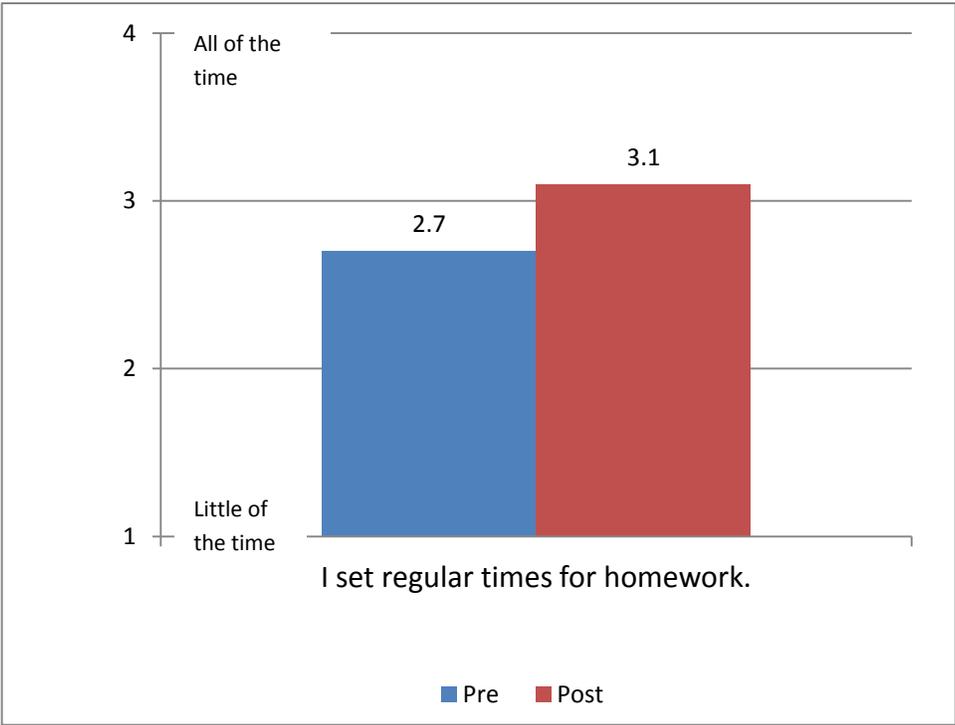
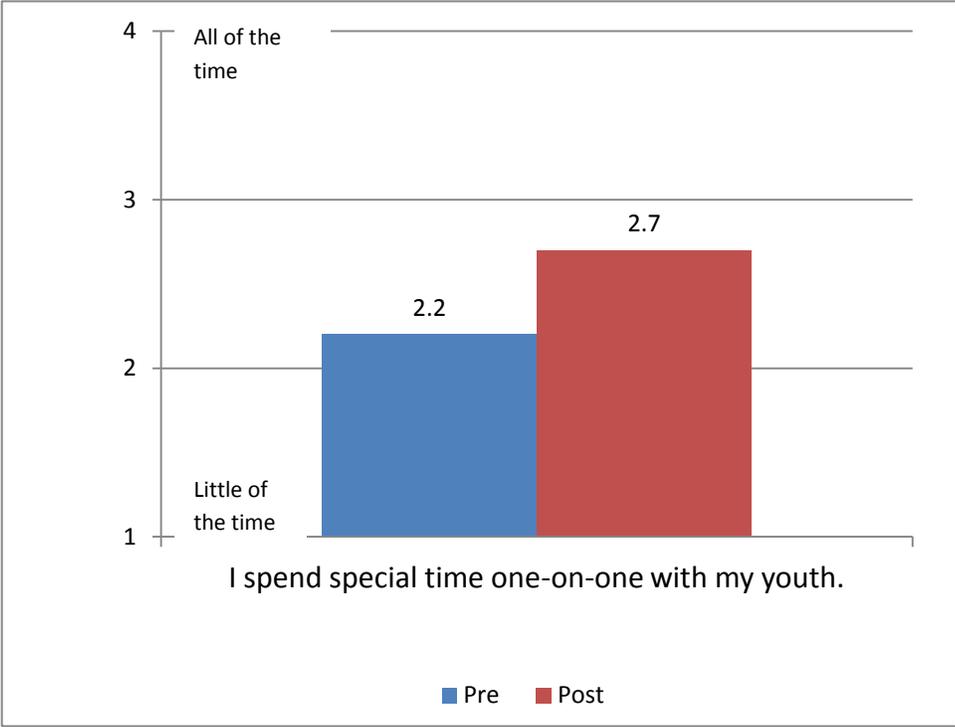
**Caregiver Results:**

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

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

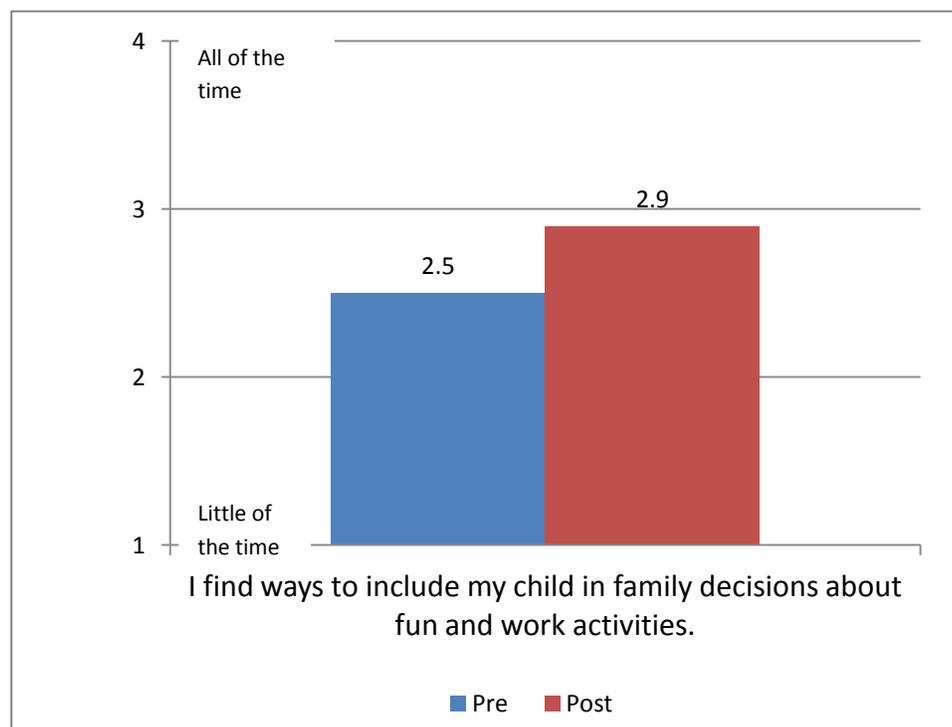
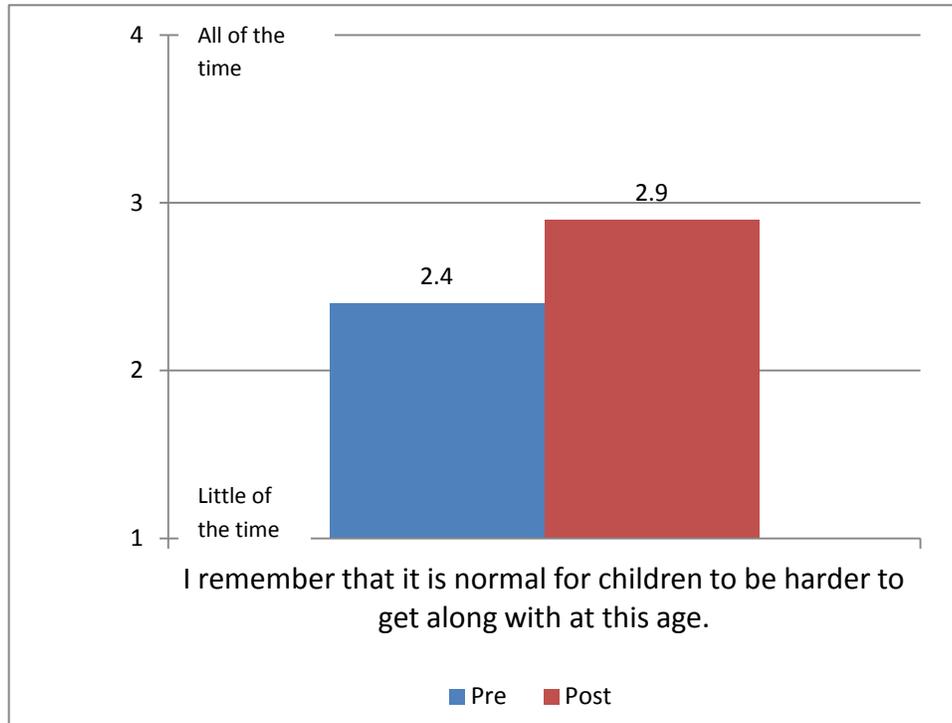


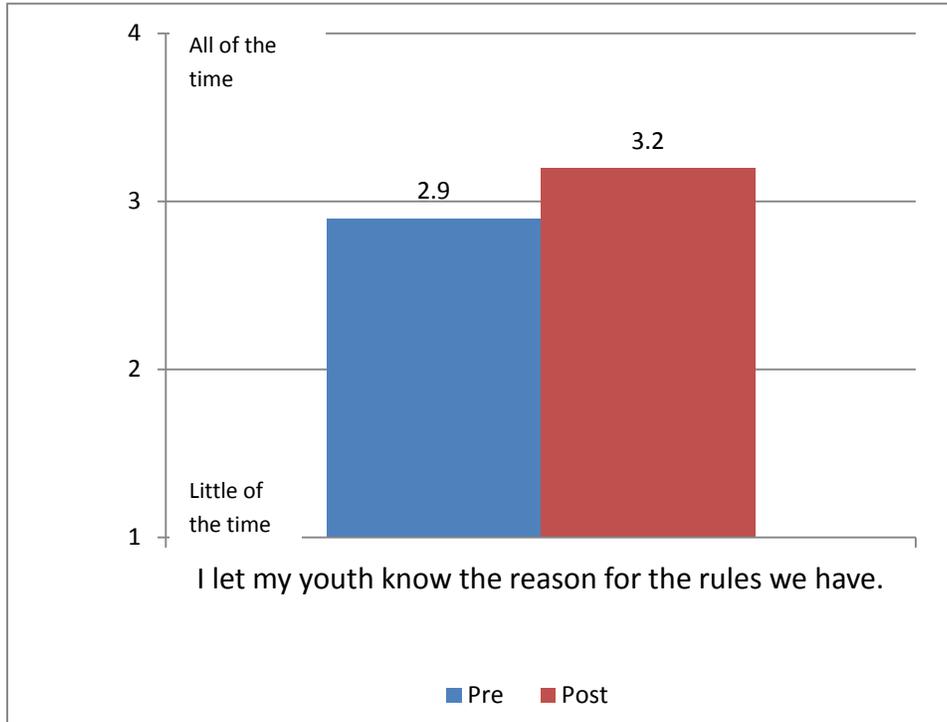




In comparing the pre- and post-test survey results, the following three questions showed significant *positive*

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





The following question also *approached* positive significance at the 10% level:

- I work together with my youth to solve problems that come up at home.

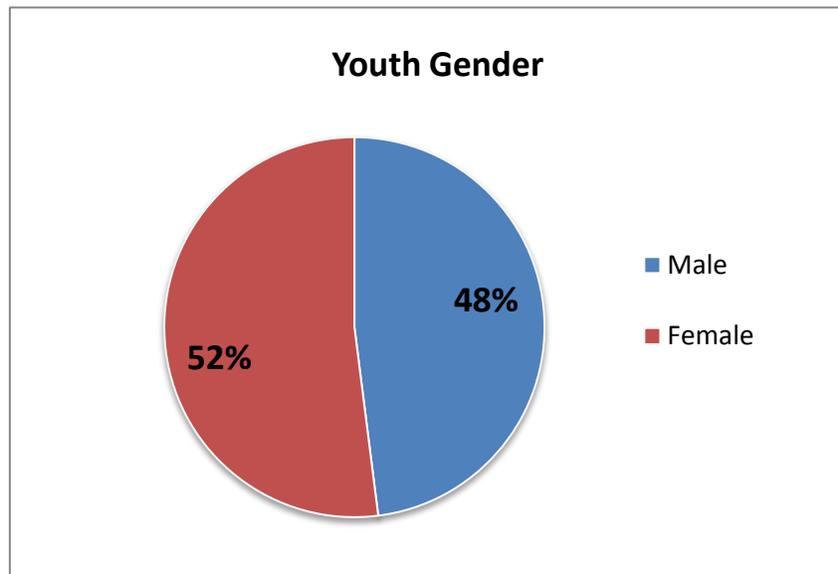
These results are highly encouraging for the Strengthening Families Program in Orange County with 8 out of 20 questions showing significant positive changes and one additional question approaching positive significance.

Refer to Appendix for a complete list of Caregiver Questions.

**Youth Demographics:**

Of the 25 youth who participated in

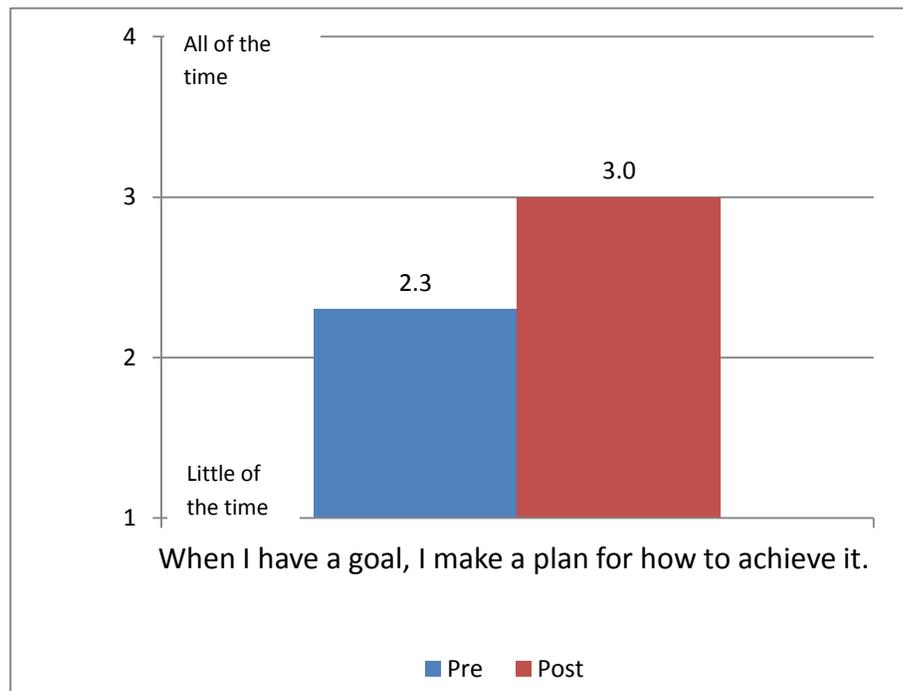
the program, 13 were females and 12 were male.



**Youth Results:**

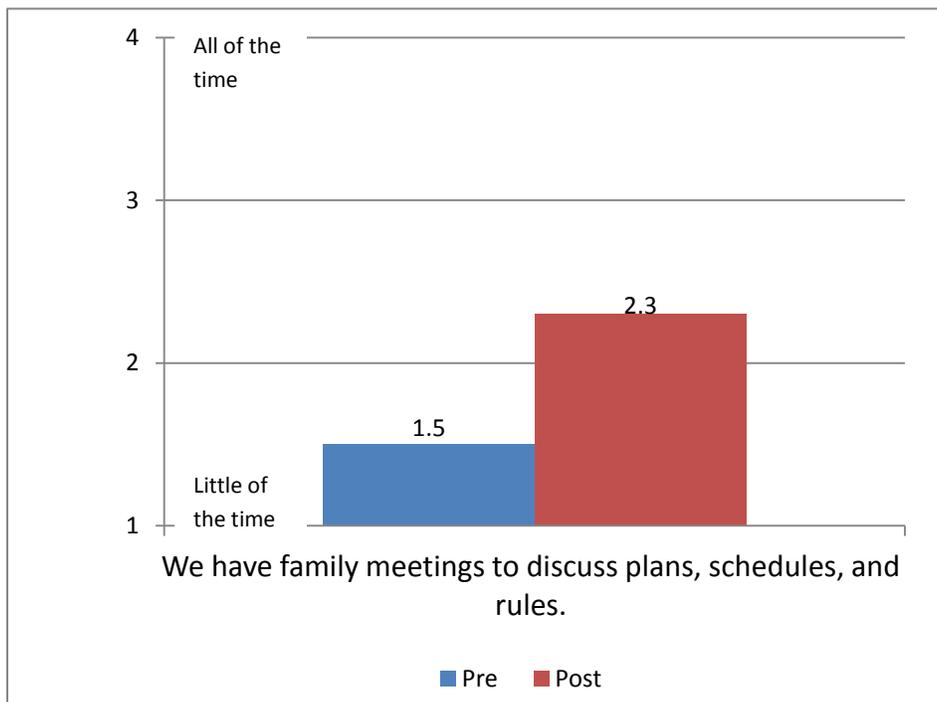
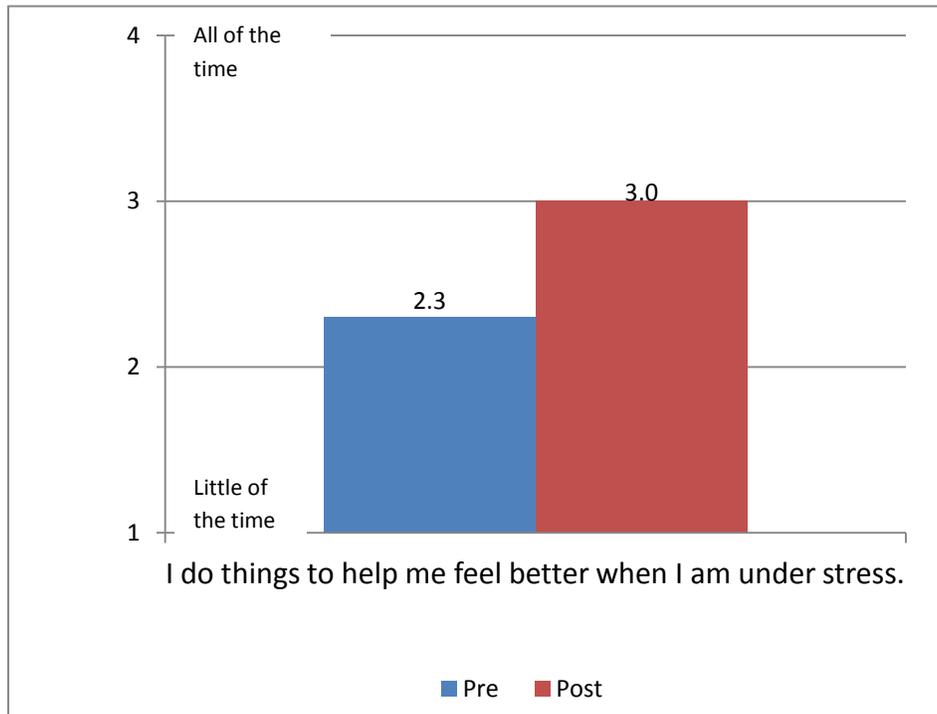
In comparing the pre- and post program, survey results, the following question showed significant

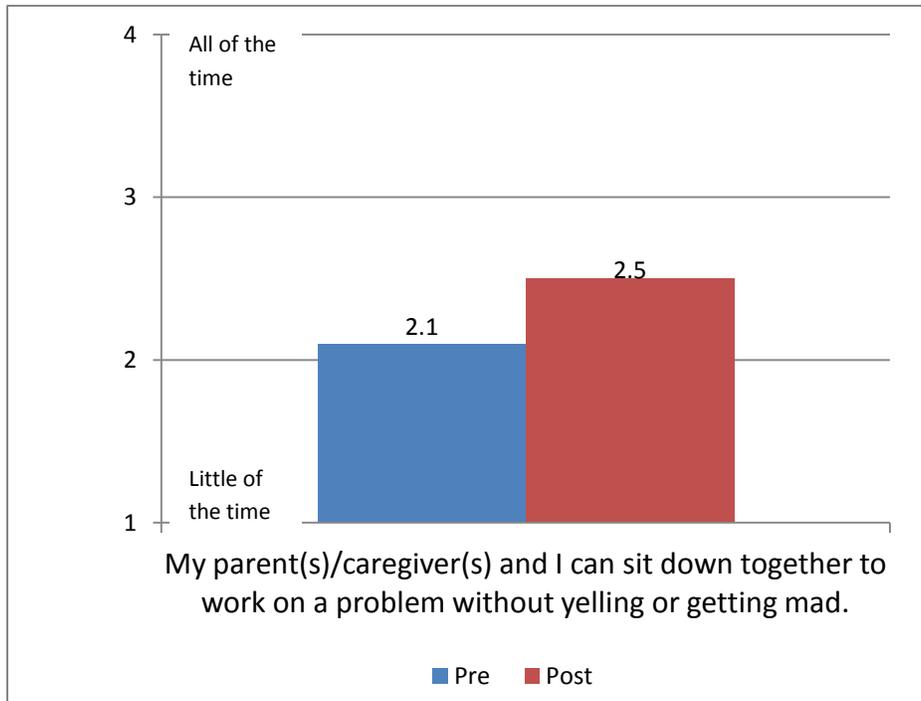
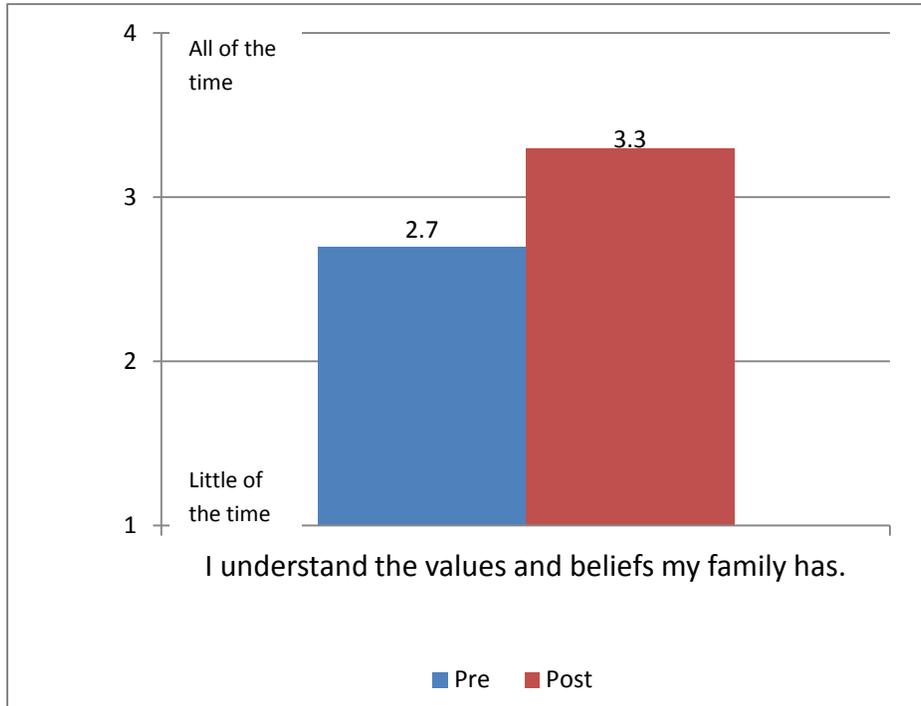
*positive* changes at the 1% level, indicating that results were highly significant with 99% certainty that the results are not due to chance.

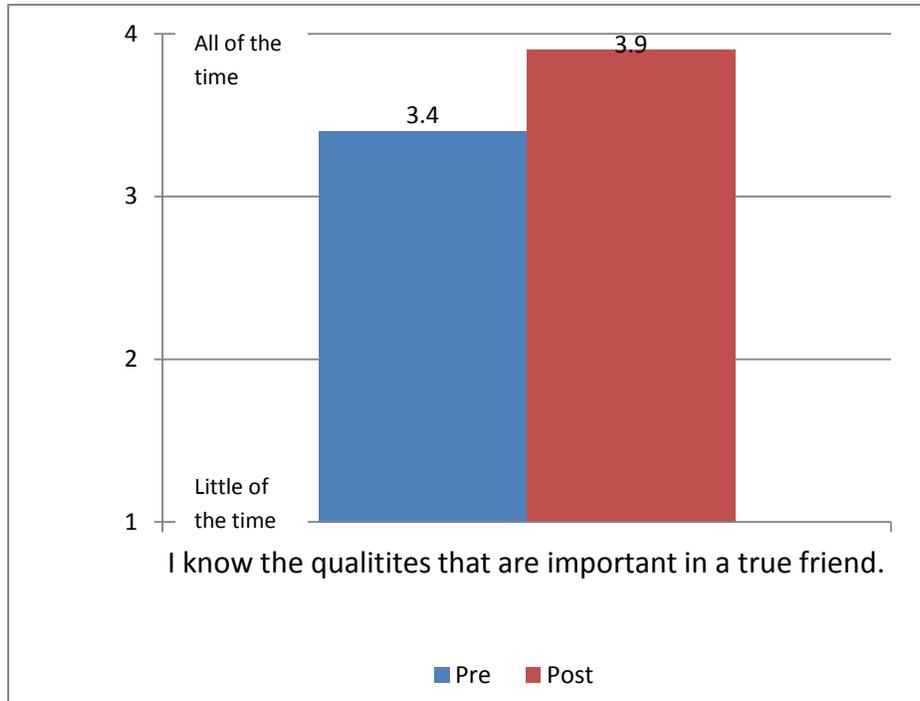


In comparing the pre- and post-test survey results, the following five questions showed a significant *positive* change

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







These results are encouraging with 6 out of 15 questions showing significant positive changes.

Refer to Appendix for a complete list of Youth Questions.

**Conclusion:**

During two separate series between October 2010 and March 2011, Cooperative Extension co-sponsored the Strengthening Families Program with the Middletown School District. Twenty-four caregivers and 25 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,

being better equipped to deal with youth problems, improved follow through with consequences, increased amount of special one-on-one time spent with youth, increased consistency setting regular homework times for youth, increased knowledge or the adolescent developmental stage, improvements in involving youth in decisions about fun and work activities and increased communication to youth regarding family rules.

As a result of participating in the Strengthening Families Program, youth reported increased ability to: plan and achieve goals, cope with stress, understand values and beliefs of family, work out problems with parent(s) or caregiver(s), and

recognize important qualities in friends. Also, youth reported a noteworthy substantial increase of participation in family meetings to discuss family issues.

In addition to the questions with significant positive changes, one question 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 very positive outcomes for 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.parenting.cit.cornell.edu>

*This work was supported by a joint research and extension program funded by Cornell University Agricultural Experiment Station (Hatch funds) and Cornell Cooperative Extension (Smith Lever funds) received from Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture*

**Eliza Lathrop Cook is a Research Assistant in the Department of Policy Analysis and Management at Cornell University.**

**Rachel Dunifon is an Associate Professor in the Department of Policy Analysis and Management at Cornell University.**

**Kim Kopko is an Extension Associate in the Department of Policy Analysis and Management at Cornell University.**

**Guillermina Martino is a senior in the School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University.**

© 2011 Cornell Cooperative Extension



**Cornell University**  
**College of Human Ecology**

Cornell University offers equal program  
and employment opportunities