

### PROTECTIVE FACTORS



## Harlan County Boys and Girls Club

Harlan, KY

**81** Average number of students served during the school year

**100%** Students from low-income families

### Main funding sources:

- ▶ State and federal funding (including 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Centers)
- ▶ Foundation grants
- ▶ Local donations
- ▶ Fundraisers

## Being a resource for students and their families to help them connect to appropriate systems of support

New research tells us that the adolescent years are a highly important developmental period for brain growth and “the second most critical period of development.” However, there are factors at both the individual and community levels that impact the development process. This includes risk factors that increase the likelihood that one will take part in unhealthy behaviors, as well as protective factors that spur healthy behaviors and development. Young people need a continuous system of support from birth through adolescence into young adulthood, creating the conditions that help them thrive and build the skills and attributes that will have a positive influence on their lives as they face thousands of decisions each day. Afterschool and summer learning programs are a part of this continuous system of support, providing services during a critical time of development for young people that will help children grow their strengths, cope with the complications of life, and lead healthful lives to become healthy adults.

### Overview

*Harlan County Boys and Girls Club (the Club)* is part of the national Boys and Girls Clubs of America, a youth development organization dedicated to helping all young people reach their full potential. The Club in Harlan County provides southeastern Kentucky youth ages 6-18 with many aspects of high-quality afterschool programming typically offered at other clubs, such as leadership development and improving healthy habits. Moreover, the Club has tailored many of its services to address the needs of youth living in a community where substance misuse is prevalent.

### A typical day for students

Every day after school, youth from three schools within walking distance begin to arrive at 3 p.m., while county buses transport students from farther away to the Club. Students start their afternoon with Power Hour, an educational program that provides academic support, such as homework help, as well as fun educational activities, like math bingo. Afterwards, youth have the option of participating in a myriad of enrichment programs that focus on leadership and character development, health and life skills, the arts, or physical fitness. During



## Risk Factors and Protective Factors

Risk factors and protective factors are present at the individual, family, and community levels. Below are examples of risk and protective factors for adolescents at the various levels.



**Individual**



**Family**



**Community**



### Risk Factors

- ▶ Low self-esteem
- ▶ Inability to communicate
- ▶ Substance use and misuse

- ▶ Family conflict
- ▶ Parent substance use
- ▶ Unemployment
- ▶ Lack of adult supervision

- ▶ Poverty
- ▶ Exposure to a community or school related traumatic event or violence
- ▶ Favorable community or peer group attitude toward alcohol and drug use



### Protective Factors

- ▶ High self-esteem
- ▶ Positive self-image
- ▶ Positive peer relationships
- ▶ Engagement in school

- ▶ Supportive relationships
- ▶ Clear expectations for behavior
- ▶ Stability and consistency

- ▶ Positive adult mentor
- ▶ Engagement in school or community activities
- ▶ Healthy peer groups

*Adapted from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's "Risk and Protective Factors for Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Disorders Across the Life Cycle."*

## Program history

As the opioid epidemic swept over eastern Kentucky, Harlan County was no exception. In 2001, as the community began dealing with the ramifications of rising rates of prescription drug misuse and abuse, a group of parents interested in creating a safe environment for youth after school came together to form the Harlan County Youth Sports League. As one of the only afterschool programs available to youth in the area, Harlan County Youth Sports League quickly realized the need to expand its services, and decided to charter as a Boys and Girls Club in 2003. At the time, it was the only Boys and Girls Club in southeastern Kentucky.

## Recommendations

*for being a resource for students and their families to help them connect to appropriate systems of support:*

- ▶ Give youth a voice. As adults, we may know what the best practices are, but to get youth to "buy in" they need to be involved in the process. Instead of dictating their needs to them, genuinely listen to what youth are expressing.
- ▶ Provide holistic support to youth by looking at each child's needs specifically and filling in the gaps that exist between school and home.



**Afterschool Alliance**

[afterschoolalliance.org](http://afterschoolalliance.org)