

# Keeping Kids Active

## **Program:** Connecting Kids

26 area agencies partner with Sioux Empire United Way to make activities available for children through Connecting Kids.

**Service:** Connecting Kids gives all children, no matter what their economic condition, the opportunity to participate in extra-curricular activities through Connecting Kids certificates to various community organizations and programs.

**Need:** Research shows kids who are involved in a youth activity are 51% less likely to use drugs and 63% less likely to become teen parents. Over 600 children used a Connecting Kids certificate to participate in extra-curricular activities in 2008.

**What does that mean to me?** Children who participate in youth activities are 15% more likely to view themselves as a worthy person and 26% more likely to get good grades. Youth activities help kids make a connection with friends and social skills that will last a lifetime. By getting kids connected, it helps increase their self-esteem. Kids who are involved in extra-curricular activities are more likely to have higher grades

The following is a letter written by an agency participating in Connecting Kids.

Dear United Way Staff,

I wanted to share an experience I had yesterday with the mother of two of my students. She was waiting with her children outside my office door and asked to speak with me privately. The minute she walked into the office she started to cry. I quickly put her children in with my after school kids, told my assistant to hold my calls, and closed the door. Through her tears she asked for some sort of payment plan because they were living at Children's Inn while she got out of an abusive relationship. She was afraid for her children, but didn't have the money or any place for them to go after school, but she had to work.

Offering her a Connecting Kids scholarship was the first option we discussed.

She was so relieved that she had a place for them. I told her that we had the ability to start picking her children up immediately and that there was no way anyone was taking them without our permission. When she left, she was smiling and breathing again.

It's because of moments like this I do what I do. I left a large salary to work at poverty level. I never had the impact on people's lives like I do now. Sioux Empire United Way helped me put some light into this woman's life.

Thank you very much. You made my day.