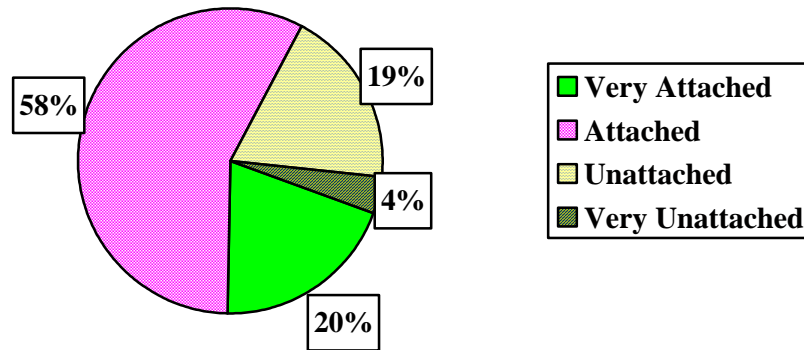


**SWYS 2005 NEWS- COMMUNITIES IMPORTANT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF TEENS**

**Southwest Wisconsin Teens'  
Attachment to Their Community**



Seventy-eight percent of teens in Southwest Wisconsin report being attached to their community. Community attachment was determined by looking at teen responses to a series of questions regarding neighborhood monitoring, local law enforcement, community safety and adult attentiveness. Of the teens that are significantly attached to their communities, 85% report having moderately high or high self esteem. Also of the teens who are significantly unattached to their community; 75% report having rare or few conversations with their mothers, and 81% report having rare or few conversations with their fathers. Almost three-fourths of females feel they have at least 3 adults other than their parents to talk to if they were to have a serious personal problem. Males are less likely to feel this way.

Those are among the findings of the Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS) conducted by 15 school districts in the Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA) District 3 as reported by UW-Extension. The school districts of Argyle, Belmont, Benton, Black Hawk, Cassville, Cuba City, Darlington, Fennimore, Iowa-Grant, Ithaca, Lancaster, Platteville, Potosi, River Ridge, and Seneca, surveyed more than 3,700 students in September of 2005. UW-Extension faculty and staff in Crawford, Grant, Lafayette, and Richland counties are involved in processing and presenting the findings. The survey was funded by the participating school districts, and the Grant County Drug-Free Coalition.

“The survey found that nearly all teens of Southwest Wisconsin feel it is important to help other people and care about other’s feelings,” says Bev Doll, Grant County UW-Extension Family Living Agent. “The findings show that of the teens who strongly agree 77% have high self esteem. Interestingly enough it

also found that of the teens who strongly disagreed that it was important to help others or care for other's feelings 66% have low self esteem."

"In terms of how teens feel others feel about them, about 3 out of 4 teens (73%) feel that adults in their community respect and listen to them", reports Amy Mitchell, Crawford County UW-Extension 4-H Youth Development Agent. "A disheartening finding is that 33% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders do not feel that people in their neighborhood care about them. We also found that the number of teens who feel respected in their community drops from 75% of males in 7<sup>th</sup> grade to 66% of males in 12<sup>th</sup> grade. This is consistent with the female teens also."

"Safety is a concern for all whether at home, at school, or in the community. So it is good to see a significant number of teens (88%) in Southwest Wisconsin feel safe at home, at school, and in their community", says Pam Hobson, Richland County UW-Extension 4-H Youth Development Agent. "However only 65% of the teens feel they have the opportunity to make their community a better place."

"When asked about community law enforcement, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade teens are most likely to report seeing the police as a resource most often", adds Jessie Potterton, Lafayette County UW-Extension Youth Development Educator. "Almost three fourths of teens (73%) agree that they can count on the police if they were having a problem or needed help. This has increased since the 2001 SWYS."

"Younger teens (7<sup>th</sup> - 9<sup>th</sup> grades) are also more likely than older teens to agree that adults in their town would tell their parents or call the police if they saw them drinking alcohol, smoking, vandalizing, or doing drugs", states Tom Schmitz, Grant County UW-Extension 4-H Youth Development Educator. "Overall 85% of youth in Southwest Wisconsin agree that adults in their community would tell their parents or call the police if they saw teens engaging in the above activities."

A full report on the SWYS results is due out this summer. Hobson, Schmitz, Doll, Mitchell, and Potterton are also giving community presentations on the data. For more information on the survey contact your local school district, Schmitz and Doll at 608-723-2125, Potterton at 608-776-4820, Mitchell at 608-326-0223, or Hobson at 608-647-6148.

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