

**Statement of Dr. Colien Hefferan, Administrator
Cooperative State Research Education and Extension Service
United States Department of Agriculture**

Before

**Committee on Government Reform
United States House of Representatives
May 20, 2004**

Good morning Mr. Chairman. I am Dr. Colien Hefferan, Administrator of the Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service (CSREES) at the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The mission of CSREES is to advance knowledge for agriculture, the environment, human health and well-being, and communities through national program leadership and federal assistance. I appreciate the opportunity to come before the Committee today to present the contributions that USDA supported cooperative extension programs make to improve the welfare of our nation's children.

The programs that I will describe to you today are administered by USDA in cooperation with our Land Grant University based partners, the State Cooperative Extension Services. The cooperative extension model, which shares leadership and funding for community based programs across Federal, State and Local governments, is ideally constructed to leverage scarce financial resources and to develop locally relevant solutions to challenges facing the youth of our nation. Federal funding for these programs is provided on a formula basis through the Smith-Lever Act and matched by more than dollar for dollar with state and local funds.

Families, Youth, and Communities is one of the key program areas of the national Cooperative Extension System. Through this program area, extension professionals provide research-linked education and training programs in critical needs areas such as nutrition education, financial security, child care, and youth development. The youth development component of the extension system is what I would like to discuss with you today, especially the 4-H Youth Development Program (4-H) and the Children, Youth and Families at Risk Program (CYFAR).

For over 100 years, the Department of Agriculture has been the national headquarters of one of America's flagship youth development organizations, the 4-H Program. 4-H reaches over 7 million young people in every corner of the country, rural and urban, engaging them in community based learning, citizenship, and leadership development programs. While the 4-H program is ultimately delivered by local county extension staff, USDA-CSREES is responsible for overall program leadership and integrity. In addition, 4-H involves hundreds of thousands of community volunteers, as project leaders and youth mentors in meeting the youth development goals of the program. In addition to these efforts, through an agreement with the Department of the Army and the Department of the Air Force, USDA-CSREES supports 4-H clubs on military bases, including programs supporting reserve and National Guard families, in 45 states and territories as well as Army bases worldwide.

4-H has always been more than just a community youth club. It is a program specifically designed to promote research-based youth development goals. Because it is linked to the research base of the land-grant university system, 4-H is an ideal program for introducing youth to careers in science and technology. 4-H also teaches youth the principles of personal responsibility, community involvement and citizenship. In fact, several members of this Committee are 4-H alums.

While 4-H is the central youth development program delivered by CSREES through the Cooperative Extension System, other programs such as the Children, Youth and Families at Risk program, build on and expand the 4-H model to reach populations of specific concern. Since 1991, CYFAR has supported programs in more than 600 communities in all states and territories addressing topics such as youth violence, drug abuse, mental and physical health, and family relationships. To ensure that critical needs of children and families are met, CYFAR supports comprehensive, intensive, community-based educational programs developed with active citizen participation in all phases. CYFAR promotes building resiliency and protective factors in youth, families and communities.

In Fiscal Year (FY) 2004 Congress appropriated \$7.538 million for the CYFAR program. The President's FY05 budget requests \$8.481 million, a restoration of the FY03 appropriation level. In addition to the Federal resources, State and local public and private organizations

contribute cash and in-kind resources that in most cases match or exceed the federal contributions to CYFAR projects. In fact, these public private partnerships have led to the long-term sustainability of the program. At least 65% of CYFAR programs are sustained through non-federal funds for at least 6 years after the end of their federal funding.

For example, a Kentucky CYFAR project funded from 1995-1999 focused on diverse community programs including teens who mentor elementary students in after school programs, a workforce preparation and self-esteem program for teen mothers, programs to support grandparents raising grandchildren, and tutorial programs for youth with reading problems to improve their reading and comprehension. Of the original seven project sites, six are still operating five years later with non-federal funds.

CYFAR project proposals are submitted by states on a five-year funding cycle. Proposals for CYFAR projects are peer-reviewed by experts in youth development research and extension from the land-grant university community. The award size per grant ranges from \$70,000 to \$135,000 per year with an average grant size of \$129,847 per year.

In FY03, CYFAR projects were operating in 216 community sites in 46 states and territories involving approximately 48,654 youth and parents. Over 5,000 youth involved in CYFAR projects are enrolled in 4-H clubs. The work state extension professionals was enhanced by the work of 4,663 volunteers, including 1,244 youth, who contributed over 92,000 hours of community service. Clearly the CYFAR program leverages other federal resources as well as extensive community involvement.

The Youth Voices project implemented by Cornell Cooperative Extension in rural, upstate New York is an example of a program that is leveraging community resources to reach out to high-risk youth. Extension educators in Erie and Jefferson counties have established positive youth development projects in high-need communities for young people, aged 13-16. The project in Jefferson County especially has become known throughout the county and the state as an outstanding example of interactive youth peer education. The youth involved in the program have received 4-H youth development training as well as training from collaborating state human service agencies on a host of issues with relevance to youth, including sexual

harassment, child abuse, alcohol/substance abuse and prevention, tobacco, relationship abuse, pregnancy prevention, and HIV/AIDS prevention. The youth educators have presented programs throughout the county, at various statewide and regional conferences, and at 4-H summer camps. Linkages with military bases in New York State and particularly, Fort Drum have been established and plans are in place to provide military base youth with training in peer education techniques so that the program can be replicated at Fort Drum. The Youth Voices project is also working locally to support Community Development Partnership (CDP) sites formed by the New York State Department of Health's Assets Coming Together (ACT) for Youth Initiative. The involvement of cooperative extension professionals allows this program to be successful in these rural areas.

These examples show how the youth development programs offered through USDA-CSREES and the Cooperative Extension System are an excellent means to leverage scarce Federal funds to provide locally relevant, research-based opportunities to youth from high-risk backgrounds. The delivery of these programs, by community based experts, coupled with the involvement of dedicated volunteers, represents a low-risk, high-payoff investment of Federal program dollars for the improvement of communities across the nation.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions from the Committee.