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Where health happens  
By Jayma Shields Spence

*Healthy Mendocino Editor's Note: The places people live and work, as well as their education level and access to resources all impact health outcomes. Having a strong community and support when people need it most can make a big difference in the health and well-being of children and families. This month learn how the Family Resource Network in Mendocino County makes a difference in health for our county.*

Imagine a warm, welcoming place where a parent or individual in need could go and receive a friendly smile, a helping hand and a problem solved all in one place. Well, such a place actually exists, and there are 12 of them located around Mendocino County. They are called Family Resource Centers (FRCs). Although Family Resource Centers look different in each community, we share the common bond of wanting to nourish healthy children, families and individuals in supportive communities. In fact, this is our guiding vision for the Family Resource Center Network of Mendocino County, a group to which all the county's family resource centers belong.

These family resource centers provide a myriad of services to support individuals, families, children and teens. These services include (but are not limited to): parenting groups, after-school programs, playgroups, nutrition and healthy cooking classes, mental health counseling and sign ups for Covered California and Medi-Cal health insurance as well as CalFresh (food stamps).

Family resource centers can be found in the communities of Covelo (Round Valley FRC), Laytonville (Laytonville Healthy Start FRC), Willits (Nuestra Alianza and WISC Family Center), Ukiah (Nuestra Casa, The Arbor Youth Resource Center, Ukiah Family Center) Potter Valley (Potter Valley Youth and Community Center), Anderson Valley (Anderson Valley FRC), Fort Bragg (Safe Passage), and Action Network FRC in both Point Arena and Gualala. In some of the unincorporated areas of the county, these family resource centers are often the only place where families can turn to for support and services. Laytonville, one such unincorporated community, is the location of my family resource center. We were born from an identified need in the community- many residents noticed that social-service types of services could only be accessed in Ukiah (a one hour one-way drive) or Willits (a 30 minute drive). Throw in hardships such as lack of transportation or the money to buy gas, and folks were left feeling like they had nowhere to turn to for support.

Today, our family resource center serves more than 1,000 children, teens, adults and senior citizens from our community a year through our varied programs and services. It is our goal that anyone who walks through our doors gets the help and support they need. Although our funding varies for the types of programs and services we can

provide, I will never use that as an excuse to not help a parent or individual get access to services and support.

Our family resource center offers clothing for kids, teens and adults, backpacks and school supplies, an emergency food pantry, an after- school program for teens, roller skating on Friday nights, and a “drug free communities” program to deter teens from using substances, just to name a few. We are strong partners with our local schools and health center, and collaborate on many health and wellness activities (such as health fairs for students) as well as partnering to provide mental health services to students and parents.

With all the services and programs and constant walk-ins and phone calls, I can safely say we never experience a dull moment here at our family resource center. To learn more about our FRC, please visit <http://www.laytonville.org/healthystart/> or to learn more about other FRCs in the county, feel free to call or email me, and I am happy to point you in the right direction.

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Jayma Shields Spence is the coordinator of the Laytonville Healthy Start Family Resource Center Coordinator. She can be reached at (707) 984-8089 or [jaymashields@pacific.net](mailto:jaymashields@pacific.net)