



April, 2014

Topic of the Month

How can attendance at Community Conversations (formerly known as Town Hall meetings) be increased?

Our elementary school puts on a school play each year. We took a few minutes at the beginning of the play to discuss Excel By 5 with those in attendance (a large group). We had the play presented at night for the parents and community. Of course, the turn-out was great and gave us a captive audience. We put together a brief power point and set up a table where we asked people if they were interested in volunteering with us and gave away goodies. We spent a few minutes before the play telling people what Excel By 5 was and what we would be doing! –**Elisa Mayo, Central Clarke County Coalition**

Take the event to the people, don't set a meeting and wait for them to come to you. When we held our Town Hall Meeting last Fall, we held it outside in downtown Indianola. We cooked up hot dogs on a grill under the tent, gave away children's books and games. Members of our coalition volunteered to talk to community members as they were out and about taking care of business and shopping during the day. We also held it at the end of the month when a lot of folks are paid or receiving checks. The key is to take the information and events to the people. Don't wait for them to come to you. Make it fun and have something for children to do along with some give-aways. –**Deborah Moore, Indianola Coalition**

Our first Town Hall Meeting was held in conjunction with our Back to School Bash. We had various community agencies and health professionals present to interact with our families. Health agencies also offered free health screenings. The part that really got the families there was the free school supply give away. After the families had time to visit the agencies' booths we had our presentation for our Town Hall meeting. Then the families were able to grab the bags of school supplies for their children as supplies lasted. This year we will have our Community Update in April during another community event we are co-hosting with other agencies which will include a free book give-away sponsored by our local United Way agency. We are hopeful the families will come and participate in a fun morning of activities and in our brief community update time. –**Ellen Goodman, Oktibbeha County Coalition**

The key is getting kids to perform. We have had kindergarteners perform, and this year, we had pre-k students from our partner centers perform. Parents are required to come! It is that simple! –**Carol Rawlings, McComb Coalition**

We have had a great response by partnering with other groups and events. We have done a back to school at Wal-Mart under Pascagoula Excel by 5. That was a great event! We distributed about 300 packets within a 30-minute time period! –**Connie Jo Williams, Pascagoula Coalition**

We held our Town Hall meeting during the merchants' Trick-or-Treat event. All the children flooded the downtown streets to collect goodies from the local merchants. Immediately following the Trick-or-Treating, the children and their parents gathered in the park for the Halloween costume contest. This is when we held our meeting. We had a captive audience as everyone waited for the costume contest to begin. We were able to give an update and pass out comment cards for the audience to provide feedback. –**Wendy Rogers, Stone County Coalition**

