

The **Financial Literacy Strategy Team** is working to ensure vulnerable families improve their stability by having access to financial education and free tax assistance.

- ***The Volunteers in Tax Assistance (VITA) program***, which provides free tax preparation and e-file to individuals and families with low to moderate incomes, was started in Decatur County in January 2007. During the 2008 tax season, the team completed returns for over 700 individuals with federal refunds totaling more than \$100,000
- ***Money management classes*** are also offered to the community at no cost by the strategy team.
- ***Homebuyer education classes*** are offered to educate potential homebuyers on the ins and outs of home buying.

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The **Hunger Prevention Coalition** is working to maximize the local resources available for our residents living in poverty.

- ***Backpack Program*** provides nonperishable, shelf-stable food to elementary school children on the weekends. These children are at high risk for going hungry during nonschool hours.
- ***Food Drives:*** Throughout the year, food is collected to increase the amount of food our partners have to provide in emergency situations.

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It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit. — Harry Truman

## DECATUR COUNTY FAMILY CONNECTION

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*A Family Connection Partnership  
Collaborative*



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**Decatur County Family Connection, formed in July 2004, is not a program but an organization through which partners work together to address and resolve the unique challenges facing our community.**

Our *mission* is to serve as a catalyst for improving the quality of life for Decatur County's children and families. Our *goal* is that all youth will graduate from high school on time.

The mission of the collaborative is accomplished through our partners working in strategy teams. Monthly collaborative meetings are a time of partner sharing and education as well as a time to discuss formal business. The actual planning and implementation of our strategic and annual plans occurs in our working groups. Strategy teams provide reports of their work at collaborative meetings.

Meetings are held at noon at Friendship House on the second Friday of the month. Regardless of your role in the community, there is a place at the table for you!

***Collaborative meetings for 2008-2009 are:***

July—No Meeting  
August 8, 2008  
September 12, 2008  
October 10, 2008  
November 14, 2008  
December—No Meeting  
January 9, 2009  
February 13, 2009

**Youth Development Strategy Team** is working to provide Decatur County youth and families with an array of programs and activities which promote constructive lifestyles that discourage alcohol and drug abuse, teen sexual activity, and criminal behavior and which will promote development of social environments that facilitate healthy lifestyles.

Programs and activities:

- ***The Dictionary Project:*** In partnership with the Kiwanis Club of Bainbridge, Family Connection provides dictionaries to all third graders in Decatur County
- ***Girls Circle Groups*** are groups for middle school age girls that meet once a week for twelve weeks. The groups educate girls on body image, healthy relationships, decision making, substance abuse prevention and abstinence
- ***Choosing the Best and WAIT,*** two national abstinence education curricula, were provided to Hutto Middle School to be taught in 7th and 8th grade health classes; the health teacher was sent to the teacher training for both curricula
- ***Shoplifting education*** is a program that the strategy team has been working to secure funding for so that youth referred to DJJ for shoplifting can be educated on the impact shoplifting has on the community and the individual who commits the act. The curriculum also teaches the offender positive decision making skills.

- ***Parenting with Love and Logic*** teaches parents skills that help them to have less stress and more fun while raising responsible kids.
- ***How to Avoid Marrying a Jerk/Pick a Partner*** teaches a way to build a healthy relationship that keeps the head and the heart working together. These relationship classes can be taught to high school students as well as single adults
- ***Alcohol and Drug Class:*** This class is offered at least quarterly and educates youth on the dangers of alcohol and drugs. Referrals are made by the Bainbridge Municipal Court, and self-referrals are also accepted.
- ***Media Madness*** teaches parents and youth the impact that media has on youth today and how to resist media pressures. Classes are available upon request.
- ***CATS for Youth*** is Family Connection's youth advisory council and consists of approximately twenty students from Bainbridge High School. CATS members work on a number of activities and projects throughout the year:
  - \* Red Ribbon Week
  - \* Substance abuse prevention public awareness with radio announcements and news articles as well as puppet shows
  - \* Abstinence education