



## The University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System's People Empowering People Program

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The People Empowering People (PEP) Program is an innovative life skills, parent leadership program created and coordinated by Cheryl Czuba, UCONN Cooperative Extension Educator. The PEP program is for adults and older teens from family resource centers, community agencies, faith communities and prisons. PEP is designed to build on the unique strengths and life experiences of participants and emphasizes the connection between individual and community action. Developed over ten years ago, more than one thousand individuals have graduated from PEP.

- **How does PEP work?** PEP participants attend ten weekly two-hour sessions focused on: values, communication skills, problem solving skills, parenting skills, action planning, community assessment and community issues. Groups and individuals also participate in projects that benefit their community. In the past, PEP participants have crocheted blankets for the homeless, created a children's library, developed literacy materials for children, developed a writing project of inspirational letters for women entering prison, made and sent 1000 origami paper cranes to Hiroshima, Japan for Peace Day. Generally, participants attend a PEP graduation after 4-8 months in the program.
- **Who conducts PEP?** The facilitator is an agency staff member or volunteer. She/he attends two days of facilitator training and receives a 200-page PEP manual. The facilitator conducts the ten training sessions, the follow up educational/support meetings, and supports the participants in their community service projects. The training sessions are conducted in English or Spanish.
- **Where is PEP?** Because the program is adaptable to a variety of settings, PEP can be found at family resource centers, community agencies, and prisons throughout Connecticut and in other states.
- **Who benefits?** PEP participants benefit. Results of an evaluation conducted by the University of Connecticut School of Family Studies showed that personal strengths, and parent/ family relationships were found to be significantly improved. PEP facilitators benefit. They learn more about their community and gain skills in working with groups. Communities benefit from adults and teens who believe in their collective ability to achieve their dreams and use their gifts to change or enhance their community.



### To learn more about starting or joining a PEP group contact:

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