

## **Developing Youth to Become Leaders and Entrepreneurs in Rural Settings**

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One effective way to stimulate rural renewal is to empower youth to remain in their communities after graduation by helping them become civically engaged entrepreneurs. United We Can (UWC) equips youth with the entrepreneurial and leadership skills needed to be successful contributors to community revitalization. UWC also reduces high-risk behaviors such as teen pregnancy; it has been shown to reduce alcohol, tobacco and drug use while increasing academic achievement and entrepreneurship skills in urban settings, but its effectiveness in rural settings is currently unknown. This project will implement and test a combined UWC and 4-H/FFA entrepreneurship program with rural youth in Harmon and Tillman counties and to identify psychosocial factors associated with intentions to leave among adolescents. We expect this will result in stronger families (with higher parental involvement, communication and cohesion), stronger youth (with hope, resilience, problem solving, critical thinking and leadership skills) and an improved community. We expect to increase school participation, civic engagement and knowledge of entrepreneurship among youth while decreasing such high-risk behaviors as substance abuse. We also expect to gain new insights into what motivates youth to remain in rural communities.