

The One-Hour difference: Religion



The moment someone becomes a parent, worry sets in. From food and sleep to TV time and social activities, parents spend an incredible amount of time worrying about whether they are doing the best things for their kids. Hundreds of articles can be found on “parent guilt” – feelings of inadequacy and the fear of wrong decisions-and even more information on making your child the best he or she can be. As kids get older, parents spend hours researching and investing in a child’s academics, after school activities and their friend choices. However, according to data from the Erie County PA Youth Survey (PAYS), it seems many parents are missing a free tool that may have the biggest overall impact on the life of their children.

“Two pieces of data from the Youth Survey really stood out: first, kids who attend a religious activity one hour a week have better outcomes in just about every area of their life, including academics, self-perception, happiness and violent tendencies,” Andrea Bierer, Community Action Plan Coordinator for UnifiedErie, said. “The second was that participation in organized religion in Erie County has dropped in the last decade and is now well below both the national and state levels.”

In 2013, only 43.72 percent of youth were participating in religious activity one hour per week. According to Bierer, this drop means that fewer children are experiencing the benefits of organized religion. Specifically, the data showed that a child who participates in organized religion one hour or more per week are:

- More likely to get As and Bs
- Less likely to get Cs, Ds and Fs
- Less likely to consider suicide
- Less likely to be sad or depressed
- Less likely to think they’re a failure
- Less likely to use cigarettes, alcohol, or marijuana
- Less likely to engage in violence
- More likely to be honest with parents
- More likely to ask a parent for help with a personal problem

The definition of what constitutes a “religious activity” was not limited to a specific religion or a specific activity. “It just mattered that they went,” Bierer explained. “It’s really the best one-hour investment you can make in the life of a child.”

The Religiosity team of UnifiedErie has launched an awareness campaign called **Take Me to Worship** to educate moms, dads, and caregivers on the impact religion makes on the life of a child. More information about this campaign can be found at www.takemetoworship.org.