Middle school years are a time of big change for all kids and their families. It's easy for families to get disconnected as kids grow and other demands pull families apart. Healthy, strong family relationships are foundational to young people's growth, learning, and well-being. These relationships build strong social and emotional strengths that kids use throughout their lives.

YWCA Tri-County Area (YW3CA)'s Youth Empowerment Program offers an interactive workshop series called Keep Connected, a program through the Search Institute, for middle school parents and youth to help them prepare for the changes they will be facing as they enter into the teen years. Keep Connected helps all kinds of families build healthy, strong relationships through ideas, activities, and experiences.

The Keep Connected program is a two-generation model for engaging families by enhancing parent-child relationships as children enter middle school. It is based on Search Institute’s developmental relationships framework and research, and www.ParentFurther.com.

**Parenting adults who participate in this program will:**
- Understand the power of parent-child and other relationships in their child’s development.
- Examine ways they might adjust their relationship with their children as they grow through middle school and adolescence.
- Together with their teens, develop goals and concrete plans for keeping connected in their families amid the changes and challenges they will experience through adolescence.
- Build a network of support with other parenting adults who are also facing similar challenges.

**Young people who participate in this program will:**
- Learn the roles they play in adjusting their relationship with their parents as they grow up.
- Develop relationship-building skills that they can apply to many relationships as they grow up.
- Become more comfortable with doing shared activities with their parents that help strengthen family relationships and keep them connected through the teenage years.
- Together with their parent(s), develop goals and concrete plans for keeping connected in their families amid the changes and challenges they will experience through adolescence.

"I would definitely recommend this program to other families. It gave my daughter and I quality one on one time to learn and grow together in our relationship."

Parent Participant, 2017
PROGRAM DETAILS

This program is designed for middle schoolers and their guardians – students who are in 5th – 7th grades. Typically sessions include 6-classes, Keep Connected focuses on bolstering communication and connectedness between the parent/guardian and their student/child. Often offered with a meal, the session aims to:

- **Discover** five keys to powerful parent-teen relationships.
- **Learn** practical ways to show care, support, and challenge as they grow.
- **Try** ways to share power with your child, even when it’s not comfortable.
- **Explore** new possibilities for children and their futures.
- **Celebrate** your family's journey together into the teen years.

Keep Connected is structured around six 90-minute interactive classes, which are optimally preceded by a shared family meal. Each session will include a mix of learning and sharing activities for parents, for their middle schoolers, and for parents and middle schoolers together. Between classes, families will engage together in simple, fun activities that help them practice key ideas.

**As a participating organization you will:**
- Build capacity to more effectively reach and engage families with middle school students.
- Integrate a focus on strengthening family relationships into your family engagement efforts.
- Provide a valued experience to families thus enriching community wellbeing.

PROGRAM PRICING

Tiered Cost for Organizations:
- Tier 1 - $990 - Partially subsidized cost
- Tier 2 - $1200 - Direct cost of program
- Tier 3 - $1350 - True cost of program

Our Tiered Pricing is intended to represent the true costs related to the program experience and allow organizations to select the level of payment most appropriate for their financial circumstances. Each organization may freely choose to participate at any of the Tier levels.

YOUTH EMPOWERMENT PROGRAM DEPARTMENT

YWCA Tri-County Area adopts a trauma-informed care lens across all programs and events. Our mission is to eliminate racism, empower women, and promote peace, justice, freedom, and dignity for all. We have chosen education as the vehicle by which to fulfill its mission.

YW’s Youth Empowerment Program (YEP) has four full-time staff, all of whom are experienced youth educators working with youth in community settings. With over 20 years combined experience serving girls and youth, the YEP team is dedicated to providing inclusive, comprehensive social emotional education to youth from preschool to 12th grade and beyond.

All Youth Empowerment Program facilitators are trained by the Search Institute to facilitate the Keep Connected program as a tool for strengthening family relationships both at the YWCA and in the community.

QUESTIONS?

Please contact Kelly Earnshaw, Youth Empowerment Program Manager, at kearnshaw@ywcatricountyare.org or 610-323-1888 ext. 252.