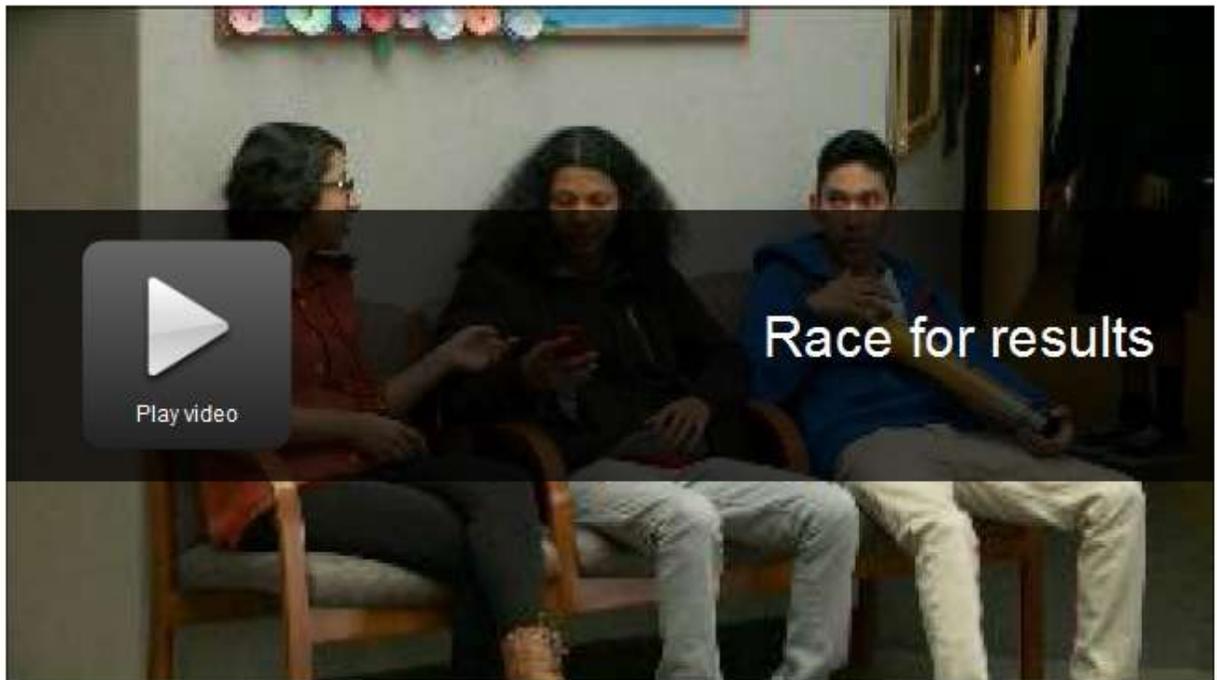




After-school program helps minority students succeed

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MIDVALE — Every day after school ends, more work begins for a group of kids in Midvale.

“Instead of just sitting down on the couch, they got you playing sports, doing homework,” said Aldair Lopez-Garcia.

For a few hours, Lopez-Garcia comes to the Boys and Girls Club of Midvale, a place he discovered about two years ago.

“Right now, I’m behind in credits,” Lopez-Garcia said. “And I heard about this program, the graduation alliance. And it’s a great program. It helps with kids that have dropped out of school or are behind in credits.”

He’s just one of many teens in the area taking advantage of the club’s after-school programs, which aim to give area youth a safe and productive way to spend their time.

“Typically, minority youth. Families that don’t have all the opportunities or resources that higher-income families in neighborhoods have,” said Iris Angell-Colvin, the teen director for the program.

According to a new study released by the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Kids Count Project, they’re a group faring far worse than their white counterparts in the state.

Using 12 indicators, ranging from whether or not kids attended preschool to teen pregnancy rates, the study found racial disparities across the country and in Utah that put white children far above minority groups in the state.

Based on the data collected, a score from 1-1,000 was given to each state. In Utah, white children scored a 712; Asian and Pacific Islander children scored a 627; Black children scored a 511; American Indian children scored 400; and Hispanic and Latino children scored a 370.

“It’s a huge, huge issue,” said [Terry Haven, Deputy Director of Voices for Utah Children](#). While not all that surprising to most, the study’s findings do help outline how to address the issue, according to Haven.

“We can do things about this,” Haven said. “Our numbers in Utah are small enough that anything we do to target teen pregnancies, or target minimum wage for parents, the preschool bill that we just passed in the Utah legislature, are going to have some positive effects on these results for the children.”

It’s an effect you can already see after just a few hours spent with the Boys and Girls Club members in Midvale, where a group of kids considered at risk of failing are now finding success.

“To see the kids that come through, who otherwise would be behind and wouldn’t have that place, and to see them excelling and going somewhere, it’s amazing,” Angell-Colvin said.