

# Manatee County, FL

## Demographic Information

- ★ Self-reported suburban area with population of 313,298
- ★ Poverty rate: 11.7%
- ★ Race and Ethnicity breakdown:

<b>Non-Hispanic White</b>	<b>84.0%</b>
<b>Non-Hispanic Black or African American</b>	<b>9.0%</b>
<b>Non-Hispanic Asian</b>	<b>2.0%</b>
<b>Non-Hispanic American Indian and Alaskan Native</b>	<b>1.0%</b>
<b>Non-Hispanic Other</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander</b>	<b>1.0%</b>
<b>Non-Hispanic Other race</b>	<b>1.0%</b>
<b>Non-Hispanic Multiracial (two or more races)</b>	<b>1.0%</b>
<b>Hispanic or Latino</b>	<b>2.0%</b>

- ★ Graduation Rate (%): 76.9%

## Overview

Many visitors come to Manatee county to see our beautiful beaches and to get away from the frosty winters up north. What most of these visitors do not know is that they are arriving in a place that views youth as a point of leadership, change, and inspiration. Any one can make a change no matter how old or young. Manatee believes in engaging elementary, middle, and high school kids in meaningful service. All ages, races, and abilities have the opportunity to be involved and are urged to do so. With 80,000 youth having taken part in one of the nations large youth volunteer initiatives providing almost ten million service hours since 1994 our youth have proven they can make a difference. It is so wonderful to see a community unafraid of accepting help from youth. Manatee County facilitates youth voice and expression by allowing youth to not only create their own projects, but also allowing them to lead and maintain them. There are groups like Youth life, Boy Scout, Girl Scouts, school civic groups like Key Clubs and 4H, after school programs like Boys and Girls Clubs, the YMCA, and Volunteer Services of Manatee County's The ManaTEEN Club, that have ongoing campaigns to attract youth to safe structured activities, encouraging healthy choices, and/or offering marketable skills. Manatee County has projects that help youth, the elderly, the poor, animals, our beaches, and even the forgotten.

With a project called tidy tombstones, created by youth and supervised by the ManaTEEN club; youth and adults clean gravesites that have not been properly taken care of. The Reef Rakers is a project that works with youth and adults to certify them in scuba so they can clean up debris on our coral reef systems and place and maintain reef balls in the Gulf of Mexico. The Reef Rakers was started by middle schoolers and now engages youth and adults. Younger children can even be bubble watchers on the dive boat which helps them ensure the safety of the divers. The Bay Buddies works with young children to maintain the Mangroves, Marshes, and wetlands. Big Breath and Bark, a project also created by youth, raised money to provide oxygen masks for cats and dogs on every fire truck in Manatee County. Home safety for seniors is a project that allows youth to work very closely with seniors as they conduct a safety assessment of the seniors home providing safety equipment where it is needed. Project Adopt-A-Grandparent also allows youth to work with seniors by assisting them with their yard work, grocery shopping, cleaning, and more. These projects are geared for youth and adults and are youth led, created, and sustained! There are many service projects for this community that engage youth, but there are also many programs that help youth. Our local government has donated \$67.1 million since 1991 to 974 programs that work to provide Child Care, Advocacy, Alternative Education, Teen Pregnancy, Screening, Evaluation, and Therapy, Mentoring Self-esteem, Services for chronically ill children, Medical & Health Related Services, Transportation, Therapeutic Foster

Homes, Education Awareness, Before After and Non School Day, Counseling, Community Networking, Parent Training, and more.

There are also various collaborations supporting youth and the programs that work to help youth in Manatee County. The Whole Child Project, The Government Collaborative Effort which includes United Way agencies, Manatee County Government Adult and Other Programs, and Manatee County Children's Services, there is also The Harlee Johnson Community Collaboration to name a few from the application. The motto found on the Commissions' Annual Plan sums it all up: "No one stands so tall as when they stoop to help a child". Manatee County strives to fulfill the Five Promises to youth by working with programs that support our youth to help them better their approaches and make a change. Our government and the residents of this wonderful community all agree that children are the future and they deserve our support, care, love, and attention. Youth deserve to have the Five Promises and Manatee County ensures that youth have them. That is why Manatee County should be one of America's 100 Best Communities for Young people to live in.

### **Commitment, Collaboration, Awareness, Data and Advocacy**

- ★ The United Way has also chosen "Strengthening Children & Families" as one of its four focused community solutions. This focus makes sure that "our children and families have the opportunity to live in our community at their optimal potential." They dedicated 51% of their funding in 2006-2007 to this initiative. 20/20 VISTA Vision is a collaborative of the Corporation for National & Community Service, Volunteer Services of Manatee County, and twenty community and faith-based organizations to work together to "transform" neighborhoods "improving lives, strengthening communities and fostering civic engagement through service and volunteering." This collaboration assigns twenty AmeriCorp\*VISTA's to the community organizations and was just awarded \$20000 by the Manatee County Foundation.
- ★ Volunteer Services of Manatee encourages the 700 registered not-for-profit agencies to engage youth as decision makers on their boards and within their organizations. The ManaTEEN Club was created by a 12 year old in 1994. It connects youth to meaningful volunteer opportunities and leadership training to help youth find and express their voice, and receives local and national recognition for its efforts. The ManaTEENs have become a vital resource in this hurricane-prone area. Over 300 ManaTEENs have Community Emergency Response Team certifications, having completed the necessary 100 hours of training, and run the Volunteer Reception Center when necessary.

### **Alliance Priorities: Dropout Prevention/School Readiness and the National Action Strategies**

- ★ A few years ago, Manatee County Public Schools faced a serious dropout problem. Annually, the district had a graduation rate of only 56 percent. It ranked eighth out of 67 Florida school districts for the highest dropout rates. Beginning in 1999, Manatee County Public Schools targeted students seriously at risk of dropping out, those who had already dropped out, and students with high truancy rates to use "Novel". This web-based educational product provided students with more course choices and flexibility while also encouraging and enhancing the student-teacher relationship in the classroom. Since implementing the system during the 1999-2000 school year, results have been dramatic. Dropout rates have fallen from 7.8% to 2.6%, and graduation rates have steadily climbed: from 56.2% to more than 75%. Manatee's LIFE program, "Learning Is For Everyone," is a customized computer based program for students who are in danger of dropping out. In addition to individualized instruction through computer tutorials, students receive on the job training locally. A job coach helps them manage their time between academics and work. The Manatee County school district has also committed increased numbers of social workers to help in reaching these students to intervene and prevent dropouts from increasing.
- ★ Providing the 40 Developmental Assets and the Five Promises are now mandatory components for programming that is supported by Manatee County Government Childrens Services, a dedicated tax millage. The millage is a one cent tax on items sold within Manatee County. These funds are disbursed to agencies serving youth through a competitive annual application. Training is also offered throughout the year to more than 150 organizations that provide comprehensive services for youth and families. The Whole Child Project, a program of the Lawton Chiles Foundation, provides an interactive website to connect residents in need of services with the agencies that can assist them with their individual needs. United Way 2-1-1 of Manasota hosts a call center to provide similar services. Just recently United Way 2-1-1 of Manasota, Whole Child Project, and the Human Services Information System merged databases to enhance the accessibility of information for youth and families.

## Resources Youth Receive: The Five Promises

- ★ **Caring Adults:** “The Mentoring Program” of the University of South Florida Sarasota Manatee works with two college students with disabilities who mentor twelve students with disabilities at a local high school who in turn mentor youth with disabilities at a local elementary school.
- ★ **Safe Places:** United Community Centers provide positive environments of education, culture, recreation and social opportunities for at-risk youth and families to combat negatives of poverty low self-esteem and illiteracy.
- ★ **A Healthy Start:** According to Florida CHARTS 91% of children entering kindergarten have met the immunization criteria. The Florida KidCare health insurance provides excellent coverage for little cost to the children of Manatee County.
- ★ **An Effective Education:** The Manatee County School District is ranked 171 of the nations largest 500 districts, by the National Center for Education Statistics. Florida has created a program that enables parents to send their children to Pre- Kindergarten for free for 300 hours. This helps better prepare these students for entry into the school system.
- ★ **Opportunities to Help Others:** Since 1994, more than 80,000 young people have participated in the ManaTEEN program, representing 68% of the teen population, contributing almost 10 million hours of service to benefit more than 700 local organizations and the Manatee County community-at-large. 42 youth led initiatives are sustained through ManaTEENs, addressing issues relating to health & human needs, the environment, animal welfare, hometown safety and disaster preparedness, response, and recovery.

## Media Issues/Challenges Identified:

Manatee County has one of the highest teen pregnancy rates in the state. Out of 67 counties, Manatee is the 17th highest; and, in births to teens 10 to 14 years of age, Manatee has the 13th highest rate. In 2006, Manatee County's Youth Risk Behavior Survey showed that one-third of 2,196 ninth-graders surveyed admitted that they had sexual intercourse. This was a 3 percent increase over the 2004 results. Of the ninth-graders surveyed, one out of 10 acknowledged having had sex with four or more partners. Another unfortunate statistic is that Manatee County has the 12th highest rate of newly-diagnosed HIV cases and the 12th highest rate of pediatric AIDS cases. This leads to another unfortunate truth, our county's approach to sex education, abstinence only, "just say no" is failing. Our teens, are continuing to engage in sexual misconduct while being uneducated about proper protection from sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy. The board of directors at Planned Parenthood of Southwest Florida, along with many Manatee County residents, has endorsed the concept of opening a health center in Manatee County that will be focused solely on prevention and education, including the means and ways to prevent the need for abortion. Their goal is to provide comprehensive, age appropriate educational curriculum and gynecological exams, cancer screenings, pregnancy testing and counseling (including adoption referral); and testing /treatment for sexually-transmitted infections, including HIV/AIDS. The Teen Pregnancy Prevention Partnership is a collaborative community effort to prevent teen pregnancy in Manatee County. The partnership engages youth, parents, faith leaders, community members, businesses, educators, health care providers and youth serving agencies. The plan focuses on the following major areas: Education and Training, Youth Development, Adolescent Sexual Health Services, High Need Community, Community Partnerships, and Public Awareness and Infrastructure. Over the past few years our pregnancy rates have dropped for instance last year the rate of pregnancies to mothers between the ages of fifteen and nineteen were 64.5 per 1000 reported while this year the rate is 61.4 per 1000. Although still high there was a decrease. Currently, we support young mothers and their children through various educational, emotional, and financial resources. Social workers provide case management and counseling services for all Manatee County middle and high school students who are pregnant and/or parenting who opt to enroll in the Teenage Parenting Program (TAPP). These services are funded by the School Board of Manatee County, the United Way of Manatee County, Inc., the Manatee County Children's Services Council, and private contributions. The Whole Child Project is now working with Manatee County School District's Teenage Parenting Program by providing Whole Child Advisors to work with over 160 teens who are attending school assisting them in designing a Whole Child Plan. The Whole Child believes that children need to attain physical, intellectual and spiritual well being, family attachment, a sense of hope, and live in an environment that encourages her/him to succeed. Through these initiatives and many more the community is helping these youth.