

THE WHITE HOUSE
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**MRS. LAURA BUSH HOSTS SECOND REGIONAL CONFERENCE ON
“HELPING AMERICA’S YOUTH”**

Panel Focus on Needs of Military Youth of Deployed Parents

Denver, CO - Mrs. Laura Bush delivered the keynote address today at the second regional conference on *Helping America’s Youth* at the University of Denver. The *Helping America’s Youth* initiative is a nationwide effort to raise awareness about the challenges facing our youth, particularly at-risk boys, and to motivate caring adults to connect with youth in three key areas: family, school and community. The two-day Denver conference featured a panel exploring the unique challenges facing youth whose parents serve in the military.

“At this important time in our nation’s history, we’re especially concerned about the children of our men and women in uniform. Military kids are resourceful and resilient, but the demands of military life can be great. But greater still is the dedication of millions of Americans to helping our young people succeed,” said Mrs. Bush.

According to the Department of Defense, there are approximately 189,000 children of deployed parents nationwide. Of the more than 17,000 military parents residing in the state of Colorado, there are nearly 6,000 children with a deployed parent. The panel of experts discussed how the usual support systems for civilian children are often not relevant to children in military families. By creating a community network for military youth and working with school staff to raise awareness of the special needs of military students, children can be fully supported before, during and after their parents are deployed.

The first day of the conference provided training on the *Community Guide to Helping America’s Youth*, a web-based guide to assist communities in coordinating resources and track effective programs to support youth. Nearly 150 community partners from Colorado, Kansas, New Mexico, Wyoming, Utah and Nebraska learned how to use the web-based guide. The guide offers communities a step-by-step approach for learning more about their community, including where youth-related challenges occur, which youth and families are most affected by those challenges, and what resources the community can use to support their youth.

On the second day of the conference, Mrs. Bush delivered the keynote address and joined local, regional, state leaders for a speaker series on the challenges facing youth and the successful methods making a positive difference in the lives of America’s youth.

In her remarks, Mrs. Bush highlighted the new *Helping America’s Youth* website: www.helpingamericasyouth.gov. The purpose of the website is to provide a one-stop resource center for information about the *Helping America’s Youth* initiative: the *Community Guide to Helping America’s Youth*, background information about the initiative, Mrs. Bush’s speeches, and video footage of previous *Helping America’s Youth* conferences.

The August 4, 2006 regional conference will be webcast live at www.helpingamericasyouth.gov. In addition, community leaders, parents, youth program practitioners and others will gather in their own communities across the region on August 4th to discuss issues impacting youth in their areas and view the *Helping America’s Youth* regional conference via webcast.

The first HAY regional conference was held in Indianapolis on June 5-6, 2006.

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