At Reclaiming Futures, we’re helping communities change the way we treat kids in the justice system with substance abuse problems.

We’ve learned how to make the reforms needed to help young people troubled with drugs, alcohol and crime. Not only is it possible—it works and it can be done in any community. Through Reclaiming Futures, thousands of young people are getting the support they need—more treatment, better treatment and beyond treatment—to turn their lives around.

We’ve shown it can be done. Here’s how:

In 10 communities around the nation, we brought together judges, juvenile justice professionals, treatment providers and community leaders to identify how juvenile courts can provide the substance abuse treatment teens need to help them be successful.

What we learned became the foundation for the six-step Reclaiming Futures model which combines justice reform, treatment improvement and community engagement.

Reclaiming Futures developed, tested and evaluated the model over a five-year period thanks to a $21 million grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF).

In 2006, the 10 communities that piloted the model reported significant improvements in the quality of juvenile justice and substance abuse treatment services, according to research conducted by the Urban Institute and the University of Chicago’s Chapin Hall Center for Children.

Change can happen where you live. Reclaiming Futures is now in 29 communities thanks to investments by RWJF; the Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust; The Duke Endowment; North Carolina Department of Public Safety Division of Juvenile Justice and the North Carolina Department of Public Safety’s Crime Commission; the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA); and the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP).

Communities selected to become site sites receive a toolkit, coaching, a comprehensive leadership program and membership in the Reclaiming Futures national network.

Communities that don’t become full Reclaiming Futures sites can still take advantage of technical assistance available from Reclaiming Futures staff, faculty judges, probation officers, treatment providers and community members.

To learn more about how you can bring Reclaiming Futures to your community and improve services and outcomes for young people, visit www.reclaimingfutures.org.
It’s time to build on the strengths of our kids, families and communities. To learn more, visit www.reclaimingfutures.org.

Many thanks to Judge Patricia Clark, Beth, Tiffany, Jacqueline and those for sharing comments about their experiences with Reclaiming Futures.

If we really want kids to succeed, we must recognize their strengths. Here’s what young people in juvenile justice might say about their strengths:

I can be redeemed. I am changing and growing. I may relapse, but I will keep trying. I make mistakes, but I learn from them. I am ready to try to repair the harm I’ve caused. I will do better if people work together on my behalf. I am more than a statistic, risk score, diagnosis, label or pathology unit. I want to contribute; just give me the chance. I have a family that deserves your support and respect. I am part of a culture; learn about it to help me grow. I want to surprise you with my ability to succeed. I am the future.

It has taken me a long time to get over some of the things that have happened to me. As I look back, now I know why. I think about all the kids in treatment who aren’t as lucky.

I look at myself and I like who I am. I don’t use drugs anymore. I feel smarter. I respect myself.

I sent some strangers into rehab and I brought my kids home. I hadn’t seen them in a long time.