

**Recommendations to the Community
Delivered at the
Youth-Adult Partnership Summit (YAPS)
February, 1999**

**Summary Report
from the
Youth Empowerment Project (YEP)**

**Resulting from Focus Groups conducted by teens among 15% of their
peers in Public High Schools
during Spring of 1998 in Ann Arbor, Michigan**

This packet contains:

- 1) Recommendations presented resulting from the Youth Empowerment Focus Groups.
- 2) Barriers to youth involvement in schools and the community identified in the focus groups (Youth to Youth, Youth to Adult, Youth to Community).
- 3) List of Action Teams organized at the YAPS to implement the Recommendations.
- 4) List of participants and sponsors.
- 5) Collective statement from the 1998-99 YEP Leadership Team.
- 6) Video Order Form – Available soon on YEP's web site.

Recommendations

In response to the barriers to youth involvement in schools and the community which were identified in the Youth Empowerment Focus Groups, we recommend:

Schools

- District-Wide communication and voting representation to the Ann Arbor School Board through a Youth Empowerment Senate
- Leadership Development and Support for youth to take initiative by Schools and the City
- Job/volunteer opportunities/Club Fair at each school in the Fall. These include inside school (clubs and volunteer opportunities) and outside (jobs and volunteer opportunities)
- Community Service-Learning Credit from Schools; and Spring Term project
- Student Organization buses
- Incentives for doing community service

News, A²

- Cross-District communication: Website, and Ann Arbor News Calendar and column for and partly by youth
- More recognition of teens in community service and leadership

City

- Leadership development and support to take initiative by Schools and the City
- Student Courts
- Incentives for doing community service
- Ongoing window of financial support for youth initiated programs through the City of Ann Arbor

Community-Wide

- Education Video on Youth Empowerment in Ann Arbor, and the focus groups project's subsequent recommendations to the community
- Youth-Adult Partnership Summit (Winter 1998-99) and Action Teams (Spring 1999)
- Hotline and Yellow Pages to connect teens and adults with organizations
- Community Service campaign and promotion in the schools and community
- Ann Arbor Career Fair
- More opportunities for youth in decision-making roles
- Youth-Adult partnership contracts to support youth initiated programs (through businesses, organizations)
- Support from the business community for youth initiated programs, as well as mentorship programs and job shadows

Summary of Barriers to Youth Involvement in Schools and the Community Identified in the Youth Empowerment Focus Groups Conducted Spring, 1998

Youth to Youth:

Some youth perceive the following as barriers set up by fellow peers:

- Youth feel as if there is a lot of discrimination between kids of different races and kids of different sexual orientations
- Teens find it difficult to include other kids in the community projects that they participate in
- Cliques
- Not enough positive role models
- Not enough help from peers to get involved
- Youth are often too caught up in their social status
- Teens do not want to do community service by themselves
- Community service isn't the "cool thing" to do

Youth to Adult:

Some youth perceive the following as barriers set up by adults:

- Youth feel that some adults dislike kids
- Many youth feel that they do not have good relationships with their parents
- Teens find it frustrating that no one regulates their groups
- Parents often do not have a balanced attitude (too strict or too loose)
- Youth feel that adults do not trust teens
- Kids feel disadvantaged by the way adults see them
- Adults expect rebellion from teens
- Youth feel stereotyped
- Adults do not support teens sufficiently
- Adults in high school and middle schools don't encourage or help kids find resources
- Adults in high schools and middle school put up barriers when kids try to do a project or ask for help
- Adults in school and the community don't ask kids their opinions or get their input in planning things they are then supposed to do

Youth to Community:

Some youth perceive the following as barriers set up in the community:

- Teens are turned off by the fact that some organizations don't get a lot done
- Teens feel that they are unwelcome and distrusted in some organizations
- Many youth do not know how to get involved
- Time constraints prevent kids from doing community service
- Teens feel that they are being pushed to be involved and do not like it
- Kids feel that there are other things that they would rather be doing
- No real reason to get involved
- There should be more lists of organizations available in the Ann Arbor area
- Community service possibilities are not readily visible to youth

- No incentives for getting involved
- No recognition for doing community service
- There are no means of communication for youth to youth, youth to adults, and youth to community
- Kids sign up for a community committee, and no one calls them or the meeting is scheduled during the school day
- Nothing is accomplished at a lot of community groups
- There is not enough interracial and intercultural interaction
- Homosexuality is a sensitive issue throughout the community
- Transportation is a problem; bus routes are limited
- There is discrimination in community activities
- Administrators foster racism in schools
- Not enough community service organizations come into schools and into classrooms
- Community service does not seem very easy to start or find
- The application process is intimidating towards youth
- Distribution of schools funds is not good
- The community holds many double standards for teens
- Lack of motivation in the part of youth as well as community

List of Action Teams

At the Ann Arbor Youth-Adult Partnership Summit held at the Clarion Hotel February 19-20, 1999, teens and adults formed Action Teams to address the Recommendations put forth from the focus groups. Their goals were to increase youth involvement in problem-solving, decision-making, and solution-implementation throughout the community.

- **Sexuality:** Identification of Issues and Resources
- **Sexual Violence:** Community High School Health Troupe-middle school education program (Existed for one year)
- **Violence Prevention:** Directory
- **Substance Abuse:** *Peer Intervention and Information Program (Now called **TRUE** (Teens Recognizing and Understanding Each Other) See the TRUE page on YEP's web site.
- **Family problems:** TASC (Teens Actively Seeking Communication and info resources)
- **Leadership Development:** *YES (Youth Empowerment **Senate**) - See the Senate page on YEP's web site.
 - Youth Section in the Ann Arbor News (Existed for one year before the Ann Arbor News decided to delete it)
 - Arbor Renaissance, Partnership w/Business Community (Existed for two years)
 - *YEP Video Production & Distribution – available soon on YEP's web site
 - *YEP Teen Yellow Pages* (Printed annually) – See YEP's web site.
 - *www.youthempowerment.com (info and bulletin board)
- **Community Service:** *SHARP CORPS (Students Helping and Reaching People), a weekly middle school service program - See the SHARP Corps page on YEP's web site.
 - *Communication Resources/Website – See the Teen Yellow Pages available on YEP's web site.
 - SLIC (Service Learning in Classrooms)

* indicates that the Action Team fostered a sustaining program that is still existent

1998-99 Youth Empowerment Leadership Team

Justin Hierta, Founder: Community
Eric Abrams: Huron
Bill Beuche: Greenhills
Eric Burnstein: Community
Jacquice Darden: Pioneer
Yobi Ekható: Huron
Alexis Fear: Huron
Rachel Frey: Community
Wenni Guo: Pioneer

Deanna Honeycutt: Pioneer
Lu Kong: Huron
Becky Kraft: Community
Melanie Larson: Greenhills
Javier Marcus: Huron
Michael Perez: New School
Albert Soberal: Huron
Daniel Stockton: Pioneer
Kyana Taylor: Pioneer

Coordinators

Sarah Cohen: University of Michigan
David Halman: University of Michigan

Jill Mason: YouthLink
Tiffany Williams: Community Action
Network

Project Advisors

Neal Berlin: City of Ann Arbor
Martha Bloom: Ann Arbor Area Community
Foundation
Barry Checkoway: University of Michigan
Judy Conger: Community High School
Cheryl Elliott: Ann Arbor Area Community
Foundation

Barb Greiner: Community Education and
Recreation
Jane Johnson: Ann Arbor Public Schools
Eileen Ryan: City of Ann Arbor
Miguel Thornton: Huron High School
Elena Weissman: Ann Arbor Youth Volunteer
Corps

Funders

Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation's Youth Council
City of Ann Arbor
DO SOMETHING! Foundation
University Bank and Kids B'Cause

With the Power of Youth, Success is Inevitable

This is a collective statement from the 1998-99 Youth Empowerment Project Leadership Team, written after completion of the focus groups for their Recommendations to the Community presented at the February, 1999 Youth-Adult Partnership Summit.

Throughout the Youth Empowerment Project, “With the Power of Youth, Success is Inevitable” has been our theme song. We, the youth of the community have a lot to offer. We do not know what cannot happen, and for this reason we approach problems and ideas with an energy that belongs only to people who still believe that nothing is impossible.

We are not burdened by having to work for our livelihood. Anything that we participate in is something that we believe strongly in. We are not participating for the money or the credit; we are involved because we are interested.

The Youth Empowerment Project is a testimony to the idea that valuable learning takes place outside of the four walls of the classroom. We have learned that some things cannot be taught, they can only be experienced. NO one can teach an adult how to relate to a youth and no one can teach a youth how to relate to an adult. Any theory is useless to a person who is never given the opportunity to test it out.

From being involved in the community we gain a lot of valuable life experience that will be important when we are the adults and entrusted with the world. In short, the Youth Empowerment Project is proof that the benefits of empowering youth are infinite and the negatives are nonexistent.