



Youth Leadership

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by Cheryl Asmus, Ph.D., Coordinator, Family and Youth
Institute

The involvement of youth in today's society and the attitudes and beliefs around that involvement may well be one of today's most important resource challenges. In February of 2002, a national conversation on youth development was held in Washington, D.C. A total of 1,200 youths and adults from 600 organizations came together to discuss the issues involving youth today and to make recommendations that will improve communities by leveraging strengths of both youth and adults.

The two-to-four hour conversations took place not only at the national level, but also in 48 of the 50 States. The conversations provided a mechanism to give youth the opportunity to voice what it is they cared about and to use these findings to impact policy at the local, state and national levels. The key findings of the conversations were:

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An Insider's View of the Greeley Youth Commission

by Stephanie Ironmonger,
Former Member, Greeley Youth
Commission

Go-Pedding, otherwise known as motorized scootering, has been a part of my life since I moved into my new neighborhood four years ago. Being able to ride down streets and through empty lots was a surprisingly great way to relieve the stress of high school.

About a year ago, this liberty was threatened by ideas to ban motorized scooters in the city of Greeley. That's when the City Council came to us (the Greeley Youth Commission) asking for advice. It started out with the question, "Should we ban motorized scooters?" With a unanimous vote opposing this proposed question, we were then asked to come up with an alternative.

After in-depth meetings set aside specifically for this issue, we were able to present the City Council with three ideas: an informational brochure on scooter safety, a videotaped public service announcement on scooter safety and courtesy, and a safety event called "Ped-Fest." With the Council on board,
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Invitation to dialogue

What issues and concerns would
you like to see addressed?

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What Are the Impacts of Youth Service and Leadership?

by Elizabeth Garner, Coordinator, County Information Services, Cooperative Extension, Colorado State University

Youth service and volunteerism is at a record high,¹ and interest in youth action is growing, driven by a general sense that involvement is good for young people and for society. It is difficult to argue with the positive impact that participation in community action can have on the individual development of young people. However, the impact of young people's participation on the communities where they focus their service effort is more difficult to measure, less well researched, yet gaining more research interest. By highlighting some youth service facts, the impacts youth are making on communities can be examined along with the impact service and leadership have on young people themselves.

Encouraging Youth Service Facts²

- ❑ Almost 83 percent of incoming freshman at UCLA in 2000 reported frequent or occasional volunteer work, compared to 81 percent in 1999, and a low of 66 percent in 1989. Community service requirements for graduation from many high schools contribute to this rise, which has increased from 23.2 percent to 28.2 percent since the item was first asked in 1998. (*UCLA/Higher Education Research Institute Annual Freshmen Survey, 2001*)
- ❑ Seventy-two percent of young adults say they have donated money, clothes, or food to a community or church organization in the past couple of years. (*Center for Democracy & Citizenship, 2002*)
- ❑ Seventy percent of young people aged 15-21 have participated in activities to help strengthen their community at some point in their lives. (*Do Something/Princeton Survey Research, 1998*)
- ❑ The number of school districts with community service requirements for students has doubled over past decade from 13 percent to 30 percent. (*USDED, 1999*)

- ❑ Teens are nearly four times more likely to volunteer if they are asked. (*Independent Sector/Gallup, 1996*)

Opportunities for Action

- ❑ An overwhelming majority (93 percent) of America's 60 million young people believe they can make a difference in their communities, but fewer than one in five civic organizations across the nation are involving young people extensively in their work. (*Do Something Young People's Involvement Survey /Princeton Survey Research, 1998*)
- ❑ Only 37 percent of American adults believe today's children, once grown, will make the world a better place. The majority of American adults (61 percent) are convinced that today's youth face a crisis in their values and morals, look at teenagers with misgiving and trepidation, and view them as undisciplined, disrespectful, and unfriendly. Even younger children are widely viewed as spoiled and out of control, not friendly, helpful or engaging. (*Public Agenda Survey for the Ad Council and Ronald McDonald House Charities, 1997*)
- ❑ Only 20 percent of young people perceive that adults in the community value youth. (*Search Institute Survey of Youth 6th to 12th Graders, 1997*)

Youth Service Impact on Communities^{3 4}

- ❑ Two-thirds of adults who volunteer today (44 percent of adults) began volunteering their time when they were young.
- ❑ Adults who began volunteering as youth are twice as likely to volunteer as those who did not volunteer when they were younger; they are also more generous in giving money. When parents volunteer, their children are more likely to volunteer later in life.
- ❑ High school volunteering recently reached the highest levels in the past 50 years. The years from 1992 to 1996 showing the highest rate of youth volunteering at 67 percent.

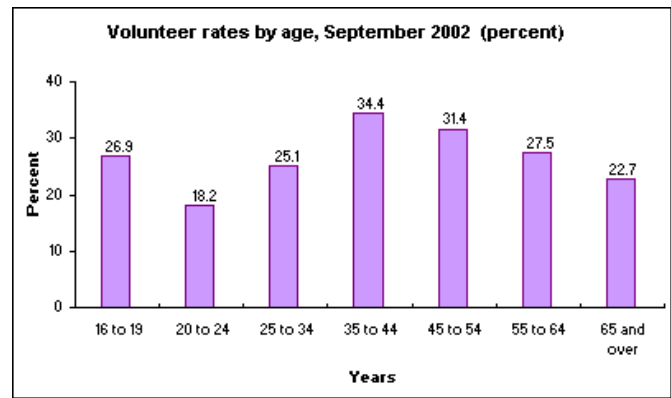
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Youth Service & Leadership Impacts *continued from page 2*

- Nearly 60 percent of adults who also volunteered in their youth had parents who volunteered and 70 percent of adults who volunteered in their youth now volunteer with their children.
- Adults who raised money, participated in student government, belonged to a youth group or were active in a religious organization in their youth also display higher levels of giving and volunteering.
- Teenagers volunteer 2.4 billion hours annually – worth \$ 34.3 billion to the US economy. (*Independent Sector/Gallup, 1996, and 1999 hourly value*)
- The value of service carried out on National Youth Service Day (the largest service event in the world, sponsored by Youth Service America in partnership with *Parade* magazine) exceeds \$171 million. (*Youth Service America estimates based on Independent Sector value of service, 1999*)
- Youth service has led to economic development, physical and environmental improvements, systems change and has increased community and social capital according to analysis of case studies by the Forum For Youth Investment.⁵

Impact of Service and Leadership on Young People⁶

- Youth who volunteer just one hour or more a week are 50 percent less likely to abuse drugs, alcohol, cigarettes, or engage in other destructive behavior. (*Search Institute, 1995*)
- Teens say the benefits received from volunteering include learning to respect others, learning to be helpful and kind, learning to understand people who are different from them, developing leadership skills, becoming more patient, and better understanding good citizenship. (*Independent Sector/Gallup, 1996*)
- Teens rank volunteering, along with the environment and eating healthy, as top three activities they consider “cool.” (*Teenage Marketing and Lifestyle Study, 1998*)
- Youth action leads to improved attitudes and behaviors related to school and work, as well as increases in academic achievement. Service learning is associated with gains in basic skills and grade point average among elementary, middle and high school students. Youth who participate in community service experiences linked with their school are more likely to attend regularly, ask questions during class, develop problem-solving skills and complete assignments.⁷
- Youth action has a positive effect on interpersonal skills and social development. Positive developmental outcomes such as having a sense of respect for others have been correlated with opportunities for young people to participate in decision-making roles inside of community program.⁸
- Youth service decreases the likelihood of participation



Source: <http://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2002/dec/wk5/art01.htm>

in risky behaviors. Youth action is featured in the literature on teen pregnancy as a powerful preventive intervention. Middle and high school age participants in programs like the Teen Outreach Program, a rigorously evaluated program with an emphasis on community involvement and service, were less likely to engage in behaviors that lead to pregnancy or delinquency.⁹

- Research by ChildTrends shows that programs combining sex education and community volunteering have participants who are less likely to be sexually active and become pregnant than teens not involved in these programs. Programs must be long-term and intensive. Results have been better with girls than with boys. (*The Futurist, 2003, 37, 16*)

¹ http://www.ysa.org/news_event/press_release.cfm?pr=St&page=1

² http://www.ysa.org/news_event/press_release.cfm?pr=St&page=1

³ http://www.ysa.org/news_event/press_release.cfm?pr=2011n_a

⁴ http://www.ysa.org/news_event/press_release.cfm?pr=St&page=1

⁵ <http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/fyi/2.2/casestudies.pdf>

⁶ http://www.ysa.org/news_event/press_release.cfm?pr=St&page=1

⁷ <http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/fyi/2.2/fall2002faqs.htm>

⁸ <http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/fyi/2.2/fall2002faqs.htm>

⁹ <http://www.forumforyouthinvestment.org/fyi/2.2/fall2002faqs.htm>

Social Change *continued from page 1*

- Involve youth directly in creating policy and making decisions at all levels of government and society
- Seek multicultural acceptance and unity for all families, lifestyles, and settings
- Provide safe and inviting environments for a variety of learning strategies
- Attract and retain exceptional people to the field of youth development
- Build collaboration among youth organizations and across government programs impacting young people. (Source: <http://www.4hcentennial.org>)

Adolescence is a long period that leaves many youth in our society with few opportunities to take part in meaningful activities. It is a time when youth are no longer children, yet are not considered adults. It is difficult to expect young people to feel connected to a community that does not treat them as full members. The increase in youth

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What Do Young People Want and Need?

by Katherine Kohnen, Extension Specialist, Colorado State University Cooperative Extension

4-H began a century ago as an educational program for the nation's rural youth. Today, 4-H joins many other youth organizations in meeting the needs of young people and engaging them in positive youth development experiences. These experiences spring from the belief that young people are regarded as resources to be developed rather than as problems to be managed.

The year 2002 marked the centennial of 4-H and its commitment to helping shape youth and communities. In looking to the next century, 4-H wants to identify what youth and adults need, so it can further develop its programs and continue its motto of "Making the Best Better." The National Conversation on Youth Development in the 21st Century, created to answer those questions and build a road map for the next generation of 4-H'ers, took place at the local, state and national levels. Gatherings of youth and adults representing many different youth serving organizations and agencies, the conversations aimed to explore the important actions needed to support positive youth development efforts in communities. Over 1,000 individuals, 60 percent youth, participated in 43 county conversations across Colorado. The priorities they identified were summarized to use as the starting point for the Colorado State Conversation on Youth Development.

At the Colorado State Conversation, held in Denver, February 3, 2002, three areas were prioritized:

Involve youth in decision making. Already a strength of 4-H, but with room for improvement, the area of youth leadership is a focus for 4-H as it searches for new opportunities to enhance the roles youth play in decision-making. 4-H also promotes youth involvement in community decision-making opportunities such as serving on school boards, recreation committees, fair boards and more.

Expand mentor programs. Youth need to be involved with caring, guiding adults who model decision-making roles and behaviors. Adult mentors need instruction, training and support to learn better ways to teach and work with young people.

Highlight positive examples of youth in the media. Many youth felt they were stereotyped as non-communicative, anti-societal, and possessing violent tendencies. Youth want the media to find more examples of diverse, high achieving youth who are accomplishing great work in their communities. Within this broader topic, 4-H youth want better publicity for 4-H youth development programs. 4-H needs to be represented as keeping up with times, being innovative, offering projects relevant to young people where ever they live, especially

information that highlights diversity and cultural inclusion.

The resulting recommendations are built on the reality of day-to-day experiences, expanded through give-and-take from thousands of conversations, and they include:

1. Empower youth to lead and let youth have active roles in local government
2. Encourage the media to promote positive publicity of youth activities
3. Design mentoring opportunities for youth
4. Bring together youth councils, government and businesses to cooperate and create a strategic plan for Colorado youth development a strategic plan
5. Explore ways that youth can earn academic credit for 4-H work, community service, and extracurricular activities
6. Improve youth activities with internships, cost effective activities to promote work and life skills
7. Provide transportation for youth participation and additional funding to support youth programs.

Additional information is available at <http://www.4hcentennial.org/>.

Social Change *continued from page 3*

depression and suicide, along with youth violence, are some consequences of this disconnection.

This issue starts with a first-hand report of a youth that serves in a leadership position in a city government. She describes how the experience has made her more aware of the community she lives in and the impact she can have on it. A powerful finding made by this young leader is that her initial motivation to be in this position was to increase her popularity, and she ended up increasing her knowledge and connectivity with her community. In other words, her behavior changed her attitudes.

The next article cites some specific findings from survey research of the impacts of youth service and leadership in communities. The data shows that volunteerism, service and inclusion of youth in governmental decision-making results in adults who continue to perform in more action-oriented, civic-minded ways.

Next, findings from a national conference on youth development revealed that youth can make important contributions and want to be included in more community decision-making. A list of recommendations is included in this article on practical steps communities and agencies can take to include youth in the decision-making and social chain in the world we all share.

Last, a new curriculum created by the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, in partnership with the National 4-H Council helps communities and agencies address some of the perceptual barriers of adult/youth partnerships and offer techniques on how these can be addressed and broken down.

Youth - Adult Partnerships Benefit Participants and Communities

by Dale Leidheiser, Extension Specialist, Colorado State University Cooperative Extension

Creating and sustaining meaningful youth-adult partnerships can be a challenge even when youth and adults have the best of intentions. How can youth and adults possibly partner on topics of mutual interest when their perspectives, skills and interests are so different? A new curriculum created and piloted by the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development (ICCYD) and the National 4-H Council aims to increase the effectiveness of youth and adults working together. The curriculum is part of a large approach to building community processes and examining community assets, creating community visions and plans, and generating sustained community change.

Increasingly, research shows the benefits of youth-adult partnerships on both personal and organizational levels. What do these benefits look like for youth and adults working together? A study sponsored by the Innovation Center and National 4-H Council (Innovation Center, 2001) found that young people can be exemplary members of governance bodies. The mutual contributions of youth and adults can result in synergy that propels decision-making groups to greater innovation and productivity. Adults benefit from working with youth by experiencing young people as legitimate, crucial contributors. Adults also tend to develop an enhanced commitment to and increased energy around the organization involved, and they feel more effective and confident in working with and relating to youth. Finally, adults gain a better understanding of the needs and concerns of youth after working in successful partnerships with youth.

Adults can develop better partnerships and collaborations with youth if they understand the different perspectives of their partners. One exercise in the ICCYD curriculum guides adults through a process of identifying qualities that they believe challenge young people in youth/adult partnerships. Through this process, adults say that youth possess the following qualities: saturated by information overload, black-and-white thinking, limited resources, lack of experience, lack of patience for planning, lack of focus and commitment, needing to be heard and accepted, lack of time commitment, trouble understanding relevance, and little follow-through.

Youth also go through the process of identifying adults' greatest challenges to effectively working in partnerships as, and they commonly assign the following qualities to adults: difficulty admitting when they are wrong, an attitude of "it's easier to do it themselves," inflexibility, a belief that age equals power, unrealistic expectations of youth, an inability to handle youth growing up, an emphasis on winning, an appearance of being in it for themselves, higher involvement with adults than youth, and inability to remember their own childhoods.

Colorado 4-H agents, members and leaders are testing the new ICCYD curriculum to raise their awareness of the challenges and benefits of working together in youth-adult partnerships. To build understanding and respect among and between participants, youth and adults split into parallel workshops to identify the challenges and benefits of working with the opposite group. Adults review fundamental child development theory in relation to cognitive, social, physical and emotional development for the age group with whom they will work. This knowledge helps adults keep realistic expectations of youth and reduces frustration among all participants.

Following the segregated exercise, youth and adults are reunited, and the challenges and benefits of working with one another are shared. Activities that help them to negotiate expectations, improve facilitation skills, address conflicts, identify roles in groups and establish boundaries complete the curriculum.

This curriculum is designed to produce benefits for both the individuals and organizations involved and their communities. It strives to produce active, contributing citizens, developing a pool of future leaders with skills, experience and commitment and leaving adults and youth with a sense of satisfaction, accomplishment and increased understanding of one another.

Reference

Youth In Decision-Making: A Study on the Impacts of Youth on Adults and Organizations, Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, a Division of National 4-H Council, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2001

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Greeley Youth Initiative helped us reach out to the public in a forum and also recruited assistance from Go-Ped vendors as well as the Knights of Columbus. Just a few months later, the "Ped-Fest" event was held and was a great success.

This issue was probably one of the more emotional ones for me. A lot of times discussions can become quite heated and long. This scenario is not very common, though. Generally, the meetings are fairly laid back. There is always a lot of laughing, but the work still gets done. Because of our age (11 through 18), we are able to voice our opinions and help with issues, but still have fun.

Sometimes, when I am sitting at meetings, I think that there are a lot of kids in Greeley, and I marvel at being one of 11 chosen to represent those kids. It feels good to know that my voice counts. Politics has always

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been in my sights, and I love the taste I am getting of it now. Sometimes, around friends, I get a big head and do a little bit of name dropping like, "I know the Mayor Pro-Tem," or "Hey, did you see me in that commercial?" Plus, I can talk about issues that most of my friends don't know about. I get a feeling of pride and accomplishment, particularly when I'm able to say something like, "Hey, you know that skate park? We had a part in that."

Part of the job of the youth commissioners is to go to our friends and gather their opinions - make sure their voices are heard. Granted, the issues we address are not usually the main thing on their minds. When they are aware of the issues, they offer input if I need it.

I got involved with the commission because my best friend had been a member, and I was jealous that she had something I couldn't share. After she urged me to join, I applied. I had a disappointing first interview, and I was notified that I had not made the commission. But, the second time around, I was prepared. This time, when I got the call, I knew I had made it. I had invaded my best friend's "turf."

Of course, that's not the reason I gave my parents. I told them the "colleges want well-rounded individuals" speech and now, that has become true. I have stayed because of the appeal that it adds to my resume. My work

went from a minor, non-important part of my life, to a quite impressive one.

Serving on the Greeley Youth Commission has developed my maturity and made me more aware of my surroundings. Before, I never voiced my opinion - at least not to people who could make anything of it.

The advantages are more than political, they are also social. There are great people on the commission from different schools that I might not have met otherwise. It's not all sunshine, though. When you put massive amounts of energy into something and then it doesn't pay off in the end, it can be very harsh. We had several meetings based around a teen center. Around this time, the City Council had put together a quality-of-life board to allocate money to specific projects. We pitched an idea for a centralized teen center to keep kids off the street, and were left disappointed when it wasn't chosen as a part of the plan. Now, however, a teen room is slated to be put in our local recreation center, which is a step in our direction.

I am sure that most youth commissioners would agree - it is a unique experience and the positives outweigh the negatives. As for me, my final term just finished up in May when I graduated. I plan to apply for an adult ex-officio position on the youth commission and continue in a youth leadership role.