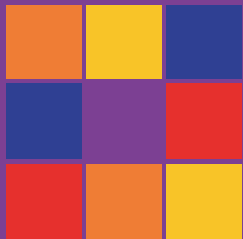


**LEADERSHIP,
VOLUNTEERISM
AND GIVING**

**A Longitudinal Study
of Youth Grantmakers
(1993-2003)**

Submitted by
Karin E. Tice, PhD



Acknowledgements

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Special thanks go to study participants, particularly those who took time to be interviewed. Adult Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) advisors who have kept in touch with youth grantmakers have been an invaluable resource to this study.



This document presents the results of a 10-year (1993 to 2003), longitudinal study of youth grantmakers from the Michigan Community Foundations' Youth Project. MCFYP has been implemented by Michigan community foundations with the support of the Council of Michigan Foundations. The study has been conducted by Formative Evaluation Research Associates of Ann Arbor, Michigan. CMF contracted with FERA starting in 1991 to evaluate multiple efforts designed to support community foundation growth and involve youth in philanthropy. FERA is an independent evaluation group working with nonprofits to strengthen their organizations and initiatives for over 30 years.

The study's key purpose is to: **contribute to our understanding of the long-term effects of engaging youth in grantmaking on their volunteering, giving and leadership activities.** More broadly, the study is designed to answer the question: How did the Michigan Community Foundations' Youth Project make a difference in young people's lives? Community foundations started involving youth in grantmaking in 1988. This is the first study to look at outcomes for former youth grantmakers as they become young adults. It is intended to be useful to established and emerging youth grantmaking initiatives worldwide.

Background information about the MCFYP is presented first, followed by an overview of the study. Next, the heart of the document focuses on the value of serving on a Youth Advisory Committee and how engaging youth in philanthropic activities has affected their levels of volunteerism, giving, leadership activities, and their lives in general. Finally, strategic opportunities are offered, followed by the conclusion.





Preface

Fourteen years ago in Michigan, an effort to permanently integrate youth into the infrastructure of community foundation grantmaking began when Dr. Russell G. Mawby, then president of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, asked, “How can community foundations involve youth in their work?” Today, Michigan community foundations have 86 Youth Advisory Committees actively engaged in local grantmaking. Michigan’s youth grantmakers have traveled far and wide to speak at conferences, present their experiences to youth and adults thinking about starting an initiative, and hold trainings for new and emerging youth philanthropy initiatives.

Thirty states now report having one or more community foundation youth grantmaking efforts. (Go to www.youthgrantmakers.org for a national database of youth philanthropy initiatives.) Regional or statewide community foundation-based initiatives are at different stages of development and maturity in Arkansas, California, the greater National Capital region (Washington, DC), Kansas, Indiana, Michigan, and New York. Initiatives have also developed in Australia, Bosnia, Canada, Great Britain, and Northern Ireland. Involving youth in community problem-solving through grantmaking has become a rapidly spreading movement, with youth taking the lead.

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“When we invest in the development of today’s young people, we are really investing in the development of the next generation, and the next, and the next. The ripples spread out from our investment—and where they will end we can never know.”

— **Dr. Russell G. Mawby**

Chairman Emeritus of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation

Executive Summary

Leadership, Volunteerism and Giving: A Longitudinal Study of Youth Grantmakers (1993-2003)

Michigan Community Foundations currently have 86 Youth Funds with combined assets of over 40 million (\$40,581,576) overseen by an equal number of permanent Youth Advisory Committees (YACs). Through this W.K. Kellogg Foundation funded initiative (1988 to 2003), youth have become integrated into community foundations' grantmaking infrastructure. Implemented by Michigan community foundations with the support of the Council of Michigan Foundations (CMF), about 1,500 youth participate annually with a total of 9,000 participants and alumni to date. Youth grantmakers assess community needs, develop requests for proposals, review proposals, evaluate their grantmaking efforts, engage in fund development and stimulate youth involvement in service. Youth grantmaking efforts now exist in thirty states in the U.S. and in five other countries, including Australia, Bosnia, Canada, Great Britain and Northern Ireland (www.youthgrantmakers.org).

Formative Evaluation Research Associates (FERA) surveyed the same youth eight times during a 10-year period to understand the effects of serving as youth grantmakers had on their volunteering, giving and leadership activities as young adults. Case studies of 11 youth grantmakers were also conducted.

Volunteering Time and Talents (page 10)

Serving on a Youth Advisory Committee is a volunteer activity for youth ages 13 to 17. Former youth grantmakers continue to volunteer their time and talents throughout their young adult years (ages 20 to 29) with a total of 94% (n=118) volunteering in 2003. Comparing two age cohorts with Michigan and national data shows significantly higher levels of volunteering among former youth grantmakers. Only 7% of Michigan's young adults ages 18 to 24 and 15% of those ages 25 to 29 volunteered in 2002.¹ Fully 88% (ages 20 to 24) and 72% (ages 25 to 29) of former youth grantmakers volunteered in 2003. Compared to the national level of volunteering,² that of former youth grantmakers ages 20 to 25 (88%) is more than double the rate for young adults ages 15 to 25 nationally (42%).

Philanthropic Giving (page 14)

As youth grantmakers move into young adulthood and their incomes rise, so do their levels of giving. A total of 96% (n=118) of former youth grantmakers gave in 2003 as compared to 52% of YAC members in 1993. The median gift in 2003 was \$707. Compared to the 74% of Michigan young adults who gave in 2002, 88% of former youth grantmakers gave in 2003 (both ages 18 to 24). The difference was smaller for young adults ages 25 to 29 (70% for Michigan adults as compared to 76% for former youth grantmakers).



¹ Wilson, Mark. (2002). Michigan Giving and Volunteering: Key findings from a 2002 survey of Michigan residents. The Non-profit Michigan Project. Michigan State University. Available: <http://www.ssc.msu.edu/~nmp/reports.htm>.

² Keeter, Scott and Cliff Zukin, Molly Andolina, and Krisa Jenkins (2002). Civic and Political Health of the Nation: A Generational Portrait. University of Maryland, MD: The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement.

“Serving on the Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) was the number one experience that shaped that period of my life. Everything I am doing now has been influenced by that experience. I wouldn’t be where I am today if it hadn’t been for my YAC experience.”

— YAC grantmaker, 12 years later

Serving as Leaders (page 16)

Youth had the opportunity to serve in leadership roles while serving on Youth Advisory Committees. A decade later, they are still serving as leaders. Fully 77% of the 2003 respondents (n=118) had served in a leadership position in their job, religious organization or community within the past 12 months. Nearly all (95%) are still using the skills they learned while serving as youth grantmakers. Fully one-quarter (31 out of 118) of former youth grantmakers have served in leadership roles in the nonprofit and public sectors as community foundation or nonprofit board members, public servants, members of community taskforces or resources for youth grantmaking initiatives. Almost all believe that, by working with groups of individuals, they can make a difference (66% responded a great difference and 30%, somewhat of a difference). These young people have the experiences, skills and attitudes to serve in leadership roles, and they are actively doing so.

Life Choices (page 18)

The case studies shared within this report provide rich details illustrating how 11 individuals’ life choices have been influenced by their experiences as youth grantmakers. Philanthropy and the nonprofit sector are clearly gaining some new leaders with a wealth of experience. Communities are gaining young adults who care enough to give back and have the skills and knowledge to be the next generation of community leaders. They appreciate the value that working with a diverse group of people brings to problem solving. They also have experience working with a wide variety of adults and peers. They understand the value of involving youth because they have experienced what it means to be “at the table” to have their voices heard. These case studies document the ways in which former youth grantmakers are contributing to their communities: mentoring a child, leading a nonprofit, serving on a local board or state-level commission, teaching and inspiring the next generation of youth grantmakers, or bringing the vision of youth grantmaking to a community foundation that has not yet experienced youth involvement.

Strategic Opportunities (page 20)

Strategic opportunities for community foundations, nonprofits and funders were developed by Formative Evaluation Research Associates (FERA) with input from youth grantmakers, adult advisors and Council of Michigan Foundations (CMF) staff. They include:

- Strengthening the connections between former youth grantmakers and the community foundation field.
- Developing ways to link former youth grantmakers with nonprofits as board members.
- Establishing a website to link former youth grantmakers to the next level of involvement in the nonprofit sector and the field of philanthropy. This website could also be used to connect former youth grantmakers with each other worldwide.
- Developing materials describing career paths and opportunities in the field of philanthropy and the nonprofit sector. This could be a valuable resource for current and former youth grantmakers, as well as for young people in general.
- Establishing a mentoring component and internship opportunities to keep former youth grantmakers—interested in pursuing or exploring careers in the field of philanthropy—strategically involved.

Background

In the late 1980s, CMF and its community foundation members developed a proposal to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation's Philanthropy and Volunteerism programming area for the Michigan Community Foundations' Youth Project. The goals were: 1) stimulate community foundation growth and expand the areas served by community foundations in Michigan so that every citizen would have access to a local philanthropic vehicle, 2) strengthen the capacity of existing community foundations, and 3) involve youth in community foundation grantmaking through endowed youth funds to be permanently overseen by YACs. To support these goals, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation has made a long-term investment (1988 to present), which includes funding for challenge grants, technical assistance, leadership training, scholarships, minigrants, technology support, team-up grants, statewide conferences, evaluation and dissemination activities (see www.growingcf.org for information and lessons learned about community foundation development). This entire initiative was known as the Michigan Community Foundations' Youth Project.

A challenge grant (1991 to 1997) of up to \$1 million per community foundation from W.K. Kellogg Foundation required \$2 of local funds to be raised and placed in a permanent unrestricted or field-of-interest fund in a community foundation, to leverage \$1 from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Kellogg monies were permanently endowed in a youth field-of-interest fund. Community foundations had to establish YACs comprised of at least 50% youth members (most are now 100% youth) to advise on grants from the youth fund, forever. This challenge grant was instrumental in integrating youth into the fabric of community foundation life.

Dissemination efforts occurred through: 1) presentations made by Michigan youth and adults at national conferences, 2) visiting community foundations and other groups interested in starting similar efforts, 3) hosting a national youth philanthropy conference, and 4) providing networking and learning opportunities to individuals and groups interested in starting a youth grantmaking initiative. Ongoing evaluation provided an opportunity to learn about and widely share effective practices, outcomes, challenges and lessons learned.

Youth are now part of the permanent community foundation philanthropic infrastructure in Michigan. This was not always true. In 1988, Michigan was served by 33 community foundations and one geographic component fund or "affiliate." While community foundations may have made youth-related grants, young people were not involved in that process. Michigan is now served by 65 community foundations and 33 geographic component funds.³ A total of 86 youth funds are overseen by an equal number of youth grantmaking advisory committees. Their combined assets in 2003 were over \$40 million with nearly \$2.5 million in grants given in that year alone. Annually, around 1,500 high school age youths (with 500 being new YAC members) are involved in YACs with a total of 9,000 youths to date. As of 2003, about one-third of Michigan's community foundations (19 out of 56) had young people serving as voting members on their boards. A statewide Michigan Community Foundations' Youth Project Committee oversees all of the training opportunities and new initiatives, and furnishes facilitators and trainers.



³ A total of 53 community foundations participated in the W.K. Kellogg Foundation Challenge.

“Through the YAC, youth are active, contributing members of their communities. Youth are supported to be at the table and their abilities to develop solutions and give feedback on problems are recognized.”

— Former youth grantmaker

Young people become involved in grantmaking through YACs permanent community foundation committees. Michigan YACs are comprised of youth, ages 13 to 17. Although YACs may vary in size depending on their organizations, the average size for a YAC is about 20 youth members. These committees have one or two primary adult advisors and involve other adults as resources when needed (see Tice 2003 and Garza and Stevens 2002 for more information on effective practices).

Michigan Youth Advisory Committees:

- ***Conduct periodic youth needs and/or asset assessments in their communities.*** Once high priority needs have been identified, YACs often invite experts on the topics to help youth grantmakers better understand the related issues.
- ***Engage in grantmaking.*** YACs develop requests for proposals, review grant proposals and make recommendations for funding, usually generated from the income of a permanently endowed youth fund in keeping with community foundations’ spending policies. YACs evaluate their efforts as part of the grantmaking process.
- ***Assist with fund development activities.*** Youth grantmakers may accompany board members as they talk with potential donors or corporations; participate in foundation-wide fundraising events; leverage their own grantmaking dollars by offering grantees challenge grants or collaborating with other funders.



- ***Stimulate youth volunteerism.*** YACs are expected to stimulate youth involvement in service to their communities. They do so in many ways, including: engaging in direct service, funding infrastructure or programs designed to support youth volunteerism or service events, and asking that grant proposals include service components.
- ***Serve as community resources and leaders.*** YACs often serve as resources and leaders in their communities. They do so through their proactive grantmaking activities and by having YAC representatives formally serve on community taskforces and nonprofit boards. They are also asked to speak at local, state, national and international-level conferences and other events, and are invited to offer their input in a wide variety of situations.

Longitudinal Study Overview

This study has surveyed youth grantmakers while they were in YACs and after they left, over a decade (1993 to 2003). It combines quantitative and qualitative data to document how youths' experiences with grantmaking have influenced their lives. Early study findings were used to document outcomes for youth while they were still serving as grantmakers. This study draws from and contributes to three bodies of literature: youth development, volunteerism and giving, and youth philanthropy. The study was designed as a way of systematically explaining youth grantmakers' involvement in volunteering, giving and leadership activities as they became young adults, but it is not a scientific study. While national and state level data provide opportunities to make some comparisons, this study does not have a control group.

In an article attempting to map out the scientific foundations of youth development, Benson and Saito (2000, p. 139) identify the need to document the connections between developmental strengths gained during the second decade of life and adult outcomes. Developmental psychology focused on the lifespan suggests that assets gained during adolescence are predictive of positive outcomes in adulthood. While this study was not designed to predict behavior, it does show the link between what youth gained during their years serving on a Youth Advisory Committee, and their volunteering, giving and leadership activities while in their 20s. Studies focused on individuals' volunteering and giving document national and regional levels for different age groups. Study findings vary, and comparisons among the studies are difficult because of differences in how studies were conducted (Keeter and Zukin, 2002). Independent Sector reported on teen volunteering and giving for the first time in 1990.

TABLE 1
Youth Grantmakers Responding to Survey

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	2002	2003
Youth Advisory	97	379	372	109	38	112	0	0
Committee members								
Former youth grantmakers		4	53	68	152	151	94	118

Studies focused on youth philanthropy 1) provide a national overview (Youth Leadership Institute 2001, and Ho 2003), 2) document outcomes for youth grantmakers in community foundations (Tice, 2003 and Orosz, Tice and Van Eck, 2002), and 3) identify effective practices (Garza and Stevens, 2002 and Tice, 2003). This study is the first effort to follow youth involved in grantmaking over an extended period of time.

In the youth development field, practice-based and research-based knowledge rarely crossed (Keeter and Zukin, 2002). This study bridges the research and practice gap by involving stakeholders, including youth grantmakers, adult YAC advisors and CMF staff. Stakeholders have guided the design of this study, have interpreted the study findings and have developed practical recommendations based on the findings. Their input has occurred through structured design and data interpretation workshops developed and facilitated by FERA. Data interpretation workshops were held twice over the course of this study. FERA brought both quantitative and qualitative data to the workshop in a user-friendly format. Workshop participants focused on key questions and reviewed relevant data. They identified key findings, the implications of those findings and recommendations for strengthening the initiative, or strategic opportunities based on the data. Throughout the study, FERA researchers and practitioners have interacted and influenced each others' work. Study findings have been used by CMF staff and have informed the practice of YACs throughout the initiative.

The longitudinal study was primarily designed to answer the following questions:

- How and to what extent are former youth grantmakers remaining engaged in volunteer activities?
- How and to what extent are former youth grantmakers involved in giving?
- How and to what extent are former youth grantmakers staying engaged in leadership activities?
- How does engaging youth in philanthropy make a difference in former youth grantmakers' lives?

To assess the effects of participation as youth grantmakers on youths' lives, study participants were surveyed eight times over a 10-year period (see Table 1 above). The initial survey was designed and piloted with a group of Youth Advisory Committee members in 1992.

SURVEY SAMPLE

In 1993, we asked adult youth advisors to mail the survey to all high school seniors serving on their YACs. New participants were added in 1994 because the types of youth being recruited into YACs had changed and we wanted a larger group of study participants. Although YACs sought youth with leadership potential from the start, it took time to successfully find and recruit these young people. Known leaders were much easier to find. In 1994, we asked all the youth attending the summer Youth Leadership Conference to complete a survey and mailed surveys to 1993 respondents. A wide range of youth attend the conference each year, representing urban, rural and suburban YACs statewide. We mailed surveys to all previous respondents in 1995, 1996, 1997 and

1998 when the initial study funding ended. Our response rate varied from 52% to 23% in any given year.

In 2000, a mini-survey designed by FERA was conducted by CMF to stay in contact with study participants. With additional study funding, FERA surveyed study participants again in 2002 and 2003. There is a core group of about 150 respondents who have responded multiple times over the 10-year period. These study participants responded between two to seven times. Individuals did not respond consistently every year.

Survey distribution methods changed several times over the course of the study in order to build a group of individuals as representative as possible. Other challenges included: young people moving multiple times during the study, surveys being returned as “undeliverable” and individuals responding some years and not others.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The Michigan Community Foundations' Youth Project, in spite of its name, is not considered a “program.” Youth programs often ask participants to complete intake forms with demographic and other information. This type of information is not collected from adult community foundation grantmakers and was purposefully not asked of youth grantmakers. The implication for this study was that no central database existed, and no statewide or local demographics are available. While there are no broader demographic data to help us determine how representative our survey respondents are, we can draw upon 12 years of ethnographic evaluation research to contextualize the youth included in this study.

Ethnographic methods included: interviews with adult YAC advisors and CMF staff, case studies of five YACs, observation of numerous training events, interviews and more informal conversations with youth grantmakers from all parts of the state, and participant

observation. We do know that 1) survey respondents represent a wide range of urban, suburban and rural YACs; 2) many more young women participate in YACs than do young men—approximately two-thirds of respondents were female and one-third were male; 3) YACs vary in how ethnically and racially diverse they are—respondents from communities of color range between 10% to 20% in any given year. Some communities are more diverse than others. In this respect, our sample roughly mirrors the youth involved statewide.

In 1993, respondents were ages 11 to 16 years old. In 2003, the 118 respondents were 20 to 29 years old. Only 12% had one or more children. In 2003, a total of 16% had completed high school/GED, an associate's degree or a year in some college; 61% had completed a bachelor's degree; 13% had completed a master's degree, and 9% had JD, PhD or MD degrees.

In 2003, almost all of the survey respondents were either working 59% or in school 38%. Of those in school, 22% were working and studying. Only a few 4% were not working outside the home or studying. These individuals were either stay-at-home mothers or in the Marine Corps. Students were working on their associate's degrees, bachelor's, masters, JD, MD, or PhD degrees. Four people were working toward teaching certificates, and one person toward a radiological technology certificate. Fields of study included medicine and science, education, social sciences, business, law, and philanthropy/nonprofit management.

About half of 2003 survey respondents came from families/extended families/households where volunteerism is considered very (25%) or quite (27%) important. In the rest of the families/extended families/households, volunteering is only somewhat (27%), not too (17%) or not-at-all important (2%). Over half (67%) attend religious services at some point during the year (36% weekly, 10% once or twice a month, 20% a few times a year and 1% less than once a year).

CASE STUDIES

Case studies were added in 2003 to provide a deeper understanding of how serving as youth grantmakers influences people's lives. FERA interviewed 11 youth grantmakers six to 13 years after they had stopped serving as YAC members. Stories from a broad range of youth were collected. Interviewees were identified through conversations with former and current YAC adult advisors, community foundation CEOs and CMF's staff. Criteria for inclusion were youth from diverse geographic locations, socio-economic backgrounds and ethnic/racial groups. Some youths were chosen because we already knew they had interesting stories to tell. Others were identified as young people who had grown in confidence and leadership abilities during their service on a YAC, but whose current activities were unknown.

Eleven stories are presented throughout this report; eight feature young women and three feature young men. Four of the youth are from communities of color (three African American and one Asian American). These young people come from rural, urban and suburban communities throughout Michigan. Three attended alternative high schools. About half of the interviewees come from households where volunteering was valued and encouraged. The rest learned these values through their YAC experiences. Interviewees are representative of the different types of youth who participate in YACs statewide, but they represent only those YAC members who were positively influenced.

Value of Youth Grantmaking

“The Michigan Community Foundation Youth Project gives young people the opportunity to learn generosity in the only practical way: by being generous. It will teach them to meet community challenges by raising funds for good works. It will teach them to be good stewards by giving them opportunities to make the hard decisions on wise giving. It will give them the opportunity to ask, to serve, and through serving, to lead. Tomorrow’s governors, mayors, chief executive officers, and executive directors will be trained through the Michigan Community Foundation Youth Project. Even more importantly, so will tomorrow’s Little League coaches, Big Sisters, Cub Scout leaders, Sunday school teachers, and community foundation trustees.”

— Dr. Russell G. Mawby, 1991

Why involve young people in the grantmaking process? We asked former youth grantmakers why it was important to involve young people in this way multiple times (1994, 1995, 1998 and 2002) over the course of the study, collecting both quantitative and qualitative data. Overall, youth were very positive about their experiences. On every occasion, 73% to 88% of respondents, both current and former youth grantmakers, said the experience was very valuable or quite valuable (see Figure 1). Only a small percent of youth rated their experiences as not valuable (between two to four percent). In general, such responses came from participants whose YAC was less successful in accomplishing its goals.

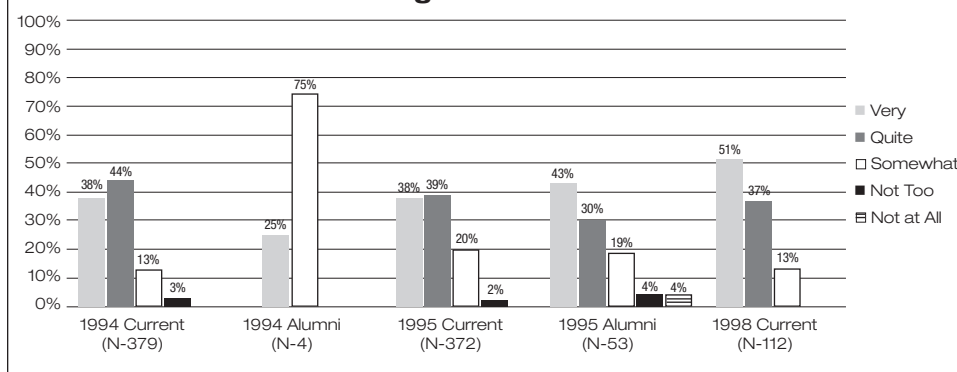
In 2002, former youth grantmakers were asked to reflect back on the value of their experience serving on a YAC. Analysis of their verbatim comments (N=94) revealed several important themes. Examples of their comments illustrate that the

experience of serving as a youth grantmaker is valuable because youth:

- **Feel that their voices are heard and their opinions valued.** Similar to the adult committees reviewing proposals submitted to the community foundations, YACs review proposals, develop recommendations and present them to the community foundation board for final approval. YACs are often asked for their input and sometimes co-funding on proposals submitted to the community foundation at-large. YAC members are often asked to speak at conferences or other community events. Their input is often sought after by local youth serving organizations and community-wide taskforces. “I was always impressed by how valued our opinion was.” “When we [YAC members] proposed an idea, the funders seemed to listen— probably because we had a viewpoint they couldn’t compare to.”

- **Gain experience addressing community problems through grantmaking.** Community foundation grantmakers of any age use their limited resources to address community issues. Youth grantmakers not only talk about grantmaking, they leverage their own grantmaking dollars and sometimes other foundations’ and individuals’ resources to effect change. They evaluate their efforts. “It is not an abstract, but rather, a hands-on and often heartfelt experience.” “I gained experience working with adults and other young people to solve community problems—something that I would not have experienced without the YAC.”
- **Can make a difference in their communities by serving in leadership roles.** In addition to making grants, YACs may also initiate other activities, such as a youth summit, a day-long conference on teen sexuality or date rape, or starting a teen center. Most YACs also do service projects together as team-building activities. “It is valuable to give youth a sense of ownership in decision making in their communities.”
- **Learn about foundations and the nonprofit sector.** YAC members learn about philanthropy, community foundations and how funders and nonprofits interact. They learn about and experience the entire grantmaking process, from defining needs and issues to focus on, to evaluating their grantmaking efforts. YACs often invite experts in to teach them about issues, such as substance abuse or domestic violence and to learn what nonprofits in their communities are already doing to address those issues. YACs interview potential grantees—which could be youth, agency directors or a combination of the two, and then conduct site visits to grantees. “[Serving on a YAC] gets you involved in community and learning how you can actually make a difference. You impact decisions about how money is spent in a community and learn about how the grant process works.”

FIGURE 1
How Valuable Would You Rate Your Experience Serving on the YAC



- **Gain leadership skills.** YAC members learn a wide range of skills, from specifics such as how to create an agenda or how to lead a meeting, to more abstract skills such as making group decisions when everyone does not agree, or how to leverage dollars to fund a project when what is available to work with is insufficient. “I developed leadership skills, and I learned that even a small group of students can make a difference.”
- **Expand their horizons and learn more about their own communities outside of the neighborhood in which they live.** As discussed in the case studies on pages 13 and 27, youth grantmakers learn about issues throughout their communities and/or regions. Some community foundations serve a county-wide or multi-county area. Youth in inner-city areas learn about the issues facing suburban youth and vice versa. They begin to understand both commonalities and differences. “Serving on YAC made me more aware of the needs of my entire county, not just my school district. It helped me broaden my horizons.” “The Youth Advisory Committee exposed me to the tremendous need that existed in my local community. Had I not been a member, it is doubtful that I would have been aware that the need was so great. I was equally surprised, however, that there were numerous organizations already in existence trying to help. Being part of the process was both educational and rewarding.”

- **Have the opportunity to work with other people from different socio-economic, ethnic and racial, and religious backgrounds.** YACs work hard to recruit a diversity of youth to serve. Regional and statewide trainings provide additional opportunities for youth grantmakers to learn about other communities and get to know youth who are different from themselves in a variety of ways. Youth grantmakers also have opportunities to interact with community foundation staff and board members, as well as their adult advisor. The youth spotlighted in the case studies on pages 20 and 27 both talk about how they valued working with a diverse group of people. Another former youth grantmaker commented, “It gave me experience working with kids from other schools, making grant decisions, and putting together ideas for the group so they would see different points or strengths/weaknesses of a grant.”

Other verbatim quotes from former youth grantmakers provide an additional feel for why they thought serving on the YAC was valuable. YAC members said:

“Through my work with the Youth Advisory Committee, I not only learned the fundamentals of group decision making, but I learned the importance of being a positive influence within the community, creating a better atmosphere for all people to live, work and play.”

“Being able to go through the process and determining which projects are worthwhile and being able to actually act on the recommendations gave me a feeling of empowerment. It was invaluable.”

“My experience was invaluable. I learned about the true meaning of giving of self. I also learned how communities can come together to make life better. It [serving on the YAC] gave high school students amazing responsibility and experience, which is invaluable.”

CASE STUDY: The Sky Was the Limit

Andrea was a high school sophomore (age 15/16) when she read about the YAC in the local paper. It sounded interesting and she decided to join. Andrea describes herself at that point in her life as having energy and drive to organize. She was already a good student and a student council member, but the YAC presented an opportunity to use her energy in a way not possible in school. Andrea served as a youth co-chair of her YAC. With the youth council “the sky was the limit... we were never told we couldn’t do something,” she says.

Andrea’s mother was born in Puerto Rico and grew up in Spanish Harlem. Her father is African American and grew up in public housing in New Orleans. Both parents are university professors. Andrea was raised in a university town and is well aware of the contrast between her life as a child and that of her parents and relatives.

Serving on the YAC, says Andrea, was the “best experience I have ever had; it built my self-confidence. I found it very empowering to be respected enough to be trusted with decisions. The YAC gave me the opportunity to meet people from other schools, from different socio-economic backgrounds and from various cliques within my own school.”

After high school, Andrea went to college. Then she spent a year doing direct service and policy work through the Micky Leeland Hunger Fellowship. After that she was a substitute teacher in Puerto Rico, subsequently receiving the Ralph Bunch Human Rights Fellowship from Amnesty International. All of these experiences led her to law school, from which she graduated last year. “Law school decimates your self-esteem,” she says. “Luckily I had built up a store of self-confidence from serving on the YAC that I could dip into.”

Thinking about her future career path, Andrea, now age 28, has been reflecting on her YAC experience. What she liked best was facilitating meetings and making a difference in her community on a larger scale rather than the scope that direct service offers. Thinking back has helped guide her to consider a career path in immigration law and policy.

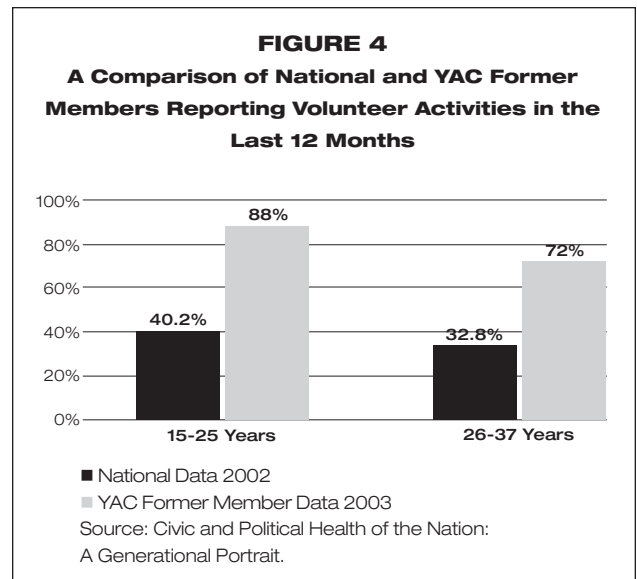
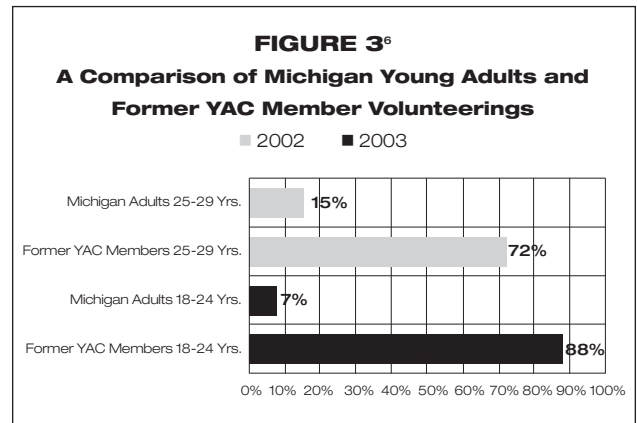
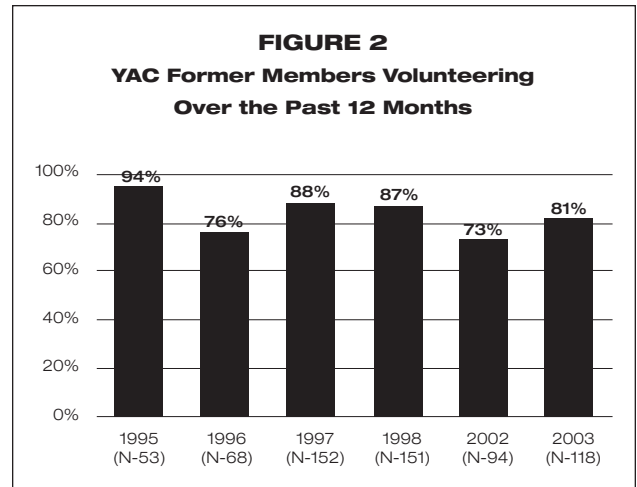
Volunteering Time and Talents

Youth Advisory Committees are expected to stimulate youth volunteerism within their communities. Youth may engage in direct service, fund infrastructure or programs designed to support youth volunteerism or service events, and ask that grant proposals include service components. Most importantly, youth serve on the YAC, a permanent, standing community foundation committee. As YAC members, they learn the types of skills that nonprofit organizations value in their board members (see the “Serving as Leaders” section for more information).

In serving as youth grantmakers, YAC members are volunteering. They participate in regular meetings, serve on sub-committees, attend community foundation board meetings and other events, and participate in YAC-sponsored service activities. Some are asked to serve on other community taskforces and boards through their YAC involvement. This is in addition to any other volunteer activities they may be involved in through school or independent of the YAC. Levels of volunteering, by definition, are 100% while young people are serving on the YAC. Over three-fourths of YAC members continue to volunteer in their communities as they move into their adult lives (see Figure 2).⁴ The case study on page 25 illustrates the importance of volunteering and being part of a community. One former youth grantmaker said, “Serving on a YAC at a young age showed me the impact volunteerism had on society, regardless of the age of the volunteer.” Another commented, “Volunteering is a priceless experience that has taught me so much about myself and others. Youth philanthropy is so important; if you start volunteering at a young age, it will make an impact on your future volunteering experiences.”

Many respondents, who were not volunteering, wrote comments apologizing and indicating that they planned to return to their volunteer activities as soon as they could. For example, one person explained, “Much of my lack of volunteering now is due to the fact that I work full time and go to college.” Others explained that they were mothers of very young children or were busy establishing their careers and, therefore, had limited time available for volunteering.

Comparing levels of volunteering of Michigan young adults and that of former youth grantmakers at the same age provides a striking contrast (see Figure 3). About three-fourths of former youth grantmakers volunteered in 2003, while this was true for less than one-fourth of Michigan’s young adults in 2002.⁵ Both groups were reporting on their volunteering over the past 12 months. More former youth grantmakers ages 20 to 24 are volunteering than are those ages 25 to 29. The opposite is true for Michigan young adults. YAC members are both internalizing and acting upon the value and importance of giving back to their communities. Their levels of volunteering remain consistently high even when the rest of the population’s volunteering fluctuates.



⁴ This figure presents the data for all former youth grantmakers responding in each year. Study participants did not respond every year, making it difficult to follow specific individuals’ levels of volunteering over time.

⁵ Volunteering among Michigan’s young adults and all Michigan citizens was much higher in 2001, 40% among 18 to 24-year-olds, and 42% for 25 to 29-year-olds (Wilson 2002). Michigan levels of volunteering in 2002 are similar to 2000 levels.

⁶ Source for Michigan data is Wilson 2002.

Former youth grantmaker levels are more than double the rates for young adults in the same age categories⁷ at the national level (see Figure 4). National volunteer rates stay relatively the same at 31.6% for adults ages 38 to 56 and then drop to 22.9% for adults over 57 years old (Keeter and Zukin 2002).

An Independent Sector report titled *Engaging Youth In Lifelong Service* found that individuals who volunteered when they were young were much more likely to volunteer and give as adults. “The level of youth engagement is a powerful predictor of several adult behaviors: the propensity to volunteer, the propensity to give, and the amount one gives” (Toppe and Golombek, 2002 p. 10). Results from this study of youth grantmakers definitely support this finding. YAC members are all youth volunteers, and they continue to volunteer and become increasingly generous as young adults in their 20s.

How much time are former youth grantmakers spending on their volunteer activities? Asking interviewees to recall the hours spent in the last month provides a more accurate picture of levels of volunteer efforts than asking them to remember a longer timeframe, such as a year. The numbers of individuals volunteering in the past month are, not surprisingly, somewhat lower than the numbers who said they had volunteered over the past 12 months. They range from 51% to 81% in any given year. In 2003, those who had volunteered spent a median of 12 hours per month. Table 2 shows the range and median hours volunteered in a month by YAC members between 1994 and 2003. Respondents consistently completed the survey between February and April, reporting on their volunteering activity for January, February or March.

TABLE 2
Former YAC Members Hours
Volunteered in the Past Month

	Min	Max	Median
1994	4	64	23
1995	2	162	18
1996	1	170	5
1997	1	200	10
1998	1	315	15
2002	1	185	10
2003	1	200	12

Former youth grantmakers volunteer their time for a wide range of organizations. The 2003 data reflect where individuals have volunteered their time during previous years. In the past month they (n=71) volunteered for neighbors (n=55), religious organizations (n=36), youth development programs (n=32), social organizations that have volunteering as part of their activities (n=32), schools (n=31) and health and human services (n=30). Fewer people volunteered for arts organizations (n=18), private and community foundations (n=15), state and local government (n=15), neighborhood or block groups or organizations (n=10), political campaigns (n=6), international development organizations (n=6) and Youth Advisory Committees (n=4). Ten individuals are participating in Michigan Campus Compact, America’s Promise, Peace Corp, VISTA, AmeriCorps, or COOLWORKS. See the “Serving as Leaders” section of this report for information about service on nonprofit boards and other community leadership positions.

Seven of the 76 young people who had moved from their home communities had contacted the community foundation in their new communities. While this is a small number, we know from the case studies that at least three individuals not only made a contact, but also worked to start youth philanthropy initiatives at those community foundations. (Adam and Kasee are still involved in the community foundations where they served.) A strategic opportunity exists to reconnect former youth grantmakers to the next level of community foundation involvement as volunteers.

Variables such as length of time serving on a YAC and number of years after leaving a YAC could very well affect study participants’ levels of volunteering and giving. Chi-square tests were run to determine if there were differences. There were no significant differences in individuals’ volunteering and giving behavior among those who had served 1 to 3 years or 4 to 8 years. It also did not matter how long it had been since they had served. Neither were there differences among young people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds. This suggests that YAC members are internalizing the value and importance of giving back over time. YAC members grasp the importance of philanthropy—giving their time, talent and treasure—within the first year. This does not mean that the YAC experience can be shortened to a year. It takes a full year for young people to learn about grantmaking and to really understand the work of a YAC. Subsequent years are spent gaining and practicing leadership and grantmaking skills and being active.

⁷ YAC alumni are ages 20 to 25 in the first category and ages 26 to 29 in the second category.

CASE STUDY: It Gave Me My Life Direction



Jenny served on a Youth Advisory Committee for four years starting at age 14 when she was a high school freshman. She also served on the statewide Michigan Community Foundations' Youth Project Committee starting her senior year. Jenny was a good student and already involved in lots of extracurricular activities like sports and band. She readily became an active YAC member.

Jenny grew up in a very poor bedroom community near two very wealthy tourist towns. Her single mother was a school teacher. The message she grew up with was, "We don't have a lot but we can share it with those who have less." Youth from her town were often looked down upon by youth from the wealthier communities. Participating in the YAC helped to break down these barriers. Jenny felt like she belonged. In years since her experience, Jenny still keeps in touch with many YAC members and some of the community foundation board members.

Serving on the YAC, says Jenny, was "a way to care about all the things I cared about at the same time. It helped me to see the community from such a different perspective. I realized that I could be involved and not be in charge. I come from a small school and was one of the students asked to do everything [student council member, class president, yearbook editor]. I am more of a team player leading by example... it's who I am."

When Jenny went to college, she visited the nearest community foundation and tried to interest it in starting a YAC. The foundation was not interested at that point. Since that door did not open, Jenny, in her job as resident assistant, stressed the importance of giving back to her fellow students. She engaged them in penny wars—donating the money to charity, blood drives and other causes. During the summers she served as an intern at the Council of Michigan Foundations, a rural nonprofit hospital and

at a community foundation on the east coast. At the hospital she experienced a different side of philanthropy, writing grants and providing direct service to youth programs focused on heroin addiction and teen suicide. At the community foundation she continued to talk about youth involvement in grantmaking. Recently, that community foundation hosted a statewide youth philanthropy conference and is thinking about ways to involve youth.

Serving on the statewide Michigan Community Foundations' Youth Project Committee and going to Northern Ireland to participate in an international youth grantmakers conference were key experiences for Jenny. "Serving at the state level was the thing that pushed me into philanthropy," says Jenny. "I knew I wanted to go to college but wasn't sure what I wanted to do. Then my mother pointed out that I was never as happy as when I was doing that [YAC] work." It became clear to Jenny that she wanted to continue in the field of philanthropy. As she said, "It gave me my life direction."

Jenny's trip to Northern Ireland was "eye opening." She learned about conflict and changed the way she looks at grantmaking. Youth from Northern Ireland and Eastern European countries had less money, much bigger problems and used their grantmaking to initiate systemic change.

Jenny is now 23 years old and is studying at the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University; she is pursuing a master of arts in philanthropic studies and a master of public administration in nonprofit management. She is considering doctoral programs that would allow her to pursue her interests further and prepare her for work in a foundation and/or academia—teaching about philanthropy.

CASE STUDY: The Experience Opened My Mind

Danielle was 14 years old when a graduating senior invited her to a Youth Advisory Committee meeting. She didn't know what participants were talking about at first, but that rapidly changed. "I was always outgoing... more on the leader side," says Danielle. During the four years she served on the YAC, she was on the grants committee and was co-chair of the volunteer committee for two years.

While volunteering and community involvement were a good fit for Danielle, they were new experiences. She grew up in Kentwood, a suburb bordering the city of Grand Rapids. Her mother created closed captions for television and her dad worked in sales and marketing. Danielle has a brother who followed in her footsteps and who is currently the YAC co-chair.

Danielle's involvement with the YAC linked her to other leadership opportunities. With another YAC member, she co-chaired a Youth Violence Prevention Committee through her city's health department. They went to the National Conference on Youth Violence Prevention and were amazed to discover that the conference participants were nearly all adults. There were only five youth present. All were from Michigan YACs. "It was the first time I had done anything like that," she says. "It was a memorable experience." During high school, Danielle also served on a Black Educational Excellence Program Committee to promote higher education among African American students, and she served on a sorority youth advisory group.

"My experience on the YAC opened my mind and made me receptive to issues outside of the things that directly affected me," Danielle says. "It gave me a chance to step outside my neighborhood and look at the city as a whole. It also opened a lot of new doors and made me aware of programs and their reliance on volunteers." Danielle learned how to work on a committee and how to be strategic, analytical and to plan ahead.

After graduating from high school, Danielle was asked to serve on the statewide Michigan Community Foundations' Youth Project Committee. "I met people in Michigan from places I didn't even know existed and became more aware of issues in their communities as well as my own," she says. Then, Danielle went to Northern Ireland to participate in an international youth grantmakers' conference. Youth grantmakers abroad had very different concerns and guidelines for their grants. "We explained how we do things and gave them insights into analyzing budgets. We went on site visits together and jointly made grant decisions," Danielle says. "Because so many of their potential grantees focused on issues related to the tensions between Catholics and Protestants, we had to really think about and differentiate between funding a religious point of view and funding a program that had links to a religious institution. It was not as easy or clear in that context."

Recently, Danielle has had an opportunity to look at her YAC experience in a whole new light. "When I came to college, I didn't realize how valuable it really was. It really is a very unique experience," she says. As she talks to people about her experience, Danielle realizes that most youth do not have the opportunity to do this type and level of community work. Danielle says, "It is fun to go back and find out that the programs we gave money to are still continuing. It is really a rewarding feeling to know that you had been a part of making it happen." Danielle recalled one grant that stood out for her. A group of seventh grade boys, ages 12 to 13, were concerned that kids didn't have anything to do after school and were getting into trouble. They developed a proposal and budget for an after-school program themselves. It was written out longhand. The YAC funded their proposal and they came to the YAC's year-end banquet to receive their grant check. "It was so exciting for everyone... us and them. Empowering other youth to make a difference was incredible."

Currently 20 years old, and a third-year student at the University of Michigan, Danielle is majoring in sociology with a focus on marketing and strategy in the business sector. She sees a direct link between the group, analytical and strategic planning skills she learned and enjoyed using in the YAC, and her decision to pursue a marketing focus, which requires a similar skill set. She has worked multiple jobs over the past three years to pay for college and hasn't had time to volunteer outside of course-related opportunities, including a housing project and serving as a mentor for a young person. She misses working with nonprofits, but she is not sure she wants a job with a nonprofit. "I still want to be involved because it's a big part of my life, and I notice its absence," says Danielle.

Philanthropic Giving

Youth grantmakers learn about the importance, value and satisfaction connected with philanthropic giving while serving on Youth Advisory Committees. They learn about the costs of developing and implementing programs and how much nonprofits in their communities depend upon charitable gifts to support their work. Many YAC members have the opportunity to speak with community foundation donors and some, to ask potential donors for gifts. About half of youth grantmakers donate money to the community foundation, to other nonprofits, to charitable causes or to individuals in need, while serving on the YAC (see Figure 5). YAC members from one community foundation went to a board meeting, emptied their pockets on the table and challenged the adults to do the same with their checkbooks.

The number of youth grantmakers who are donors increases over time. As they move into the workforce and have higher levels of income, more people give. Survey respondents who worked in 2003 (n=93) are making under \$20,000 (39%), \$20,000+ to \$40,000 (36%), \$40,000+ to 60,000 (11%), and \$60,000+ to \$75,000 (7%). Fully 96% of 2003 respondents had given to a charitable cause over the past 12 months (see Figure 5). The amounts they gave ranged from under \$100 to \$12,000 (see Table 3). Taking out the one highest gift of \$12,000, the mean gift in 2003 was \$707. In 2002, we asked former youth grantmakers how serving on the YAC had influenced their giving. Examples of their responses:

“I learned some of the essential ways to raise money and how to get people to give and what areas to give to, and why! I have used these philanthropy skills in so many areas of my life it would be just too much to write here.”

“It gives kids a sense of worth. They learn what it’s like to give to other.”

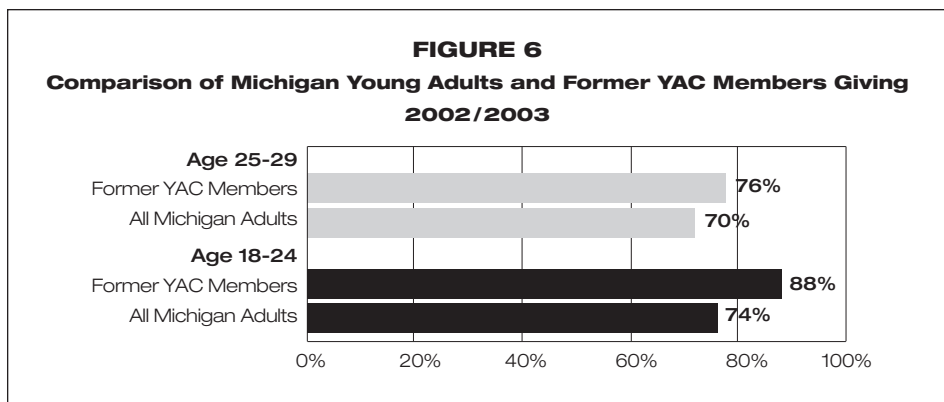
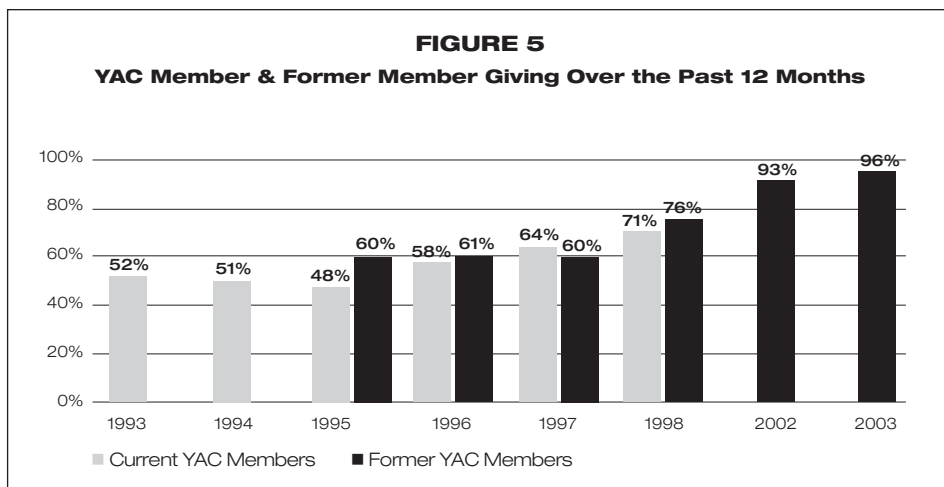


TABLE 3
Former YAC Members Levels of Giving in 2003
Ages 20-29 (N=117)

18%	\$0
17%	Under \$100
40%	\$100 to \$500
7%	Over \$500 to \$1,000
8%	Over \$1,000 to \$2,500
9%	Over \$2,500 to \$5,000
1%	\$12,000

Compared with giving among young adults in Michigan, a slightly higher percent of former youth grantmakers give (see Figure 6). The gap between Michigan young adults and former YACers decreases with an increase in age.

Most former youth grantmakers in 2003 (n=118) gave to the following types of organizations or causes: religious (n=62), health and human service (n=57), youth development (n=32) and informally (e.g., to a neighbor) (n=27). Fewer gave to arts, culture and humanities (n=23), to community foundations (n=20) or to the environment (n=15). Very few gave to political organizations (n=12) or gave internationally (n=8).

YAC members learn to be proactive grantmakers. They analyze and prioritize community needs and think strategically about how to effectively leverage their resources. These lessons appear to be carried over into their giving strategies. Former youth grantmakers use a combination of reactive and proactive giving strategies. Most respondents think carefully about what causes/organizations they want to give to (see Table 4). They both respond to and seek out organizations and causes they want to support. Similarly, larger gifts are given to a few key organizations and smaller gifts to lots of different organizations. YAC members are more likely to give to an organizational fund-raising effort when asked on the street than to an individual. They think carefully about where their dollars can make a difference.

Community foundations have a strategic opportunity to stay connected with former youth grantmakers who are potential future donors. They understand the value of contributing to their communities and do so. They also know about planned giving, endowments and community foundations. Over one third (33%) of 2003 survey respondents still live in their home communities. The majority (71 out of 118) of survey respondents said they had no ongoing contact with the community foundations where they served as YAC members. Of those who remained in contact, only 31 received an annual report or other materials, and even fewer (13 individuals) received a year-end request to give. Twenty-one individuals indicated they kept in touch informally. We know from other evaluation activities that the YAC advisor is usually the person that young people stay in touch with. This is true even years after YAC advisors leave the community foundation.

TABLE 4
Approaches to Giving in 2003 (N=118)

	Always (5)	Usually (4)	Sometimes (3)	Not Too Often (2)	Never (1)	Mean
I think carefully about what I give to	50%	35%	9%	4%	3%	4.3
I respond to requests from organizations/causes I want to support	8%	32%	32%	23%	6%	3.1
I give larger amounts to fewer key organizations/causes	6%	26%	20%	27%	20%	2.7
I give cash on the street when asked by an organization or fundraising effort	<1%	17%	41%	27%	14%	2.6
I seek out organizations/causes I want to support	3%	16%	34%	30%	17%	2.6
I give small amounts to lots of different organizations/causes	3%	14%	35%	35%	14%	2.6
I give cash to people on the street if asked (e.g., homeless people, panhandlers)	0	7%	17%	35%	41%	1.9
I give to organizations/causes I want to support via the Internet	0	4%	9%	22%	66%	1.5

TABLE 5
**Individuals Wanting Stronger Connections with
Community Foundations (N=114)**

	Yes	Maybe	No
Individuals desiring a stronger connection with the community foundation where they served as a YAC member	33%	37%	26%

About one-third of former youth grantmakers are sure they want stronger connections to community foundations. Another third said "maybe." Less than a third did not want a stronger connection (see Table 5). One person commented, "I made connections that will affect me the rest of my life. I also realized how much community foundations affect/benefit their communities, and I know it's important to give back to them."

Serving as Leaders

Youth grantmakers learn and practice a wide range of leadership skills while serving on a Youth Advisory Committee.

Over half of the YAC members responding in 2003 said they learned to:

- Be effective team members (86%)
- Listen to others with different viewpoints (83%)
- Make group decisions (82%)
- Work with a diverse group of people (81%)
- Communicate their points of view (73%)
- Develop youth/adult partnerships (66%)
- Run a meeting (64%)
- Network with community leaders (54%)

Other skills learned by YAC members included:

- Planning a meeting
- Making their own decisions
- Asking for money (within the context of fund development)
- Accessing information about community needs/issues
- Accessing information about community resources
- Giving a presentation or speech
- Planning an event (not a fundraiser)
- Planning a fundraiser

Not only had they learned leadership skills during their YAC experiences, over half of the respondents indicated that they continue to use these skills (see Figure 7). Most former youth grantmakers responding to the 2003 survey indicated that they definitely (56%) or somewhat (38%) consider themselves leaders now. Only eight (7%) of the respondents did not consider themselves to be leaders.

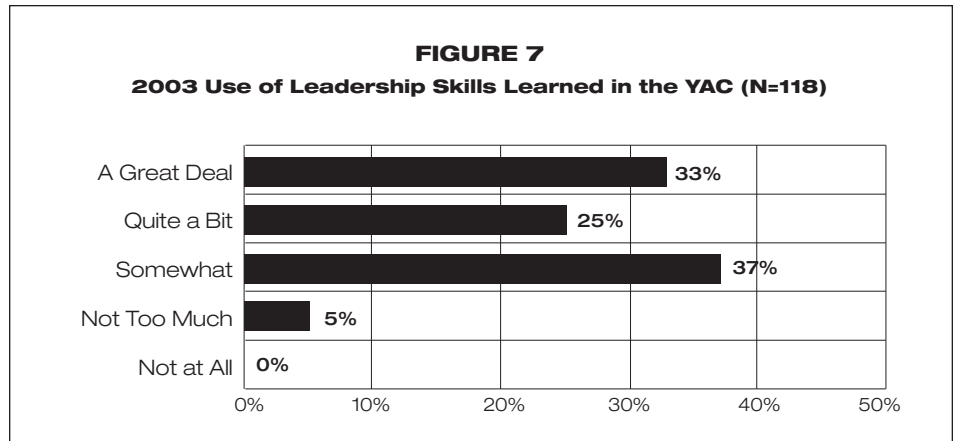


TABLE 6
Former Youth Grantmakers Serving on Boards and in Other Leadership Positions (N=118)

Previously Served	Currently Serving	Position
26%	20%	
5	2	On a community foundation board (voting member)
2	2	On a community foundation board (non-voting member)
11	9	On a nonprofit board (voting member)
8	6	On a nonprofit board (non-voting member)
8	6	On a community taskforce
7	5	As a resource for a youth philanthropy initiative
3	2	On a school board
1	4	As a public servant (e.g., city council member, mayor, senator)

TABLE 7
Individuals Believing They Can Make a Difference (N=117)

	Great	Some	A Little	None
As individuals	15%	53%	30%	3%
Working as a group	66%	30%	4%	0%

Fully 77% of 2003 survey respondents had served in a leadership position over the past 24 months. They have leadership responsibilities in their jobs (n=52), schools (n=32), religious organizations (n=20), communities (n=19), political/advocacy groups (n=3) and other venues (n=8). The types of roles they have include: serving as a program manager/coordinator or supervisor (n=59),

coordinating an event such as a conference, fundraiser or blood drive (n=47), developing and leading a team to accomplish a specific goal (n=43), holding an office in student government, a club or sorority/fraternity (n=20), or being captain or coach of a sports team (n=15). They also served as Sunday school teachers, mentors and union representatives.

Engaging young people in grantmaking through community foundations has provided them hands-on experience using a wide range of leadership skills. They also have opportunities to interact with adults who are serving in community leadership roles. Former youth grantmakers continue to use these skills and to serve in leadership roles in their jobs, religious organizations and communities. Fully one-quarter (31 out of 118) of former youth grantmakers have served the nonprofit and public sectors as community foundation or nonprofit board members, public servants, or as members of community taskforces or resources for youth grantmaking initiatives (see Table 6). Former youth grantmakers commented:

“We learned about foundations and nonprofits and gained skills needed to be effective board members.”

“YAC was my first experience in a real ‘board’ situation where we had agendas, etc. It helped me to see my leadership potential and to realize that I had skills in that area that were very useful.”

“We learned how a nonprofit/community meeting runs and works.”

Former youth grantmakers believe they can make a greater difference working with others in their communities than by themselves (see Table 7). These young people have the experiences, skills and attitudes to serve in leadership roles, and they are actively doing so. Two former youth grantmakers comment on their leadership involvement:

“I’ve learned a great deal on working in communities and as a small part of a whole; how to do these things and still have time to do other things; how to deal with people opposed to an idea you presented.”

“It taught me leadership and exposed me to a diversity of people. It has shown me things that need to, and can, be done.”

CASE STUDY: Influenced 110% by Her YAC Experience

Kasee was in seventh grade when she joined her Youth Advisory Committee. A teacher had noticed her leadership potential and another YAC member accompanied her to several meetings. Kasee lived in a rural area called Pittsford, about fifteen minutes from a small town. Pittsford has a post office, a bar and a school serving grades K-12. Most of Pittsford’s residents are farmers or had worked in local factories. Most of the factories moved out of the area, leaving many households struggling to make ends meet. Kasee’s mother is a bookkeeper at the local school, and her father works in a small shop building engines.

Kasee says, “I was confused for the first year and a half in the YAC; and then I got a grasp on the work.” Among other things, she learned about foundations, endowments, grantmaking, and grantwriting. The YAC wrote a grant proposal, which they submitted to Blue Cross/Blue Shield for a smoking prevention project. The YAC’s proposal to develop anti-smoking commercials for cable TV did not get funded. Convinced that the idea was good, the YAC funded the project itself. Students representing every school in the surrounding three counties participated in the commercials. YAC members organized and oversaw the project. The commercials were viewed on cable TV and at all the local schools. They received lots of positive feedback. Seeing older students from their own schools speaking out against smoking made an impression, especially on the younger children. It was such a successful experience all around that the YAC plans to do it again this year. This time they received a grant from an outside source and will create three commercials.

Learning about issues facing young people in her community was, and continues to be, one of the key benefits of participating in the YAC for Kasee. The YAC decided to address the issue of homelessness. The young people invited an expert on the topic to talk with them. Kasee says, “I was floored—there were a

couple of hundred homeless people and families in our county—I thought there were only one or two.” With this information, the YAC decided to create a homeless awareness camp. YAC members are “evicted” by the police from their homes and participate in a mock trial at the courthouse. Then groups of youth are given places to stay and minimal money for food. Finally, they all set up boxes on the county courthouse lawn to increase awareness about homeless people.

In Kasee’s senior year in high school, the longtime adult YAC advisor retired. The board was unsure whether it could afford to replace her, so Kasee offered to be the YAC advisor. Two years later, at age 19, Kasee is a freshman at Central Michigan University and balances her studies with her responsibilities as an adult YAC advisor. Kasee, like about half of the young people in her region, is a first generation college student. The YAC has become a place where people share information about college. Most people don’t even know where to start. YAC alumni come back and help graduating seniors through this process.

Kasee has a dual major in psychology and family studies with a minor in youth studies. She said her career path was influenced “110%” by her YAC experience. She explains, “Our YAC reaches out to students with leadership potential. Many are struggling in school and in their lives. I saw the former YAC advisor encouraging YAC members who were struggling. I wanted to do this, too. Youth, family, community—all these aspects are very important to me.”

Life Choices

While the primary focus of this study is on former youth grantmakers' volunteering, philanthropic giving and leadership activities, the study has also documented many other important ways that these young people have been influenced by their experiences serving on Youth Advisory Committees. This section draws on an analysis of the case studies and survey data both quantitative and qualitative. All of the quotes in this section are verbatim quotes from former youth grantmakers.

Serving as youth grantmakers gives young people a window into the nonprofit sector. Through their work, they learn about the roles foundations and nonprofits play in their communities and meet some of the people employed in those organizations. For some youth, this has opened up new career possibilities. In 2003, one-quarter of former youth grantmakers working were employed in the nonprofit sector, less than one-half were in business (43%), and a smaller percentage worked within government (7%). Of the 26% that work in "other jobs," 10 are working in education, and eight are in healthcare.

Case studies provide rich details illustrating how some individuals' career choices have been influenced by their experiences as youth grantmakers. Philanthropy as a field is clearly gaining some new leaders with a wealth of experience as grantmakers well before starting their first job. The case study found on page 23 shows how one person's experience translated into making youth an integral part of the nonprofit organization she now heads.

TABLE 8

Former Youth Grantmakers Are Still Connected in 2003 (N=118)

25%	YAC members from your YAC
27%	An adult YAC advisor
12%	Community foundation staff
10%	Community foundation board members
8%	YAC members from other YACs
4%	CMF staff
10%	Others you met through your experience on the YAC (Adventure Tour Staff, guest speakers to our YAC—one became one of my most influential mentors in college, Karen Young—Youth on Board from conference camp, MCFYP Committee members, and people in other states who are involved in youth philanthropy)

Here are a few survey respondents' verbatim comments about how the YAC influenced their career paths.

"My YAC experience made me want to remain involved with my community and made me want to continue to work with people."

"Priceless! Opened many doors to me. Introduced me to philanthropy and the world of non-profits, and I have not had such an in-depth experience with non-profits, since. I doubt most people ever get that experience."

"I am a politics major largely because YAC inspired my interest in the ways that communities can affect social change."

"My experience with YAC taught me the value of diversity, something I have tried to integrate in all organizations I have since been a part of."

"I have decided to pursue a career in education and politics. I want to stay involved in the community with young leaders."

"Being in YAC has given me the people skills and experience that will continue to benefit me forever. I am currently going to Eastern Michigan University and I use my philanthropy skills as much as possible there. My major is special education, and I am going to be the orientation group leader this fall."

Former youth grantmakers are leveraging the connections with adults they met as youth grantmakers. About one-third of survey respondents said that the adults they met while in the YAC have written letters of recommendation (34%) or served as mentors (28%). As young adults, they are staying in contact with people they met during their years of service (see Table 8).

Former Youth Grantmakers believe that they have a responsibility to give back to their communities. We know from the case studies and from qualitative survey data that former youth grantmakers are finding ways to contribute to their communities—mentoring a child, leading a nonprofit, serving on a local board or state-level commission, teaching and inspiring the next generation of youth grantmakers, bringing the vision of youth grantmaking to a community foundation that has not yet experienced youth involvement, and giving their resources, time and talents to a variety of nonprofits and community groups. As described earlier in this document, former youth grantmakers are contributing to their communities through their volunteering, giving and leadership efforts.

“My experience serving on a YAC taught me not only skills but values that I can carry throughout my life. I am a better person having served on a YAC, and I continue to contribute to my community, utilizing the skills and values that I obtained or were strengthened during my term.”

“I certainly understand how important it is to give and participate with groups in the community. While in the YAC, I gained a new understanding of how a little can go a long way.”

“My YAC experience taught me important lessons about my community, community foundations, volunteerism and myself. These lessons have been invaluable, and I look forward to repaying the investment made by MCFYP, CMF, the Kellogg Foundation and my community foundation.”



Former youth grantmakers think they can make a difference; they feel empowered. Almost all former youth grantmakers believe that, in working with a group of people, they can make a difference (see Table 7 on page 16). Case studies found on pages 9 and 21 illustrate how important this can be.

“Profound experience that taught me as a teenager that small groups can change a community.”

“It gave me the self-confidence I needed to voice my decisions and to feel that I counted and that my ‘voice’ made a difference.”

Former youth grantmakers value working with individuals with diverse backgrounds. Youth Advisory Committees may include adults/youth from different socio-economic, ethnic and racial, and religious backgrounds with a wide range of opinions on social issues. They have carried this value forth into their current interactions (See case study found on page 27).

“My past experience on the YAC was invaluable in terms of learning leadership skills, valuing diversity, working with people from all different backgrounds, learning what it means to be philanthropic.”

“It benefits the community, makes well-rounded individuals, allows you to interact with people of different backgrounds/cultures.”

Strategic Opportunities

This section presents strategic opportunities for community foundations, nonprofits and funders. They were developed by FERA with input from youth grantmakers, adult advisors and CMF staff.

- Community foundations have an opportunity to stay connected with the young people who served on their YACs. They could actively seek out former youth grantmakers to support the YAC, serve as board members, act as community foundation ambassadors, and serve as donors.
- Community foundations could serve as a link to other community foundations for youth who move out of their home communities for school and/or work opportunities. For example, each person could have a letter of introduction describing his/her work as a youth grantmaker. This would serve two purposes. First, it might lead to an ongoing connection and involvement with community foundations. Second,

former youth grantmakers could serve as resources for developing a new or supporting an existing youth philanthropy initiative.

- Nonprofits have an opportunity to seek out former youth grantmakers who have skills that would make them valuable contributors to their boards.
- Ways to strategically link former youth grantmakers to opportunities could be developed. A website designed specifically for former youth grantmakers worldwide could be the infrastructure linking youth with meaningful volunteer opportunities that would use the leadership skills they have developed.
- Creating new and publicizing existing foundation internship opportunities to former youth grantmakers could be beneficial to youth and to foundations. It would provide opportunities for youth grantmakers to stay involved in the field of philanthropy and to further develop

their skills and knowledge. Foundations would benefit from involving young people with considerable knowledge about local grantmaking.

- Currently the nonprofit sector is not well organized with regard to connecting former youth grantmakers to the next level of involvement. Developing a mentoring component for former youth grantmakers interested in pursuing or exploring careers in the field of philanthropy could facilitate keeping these young people strategically involved.
- Describing career paths and opportunities in the field of philanthropy and the nonprofit sector would be a valuable resource for YAC members and alumni as well as for young people in general.

CASE STUDY: You Have the Power to Make a Change

When Lamont was in ninth grade, his school principal read students a memo describing the Youth Advisory Committee and asking for students to apply. The school principal told Lamont to go for an interview, so he did. Lamont was surprised that he felt comfortable in the interview and that the questions they asked and the information shared were interesting. He was asked to serve on the YAC.

At the time, Lamont was becoming more involved in school. He had recently transferred to an alternative school for students not thriving in other school settings. Before this, Lamont could not see the relevance of studying. As he described it, "I did not feel a lot of need for school." In middle school, basketball was his only outside school activity until he started participating in the YAC. Lamont's mother worked as a medical assistant and his father, as a carpenter. He

remembered doing volunteer work as a child with his dad, fixing things for people around the neighborhood.

Lamont valued his experience serving on the YAC. He explains, "You feel like you have the power to make a change. When I was just a kid, I had an opportunity through the YAC to make a difference. I learned team building skills and met people from different backgrounds that I never would have met. It showed me the commonalities among people regardless of what school they attend, or what side of town they live on." "We did a lot of community service... taking care of our town... giving back to people," says Lamont. I discovered that I have the ability to help someone else. Now I am more open and more aware that I can step up to the plate and make a change. Before I started in the YAC, I didn't see a reason to be part of anything like that." He goes on to

explain that most young people don't have community experiences, like the YAC, that are similar to real life and teach you about politics and the importance of community involvement.

When Lamont went to college, he focused on a degree in social work. When asked if his experience on the YAC influenced his focus, he explained that while he had not consciously made that connection, it was part of his subconscious thinking. It definitely made a difference to have the YAC experience to put onto his college application. When he began his coursework, the professors talked about nonprofits and grant writing. Lamont remembered thinking, "this is familiar, I know how to do this." Currently, Lamont is 24 years old and is about to graduate from the University of Michigan with a masters in social work. He plans to serve as a social worker in a middle school.



CASE STUDY: The One Thing that Made a Difference

Melissa was 16 and a junior when her high school counselor approached her to see if she would be willing to represent her school on the Youth Advisory Committee. Melissa agreed and soon found herself in the midst of developing the YAC. It was the YAC's first year. There were no guidelines and no one was sure how to do things. They didn't even have grantmaking dollars yet. They learned a lot about philanthropy and spent a lot of time getting organized. "Spending time with people who cared about the common good was a unique and positive experience," says Melissa. Even though I didn't get a chance to make grants, I knew what I was doing was going to be important."

Melissa's hometown is middle class, small and very rural. She comes from a close-knit family. Her mother worked as a waitress, at the local post office, and is now on disability. Her stepdad returned to school in his 40s and recently received a master's degree in social work. A good student, Melissa had lofty goals for herself, of going to college and becoming a doctor. She also had some self-confidence issues.

That summer, Melissa went to the summer Youth Leadership Conference. This experience has remained vivid in her mind. She says, "I think back to what I did and learned all the time." For example, she thinks about doing the high ropes course and how she had to trust other people. She remembers how afraid she felt initially and how strong and confident she was when she overcame those fears. Melissa has often thought about this during difficult times in her life. Camp and YAC counselors provided excellent role models, especially one person who was going to medical school.

Family troubles plunged Melissa from an honors student to a high school dropout. Her family moved, and after only one year serving on the YAC, she had to stop. Although she did not have a choice, Melissa deeply regrets not being able to participate longer. She re-enrolled in an alternative high school where she completed her studies. Melissa went to college for one semester, met her husband, and left school once more.

Staying at home for eight years to mother two small children, Melissa has postponed and revised, but not let go of her original goal. She recently enrolled, and is currently studying nursing at a community college, while her mother helps care for her children.

"It is a great program! There are very good role models. Even though I was only part of the YAC for a year, it made a very positive impact for me," says Melissa. I think about it a lot and am very proud to think I have been part of it. It is the one thing I saw happening that made a difference." Melissa, now 29 years old, recently contacted the current YAC advisor and offered to come speak to YAC members, share her experience and encourage them to be active and take advantage of what they have. As she says, "When you are 16, it is hard to have perspective." She hopes to share some of hers. "Getting the perspective from youth who think nobody is listening is important! I want my daughter to have that experience."

Conclusions

“It is good to let youth be a part of, and have an active role in, a community foundation. It facilitates youth ownership in the community.”

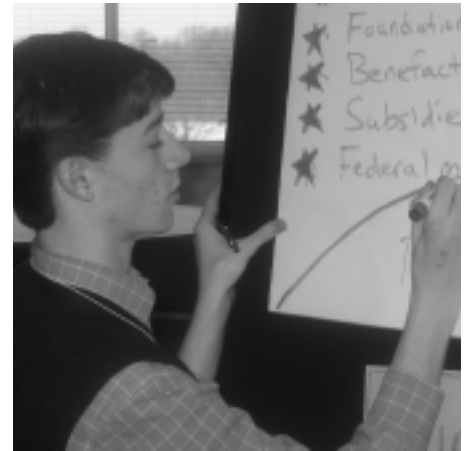
Michigan community foundations have integrated youth into community foundations’ grantmaking infrastructure through Youth Advisory Committees, which oversee permanently endowed youth funds. Serving as grantmakers, youth gain experience addressing community problems through grantmaking and make a difference in their communities by serving in leadership roles. They work with a diverse group of people and expand their horizons by learning about the broader communities and regions in which they live. Youth grantmakers learn about foundations, especially community foundations, and nonprofits and the work they do.

These experiences have influenced young peoples’ lives in many ways. As they become young adults, they are continuing to give back to their communities as they did in their teen years by serving on Youth Advisory Committees. They are volunteering at much higher levels as compared to young adults in their 20s at the state and national levels. Compared to young adults in their 20s at the state level, they are also giving at slightly higher levels. Former youth grantmakers become increasingly generous as they move into their late 20s and as their incomes rise. As one former youth grantmaker said, “I like to think that YAC helped to shape the person that I am today. Not only was the actual experience in the YAC extremely valuable, but it gave me exposure to many other human service and cultural organizations that I was previously unaware of. YAC helped to change me from the very quiet, shy person I was to the still shy but much more empowered person that I feel I am today. I think that YACs are wonderful programs to involve youth in their communities and make them feel as though they are valued members of society.”

One-quarter of 2003 survey respondents were employed in the nonprofit sector. As shown in the case studies, some are seeking careers in the foundation world and the nonprofit sector. Former youth grantmakers are still using the leadership skills they learned in the YAC as they serve in leadership roles in their jobs, religious organizations and communities. One-quarter of the youth responding to the 2003 survey had served as board members, community taskforce members, public servants, or as resources for a youth grantmaking initiative. Most believe that, by working with others in their communities, they can make a difference.

Communities are gaining young adults who care enough to give back and have the skills and knowledge to be the next generation of community leaders. They bring with them an appreciation of the value that working with a diverse group of people brings to problem solving. They also have experience working with a wide range of adults and peers, many of whom have opinions different from their own. They understand the value of involving youth because they have experienced what it means to be “at the table” and to have their voices heard.

“Life’s lessons are by no means confined to a chalkboard or textbook. If you want young people to have a role in their community, you must immerse them in the decision-making process.”



CASE STUDY: A Turning Point

Jeanie was a ninth-grader when her parents told her about the Youth Advisory Committee. She was a good student but did not consider herself a leader. The YAC changed that perception. “It was a turning point,” she says.

Jeanie’s parents are both active community leaders. Her mother served as town mayor and Jeanie had the chance to join committees and work with her mom.

Leadership skills were part of what Jeanie learned while serving on the YAC. For example, she learned how to lead projects by being in charge of the youth needs assessment in her community. She also gained experience talking to adults and presenting to large audiences. Jeanie received a Rotary award, and she had to speak to the group. She learned to value different points of view and what others brought to the table. Jeanie’s YAC included youth from different schools, backgrounds (including a teen mother) and ages. “Asking the question— who is at the table—is relevant to what I do today,” she says. “I met people whose families were struggling to make ends meet. I learned about the spirit of philanthropy and giving back... both money and time and the importance of involving youth.”

Jeanie remembers several key experiences. Her YAC hosted a Teen Forum, which focused, among other issues, on teen pregnancy. “It was an opportunity to learn and really opened my eyes,” she says. She also remembers the Youth Summer Leadership Camp and still talks about the exercise in which participants were divided into three groups and given different resources to get across the lake. On the other side, the groups were treated differently with varying access to food. They debriefed the entire experience and talked about how it relates to real life. Jeanie reflects, “I learned how important it is not to pretend you know how to solve other people’s issues.” Jeanie’s high school YAC experience made her realize that she wanted to work in the nonprofit sector.

Through the YAC, Jeanie was linked to several other key opportunities. She was the first youth member of an area-wide human service provider collaborative. Jeanie met Karen Young, who started Youth on Board, a leading national nonprofit in the area of youth governance, and was also invited to speak at a youth philanthropy Independent Sector conference. This led to a summer internship with Youth on Board while Jeanie was in college. When she started college at the University of Michigan, Jeanie facilitated a workshop at the local YAC’s youth summit and interned at the Council of Michigan Foundations.

After graduating from college, Jeanie moved to Colorado where, because of her involvement with the YAC, she received a mailing about an international conference. The conference was held in Colorado, through the Institute of Cultural Affairs. She attended, met people from all over the world and went on a site visit, meeting people involved in the organization she currently heads.

Today, Jeanie is the CEO of a nonprofit organization focused on youth development and substance abuse prevention. She is involved in fund and program development, modeling her YAC experience, and makes sure that youth are involved in every aspect of the organization. Her organization has an intern that works to increase youth involvement. Two youths serve on the board.

She has conducted community trainings on youth-adult partnerships, focusing on how to make sure that youth are at the table and not at a token “youth seat.” Jennie has hopes to get youth involved at the local community foundation, too.

Jeanie received a bachelor’s degree in organizational studies and plans to get either an MBA or an MA in nonprofit management to prepare her to work with an international foundation. She is interested in international development and philanthropy. “There have been several threads in my life: youth empowerment, valuing diversity and philanthropy,” she says. “Serving on the Youth Advisory Committee was the number one experience that shaped that period of my life. Everything I am doing now has been influenced by that experience. I wouldn’t be where I am today if it hadn’t been for my YAC experience.”

CASE STUDY: A Rare Experience

Adam was a sophomore in high school when he was selected by another YAC member to serve (graduating seniors recruit replacements in this YAC). He was a pretty good student and very active in sports. Adam had never volunteered before, but he knew a little bit about the community foundation because his mother worked there as the administrative assistant. His father worked as a graphic arts salesman.

Being a grantmaker made quite an impression on Adam. He says, "My first year we had \$100,000 to give in grants. It was more than I had ever seen in my life. It is really a rare experience to be given that kind of power and respect by adults in the community." He goes on to say, "Youth have different perceptions than adults do, and it was invaluable to have input from youth into where the money was going. We could tell that some grants had no input from youth, and they generally did not get funded."

Adam grew up in a suburb of a small ethnically and religiously homogeneous town. He was amazed by the diversity of the religious, socio-economic, and family backgrounds he encountered on the YAC. He had not been aware that this diversity existed in his community. As grantmakers, YAC members had to learn to understand one another's points of view, work through conflicts, and come to agreement on what

they would and would not fund. One of the most important things that Adam gained from serving on the Youth Advisory Committee was his new awareness of people with differing backgrounds, and how to work together and understand one another's differing viewpoints. "I will take that with me for the rest of my life," he says.

Learning about the community was also important. "It was an eye-opening experience for me to see how much money there was in my community and how generous people were," he says. "I had no idea how many organizations existed to help young people." In Adam's junior year, he traveled to California to speak on a panel at the National Conference for Family Foundations. Inner-city kids from one of Los Angeles' poorest neighborhoods were also on the panel. They were starting a youth grantmaking initiative in their own community. Adam comments, "It was a neat exchange. Surprisingly, a lot of the issues in our communities, such as drugs and gangs, were the same. The difference was in the magnitude of the problem." He also had the opportunity to participate in the White House Millennium Initiative designed to involve young people in philanthropy. Adam, along with three other youths and prominent individuals from AOL, Dell and other key businesses, worked to draft a proposal to involve young people in philanthropy via the Internet.

Since graduating from high school, Adam has remained an active volunteer at his home community foundation and elsewhere. He updates the community foundation's website annually, and he helps to teach current YAC members about philanthropy and grantmaking. In high school, Adam served as class president his senior year. In past years, the senior class had given gifts, such as a sign or a scoreboard, to the school. Adam encouraged his class to establish an endowed scholarship through the community foundation. He says, "It is a gift that keeps on giving... I look at the community foundation report every year to see how the endowment has grown. I never would have thought to establish an endowment if I hadn't been involved as a youth grantmaker." In college, Adam volunteered at a hospital and at a resource center for people with disabilities. Adam describes the satisfaction he received throughout his college years from reading to a fellow student with low vision. "It was one of the most rewarding experiences I have ever had," said Adam.

Adam is currently finishing his master's degree in chemistry at Michigan State University and plans to obtain an MD/PhD in medical science training at Chapel Hill. Serving on a YAC, he says, has "opened my eyes to the joys and rewards of helping people."



CASE STUDY: One Person Can Make a Difference

John was 14 when his mom, who ran a public education foundation, suggested that he join the YAC. John's father is a chemist and works for a pharmaceutical company. They lived in Kalamazoo, a city surrounded by rural farm country. Even before he joined the YAC, John learned from his parents that one person can make a difference. He was encouraged to volunteer in middle school. "My mom told me to do it," he says. When John became a YAC member, he wanted to attend YAC meetings and to participate in the volunteer activities organized through the YAC.

John explained how the YAC was different than other high school experiences. With youth in charge of planning and organizing, if they didn't show up, they only let themselves down. This is very unusual. Most after-school activities have adults pressuring students to attend. Young people went to YAC meetings because they wanted to go.

John explains, "In the YAC, our ideas were taken seriously and would go someplace. The YAC let you make a difference! We gave away \$40,000 to \$50,000 per year. Potential grantees came in and had to justify why they needed the grant. It was an open forum and we helped them think it through. We presented grantees with checks, visited them and invited them to a year-end celebration." John learned several important things through this process. First, he started to see what a difference young people can make in their communities. Next, he realized how much it costs to run programs. Finally, he made the connection why it was critical for community members to support local nonprofits.

John studied chemistry in college. He volunteered as an elementary school tutor and as a judge for elementary science fairs throughout college. After graduation, John began a PhD program in chemistry. He left the program after one semester to re-evaluate his future, and thought a lot about his experience in the YAC. John explains, "I like the idea of living in one place your entire life, getting involved with the community, creating bridges and ties with people from all walks of life." It is hard, he noticed, to serve on boards and become deeply involved in the life of a community when your job requires you to move. John wanted to have the same experience that adults he knows have had—watching young people in a community grow up and being part of their lives.

John moved to Los Angeles and volunteered in a children's dental health center. Many of the children had never seen a dentist. After serious reflection, he decided to go to dental school. In the meantime, John is working at a Michigan pharmaceutical company that supports worker involvement in volunteer activities. He volunteers and participates in all the company fund drives.

"I want to be involved with the community and to continue that level of service for the rest of my life," John says. He stays in touch with a lot of other YAC members. "Everyone I talk to is still involved [in the community] and talks about things [their YAC experience] as if it happened last week," he says. John is now 24 years old.





CASE STUDY: A Passion for Public Service

Volunteering and giving back have always been a part of Anita's life. She was raised in a household where giving was highly valued. Her father is a recently retired high school English teacher. Over the years, Anita's mother has taught elementary school children, served as a daycare provider and worked as an office receptionist.

Anita wasn't really involved in leadership activities before she became involved with a Youth Advisory Committee (YAC). The YAC was her first, big extracurricular activity. After starting with the YAC, she describes herself as "one of those high school and college students who did everything." Anita served on the YAC her junior and senior years in high school. She says, "It opened my eyes to the whole world of philanthropy and volunteerism, and it was the starting point for my figuring out that I wanted a career in some kind of public service capacity. The YAC also taught me the practical skills of committee work, leadership, representation, etc. Without a doubt, YAC was the most enjoyable and most formative part of my high school years—the experience and learning that has influenced me the most in my life."

After high school, Anita went on to study economics and political science at the University of Toledo, where she further defined her career aspirations to focus on international development. When she was working on her college degree, she contacted the Toledo Community Foundation and told people there about her experience with youth grantmaking. She recommended the program to them as an excellent community program for youth, and then she had the opportunity to work with the Foundation and a local youth leadership organization as they initiated a similar program in Toledo.

From Toledo, Anita went on to Washington, DC, where she studied for a master's degree in international development at George Washington University. While working on her master's, she worked at InterAction, a coalition organization of U.S.-based non-governmental organizations working in international relief and development.

Following graduation, she started working for Save the Children. In December 2001, she was sent on assignment to Pakistan, and she has been working overseas with Save the Children ever since, conducting development assistance and humanitarian relief. Anita worked on education and child protection projects with Afghan refugees in Pakistan for four months, and then went to Afghanistan for a year. In June of this year she transferred to Iraq, spent June and July in Baghdad, and is now in Basrah, where she is managing an education and child protection program. She is now 26 years old.

When asked how her experience serving on a Youth Advisory Committee had influenced her life, Anita said, "It influenced me hugely. The YAC helped me discover a passion for public service and introduced me to the many possibilities for being involved in assistance work. It also gave me a great faith in not-for-profit organizations; my entire professional career to date has been in the not-for-profit sector. I'm deeply committed to working in international relief and development, and I feel that the YAC was the start of that in many ways."

In addition to helping establish values that continue to guide her career decisions, the YAC also provided Anita with some very tangible benefits. She received full scholarships for both college and graduate school. She is confident that her experience with the YAC helped her receive the college scholarship, and, she says, "My college experiences with leadership, public service, and volunteerism—habits learned from my time in YAC—helped me to get a fellowship for graduate study."

Anita plans to continue working in the field of international relief and development for non-governmental organizations (rather than government, UN or private contractors). She says, "I can't say enough in praise of the YAC—it really was a fabulous experience, which has made a lasting impact on my life. I really just wish that more teenagers in the world could have similar experiences."

CASE STUDY: Serving Opened My Eyes

Kari was 13 years old and a freshman in high school when her father suggested she apply to be on the Youth Advisory Committee. Her father, a businessman and community foundation trustee, thought it would be a good experience. Kari did not. Finally, very reluctantly, she submitted an application and spent her first year trying to figure out what the YAC was about.

Kari had volunteered with her family before becoming a YAC member. She was talkative, very involved in sports and dance, but not really involved in the community or in any leadership activities. She grew up in a small, homogeneous, well-to-do town that has streets lined with large, well-kept Victorian homes. “Serving on the YAC opened my eyes to what is going on out in the community,” she says. “I saw I could help and make a difference. The problems in my community were hidden very well. I hadn’t seen them before.”

There were two turning points for Kari while serving on the YAC; one was working with fourth graders developing minigrant proposals. Kari went to the school, and talked to them about philanthropy and diversity. She read them Dr. Seuss’ book about Sneetches, and took them through an exercise where they were divided into two groups and were treated differently. Then, the fourth graders brainstormed ideas for their \$100 minigrant. They wanted to buy a TV for a nursing home so the residents would have something to do in the winter. Since \$100 was not enough, they decided to raise the rest of the money themselves. Kari says that was when “I could see how the kids took the little we gave and used it to make a bigger impact.”

The second turning point was when the YAC adopted a family. YAC members shopped for food and presents and baked cookies.

“When we went to deliver the gifts, we saw how little this family had,” say Kari. After leaving, we all pulled out whatever money we had and went out and bought the family more things they needed, and went back. It meant so much to see the look in their eyes... to see someone’s life touched. The next year an anonymous donor gave money so that we could adopt two families. I saw how doing something small can grow.”

Kari’s work didn’t stay local for very long. She became a member of the statewide Michigan Community Foundations’ Youth Project Committee and a youth commissioner for the Michigan Community Service Commission. She has interned at two foundations and at the Council of Michigan Foundations. She is currently serving as a youth commissioner on America’s Service Commission, a national organization of state-level commissions. Each of these opportunities came to Kari through her YAC networks.

Kari’s experiences with youth grantmaking changed her life path. “I had planned to take over our family business and pursued a business major my first year in college, but it just didn’t feel right,” she says. “I decided I wanted to be in the philanthropic and nonprofit sector and changed my major.” She stayed active as a leader in college—organizing volunteer days and chairing a committee on philanthropy. Kari received a Leadership Advancement Scholarship, a program that focuses on developing students’ leadership skills and requires students to be active volunteers throughout

their college years. A few of her volunteer activities included: serving as chair for a committee on philanthropy, planning a golf outing to raise funds for the National Kidney Foundation, serving in multiple positions (mentor, vice president for external affairs, president) for the Panhellenic Council and organizing four philanthropy days. Kari comments, “Without the skills and confidence I gained in the YAC, I don’t think I would have done any of that.” I certainly would not have received the leadership scholarship if not for the YAC.”

Now Kari is working on her masters of public administration at Grand Valley State University with a focus on nonprofit administration, and is a program associate at the Council of Michigan Foundations. In that role she is responsible, among other things, for organizing and conducting all of the regional and statewide YAC trainings. Someday, she hopes to be president of a major foundation or a regional association of grantmakers. She says, “If it wasn’t for the YAC experience, I wouldn’t be doing this. Giving back to the community is now a normal part of my life. Donating money or time to an organization is not a big deal. It’s a part of me!”

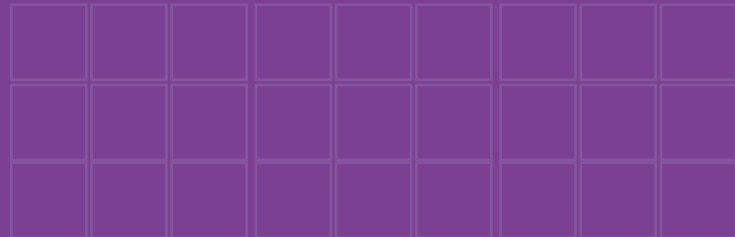
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