

WALKING *the* TALK

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT AND GRANTMAKING IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION (2001-2005)

A research report for The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region

by Karin E. Tice, Ph.D. FERA (Formative Evaluation Research Associates)



GWYPI at ARCH Training Center

photo: Lloyd Wolf



Walking the Talk:

**Youth Engagement and Grantmaking in the National Capital
Region (2001-2005)**

A research report for

The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region

Design: Laryn Bakker/Becky Soll, CEDC, www.cedc.org

Cover image: GWYPI Members 2002-2003, Rick Reinhard



“It can’t be a community foundation unless youth are involved because youth are part of the community. We’re a big part and we’re the future.”

YAC member

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Preface	4
Introduction	5
Background	6
A Conceptual Framework	7
Why Involve Youth In Grant Making?	8
Key Findings	10
Outcomes	12
<i>Community Leadership</i>	12
<i>Youth Advisory Council Members</i>	14
<i>Grantees</i>	16
Effective Grantmaking from A Youth Perspective	23
Youth Engagement In Organizations	25
Effective Practices	26
Taking Action - How To Engage Youth	28
<i>What Can Your Organization Do?</i>	28
<i>What Can Funders Do?</i>	28
Conclusion	29
Sources and Resources	30
<i>Reports and Publications</i>	30
<i>Websites</i>	31
Acknowledgements	32

Executive Summary

What if we invited young people to sit at the table and participate as decision-makers in the organizations that support the social fabric of our democracy? What if adults partnered with youth at a time in their lives when they are exploring their place in the world? What if we not only listened to their ideas on how to improve the lives of other young people in their communities, but actually gave them resources and support, empowering them to implement their ideas and to serve as leaders?

This evaluation research report tells the story of what youth and adults from the Greater Washington Youth Philanthropy Initiative (GWYPI) of The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region (CFNCR) have learned over the past four years about engaging youth as grantmakers and community leaders. It tells stories like that of the relationship between a group of youth grantmakers, the DC Youth Advisory Council and youth from Facilitating Leadership in Youth (FLY), a nonprofit working East of the Anacostia River in Washington, DC, one of the neighborhoods most affected by poverty and violence in the greater Washington region. Over the past 4 years, youth from FLY have received three grants from the DC Youth Advisory Council for: development of their own youth council; career training; leadership training on how to effectively engage youth in school system reform; and for a youth-led publication on violence and police brutality. Youth grantees from FLY investigated the issue of violence in their neighborhood by interviewing community leaders, police, and gun store owners, among others. Young people ages 12 to 16 wrote about

their own experiences and the results of their investigation in a publication titled “Guns Killin Youngins” that was featured in The Washington Post. See *Full Article on p.18*.

Stories like this one show the power of young people to identify critical issues, mobilize resources and affect change. They offer hope and propel us to take action. Young people from all over the greater Washington region are working to improve conditions for their peers and increase the numbers of young people actively engaged in civic and community life through youth-to-youth grantmaking. They are serving as stewards of grant dollars and as community leaders. Benefits from investments in these young people, and their commitment to serving as leaders in our Nation’s Capital have the potential to shape their futures as well as ours.

We hope that our story and experiences inspire you to think strategically about how your organization can engage young people as leaders and decision-makers on issues that directly affect their lives. This document is intended to link you to information, ideas and other resources to empower you to journey along this path and experience the impact of investing in youth to create positive community change.

The Greater Washington Youth Philanthropy Initiative (GWYPI) was established in fall 2001 through a \$300,000 multi-year grant to The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region (CFNCR) from the Time Warner Foundation as well as generous contributions from foundations and donors in the greater Washington area. As a regional program, GWYPI established partnerships with CFNCR’s regional affiliates in Maryland — the Montgomery County Community Foundation (MCCF) and

the Prince George’s Community Foundation (PGCF). A similar relationship with CFNCR’s new affiliate in Alexandria, Virginia, the Alexandria Community Trust, is currently being explored.

Four Youth Advisory Councils (YACs) were established during the Initiative’s first three years. They are in Washington, DC (DC Urban Up-Lifters), Montgomery County (Teens Giving Grants to Teens), Prince Georges County Maryland, (Prince George’s Home Of Philanthropy), and Northern Virginia (Future Leaders of Society).

Between 2002 and 2005, the four YACs have recommended grants totaling \$279,500 to youth-led projects and have worked to encourage other foundations and nonprofit organizations to engage youth in meaningful ways. Youth Advisory Council members are a diverse group of young people including African American, Asian American, Caucasian, Latino, and immigrant youth. Ranging in age from 12 to 19, many live in socio-economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. Youth Advisory Council members serve as **grantmakers** and **community leaders**. As one YAC member commented, “We are helping ourselves while helping the community.”

YACs primarily fund youth development, youth leadership, youth civic engagement and youth organizing activities. Grants focus on serious issues including teen health, violence prevention (particularly gang violence prevention), domestic abuse prevention, youth empowerment through the arts, substance abuse prevention, academic achievement and job training/employment. **All grant projects are youth-initiated and youth-led.**

This executive summary presents highlights from a comprehensive report that presents the findings from

“We believe young people must be directly involved in decisions that affect their lives. Too many youth have to endure racism, poverty, violence, poor education, housing and healthcare. These conditions should propel us to action. We hope that you will consider the recommendations in this report and urge you to join us in engaging youth as leaders now!”

Terri Lee Freeman, President, The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region

a four-year evaluation of The Greater Washington Youth Philanthropy Initiative (2001 – 2004) conducted by Formative Evaluation Research Associates (FERA), an independent evaluation group located in Ann Arbor, Michigan. The full report also presents effective practices, ideas, and other resources to support engaging youth in organizations. Specific actions an organization or foundation can take to begin the process of engaging youth are offered.

Key findings include (see page 10 for a complete list of key findings):

- Youth Advisory Council members, in partnership with the CFNCR are serving in a community leadership role to encourage foundations and other organizations to strategically engage youth in their organizations.
- Some grantee organizations are increasing the ways they engage youth because of their experiences observing youth-funded and youth-led projects. Many more would like information on how to more meaningfully engage youth in leadership and decision-making roles. *“Prior to receiving the grant we merely viewed youth as potential volunteers. Their level of engagement post-grant allowed us to see their true interest in serving their community. We began to ‘listen’ more to their ideas.”* — Adult staff member-grantee
- Neighborhoods and communities are benefiting from the work young people are doing supported by youth grants. Youth-to-youth grantmaking leverages youth leadership on many levels—within organizations, in neighborhoods, in communities, and region-wide. These leaders take on serious issues and work to improve the quality of life in their communities.
- Youth engagement at every stage of program development and implementation is the key success factor. YAC members are strategically involved in the running of the initiative within the CFNCR. They are also engaged

externally in youth development, leadership and civic engagement efforts as they analyze the needs and issues facing youth in their communities, build their skills and capacities to take action around issues they identify and engage in leadership activities (including grantmaking) to address the issues they identify.

- Community-based youth-to-youth grantmaking puts economic resources, decision-making, project development and implementation into the hands of the people whose lives are most affected by those projects.
- Youth-to-youth grantmaking deepens young people’s understanding of societal issues and empowers them to make necessary changes. When young people partner with adults to improve their communities they also develop and grow in multiple ways depending on the focus of the project. For youth grantmakers and youth grantees, community development and youth development are intertwined and create synergies.
- YAC members learn about the role of philanthropy and the nonprofit sector in developing and funding strategies to address high priority issues. They learn about diversity in all its many forms and experience working with others to find common ground in spite of their differences. YAC members gain confidence in their leadership abilities. They also learn concrete skills including: 1) analytical and critical thinking, 2) group process; 3) decision-making; 4) communication. Intergenerational youth-adult partnerships create learning opportunities and expand the social capital and networks for both youth and adults.
- Youth philanthropy initiatives offer an opportunity to the funding and nonprofit community that other grantmaking entities may not. YACs are bold, innovative and daring with their support. Youth bring an insight and passion to grant-

“We experience violence every day. There are guns, fighting, and domestic violence. We get cussed out and there are drive by shootings.”

FLY youth grantee

“East of the River is deemed as so bad that nothing can be done. It is nice to see some young people who are trying to change that. That is why we funded FLY.”

DC YAC member

making that is based on their first-hand experience of being directly impacted by the issues they seek to address. This results in a very candid and critical review process of proposals, and a willingness to partner with organizations that may not receive consideration from other funding sources.

The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region was established in 1973 with a “mission to facilitate individual, family and organizational giving at all levels to improve the quality of life in the metropolitan Washington region. CFNCR is one of the fastest growing community foundations in the country, with more than \$250 million in new philanthropic capital raised in the past three years. It is also one of the most generous community foundations in the nation, with total giving topping \$83 million in fiscal year 2005. To obtain additional copies of this report or for more information about the Greater Washington Youth Philanthropy Initiative please contact:

E. Bomani Johnson, Program Officer
The Community Foundation
for the National Capital Region
1201 15th Street, NW Suite 420
Washington, DC 20005
Phone (202) 955-5890 ext. 113
www.cfnrc.org

Preface

“I have been involved with the youth philanthropy program for three years. I helped set the criteria and put my own experience of teen pregnancy in. My sister got pregnant at a young age and I believe that having help for teen mothers is a great thing because many teens do not protect themselves. If my sister had had someone to help her, it would have been so much easier for her. So that’s why I fought for the program’s criteria. These three years have been a blessing to me. I feel like I helped create something that is worth more than money and something you can’t put a price on— youth empowerment. It is engraved in us by society that power comes with age— that at 18 or 21 you gain power — but we help show that you can be 13 handling decisions and money that a lot of adults don’t ever get to see in their lives. Our goal is to engage youth and be a better influence in their lives so they can be a good influence in their communities. We have accomplished a new way to show teens that we can be as helpful as our souls and imaginations want us to be. After this program, I will walk away with a greater understanding of teen empowerment and a better feeling about myself. We are inspired by the adults around us everyday. Now it’s our turn to inspire them.”

These are the words of Javiel Barrios, a member of the Montgomery County, Maryland Youth Advisory Council (YAC) of the Greater Washington Youth Philanthropy Initiative (GWYPI) when asked to describe some of his experiences as a YAC member, and how he feels his work has impacted his community.

Launched in 2001, the GWYPI set out to :

- Increase opportunities for youth to be engaged in community and civic life;
- Promote youth civic engagement and youth philanthropy as a strategy for youth development and social change;
- Encourage and support other organizations to involve youth as leaders and decision makers;

- Raise awareness of youth needs and of youth as real partners and sources of knowledge and strength in our community; and
- Increase investments in youth development and youth engagement.

In its first four years, 88 young people have been a part of this leadership development and grantmaking program. Through the effort, young people aged 12 to 19 are entrusted with the financial stewardship of \$100,000 per year. They are charged with learning about the needs in their communities, and doing something about it—awarding grants, speaking out, and encouraging other young people to get involved. Over the past four years there have been some major accomplishments and lessons learned that have directed the development of the initiative and its impact in the greater Washington region. This evaluation research report documents what we have learned and is written in hope that it will be useful for foundations and donors who support youth organizations and programs; organizations seeking to further involve youth in the decision-making aspects of their organizations; and other existing and emerging youth grantmaking initiatives.




GWYPI members during evaluation session

photo: Daniel McNeill

Introduction

Envision a boardroom filled with a diverse group of community leaders actively discussing the proposals they have just reviewed. Which ones should we fund? How will these grants make a difference? Do the organizations submitting the applications have the capacity to carry out the grant? Now, imagine that this group is a racially, ethnically, culturally, geographically, and socio-economically diverse council comprised of youth, ages 12-19 and that the proposals they are discussing were developed and will be implemented by their peers in collaboration with nonprofit organizations. Four such Youth Advisory Councils (YACs) are part of The Greater Washington Youth Philanthropy Initiative (GWYPI) of the Community Foundation for the National Capital Region (CFNCR). Over four years (2002-2005) these councils have awarded grants totaling \$279,500 to youth-led projects in the greater Washington region and have worked to encourage other foundations and nonprofit organizations to engage youth in meaningful ways.

In 2004, Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE), a national community of grantmakers and donors committed to strengthening democracy by using the power, influence and resources of philanthropy to open pathways to participation, selected the GWYPI as a model civic engagement program, citing both its diversity and impact in the region.



“Youth are a big part of the community and we will be better prepared by having this [youth grantmaking] experience... We understand the needs in the community for the youth... We bring another perspective into the grantmaking arena, a fresh new perspective.”

YAC member

The key purposes of this document are to: 1) conceptually and practically place youth grantmaking within the broader scope of youth civic engagement and community development; 2) share key findings and lessons learned during the first four years of GWYPI; and 3) highlight principles, effective practices, tools and resources for engaging youth.

Findings from a four-year evaluation of GWYPI (2001 – 2004) conducted by Formative Evaluation Research Associates (FERA), an independent evaluation group located in Ann Arbor, Michigan, are presented. FERA uses a participatory, utilization-focused approach to evaluation. Youth Advisory Council members along with CFNCR staff and a representative board member were strategically involved in the evaluation. This advisory group developed and prioritized evaluation types, questions, short-, intermediate- and long-term outcomes and reporting needs. They also participated in a structured data interpretation workshop.

Data collection methods used to evaluate the GWYPI included: 1) a literature review; 2) grantee surveys (Year I and II)¹; 3) an annual Instrumented Group Interview with each YAC; 4) a survey of youth in years II and III; 5) annual interviews with CFNCR staff and selected board members; and 6) site visits to a sample of grantees. Many of these data collection activities occurred during annual two-day evaluation site visits. All YAC members engaged in yearly instrumented group interviews (IGIs) to reflect on their work, and discussed ways to strengthen and improve their work as youth grantmakers. IGIs are similar to focus groups except that participants complete a short written form for individual reflection followed by a facilitated group discussion on issues they choose. The second part of this report is based on a review of the literature on youth engagement, and interviews with current and alumni YAC members and adult experts working in this area.

This document is divided into two major sections. The first presents: 1) background information about the initiative; 2) a conceptual framework placing youth grantmaking within the broader context of youth engagement and exploring the question – Why involve youth in grantmaking? 3) an overview of key findings; 4) multiple levels of outcomes including – a) community leadership outcomes at the regional level, b) outcomes for Youth Advisory Council members, c) grantee outcomes, and d) community foundation outcomes; and 5) effective grantmaking from a youth perspective. The second section focuses more broadly on youth engagement in organizations answering the questions – Why is it valuable? What conditions are necessary? and How do organizations benefit? Effective practices for youth grantmaking initiatives which are also relevant to other youth engagement efforts are detailed. Concrete steps an organization and/or a foundation can take to support youth

¹ Grants made in Year III were not surveyed because they had not yet implemented their projects.



DC YAC Members conduct Elementary Giving Program
photo: Daniel McNeill

engagement are suggested. Finally, helpful resources including reports, publications, and websites are offered.

Background

The GWYPI was established in fall 2001 through a \$300,000 grant over three years from the Time Warner Foundation as well as generous contributions from foundations and donors in the greater Washington area. The GWYPI is the first *regional* youth led grantmaking program in the greater Washington area and was designed after a careful review of models elsewhere in the country with technical assistance from the Council on Michigan Foundations and the Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth. Four YACs were established over three years. They are in Washington, DC (DC Urban Up-Lifters), Montgomery County, Maryland (Teens Giving Grants to Teens), Prince George's County, Maryland (Prince George's Home Of Philanthropy), and Northern Virginia (Future Leaders Of Society). Youth Advisory Council members refer to their councils by the names they selected.

Youth Advisory Council members are a diverse group of young people including African American, Asian American, Caucasian, Latino, and immigrant youth. Ranging in age from 12 to 19, many live in socio-economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. A wide range of schools (public, private, charter) is represented as are the level of students' successes in school. The majority of these young people have not had previous opportunities to develop and demonstrate leadership skills and qualities. Many Youth Advisory Council members work in addition to attending school and are expected to contribute to their households' income. Others provide childcare for younger siblings so that adult household members can work.

Young people become members of YACs by various means: they are recruited by other members; they are recruited by community-based organizations working in partnership with the CFNCR, and they are referred to the YACs by staff, board members, donors and others who are part of the

CFNCR family. So far, a total of 88 young people have served as YAC members, with a retention rate of 85%.

The purpose of the YACs is to create positive community change and increase the numbers of youth involved in civic and community life, through the implementation of a comprehensive leadership development and grantmaking process. YACs are youth-led groups that function as part of CFNCR and its regional affiliates the Montgomery County Community Foundation and the Prince George's Community Foundation. This model of youth-to-youth grantmaking is designed to stimulate youth civic engagement and encourage more nonprofits to embrace youth as leaders, both by modeling effective youth civic engagement and by supporting the efforts of other organizations to engage young people as leaders and full partners in decision-making.

Given this purpose, GWYPI requires its grantees to:

- Engage youth in leadership roles – projects and activities are designed and/or managed by youth or by youth in partnership with adults;
- Empower youth to use their unique abilities and encourage partnerships between youth and adults;
- Impact youth in a positive way that also benefits their neighborhoods or the larger community;
- Partner with adults who have experience in empowering young people to succeed.

Youth Advisory Council members are **grantmakers** – they:

- Receive skill-based training in facilitation, conflict resolution, diversity, team building, decision making, and public speaking;
- Conduct community needs assessments;
- Prioritize grantmaking areas;
- Design and receive training in issue areas they fund such as violence prevention, education, youth empowerment, youth employment and training, teen health, and youth arts;
- Receive intensive training in the grantmaking process including proposal review, reviewing financial statements and conducting interviews and site visits;
- Develop and distribute requests for proposals;
- Review grant applications based on criteria they establish;
- Interview applicants (youth and adults) representing proposals they are interested in possibly funding;
- Discuss grant proposals and interview data and develop recommendations for funding;

- Present their grant recommendations to the board of trustees of the Community Foundation for the National Capital Region, the Montgomery County Community Foundation and the Prince George's Community Foundation for final approval; and
- Conduct site visits to grantees to evaluate and assess adherence to grant agreements.

Youth Advisory Council members are **community leaders** - they:

- Catalyze youth involvement in community organizations and issues (civic life);
- Speak out on issues affecting youth and support the efforts of youth organizations throughout the region (e.g., engagement of youth in organization's funding for after school programs);
- Serve on standing committees of the Community Foundation for the National Capital Region;
- Represent the CFNCR and the affiliates at meetings, conferences, and other public events; and
- Inform CFNCR's strategic planning as key stakeholders on the issues of academic achievement and workforce development.

A Conceptual Framework

Youth civic engagement is defined in many different ways. What current researchers and practitioners are beginning to agree upon is that multiple strategies and pathways are needed to engage young people in organizations, in neighborhoods and in civic life however it is defined. For the purpose of this document we are using the following definition of youth civic engagement – “young people developing civic skills and habits as they actively shape democratic society in collaboration with others” (Skelton et al 2002). “A plurality of approaches can compliment and enhance one another” (Gibson 2001,

Listen 2005). Youth philanthropy engages young people in the giving of time, talent and treasure. It can be defined as youth: “giving, serving and private citizen action intended for the common good” (Dr. Robert Payton, Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University).

Youth philanthropy as defined here contains the multiple pathways to youth civic engagement—learning about philanthropy broadly defined through school-based curriculum, service learning, volunteerism, youth leadership, giving, political engagement, youth organizing, and youth grantmaking. The pathways that exist to engage youth in philanthropy can influence youths' development in positive ways. Additionally each pathway has the potential to engage youth in community development and in creating a civil and just society. The intensity and level at which youth become engaged in community development and creating a civic society can vary widely, but all are important experiences and can build upon one another.

“Community development and youth development not only complement one another but are critical to each other's success” (Irby, Thaddeus and Pittman et al 2001, Gibson 2001). “Recent conversations bringing people together from a broad range of fields build on this thought by adding civic development as a third necessary and integral element” (Long et al 1999). A holistic approach involving all three is needed in order to reweave a strong social fabric. These approaches recognize that rather than being passive recipients, youth must be actors in their own lives, in their communities and in the systemic social changes that are critical to achieving social justice and regional equity. Youth grantmaking is one pathway which draws young people into community development and civic engagement activities while providing them with positive youth development skills and experiences.

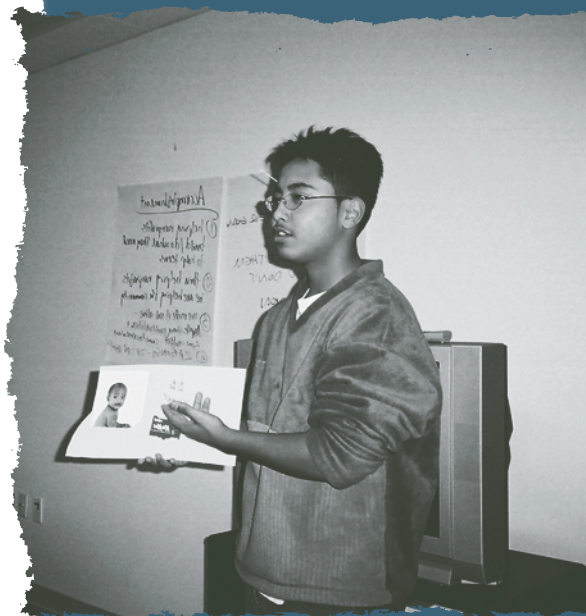
The Youth Engagement Continuum (developed by Listen, Inc.) describes different ways that **organizations** can

“Civic engagement of adults and youth is at the core of democracy. Many major social change movements have been led by youth—for example, young people played a critical role in the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950's and '60s and the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. History shows us how positive social change can occur when young people are fully engaged as leaders.”

Terri Lee Freeman, President, CFNCR

“Youth should have a legitimate, meaningful seat at the table in all of the institutions that affect their lives.”

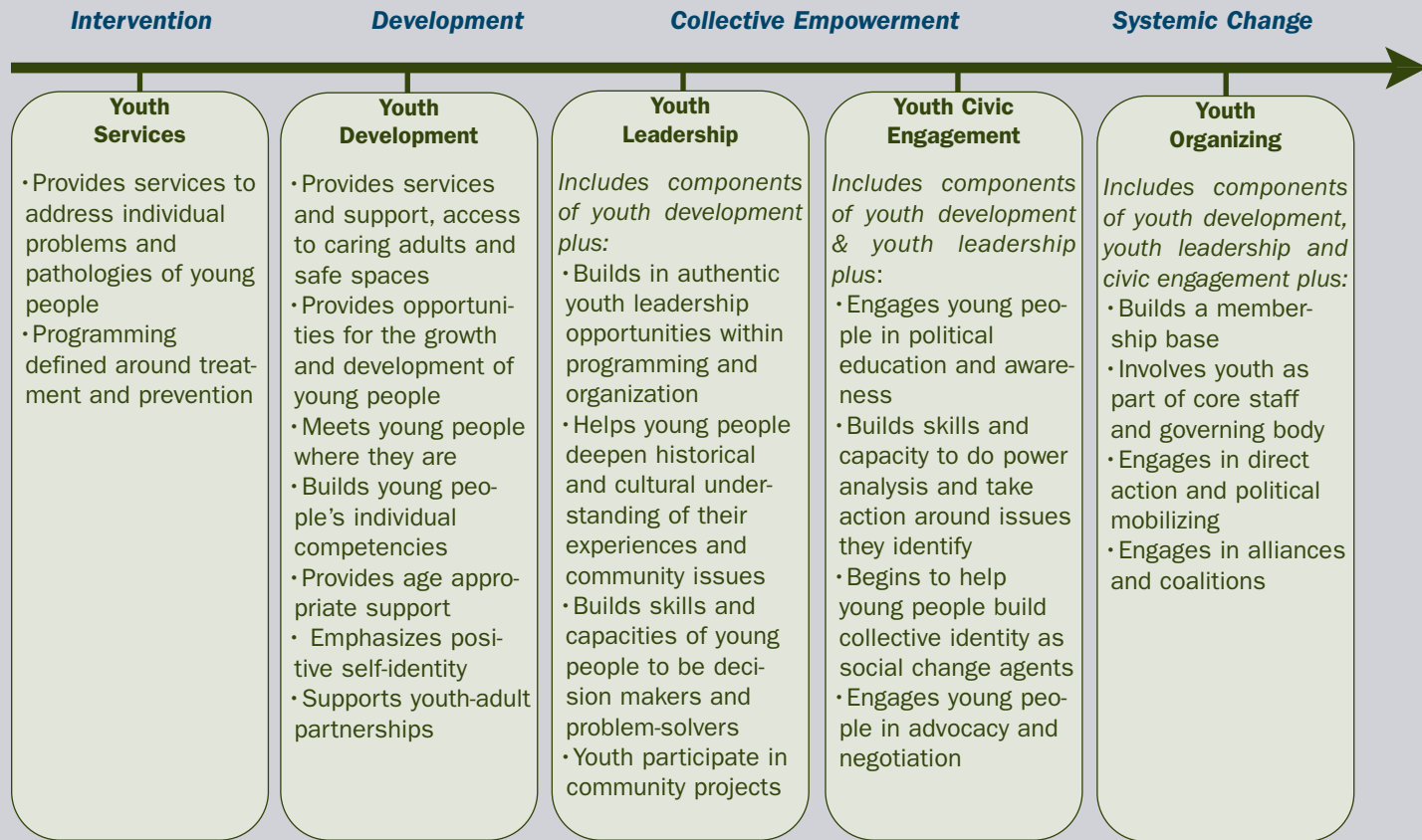
James Pearlstein Co-Founder, Facilitating Leadership in Youth



Montgomery County YAC Member
photo: Silvana Straw

Figure 1
LISTEN Inc. – Youth Engagement Continuum²

LISTEN, Inc. believes that one of the core elements of creating a local youth movement is to have people working in all five areas of the continuum.



engage youth (see Figure 1). GWYPI YACs fund organizations that have developed projects to engage youth in youth development, leadership, civic engagement and organizing activities. Most of the YACs' grants fall under the categories of youth development, youth leadership and youth civic engagement. Most also focus on community development issues. **The most critical criteria are that projects are youth-initiated and youth-led.** Youth grantmakers have a very special leveraging role to play in this arena. In addition to funding all of these levels of participation, YAC members are themselves engaging in youth development, leadership and civic engagement efforts as they analyze the needs and issues facing youth in their communities, build their skills and capacity to take action around issues they identify and engage in leadership activities (grantmaking) to address the issues. Youth grantmaking provides youth an opportunity to obtain peer-to-peer funding to implement their ideas for improving their communities.

Youth grantmakers are clearly both engaged in the process as well as facilitating it for others. This often creates a synergy between grantmakers and grantees—they learn from each other and are inspired by the active leadership roles each is playing in their communities, organizations and/or personal lives. Some grantees have become interested in grantmaking, joining the YAC or attending to the funding dimensions of their nonprofits, while some YAC members have joined grantees to work with them on their projects.

Why Involve Youth in Grantmaking?

Adult and youth interviewees spoke passionately about why youth should be involved in grantmaking. There are benefits to youth, foundations and other organizations, communities and our civil society in general. Community

² This continuum was developed by LISTEN Inc. 2005

development and youth development must be intertwined, so the categories just described are blurred and often overlap. Positive youth development outcomes as articulated by YAC members include³:

“It’s great for youth because not only do they feel like they’re good at something but that they’re making a difference and will hold onto that forever.”

“It [the GWYPI] gives youth a chance to be a part of a solution for my community.”

“The YAC has encouraged and helped us be more aware of social and economic situations in our communities. With the help of the YAC, we have a chance to be a part of the well-being of our communities.”

“I really appreciate being in the situation as a young person being trusted and respected in making huge decisions.”

“It allows us to meet people my age from different races and parts of the Metropolitan area.”

“Youth and adults learn a great deal in the process.”

Adults commented:

“The only way to help young people develop fully is to involve them in changing their conditions.” —Nat Williams, Executive Director, Hill-Snowdon Foundation

“We give young people the message that we believe in their work... “[Involving them in this way] builds early capacity for a body of young people to gain experience getting things started.” —Ditra Edwards, former Executive Director of Listen Inc.

“Youth grantmaking prepares young people to be self sufficient adults, critical consumers of information and to know how to

advocate for themselves.” — James Pearlstein

“Young people from communities of color and low income youth are disproportionately affected. They don’t have a voice and are shut out of decisions that affect their lives. Grantmaking provides them an opportunity to analyze and assess conditions and develop strategies.” —Nat Williams

“Provides youth an opportunity to promote positive community change.” —James Pearlstein

“I heard a young woman say ‘I am a philanthropist’...for a young person to make that conclusion about herself is a mark of success.” —CFNCR board member

“It is crystal clear that if youth understand the concept and value the role that philanthropy plays in a community they will be stronger leaders now and as adults.”

—Betsy Franz, Leadership Arlington

Benefits to foundations and organizations from YAC members’ perspectives are:

“The most important reason is that the younger generation has to take over and sustain [organi-

zations]. Prepare people on how to keep programs afloat.”

“Youth are a big part of the community and we will be better prepared by having this experience...We understand the needs in the community for youth...We bring another perspective into the grantmaking arena, a fresh new perspective.”

“Youth are most aware of the problems their peers face and best able to help identify workable solutions.”

“Because of youth involvement, the CFNCR has a larger list of organizations to potentially fund.”

“Organizations’ boards learn from youth and vice versa.”

Adults commented:

“It is important for youth to understand that there is not an endless pot of money. If you get a grant, you become a steward of those dollars and have a responsibility to be a good steward.” —Betsy Franz

“Young people are willing to give seed funding to projects. Obtaining seed money is huge, it gets you started and helps you become visible to the funding

*Elementary Giving Program
photo: Daniel McNeill*

“If you’re trying to target youth in the community and want to improve life, the best way to do it is to get a sense of the issues. The best is to have youth involved in the decisions.”
YAC member

³ Some quotes are attributed and others are not. Most of the individuals we have quoted in this document were promised confidentiality either on a survey or in an interview, while a recent set of interviews with key leaders in the youth engagement field were asked if they could be quoted

community. For some it is the cornerstone to getting started. It opens up new funding possibilities for projects.” —Ditra Edwards

“It is really important that youth have budgetary control... ..knowing how to understand and negotiate a budget is critical.” — James Pearlstein

“Youth should have a legitimate, meaningful seat at the table in all of the institutions that affect their lives.” —James Pearlstein

Neighborhoods and communities benefit in the following ways when young people are involved in giving and obtaining grants (many of the benefits already identified for youth apply to nonprofits as well). Youth grantmakers said:

“Youth are most aware of the problems their peers face and best able to help identify workable solutions.”

“It’s important for youth to develop leadership skills as quickly as possible because we’re the leaders for tomorrow. The better trained we are as youth the better we’ll be as adults and better able to affect change in our own community. Youth can also be the leaders of today.”

“It’s really important [to involve youth in decision-making] because youth do make an impact on the community.”

“Youth have different perspectives.”

Finally, civic society as a whole benefits when our assumptions about young people’s involvement in society and contributions to its creation change. YAC members said:

“It’s a sustainable idea of helping the community through grantmaking and should start at a young age.”

“Voices of youth are heard.”

“Youth are the future and should be involved in and exposed to decision-making today.”

Key Assumptions

- Youth have valuable and essential contributions to make to civil society.
- Youth can only develop fully when engaged in improving their communities.
- Communities can only develop fully when engaging youth.
- Youth should have a meaningful seat at the table in the institutions that affect their lives and in the decision-making processes on issues that affect their lives.
- Partnering across the generations benefits everyone.

“Youth are the future of the whole community. We are the future and [grantmaking gives] us the chance to prove we do have leadership skills and capabilities.”

Adults commented:

“Young people are authentic—they know better than we do because they live their lives everyday. Youth culture changes over time and across regions...our ability to speak to that is limited... it challenges us to see young people in a different way.” —Ditra Edwards

“Youth grantmaking provides an opportunity for interesting things to happen. Youth-to-youth grantmaking gets to more root causes of issues. Adults bring baggage – who they have to please and what they need to do to satisfy their own political leanings. Youth tend to confront issues more directly and have more honest conversations.” —James Pearlstein

“[Youth grantmaking] engages youth as partners in a broader process of facilitating youth engagement.” —Nat Williams

“You can’t have youth civic engagement without youth involvement in philanthropy.” — Betsy Franz

Key Findings

The findings in this section were developed based on a structured data interpretation workshop with YAC members, CFNCR staff, and one CFNCR board member. Data interpretation workshops actively engage key stakeholders in the analysis of data through a facilitated process. GWYPI participants systematically reviewed YAC and grantee survey data summaries and organized verbatim comments. They identified key findings, their implications, and made recommendations based on these interpretations from their unique roles in the organization. The findings presented here combine this group’s analysis with additional analysis done jointly by CFNCR staff and FERA researchers. Specific outcomes are detailed further on in this document. Highlights are presented here.

This model of youth to youth grantmaking leverages youth leadership on many levels—within organizations, in neighborhoods, in communities, and region-wide. CFNCR partners with youth to encourage foundations and other organizations to engage youth in meaningful ways in their organizations. YAC grants provide resources

and impetus for this to happen. (See youth grantee outcomes section for examples.)

Youth engagement at every stage of program development and implementation is the key to the success of the GWYPI. This model empowers young people to seek understanding of issues and then create a funding mechanism to address their findings.

Youth philanthropy initiatives offer an opportunity to the funding and nonprofit community that other grantmaking entities may not. YACs are bold, innovative and daring with their support. They refuse to make mediocre grants. Youth bring an insight and passion to grantmaking that is based on their first-hand experience of being directly impacted by the issues they seek to address. This results in a very candid and critical review process of proposals, and a willingness to partner with organizations that may not receive consideration from other funding sources.

Community based youth-to-youth grantmaking puts economic resources, decision making, project development and implementation into the hands of the young people whose lives are affected by those programs. Youth not only directly or indirectly experience the issues addressed by programs, they also witness grantee successes. Through this process they learn about supports and challenges to effective change.

Youth-to-youth grantmaking deepens young people's understanding of societal issues and empowers them to make the changes they see are necessary. Youth grantmaking is empowering for the YAC members and youth who submit proposals for funding. YAC members learn about community issues from a combination of literary sources that capture the empirical data about their communities including needs assessments, and anecdotal/real life learning from their own life experiences and those of their peers in addition to proposal review, interview, and site visit processes; and then contribute to efforts that meet their criteria for community-based, youth-led improvement. Youth grantmakers interweave community development and youth development.

Grantees have the experience of participating in efforts to improve their community, seeking support for their work, and the feeling of success when other young people in their community support their ideas.

YAC members learn about the role of philanthropy and the nonprofit sector in developing and funding strategies to address high priority issues. Finally, they learn about diversity in all its many forms and experience working with others to find common ground in spite of their differences.

YAC members learn analytical and critical thinking skills and how to partner with each other in establishing grant selection criteria, grantmaking priority areas and grant

Elementary Giving Program – Greater Washington Youth Philanthropy Initiative

Photo: Daniel McNeill



decisions. These experiences teach valuable skills – decision-making, conflict resolution, listening, supporting “uncommon” positions, negotiation, foresight and strategic planning.

YAC members learn a wide range of other skills and gain confidence. Public speaking, research, interviewing, financial management/budgeting, teamwork, individual and collective accountability are other skills that YAC participation builds and enhances.

Decision-making in the YACs has positive impact on decision-making in other parts of members’ lives. YAC members feel that they have the ability to analyze situations and then make decisions better than they did before they were YAC members. Interviews with YAC members and alumni indicate that making decisions regarding academic and career development have been enhanced by YAC participation.

YAC members become neighborhood and community leaders. YAC members speak on behalf of the respective YAC in public forums/events, as well as lead all the discussions in meetings and interviews and evaluation site visits with grantees, and serve as speakers at conferences, and media representatives.

Intergenerational youth-adult partnerships create learning opportunities and expand the social capital and networks for both youth and adults. Working with young people to build on their understanding of the issues that impact their lives and communities; develop their leadership skills; and create projects that are meaningful to them and their communities is a learning process for both the youth and adults involved in the GWYPI.

Youth grantmakers address serious societal issues. Each of the four YACs identifies and addresses issues that have devastating impacts on their communities. YACs have chosen the following grantmaking areas: teen health, violence prevention (particularly gang violence prevention), domestic abuse prevention, youth empowerment through the arts, substance abuse prevention, academic achievement and job training/employment. In addition to the above, local YACs have solicited proposals in the areas of teen driving safety to address the increasing numbers of young people who are injured and killed in auto accidents on the main highway in Montgomery County, Maryland; and discrimination prevention to address the increasing numbers of Latino immigrants in Northern Virginia.

Youth, especially those from socio-economically disadvantaged communities, need access to other supports and resources which are beyond the scope of a youth grantmaking initiative. Partnering with a youth organization like the YMCA helps to ensure that youth and their families get needed referrals and contacts to other

needed resources. Staff must be available and trained to support the whole young person and not just program operations. Staff must be able to provide comprehensive support or refer youth to appropriate support as needs arise such as mental health, preparation for college, and/or employment.

Operating dollars are needed to engage youth as grantmakers. Operational costs for effectively involving youth in grantmaking are relatively high because youth need training and other types of support. Often funders do not understand the programmatic supports needed for a comprehensive youth development program and why they must provide operational dollars in addition to those designated for grantmaking. Youth civic engagement programs are also youth development programs and must have dedicated staff and training and supports in addition to the actual activity, i.e., grantmaking.

Engaging youth in grantmaking helps CFNCR meet its mission. Youth can represent their peers and can be partners on strategic issues the CFNCR seeks to address. Documenting the impact youth are making in our communities can be shared widely with donors, trustees and other foundations. By operating this youth philanthropy program, the CFNCR is modeling youth civic engagement.

Outcomes

Outcomes were identified and documented at multiple levels through yearly site visits to GWYPI, individual and group interviews with YAC members and several alumni, YAC youth grantees, GWYPI and grantee staff, surveys of YAC members and grantees, and document review. They include outcomes for: 1) community leadership; 2) Youth Advisory Council members; 3) grantees, and 4) the CFNCR. While this evaluation focused primarily on youth-related outcomes, all of the youth have worked to effect positive change in their communities.

Community Leadership Outcomes

Community foundations serve as community-based funders. They bridge donors’ desires to give back to their communities and nonprofits’ needs for resources to facilitate their work. Community foundations also serve as community leaders, convening individuals and groups around key societal issues (e.g., academic achievement, workforce development, healthcare, etc.). The CFNCR has taken a leadership role

in facilitating youth engagement in the greater Washington region. As a result of their work in this area over the past 4 years, there is an increasing awareness on the part of funders and nonprofits about the value of youth engage-

“What sets CFNCR apart is its commitment to youth philanthropy for social change and as a means to engage youth grantees in meaningful ways.”
Martha Johnston, Associate Director,
Coalition of Community Foundations for
Youth

ment and an increased commitment or effort to engage youth as leaders. For example:

- As a partner with the Greater Washington Youth Philanthropy Initiative, the Consumer Health Foundation now funds youth-led projects. They recently indicated an interest in increasing their level of commitment to supporting youth-led programs in the health prevention and promotion area and are interested in partnering with the GWYPI.
- The Washington Area Partnership for Immigrants (a funding collaborative housed at the CFNCR) commissioned national/local research on best practices in engaging immigrant youth to help inform the design of a new grant program that will fund programs to engage immigrant youth in community/civic life.



GWYPI members during evaluation session
photo: Daniel McNeill

- CFNCR is exploring a partnership with other area funders to promote youth engagement as an effective youth development and social change strategy. The goal is to build awareness, convene key stakeholders and leverage funds to support youth led programs, and ultimately increase the number of youth engaged as leaders in public and private institutions as well as build capacity of organizations to effectively engage youth.
- The DC Education Compact (a cross-sector collaborative of government, business and foundation officials working on DC Public Schools system reform) requested CFNCR's assistance on how to effectively engage youth in their strategic planning process.
- The newly formed Alexandria Community Trust, the community foundation for Alexandria, Virginia, is working to develop a youth philanthropy initiative in

partnership with the Northern Virginia YAC of the GWYPI.

Youth grantmakers also serve as community leaders, conveners and catalysts for positive community change. In the greater Washington area, the four YACs have been leaders and catalysts in the area of youth engagement. They do this both at the regional and neighborhood levels. Within the region, they model youth engagement, make presentations to a wide range of groups and serve in advisory capacities for other organizations. Over the past four years, YAC members have served as presenters in the wider community at the:

- Washington Area Women's Foundation Giving Circles meeting
- Consumer Health Foundation board meeting
- The DC Children and Youth Investment Trust Corporation Conference
- Conference on Youth Philanthropy panel at the Richmond Community Foundation

- Association of Fundraising Professionals International Conference in Baltimore, Maryland

YAC members and alumni are being sought after for other advisory positions. For example:

- Two YAC members served as members of the Time Warner Foundation's Youth Advisory Group.
- One YAC alumni served as an intern at the Fannie Mae Foundation.

YAC members are also finding ways to make their voices heard on issues affecting young people. For example:

- YAC members together with youth from other youth civic engagement groups participated in the DC Education Compact planning process (a cross-sector collaborative of government, business and foundation officials working on DC Public School reform);
- YAC members wrote a letter to The Washington Post expressing

their concerns about proposed budget cuts for funding after-school programs in DC;

- YAC members advised the National Crime Prevention Council's Youth Outreach for Victim Assistance grant-making process; and
- YAC members were featured on 2K Nation Youth Radio program and in other media (e.g., Chronicle of Philanthropy, Washington Post).

Youth Advisory Council Member Outcomes

Young people obtain skills, knowledge and experience through efforts to effect positive changes in their communities and neighborhoods. These outcomes occur for three different groups: 1) Youth Advisory Council members; 2) youth who take the lead on developing a proposal and designing/implementing a project (youth grantees); and 3) youth who participate in the grant funded project. This section focuses primarily on YAC members while the next

section discusses both the youth grantees and participants as well as the impact their work has on the organizations they partner with and the community at large.

While serving on their council, YAC members: 1) experienced making a difference; 2) increased their levels of confidence and ability to communicate their views; 3) developed perceptions of themselves as community leaders; 4) gained knowledge about philanthropy and the grantmaking process; 5) learned analytical skills; 6) gained a deeper understanding of some of the issues affecting youth in their communities; 7) acquired a range of skills including leadership, decision making, communication, conflict resolution, and grantmaking skills (see Tables 1 and 2).

DC YAC letter to The Washington Post in response to pending budget cuts for out-of-school time programs.

Dear Editor,

We are the DC Urban Up-Lifters, a youth-led advisory council affiliated with The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region. Being youth ourselves, our goal is to empower young people. We grant money to youth-led projects that improve the lives of youth in Washington, DC

We are writing to you because we are very concerned about the proposed federal and DC government budget cuts for out-of-school time programs. We believe these cuts will have severe consequences for youth and their parents and could cause a negative chain reaction in our community.

Afterschool and summer programs are sometimes the only positive influence in young people's lives. Some parents may not be able to afford or find childcare, so children and youth might be left alone and their safety could be at risk. Without these programs, children and youth will be more likely to turn to negative influences such as drugs and alcohol, hustling, or violence. It is more expensive to incarcerate youth than to fund afterschool programs. It could also lead to an increase in sexually transmitted infections and teen pregnancy. Some parents may be forced to quit their jobs to take care of their children. The stress of this type of situation can lead to depression, domestic violence, and may even force families onto public assistance. Some teens rely on after school and summer jobs to assist their families with money for food, clothing and other necessities. Young people have responsibilities too. Their income will be severely missed. The only time some children and youth eat is at their jobs or afterschool programs.

Everyone who lives and works in DC will feel the impact of these cuts. You will probably see an increase in crime. This will make the city's attempts to revitalize futile. If there is an increase in crime, there will be less tourists and less people wanting to live in DC

We ask you to carefully consider the potential problems of budget cuts on out of school time programs. Contact your city council member, the Mayor, or your congressional representative and let them know how these budget cuts will hurt young people and our community. Hire a young person this summer. Volunteer your time at a youth organization. Contact us if you want more information on how you can help.

You were young once and had dreams too. Give us a chance. Walk in our shoes, live where we live, and you will see how much we need these programs.

Sincerely,

The DC Urban-Uplifters

Table 1
Increased Awareness of Community

	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
Awareness of your community's needs/assets	30 (57%)	18(34%)	4 (8%)	1 (2%)		4.5
Participation in your community	25 (47%)	14 (26%)	10 (19%)	3 (6%)	1 (2%)	4.1
Sensitivity to people who are different from you	25 (47%)	16 (30%)	5 (9%)	4 (8%)	4 (8%)	4.0

5= A Great Deal 4= Quite a Bit 3= Somewhat
2= Not Too Much 1= Not At All

Youth vocalized their increased understanding of their community's needs, understanding others, and developing a greater sense of participation in addressing community issues. One YAC member explained, "If I see something going wrong in my community now I have a voice to help out the community." Youth felt empowered through their collaborative efforts to identify local issues relevant to their peers and award grants to address those needs. Others commented:

"The skills I am learning are useful in everyday life. Now I look at the when, where, who and why. It helps [you] analyze the situation and teaches you what's supposed to go through your head."

"I look at decision making in a new light. Now I have a thought process to help me make major decisions. I think through the benefits. I have become more organized."

"I never participated in anything. I was very shy. I never talked to anyone unless I knew them." During her first year as a YAC member, this young woman barely said a word at meetings ...now she talks to lots of people, has presented to the CFNCR board and plays an active leadership role on the YAC and her grades/academic performance has greatly improved as well as her self-esteem and social skills. Because of the diversity of YAC members, youth learned to listen and not judge others' opinions.

"I mean, before I joined the YAC I had nothing, or was not giving much to my community besides the obligated community service. When I joined I really enjoyed playing a responsible role of grant giving and I really appreciate being in the situation as a young person being trusted and respected in making huge decisions."

Table 2
Skills Learned

	5	4	3	2	1	Mean
Grant Making Skills	35 (66%)	16 (30%)	2 (4%)			4.6
Confidence	31 (59%)	17 (32%)	3 (6%)	2 (4%)		4.5
Decision-making Skills	26 (49%)	23 (43%)	2 (4%)	2 (4%)		4.4
Communication Skills	26 (50%)	17 (33%)	7 (14%)	2 (4%)		4.3
Skills to Work as a Team Member	30 (58%)	13 (25%)	6 (12%)	2 (4%)	1 (2%)	4.3
Leadership Skills	28 (53%)	14 (26%)	9 (17%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	4.3

All but one YAC member surveyed now consider themselves leaders (see Table 3). Interviews with youth revealed that their understanding of leadership and the level of leadership which they could assume changed also as a result of their YAC experience.

Table3
Youth as Leaders

Yes, Definitely	Yes, Maybe	No, Probably Not	No, Definitely Not	Don't Know
40 (78%)	10 (20%)			1 (2%)

The effects of serving as a youth grantmaker continue even after youth leave. Interviews with YAC alumni indicate that their experiences as youth grantmakers continue to influence their lives in many ways. Some YAC members:

- Receive scholarships they thought they wouldn't have received without the YAC experience.
- Use the YAC experience on college applications to distinguish themselves.
- Use decision-making skills learned in the YAC to help them make decisions about pursuing higher education, colleges and career choice. Many YAC members as a result of their experience have decided to major in public policy, nonprofit management, and continue to be actively involved in community service. Many YAC members stay in touch with CFNCR after entering college and some have returned to participate on their council during breaks from school.
- Use their new social networks by asking the CFNCR staff to write them letters of recommendation for scholarships and college applications and job applications.

All YAC members are exposed to job opportunities in the nonprofit sector that they probably were not aware of before. While it is too soon to know the long-term impact of the GWYPI, a ten-year study following Michigan youth grantmakers into their late 20's, shows that most youth have continued to volunteer, give, and serve in community leadership roles. (Tice 2004). They are continuing to be engaged in forming civic society. This longitudinal study

shows how a youth grantmaking initiative can influence YAC alumni's career choice, job, educational, and civic engagement choices well into the future.

Grantee Outcomes

Grantee outcomes occur for: 1) youth participants; 2) organizations; and 3) neighborhoods and communities. When young people partner with a nonprofit and receive a grant, the resources leverage their time and talent and they are empowered to make a difference in their neighborhoods and/or communities.

Youth grantees have implemented a wide range of community development/youth development projects focused on gang and violence prevention, conflict resolution, diversity and racism, teen health, hip-hop/spoken word, engaging in community service together with homeless youth, peer education about sexual harassment, health education through creative dance, exposure to career opportunities, and opportunities via youth radio and in person to allow youths' perspectives on issues to be heard.

YACs only fund youth-led projects that are sponsored by nonprofits or schools in their respective geographic service areas. Youth must be integrally involved in developing a proposal and designing/implementing the project. They must: 1) identify and analyze an issue; 2) develop a strategy on how to address the issue; 3) write a proposal; 4) figure out a budget; 5) present the idea to the YAC; 6) obtain funding; 7) implement the idea; 8) evaluate the project; and 9) write a final report.

While most of the proposals are submitted by high school age youth, the YAC has a special Elementary Giving Program where 4th graders are taught by YAC members about grantmaking and proposal development. These 4th graders then develop a proposal, obtain funding and implement their school based project.

YACs have granted a total of \$279,500. A number of projects received grants for more than one year. Table 4 shows the total amounts granted and the number of grants made by each of the four Youth Advisory Councils 2002-2005. As noted previously, these projects are located across the Youth Engagement Continuum (see Figure 1). Grant amounts ranged from \$1,000 to \$7,000. The total amount each Council spent on elementary grants ranged from \$2,500 to \$4,800.

Table 4
GWYPI Grant Award Totals

Youth Advisory Committees	2002	2003	2004	2005
Washington, DC	\$23,000 (n=8)	\$26,500 (n=10)	\$25,000 (n=10)	\$25,000 (n=8)
Montgomery County	\$15,000 (n=4)	\$21,000 (n=5)	\$29,500 (n=8)	\$25,000 (n=6)
Prince George's County		\$15,000 (n=5)	\$16,000 (n=16)	\$19,500(n=5)
Northern Virginia County			\$14,000 (n=5)	\$25,000(n=7)
Total	\$38,000	\$62,500	\$84,500	\$94,500
GRAND TOTAL:				
	\$279, 500			

The rest of this section presents case studies highlighting youth development, organizational, and community level outcomes. Clearly, the outcomes are interrelated and each of the case studies has elements of all three.

Youth Development

When young people partner with adults to improve their communities they also develop and grow in multiple ways depending on the focus of the project. Facilitating Leadership in Youth and Operation Understanding DC are good examples of how youth development and community development are interwoven. Youth development occurs when young people gain leadership skills and have responsibility for developing and implementing community-development programs.

Facilitating Leadership in Youth (FLY) An advisory council for FLY comprised of young people ages 12-16 living primarily in the Barry Farms public housing community of the Anacostia neighborhood of Washington, DC, decided to do something to address the issue of violence in their neighborhood. These young people have received three grants (\$10,800 in total) from the DC YAC. The first grant was to support the development of FLY's Youth Council and for a program designed to expose teens to different career options, prepare them for opportunities and empower them with the confidence to accomplish their goals for the future. The second grant supported participation of FLY's Youth Council in a leadership training workshop and travel to visit a successful youth organizing model at the Philadelphia Student Union. This year, FLY's Youth Council was given a grant to work on a new publication about police brutality in their neighborhood called "Is It Because..." One of the FLY Youth Council's strategies to address violence is to increase awareness of the issue and to help other young people in the community understand their rights and responsibilities. In their first publication, they interviewed community residents, policemen, gun store owners, and wrote about their own experiences. They published and distributed their findings in their first publication called "Guns Killing Youngins." In addition, one of the FLY Youth Council members wrote the

President of the United States to inform him about the educational issues and violence in Anacostia, and provided suggestions for improvement.

FLY is a nonprofit organization founded by two American University students, then age 18. FLY supports youth East of the Anacostia River in achieving their educational goals, developing their talents, and expanding their leadership roles. FLY provides youth primarily from the public housing community of Barry Farms with tutoring during the school year, summer camp, appointments on college campuses and with opportunities to be an integral part of FLY. "I was 18 when my co-founder and I started FLY. Involving youth in FLY was what we wanted to do, but we didn't know how to do it. It has been part of our learning process."—James Pearlstein. Now youth hire staff, serve on the board of directors, facilitate FLY's youth council, and lead community campaigns on issues affecting Anacostia such as gun violence, police brutality and harassment. A few of FLY's goals for next year are to hire 3 youth staff members and to begin to raise funds to build a home for FLY and other Anacostia youth organizations.

Operation Understanding DC (OUDC) has received grants from each of the four YACs for four years (for a total of \$12,500) to support their annual civil rights journey and their Speech Making and Facilitation retreat where Washington-area African American and Jewish youth learn

discussion facilitation, how to lead diversity workshops, handling of racial remarks and public speaking skills. Following the retreat, students conduct outreach to schools, community groups, churches and synagogues to facilitate discussions with children, their peers and adults. This year's grants will support the participation of youth from Prince George's County and Northern Virginia in OUDC's 2006 Civil Rights Journey. As part of a year-long commitment to the program, OUDC students take a month long trip to New York City and cities across the South to learn about civil rights history and to cultivate leaders to fight racism and anti-Semitism. Students in this program gain a deeper understanding of racism and anti-Semitism, and learn specific skills they can use to address these issues in their schools and communities. A staff member commented, "What we are doing with this group is just ripples on the pond. Our hope is that they (the youth) take their experiences and share them with others so that they can have a larger impact on their communities." "When I was in the program, it shaped my world views and core values through the things I learned and the people I met." — OUDC youth participant

Organizations

Organizations begin to view youth in new ways as they demonstrate leadership skills and take responsibility for project development and implementation. Some organiza-



GWYPI Grantee: Facilitating Leadership in Youth
photo: Charise Van Liew

Amid Violence, an Outlet for Feelings; SE Teenagers Conduct Interviews, Write Poetry for Mentoring Program Magazine

**Nicole Fuller. *The Washington Post*.
Washington, D.C.: Jan 24, 2005. pg. B.01**

© 2005, *The Washington Post*. Reprinted with Permission.

Fifteen-year-old Martin Jenkins scans the newspapers, but not the usual sections where teenagers might be drawn. He checks for crime stories and obituaries about homicide victims from his neighborhood in Southeast Washington.

"I look for the crime because I want to know what's going on around here, so I can do my best to change it," Martin said.

Gunfire is often heard outside of the squat, brick buildings in and around the Barry Farm complex where Martin and his family reside, and drug dealing is prevalent. After reading about so much of the crime, Martin decided to write about it.

He and other D.C. youths contributed to a new magazine, *Why? Guns Killin' Youngins*. Subtitled *The Youth of Southeast Washington Want Answers*, the publication was part of a mentoring program that works with about 40 young people from Anacostia, including Martin and his friends.

The four-month project was led by Facilitating Leadership in Youth, a nonprofit organization and student club from American University. About 2,000 copies were printed and distributed through a \$2,500 grant from the National Center for Neighborhood Enterprise.

The magazine – which can be viewed on the group's Web site, www.flyouth.org – includes interviews with police, anti-violence activists, families of homicide victims and a gun shop owner. The articles are accompanied by poems and artwork done by the youths.

The poems are filled with emotion, and the interviews contain pointed questions from youths in a city where 24 juveniles were homicide victims last year. "This project opened our eyes," the youths declared in the issue. "We hope it opened yours."

In a question-and-answer piece with the owner of Southern Police Equipment Co., which operates a gun store in Richmond, Martin asked: "Anacostia is the neighborhood that we live in. There are very high rates of gun violence in Anacostia, particularly among youth. How do you feel knowing your guns may possibly be used by young people in our community?"

The company's owner, Karen Allan, took issue with the question's premise, saying, "I don't believe my guns are being used there."

Allan recently confirmed that she was quoted accurately in the magazine and said she had seen a copy. Martin also asked her about the District's strict law banning handguns, and she said, "I don't believe guns should be banned from anywhere in the U.S. I believe it is our right to own a gun. I believe that there are millions out there that are innocent people that deserve the right to own a gun."

Martin, a 10th-grader at Thurgood Marshall Academy Public Charter School, relished playing the role of reporter. He said the process empowered him.

"It felt good because many people don't listen to what I have to say," he said. "It made me feel like I can do anything I want."

The magazine also features an interview with a D.C. police sergeant conducted by Kristopher Stith, 13, an eighth-grader at Eliot Junior High School. Among other things, Kristopher asked Sgt. Derek Larsen, who has worked for years in Barry Farm, "What kind of violence prevention programs, if any, do you think work?"

Larsen replied that mediation can ease tensions between rival neighborhoods, such as the ongoing and often deadly strife between Barry Farm and Condon Terrace. Conflict among youths from those neighborhoods was behind the Feb. 2, 2004, killing of 17-year-old James Richardson inside Ballou Senior High School in Southeast.

"People just need now to get together and put down your fist, put down the weapons and they just need to talk," Larsen said.

The poems gave the youths a powerful way to air their feelings about the city's problems. A poem written by Tyesha Sands, 14, begins like this:

Summer time's here and all the fun starts
Summer has its own special place in my heart
Cause I'd rather be at camp where it sunny and nice

Then at home where you got to fight for your life

The ninth-grader at Young America Works Public Charter School has been writing poetry since she was 10. Most afternoons, she said, are spent inside her family's apartment doing homework, rather than playing outside with friends because of frequent shootings in her neighborhood.

"I'm only a teenager," she said. "I feel like sometimes I don't have a voice. But I wrote about that because it's something that's in my mind because of the community that I live in. Because a lot of stuff happens in my neighborhood."

James Pearlstein, who launched the Facilitating Leadership in Youth mentoring program in 1999, along with Charise Van Liew and Amy Hendrick, then students at American University, said the

magazine project was important to give students a way to express themselves.

The nonprofit organization holds an annual two-week summer camp at the university and provides twice-weekly tutoring and other programming to a group that ranges in age from 7 to 15, mostly from Barry Farm.

Pearlstein said the approach is "sneak-attack learning" and is dependent on the close relationships forged between staff members and the youths and their families.

"Instead of an English class, we'd have a rap writing class," Pearlstein said. "They're using the same skills, but they're having fun."

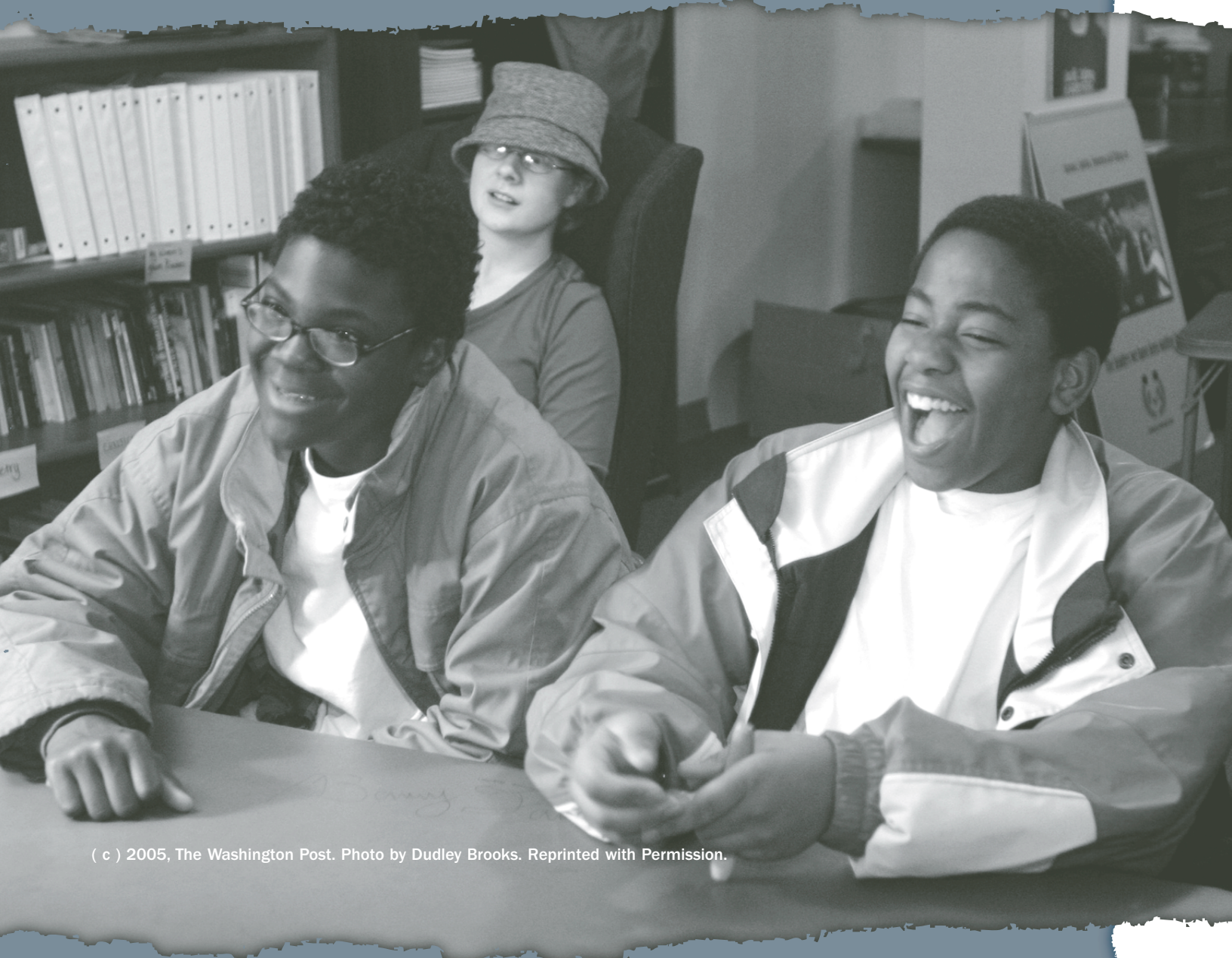
The organization is housed at the Gatepost Center in the 1300 block of Good Hope Road SE. It operates on a tight

budget that is largely funded by American University, the D.C. Children and Youth Investment Trust Corp. and other benefactors.

A party was held last month at the Gatepost Center to celebrate the magazine's launch. Pearlstein said another issue could follow.

Anthony Franklin, 12, an eighth-grader at Hine Junior High School, said the magazine represented the voice of the young people who see the violence up close.

"We [created the magazine] because most people in this area don't really know what's happening in Southeast," Anthony said. "It's not all bad. There's people trying to make it better for everyone instead of having stereotypes about people who live here."



(c) 2005, The Washington Post. Photo by Dudley Brooks. Reprinted with Permission.

tions have taken steps to engage, or further engage, youth in their organizations. For example, one grantee commented, "Prior to receiving the grant we merely viewed youth as potential volunteers. Their level of engagement post-grant allowed us to see their true interest in serving their community. We began to 'listen' more to their ideas." Most grantee organizations are interested in further exploring these possibilities and would like more assistance on how to do so. Liz Lerman Dance Exchange and Leadership Arlington are two examples of how youth grantmaking has leveraged organizational change.

Before receiving their first grant from the Montgomery County YAC, the **Liz Lerman Dance Exchange** had a teen dance program. Teens took classes and workshops at the center. The first grant allowed young people to be trained to develop workshops and performances which they then conducted around the region at youth organizations and senior centers.

As a result of the grants, youth have become involved in every aspect of the company. They now have a teen advisory board. Youth have learned about fund development, budget development and management skills, and what is involved in sustaining a nonprofit. One young person commented that now they understand what it takes to provide a program and to keep a nonprofit going. They appreciate much more the programs that are available to them. Another person said, "We get to do what the company gets to do – go out into the community. We get more aware of how to support the program." —Teen advisory board member

"We believe that young people need more opportunities to participate in decision making and problem solving; and support to build the skills they need to participate meaningfully in the civic, organizational, and policy processes that impact their lives. Youth civic engagement is a strategy that allows youth to develop new competencies while fostering civic participation in work that will improve community life. It combines youth development, civic activism and problem solving. It facilitates new ways for young people and adults to work together for a better community."

Ditra Edwards

Leadership Arlington is another example of organizational change. Leadership Arlington offers an intensive leadership training program for adult community leaders. As a nonprofit with a small operating budget, the youth grants (a total of \$5,000) for 2004 and 2005 provided necessary dollars so that they could partner with youth to develop a similar training program for community-based youth leaders. In 2004, 16 youth participated in six daylong meetings (at businesses, government facilities, and nonprofits in Arlington) focusing on building skills in the areas of collaboration and team building, conflict resolution, group facilitation and evaluation.

Communities

Communities benefit when young people are engaged in making them better places to live. Global Development Services for Youth, Inc. is an example of how a youth grant is leveraging community change focused on workforce development. Of course, this grant also has positive outcomes for youth participants.

Global Development Services for Youth, Inc. received a \$3,500 grant in 2003 to support a two-day Entrepreneurial Development Summit providing 32 youth ages 13-18 the opportunity to gain knowledge in the principles and foundations necessary to start and operate their own business. In 2004, they received \$2,500 to support the Youth Leadership Development Summit planning retreat, which taught 20 youth participants effective strategies for planning events and engaged them in the planning of a summit for junior high and high school youth of Prince George's County. The youth participating in developing and attending these summits live in a neighborhood with high

DC YAC at Ballou High School Girl-to-Girl Conference

photo: Glen O'Gilvie



unemployment and violent crime rates.

By creating their own businesses young people not only generate needed income for themselves and their households but provide needed services to community residents. These small businesses create jobs where few exist and are an alternative to drug dealing as a source of income for youth. While Global Development Services for Youth receives funding from multiple sources, the YAC was involved more than any of their other funders, again creating an opportunity for exchange and synergy between grantmakers and their grantees. Youth grantees learned about organized philanthropy while YAC members, living in similar communities, learned about possibilities for starting a business to which they had not previously been exposed.

Community Foundation Impact

Unlike other types of foundations, community foundations are governed by a board comprised of individuals representative of the community which they serve. Community members are also invited to serve on various committees. The GWYPI invited youth to participate in the foundation's work for the first time.

As a regional program, the GWYPI also established partnerships with CFNCR's regional affiliates in Maryland—the Montgomery County Community Foundation (MCCF) and the Prince George's Community Foundation (PGCF). These partnerships have increased the visibility of the respective YACS, provided localized expertise on the youth

Arturo was in the ninth grade (15 years old) when he learned about the YAC. While serving as President of the Alexandria United Teens, a community-based group that addresses youth needs in the community, Arturo helped apply to the YAC for a grant. He was then asked to become a member of the YAC. Arturo saw the YAC as a new opportunity to develop additional skills and give back to his community.

By participating in the YAC Arturo broadened his leadership skills, honed his public presentation skills, boosted his confidence and greatly increased his desire to be a community leader. Arturo explained, "It has given me a lot of confidence to do more things. I thought I was a leader, and then I got into the YAC." Through the YAC process he learned more about his community and local organizations. Arturo also learned about the importance of teamwork and partnering both with peers and adults. "It's much better if youth work with adults in partnership, you get better results."

Arturo applies the knowledge and skills he gained to various aspects of his life. "I use it in everything. I now have lots of confidence to talk in front of people. I present at school and now I'm the first to volunteer to speak in class. I tell others about the resources in our community. It has given me a lot of leadership skills. In my school I'm in the principal's group [like advisory group]. I give the Latino view and what they need...I've learned how to read things more clearly from reading all of the grants; learned how to read a budget and see where groups need money, where it is going. I've learned how to become more social and talk to people. I learned a lot about working with other people."

Another integral component of Arturo's experience on the YAC has been the growth in his exposure to and understanding of other groups in his community. He explained, "The community is not just based on one race. Where I grew up it's mostly Latino. I never knew Alexandria had a Boys and Girls Club. I never knew we had groups of African Americans. They have a different view of the community."

The YAC experience has also influenced Arturo's plans for the future. He hopes to become a lawyer or a politician. His future career will focus on helping the community and making a difference. As the first in his family that will go to college, Arturo sees the YAC as an important component of his development.

The significance of the role of youth in leading the YAC grant-making process, discussing, and ultimately awarding funds to local organizations has had a profound impact on Arturo and other YAC members. Arturo commented, "It's great for youth because not only do they feel like they're good at something, but that they're making a difference and will hold onto that forever."

"We are more involved in Dance Exchange now and it is so much more meaningful than just a dance class – we are teachers, choreographers, performers, fundraisers, and advisors."

*Youth Chair of Teen Advisory Board-
Liz Lerman Dance Exchange*

continued on page 23

⁴ Youth Case Study names have been changed.

GWYPI Grantee: Sol Y Soul
photo: Rick Reinhard



"We empower and trust our youth to make decisions that affect their lives."

Adult staff
Liz Lerman Dance Exchange

for people to contribute their dollars, time and other types of support. The second guide highlighted many of the YACs grantee organizations as examples of effective civic engagement. Two YAC representatives are currently involved in the third guide focused on workforce development.

- YAC members along with youth leaders from other youth civic engagement groups comprised one of four stakeholder sessions to provide the CFNCR with input on their strategic areas for the future – academic achievement and workforce development.

- The Toys R Us Fund of the Prince George's Community Foundation is partnering with the YAC in Prince George's County to facilitate all of its grantmaking for the next three years (2005 – 2007).

organizations in their geographic areas, and leveraged additional funds and resources for their communities through the YACs. Both affiliates have benefited from the YACs to leverage investment for other youth in their communities. Affiliates also benefit from the YACs contributing a youth perspective to community issues. Acknowledging the value of hearing from youth community leaders, MCCF arranged speaking engagements for YAC members at their professional advisor meetings and donor education forums, as well as provided opportunities for YAC members to advise other youth grantmaking bodies that serve Montgomery County. PGCF leveraged an additional \$67,000 from the LEARN Foundation and Toys R Us Foundation to benefit specific communities in Prince George's County, Maryland through the YAC. These two foundations were so impressed with the PG YAC that they decided to allow the PG YAC to make their grant awards. A similar relationship with CFNCR's new affiliate in Alexandria, Virginia, the Alexandria Community Trust, is currently being explored.

Increasingly, CFNCR is integrating youth leaders into the Foundation's work and that of its affiliates in the surrounding counties. When the CFNCR focuses on initiatives that affect youth, the YACs represent the youth voice at the table. For example:

- One YAC member served on CFNCR's first Spirit of Giving Guide Selection Committee focused on nonprofits working in neighborhoods East of the River in 2003. The Spirit of Giving Guide is a publication which describes nonprofits work and details opportunities

- YAC members conducted informational meetings for students, parents and nonprofits interested in the YACs.
- YAC members developed and led a tour for CFNCR board members and donors of youth-led programs funded by the YAC.
- YAC members in Montgomery County serve on the emerging Workforce Development Commission to address employment and broader economic issues for youth.
- YAC members are presenting at the 2005 Council on Foundations annual community foundation conference about CFNCR's work related to youth civic engagement.
- YAC members helped establish the CFNCR's Linowes Leadership Program's Youth Award and annually select youth award recipients. Established in 1997, the Linowes Leadership Awards Program recognizes the efforts of unsung heroes working to improve communities throughout the metropolitan Washington region and to encourage others to follow their example of community leadership and service. The awards program is one of only a few awards programs in the region recognizing and bringing to light the compelling stories of community leaders who are not yet on most radar screens. The GWYPI was instrumental in CFNCR expanding the program to include a new youth award and YAC members have reviewed the youth applicants

for the past two years, providing their recommendations to the Award Committee.

- YAC members and their grants are featured in CFNCR's external publications.
- YAC members provide strategic input and guidance in developing, managing and evaluating the Greater Washington Youth Philanthropy Initiative. They have:
 - Participated in the hiring process of all adult staff hired for the GWYPI since the inception of the program in 2001;
 - Taken responsibility for recruiting new YAC members and grant proposals;
 - Facilitated training sessions for new YAC members;
 - Co-chaired meetings;
 - Developed grant guidelines and selection criteria;
 - Presented grant recommendations to the community foundation boards;
 - Engaged in the design of a participatory evaluation of the GWYPI; and
 - Served as representatives of the CFNCR on internal and external committees and at public events.

CFNCR is working to increase the involvement of youth in its operations. Ideas include training and inviting youth to serve as board members; establishing a permanently endowed youth fund; hiring youth as staff members; including YACs in fund development activities; and establishing an advisory council of youth to be CFNCR ambassadors on key issues (e.g., education and employment).

Effective Grantmaking from A Youth Perspective

Youth can be effective grantmakers in their neighborhoods and broader communities because they experi-

Youth Engagement and Grantmaking in the National Capital Region (2001-2005)

Rashon

Rashon was one of the participants in the initial DC YAC and joined as a sophomore. He remained active on the YAC for three years. Through his YAC experience, Rashon broadened his understanding about how to be a community leader. It "made me want to give back to change the community...Community change can happen now. Many times people think you have to be a certain age or education[al background]. We did it by funding other youth organizations." He learned about nonprofit public administration as a possible career path and the importance of sponsoring and giving funds to support other organizations.

Working with other YAC members, Rashon developed public speaking skills, learned how to work as a team member, and honed his problem-solving skills. Rashon continues to use the skills he gained in the YAC. He currently works as a summer school teacher for his former high school to "help the younger generation through education in the classroom to help students achieve their goals and dreams." He also connects his students to the community foundation and other organizations so they too can learn about becoming leaders in their communities. Rashon explains "the Community Foundation made a gigantic impression on YAC members. They took their jobs very seriously. The Community Foundation is an excellent example of making a difference in the community with youth." Because of his YAC experience, Rashon believes it is important to "help other youth articulate [themselves] and see the value in a child's voice." He views it as the responsibility of YAC members to "advocate and let others know about opportunities."

Looking toward the future, Rashon aims to pursue graduate studies in Public Administration or Public Policy. He hopes to continue his passion for education by working for a nonprofit that deals with education reform or possible health care. In the next 20 years Rashon hopes to make financial investments to both sustain himself, and help the community as a sponsor and/or funder.

Sam

Sam became the youngest member of the YAC when he joined as a seventh grader. The fall of 2005 will mark his third year as a YAC participant. Before joining the YAC, Sam had no prior experience in leadership activities. Because of his YAC experiences, he is increasingly interested in becoming a leader and commented that the YAC has inspired him to be "more active in the community."

Sam's work with the YAC has taught him skills needed to be an effective leader, such as public speaking and interviewing. Additionally, he learned how to read and analyze proposals, skills he utilizes regularly in his schoolwork. He used his skills to speak about his YAC experience and the importance of giving to organizations to help the community.

Being on the YAC also broadened Sam's perspective on the DC community and showed him the importance of giving kids a

ence the issues directly — from the inside out. Having an opportunity to support other youth in their own communities who are working on improving the quality of life for young people is empowering for both grantors and grantees.

YAC members interviewed by FERA shared their perspectives on grantmaking and engaging youth. In addition to the elements that grantmakers usually look for in a proposal (e.g., addresses a community need, measurable outcomes), they identified special criteria specific to making grants to youth-led projects. These are:

- Programs must be clearly youth-led from the writing of the proposal to developing and implementing the project “It’s important that youth understand they have a

“In Prince George’s County the YAC members met with board members to talk about their experiences as grantmakers. The young people talked about stewardship. It was helpful to hear from a group of youth...it was a good reminder of why we are doing this work. It was so affirming to hear youth talking about the work. It gave board members an opportunity to step back and think about their own work.”

*Desiree Griffin-Moore, Executive Director,
Prince George’s Community Foundation*

partnership with adults where youth lead and the adults assist.” (YAC member) Youth grantseekers interviewed by youth grantmakers must be able to speak as representatives on behalf of the nonprofit organization and be very informed about the proposal and budget.

- There must be active participation by youth grantseekers in the interview/site visit process – youth must answer questions, as opposed to adults speaking on behalf of youth at the site visit/interview
- Youth are clearly passionate about their project

YAC members provided examples of projects they funded. A group of students submitted a proposal. At first, the YAC members didn’t understand their proposal. They had a lot of stereotypes about this group of young people. This led to a long discussion about diversity. They tried to understand the importance of this grant from their perspective. After much debate the group decided to fund the proposal after meeting face-to-face with the students who submitted the proposal and actually ended up giving them more funds than they had asked for. In another case, the YAC decided to fund an organization to hold a conference for youth on how to start your own business. “Four kids presented, the adults sat in the corner. The kids were engaged, they had pictures. We will do site visits next year.” —YAC member)

YAC members also offered tips for identifying projects that were not youth-led. Known as “red flags” throughout the GWYPI, YAC members generally decline proposals when one or more of the following are present.

Red flags included:

- Adults presenting the proposal “Two adults presented...the youth had no role. We didn’t fund them.”

*Prince George’s County YAC Member
photo: Daniel McNeill*



- Youth presenting the proposal can't answer any questions about the proposal or the organization.
- Proposals that request funds to be used solely for adult staff support.

Youth Engagement In Organizations

This section of the document provides organizations and funders with information, ideas and resources to support engaging youth as leaders in organizations. Drawing from existing literature, the value of involving youth, conditions that support meaningful youth development and key effective practices for involving youth in philanthropy are identified. These are followed by specific actions your organization or foundation can take to begin the process of engaging youth.

Engaging youth in these organizations is valuable because it:

- “Represents a key constituency in the community;
- Adds to membership, volunteers, and audiences;
- Brings and implements new ideas while offering unique and important perspectives;
- Brings special skills and interests;
- Recruits other young people;
- Persuades and inspire audiences, young and old, to become involved; and
- Develops life-long habits of civic involvement.”
—Zener, Himmelman and Shea 1999

Conditions for changing organizations to include youth in meaningful ways include:

- “The board of directors is committed to youth governance and entrepreneurial decision-making;

voice. “It’s such an amazing experience. I’ve met new people, learned new things. It has really make me a great person.” The YAC experience has influenced Sam’s future plans and he aims to stay involved in the community and continue giving back. He reflected, “When I was little I wanted to be an artist or a professional athlete. I am no longer interested in being a star or having a huge house. Now I’m interested in helping the community with what I do.”

Susan

Susan joined the YAC while in ninth grade and has served on the committee for three years. Coming from a family that emphasizes the importance of community service, Susan has also volunteered for a number of organizations.

Because of the YAC Susan has become much more interested in being a community leader. Both YAC participants and grantees have broadened her understanding of her community, made her aware of a variety of issues that youth confront, and introduced her to the numerous organizations trying to address those problems. She points to the importance of engaging youth in the solution to problems that affect youth as they have a different and “fresh” perspective. “Talking to YAC members with different backgrounds has inspired me and made me feel that I want to do more.”

Like many YAC members, Susan has learned about herself and her community. The YAC has “made me more aware, broadened my view and made me think about the world in a broader way.” The whole grantmaking process “was empowering and made me develop leadership qualities, helped me develop an identity and identify issues I’m interested in focusing my energy on. [It has helped me] decide what kind of an individual I want to be. It put me in situations I wasn’t familiar with and had to take a leadership position and focus on people with very different experiences than myself – different race/ethnicity, economics, and neighborhoods. It made me examine the way I live and interact with my friends.”

She also learned about other youth from different socio-economic and racial/ethnic backgrounds. She was one out of two who attended a private school and one of the few white youth in the YAC. “It was really different for me because I live in a community that is mostly white and mostly upper-class. I was a minority for the first time. I had to quickly adapt. It felt strange at first but now I feel so comfortable among all the YAC members—more comfortable than with my friends.”

Through the YAC, Susan has developed a number of leadership and decision-making skills. “I learned good life skills and use [them] in the classroom. The vital skill of a leader is to consider everyone else’s opinions.” She argues that it’s important for youth to develop leadership skills early on “because we’re the leaders for tomorrow. The better trained we are as youth the better we’ll be as adults and be better able to affect change in our communities. Youth can also be leaders today.” Though Susan does not know where she wants to go to college or what she will major in, she is committed to learning Spanish so that she can work with Latino communities.

- Adult leaders strongly advocated for including young people in decision-making roles;
- Youth provide pressure and support for increasing youth participation in governance;
- Adults need a variety of experiences with youth;
- Organizations provide support for youth to advance through a variety of decision-making opportunities;
- Organizations involve older youth in governance positions early on in the organizational change process.”
—Zeldin et al 2001, p. 45-48

Effective Practices

One of the most critical elements of successfully engaging youth is an organization’s ability to satisfy the social and developmental needs of the youth participants, while maintaining the programmatic and administrative standards of the sponsoring organization. In order for the sponsoring organization to meet these needs, a number of practices must be implemented. The capacity of an organization to successfully implement and sustain a youth philanthropy initiative or to effectively engage youth includes: the financial and material resources of the organization; staff capacity; and the youth development and program management experience of the primary staff. An organization’s leadership must learn new ways to integrate youth leaders into the organization’s operating principles and practices and be willing share decision-making power.

Following are some recommended effective practices for organizations interested in developing a youth philanthropy initiative. These practices were developed based upon CFNCR’s experience with the Greater Washington Youth Philanthropy Initiative. Many of these practices are also relevant to any organization interested in engaging youth. For

more information about effective practices refer to the publication “Best Practices in Youth Philanthropy” —Garza and Stevens 2002 and visit www.youthgrantmakers.org.

Recommendations:

1. Youth training. Build the skills and knowledge of youth to design, implement and manage the program. Skill-building and trainings include: diversity training, problem-solving, facilitation, conflict resolution, public speaking, proposal review, understanding financial statements, conducting interviews and site visits, issue training on topics of interest to youth (e.g., youth violence prevention, teen health, youth employment, etc.), and an overview of philanthropy and the nonprofit sector. Young people should have the authority to determine everything from the time and day of council meetings, type of training they are interested in, to the criteria used to review and make their grant decisions.

2. Sustainability. Develop mechanisms and resources to increase program stability and longevity (Garza and Stevens 2002). Secure adequate funding for operating costs of the program. This includes funding for training, salaries for key staff (youth worker and other program management staff), for youth service organization partners, transportation/food costs for youth, youth stipends and/or scholarships to recognize the time commitment of young people, program evaluation, communications, and professional development. On-going sources of grantmaking dollars are also critical to sustaining an initiative.

A key element of ensuring sustainability is that the organization’s leadership understands and values youth leadership and how it facilitates meeting the organization’s mission.

3. Adult training. Provide training for adults (staff and board members) in the organization on how to work effectively with young people. Training should minimally include basic youth development principles, becoming an adult ally, and sharing power with youth.

4. Support of youth. Secure institutional support for engaging youth at every level of the organization from the receptionist that will ensure that young people can easily access the office for after-hours meetings, to the executive director and board chair. Provide youth access to phones, computers, and to the governance board



who must approve the grants and can secure resources for the initiative.

5. Community partnerships. Build partnerships with other organizations to provide opportunities, supports, and services that the sponsoring organization does not provide (e.g. tutoring, employment, college prep, arts programs, recreational opportunities, health care, counseling). Youth philanthropy is not just about grantmaking. It is a youth development program that encompasses youth service and youth leadership which leads to engagement and advocacy. To be successful, the initiative must support the developmental needs of the whole young person through availability of trained and dedicated staff, and the ability of the organization to partner with other organizations that can provide other services, supports, and opportunities as needed.

6. Communications/Education. Develop internal communication and reporting procedures that help all staff and board members understand the program's pur-

pose, and provide updates on progress and outcomes. Regular communication is needed to ensure that the leadership of the sponsoring organization (staff and board) understands initiative goals, intended and actual outcomes, and the value of youth leadership and its link to the organization's mission. Develop external communication and public relations procedures/materials that allow youth, staff and board to effectively promote the initiative, to build support, and to expand its outreach.

7. Integration. Develop a plan to integrate youth as leaders into the operational and decision-making structures of the initiative and the sponsoring organization. Youth leaders must be visible and part of sponsoring organization's family/operations through ongoing participation in other foundation programs and events, as well as visibility in the organization's publications, and website. Externally youth leaders can serve as representatives of the foundation on committees, for the media, as presenters at conferences, etc.

8. Recognition. Develop and implement ways to recognize and acknowledge the work and accomplishments of youth participants and partners in the initiative. Provide opportunities and public recognition events (press conferences, annual celebrations) to celebrate accomplishments among youth grantmakers, their families, friends, youth grantees and other partners, funders/donors. Parties, dances and informal social outings are other ways for youth leaders to celebrate their accomplishments.

9. Networks. Build community and expand youth's networks by opening avenues for connections between youth and their peers, youth and adults, and youth and other community organizations. Provide opportunities for youth grantmakers and youth grantees to network, build relationships among themselves, and with other organizations and community networks.

10. Recruitment. Youth are the key to successful recruitment and retention of council members. As ambassadors of the initiative, they are responsible for recruiting new youth councilmembers and grantees through schools, friends, families and other youth organizations. GWYPI had an 85% retention rate as a result of youth-to-youth recruitment. Most young people who did not return either had other commitments (the need to work after school or take care of siblings) or graduated from high school and went on to college.

11. Staff support. Primary initiative staff must have a combination of skills including youth work (youth development/facilitation/empowerment), as well as program management (fundraising/grantmaking/evaluation). The ideal staffing scenario requires a team of two staff to provide a strong balance of skills, as it is rare to find these skills in one person.



GWYPI Grantee: Youth Action Research Group at DC City Council Hearing
photo: Amanda Huron

12. Orientations. Hold orientations for youth grantseekers and adult representatives from nonprofits to help them understand what is meant by “youth-led” programs and how to develop strong proposals that meet the criteria for being youth-led. Hold orientations for parents and adult staff of sponsoring organization to ensure their understanding of the program and support of the youth involved.

Taking Action - How To Engage Youth

What Can Your Organization Do?

Organizations, whether youth-serving or not, can benefit from engaging youth. Your organization may already involve youth to some degree, or may be just starting to think about the idea. Here are some very practical ideas about ways to start or to move forward.

- Learn more about effective youth engagement - read, visit organizations already doing this work (invite some of the youth in your organization to go, too).
- Engage board and staff in a discussion of where your organization fits on the continuum and decide where you would like to be. Engage young people in this dialogue.
- Provide opportunities for youth and adults in your organization to get to know each other – celebrations, activities with some structured activities designed to promote interaction, discussions about an idea or issue that both adults and youth care about, do a service project together .
- Encourage youth to apply for a grant from the Youth Advisory Council in your area.
- Invite youth to provide input on programming or an upcoming decision- they can identify strengths, areas for improvement and possible solutions.
- Invite youth to take leadership in developing and implementing an activity or program component.
- Involve youth in developing criteria for, interviewing and selecting staff.
- Develop a youth advisory group.
- Select youth representatives (more than one) to serve as board members.
- Hire youth staff members or interns.
- Develop a youth speakers bureau.
- Involve youth in program design/implementation.
- Involve youth as grantmakers/fundraisers.

What Can Funders Do?

The greater Washington area has both local and national level organizations providing a unique opportunity to leverage this work at both levels. Funders can think about how and whether to engage youth in their own organizations as well as how to leverage youth involvement in community-based and national level organizations. In terms of leveraging the work, funders either individually or collaboratively could:

Use your influence to leverage this work

- Host/fund a forum of funders, organizations and youth to identify future directions for the region.
- Talk to your colleagues, funder to funder, about why it is important to fund youth engagement efforts and about why foundations should engage youth in their work.
- Connect organizations and people to national resources (people, publications, organizations, conferences etc.) that could inform local work.
- Highlight and share different models and success stories.
- Make engaging youth a part of your criteria for grant funding along with support for training and capacity building for youth-led groups/organizations.

Provide funding

- Provide resources for training and capacity-building focused on leadership development, civic engagement and youth organizing (Listen 2005)
- Invest in strengthening the infrastructure of organizations and networks that have the desire to fully engage young people as decision-makers within their institutions and the community (Listen 2005)
- Invest in emerging and existing youth-led organizations and efforts (Listen 2005)
- Support cohort work and the efforts of a core group of organizations to strengthen their youth engagement strategies (Listen 2005)
- Offer multi-year support for organizations working with immigrant youth (Washington Area Partnership for Immigrants 2005).
- Support relevant evaluation and research efforts and interactive opportunities to analyze research findings, understand their implications and develop recommendations and lessons learned.

Engage youth in your own foundation

- Ask young people what your foundation could do to engage them.
- Invite Youth Advisory Council members to present to your board/staff and/or to donors

- Hire younger staff in their 20's as bridges—nearer to being peers to younger people.
- If you don't have the capacity, time or staff resources to start your own Youth Advisory Council make a grant to The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region's GWYPI to re-grant funds to youth led projects or to your local youth philanthropy program or other youth civic engagement programs.
- Offer a stepping stone into a career in philanthropy by providing internship opportunities for Youth Advisory Council alumni and other youth interested in pursuing foundation or nonprofit work.
- Model the importance of engaging youth by including them in your foundation's work - establish a Youth Advisory Council and/or select youth to serve as board members.

Conclusion

Creating positive community change and successfully weaving the social fabric of our neighborhoods, regions and country requires the engagement and collective action of both young people and adults from all walks of life. Four years of evaluation research have found that young people can effectively serve as responsible stewards and as leaders working to improve the quality of life of their peers in their neighborhoods and regions. These leaders—ordinary, but extraordinary young people—are making a difference in some of the most marginalized neighborhoods in our Nation's Capitol. We hope that our story and experiences have inspired you to share power with young people and think strategically about how to engage them as leaders in your organization's work.

"We have a powerful potential in our youth, and we must have the courage to change old ideas and practices so that we may direct their power toward good ends."

Mary McLeod Bethune



GWYPI Members at Annual Event
Photo: Daniel McNeill

Sources and Resources

Reports and Publications

Checkoway, Barry and Katie Richards-Schuster (2004). *Participatory Evaluation with Young People*. Battle Creek: MI, W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Edwards, Ditra. Nicole Johnson, and Kim Mc Gillicuddy (2003). *An Emerging Model for Working with Youth: Community Organizing + Youth Development = Youth Organizing*. New York, N.Y.: Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing.

Gibson, Cynthia. (2001) *From Inspiration to Participation: A review of Perspectives on Youth Civic Engagement*. The Grantmakers Forum on Community National Service.

Garza, Pam and Pam Stevens. (2002) *Best Practices in Youth Philanthropy*. Kansas City, KS: Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth.

Hyman, James B. *Exploring Social Capital and Civic Engagement to Create a Framework for Community Building*. In *Applied Developmental Science* October 2002.

Irby, Merita, Thaddeus Ferber, Karen Pittman et al (2001). *Youth Action: Youth Contributing to Communities Communities Supporting Youth*. The Community and Youth Development Series, Volume 6. The Forum for Youth Investment.

LISTEN. (2005) *Voice of Power: An Exploration of Youth Engagement in Washington , DC* Washington, DC: Community Foundation for the National Capital Region

Long, Robert F., Kate Gill Kressley and Susan J. Poulsen (1999). *Youth in Community - Youth in Citizenship: Weaving in Future Tense*. Battle Creek:, W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Mohamed, Inca A. and Wendy Wheeler (2001). *Broadening the Bounds of Youth Development: Youth*

as Engaged Citizens. The Ford Foundation and the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development.

Washington Area Partnership for Immigrants. (2005) *From Identity to Action: Strengthening Civic Engagement of Young People from Immigrant Communities*. Washington, DC: Community Foundation for the Capital National Region.

Tice, Karin (2005 forthcoming) *Youth Philanthropy and Youth Civic Engagement: A Conceptual Framework*. Grand Haven, MI: Council of Michigan Foundations.

Tice, Karin. (2004) *Leadership, Volunteerism and Giving: A Longitudinal Study of Youth Grantmakers (1993-2003)*. Grand Haven, MI: Council of Michigan Foundations.

Tice, Karin (forthcoming). *Youth Grantmakers from Communities of Color: A National Perspective*. Grand Haven, MI: Council of Michigan Foundations

Yohalem, Nicole and Karen Pittman. (2001) *Powerful Pathways: Framing Options and Opportunities for vulnerable youth*. A discussion paper of the Youth Transition Funders Group.

Zeldin, Shepherd. Annette Mc Daniel, Dimitri Topitzes, and Matt Calvert (2001). *Youth in Decision Making: A Study of the Impacts of Youth on Adults and Organizations*. Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin.

Zener, Jullietee; Himmelman, Ken; and Shea, Margo. (1999) *Do Something Community Connections Campaign: How-to-Guide and Summary of Research on Recruiting, Involving and Developing Young Leaders in Community Organizations*. Funded by the Pew Charitable Trust. New York, NY: Do Something, Inc.

Websites

- *Center for Youth as Resources www.yar.org
- Council of Michigan Foundations www.youthgrantmakers.org
- Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth www.ccfy.org
- *Co/Motion: A National Program of the Alliance for Justice www.comotionmakers.org
- Community Impact www.community-impact.net
- Community Partnerships with Youth Inc. www.cpy-inc.org
- Do Something www.dosomething.org
- *Facilitating Leadership in Youth (FLY) www.fly.org
- The Forum for Youth Investment www.forumforyouthinvestment.org
- Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing www.fcyo.org
- *The Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development
www.theinnovationcenter.org (Chevy Chase, Maryland)
- *Justice 4 DC Youth! Coalition www.justice4DCyouth.org
- *Listen Inc. www.lisn.org
- *The Young Women's Project www.youngwomensproject.org
- *Youth Action Research Group (YARG)
<http://socialjustice.georgetown.edu/research/yarg/>
- Youth on Board www.youthonboard.org
- *Youth Education Alliance

Youth Leadership Institute www.yli.org

Youth Outreach, The Points of Light Foundation
www.pointsoflight.org

**Located in the Washington, DC Area*

The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region was established in 1973 with a "mission to facilitate individual, family and organizational giving at all levels to improve the quality of life in the metropolitan Washington region. CFNCR is one of the fastest growing community foundations in the country, with more than \$250 million in new philanthropic capital raised in the past three years. It is also one of the most generous community foundations in the nation, with total giving topping \$83 million in fiscal year 2005. To obtain additional copies of this report or for more information about the Greater Washington Youth Philanthropy Initiative please contact:

E. Bomani Johnson, Program Officer
The Community Foundation
for the National Capital Region
1201 15th Street, NW Suite 420
Washington, DC 20005
Phone (202) 955-5890 ext. 113
www.cfnrc.org

Acknowledgements

Many individuals have contributed to make this document possible. Special thanks go to Pam Stevens, Vice President, Youth and Education of the Time Warner Foundation for supporting the Greater Washington Youth Philanthropy Initiative (GWYPI) and the development, publication and dissemination of this document. Youth Advisory Council members, grantees and the leadership from The Community Foundation for the National Capitol Region, The Prince George's Community Foundation, The Montgomery County Community Foundation, and partner YMCA's (YMCA National Capital (Washington, DC), YMCA Youth and Family Services (Montgomery County) - special thanks to Cynthia Price, Associate Executive Director for your hard work and dedication-, YMCA Prince George's County and YMCA Alexandria, Virginia) have talked openly about their accomplishments, challenges, and visions for the future. We want to thank all the current and former YAC members for their vision, courage, knowledge, talent, time, energy, honesty, passion, and sense of humor.

Thank you to The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region's lead GWYPI staff Silvana Straw, Senior Program Officer and E. Bomani Johnson, Program Officer for their contributions to the program and to this report and to Glen O'Gilvie, former Program Officer (currently President and CEO of Earth Conservation Corps).

Martha Johnston - Associate Director, Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth; Pam Stevens - Vice President, Youth and Education, Time Warner Foundation; Ditra Edwards, former Executive Director of Listen Inc.; Nat Williams - Executive Director, Hill-Snowdon Foundation; James Pearlstein - Co-founder and Director of Youth Leadership, Facilitating Leadership in Youth; Margaret K. O'Bryon - President and CEO, Consumer Health Foundation; Betsy Franz - President and CEO, Leadership Arlington; Rob Collier - President and CEO and Kari Pardoe - former Program Associate, Council of Michigan Foundations, offered their per-

spectives on how youth grantmaking fits into the wider field of youth engagement. Your energy, time and commitment to young people are greatly appreciated.

The Greater Washington Youth Philanthropy Initiative has been supported by and would like to thank the following funders:

- Beekhuis Family Fund
- Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth
- Consumer Health Foundation
- Community Foundation for the National Capital Region
- Exxon Mobil Community Fund
- Fannie Mae Foundation
- Fight for Children Foundation
- Freddie Mac Foundation
- The Learn Foundation
- Montgomery County Community Foundation
- Porter Family Foundation
- Prince George's Community Foundation
- San Miguel Fund
- The World Bank Group
- Time Warner Foundation
- Toys R Us Foundation
- Individual Donors

YAC members take a break from training
photo: Silvana Straw





GWYPI Grantee: Facilitating Leadership In Youth

photo: Charise Van Liew



**THE
COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION**
for the National Capital Region
1201 15th St. NW, Ste. 420
Washington, DC 20005
www.cfncr.org

