

Community Toolkit

- Business Support for Youth Programs
- Creating an Education Program and Hiring Youth Outreach Staff
 - Creating Youth Recognition Awards/Scholarships
 - Developing a Youth Training/Leadership Program
 - Involving Young People in the Election Process
 - Mentoring Students and Visiting Schools
 - Setting up Internship Programs
- **Working with Youth to Address Specific Community Issues or Needs**
 - Youth Philanthropy
 - Youth on School, Municipal, and Advisory Boards / Councils

The Maine Department of Education's
Citizenship Education Task Force

and

CAMPAIGN FOR THE CIVIC MISSION OF SCHOOLS



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While it is extremely important to encourage and educate our young people about the importance of civic engagement, it is equally important to give them the opportunity to put their knowledge to use. By creating opportunities for young people to work with community representatives, business leaders, or local non-profit organizations, we can help to build a sense of belonging and purpose. They will gain important life experiences within their communities, develop communication skills, build self-confidence, and find where they belong within their communities.

Addressing Underage Drinking: Maine Youth Voices

Maine Youth Voices (MYV) is a grant funded youth organization dedicated to creating the opportunity for youth to proactively engage in prevention strategies surrounding underage alcohol use in their schools and communities throughout the state of Maine. There are fourteen MYV groups across the state. Maine Youth Voices and the fourteen groups operate on a youth empowerment model, which means that each is run by the students and guided by an adult coordinator in partnership with their sponsoring agent and AdCare.

The groups deliver events, activities and presentations designed to educate adults and youth on a broad spectrum of underage drinking issues. Their prevention efforts include examining news; advertising issues; writing newspaper articles; partnering with law enforcement agencies; studying and making recommendations on school, local and state alcohol policies; creating and airing public service announcements, documentaries and live forums; preparing and delivering presentations and interactive theatre performances to students, school boards, administrative staff, agencies and communities; as well as many other creative activities. (See AdCare for other substance abuse prevention programs: the Youth Empowerment and Policy Project and the Student Intervention and Reintegration Program)

Addressing Ethnic Diversity: Seeds of Peace

John Wallach, an award-winning author and journalist, founded Seeds of Peace in March 1993 to provide an opportunity for the children of war to plant the seeds for a more secure future. Seeds of Peace is dedicated to empowering young leaders from regions of conflict with the leadership skills required to advance reconciliation and coexistence.

Seeds of Peace is an internationally recognized program model that begins at the International Camp in Maine and continues through follow-up programming at the Seeds of Peace Center for Coexistence in Jerusalem. There are also international youth conferences, regional workshops, educational and professional opportunities, and an adult educator program. The comprehensive system allows participants to develop empathy, respect, and confidence as well as leadership, communication and negotiation skills.

Over 450 teenagers participate in Seeds of Peace each summer. The Seeds of Peace International Camp in Maine hosts eight delegations from the Middle East (Egyptians, Israelis, Jordanians, Moroccans, Palestinians, Qataris, Yemeni, and Tunisians), two from Cyprus (Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriots), Greeks, Turks, Indians and Pakistanis, Afghans, and five from the Balkans (Bosnia, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Serbia).

The camp also hosts two domestic programs: Beyond Borders and Maine Seeds. Maine Seeds addresses the ethnic and racial tensions between the diverse communities that have settled in Lewiston and Portland. Seeds assists the Lewiston and Portland city officials and educators as they grapple with problems in the community. At the 2003 second session of camp, fourteen of the Portland Seeds worked on a Youth Charter for the State of Maine. On October 28, 2003, the Portland Seeds presented Governor Baldacci of Maine with a youth Charter addressing the topics of diversity, education, economics, and media in Maine.

Addressing Community Revitalization: Lots to Gardens

Lots to Gardens is a grass-roots effort to build the community from the ground up. With the organizational support of the Sisters of Charity Foundation, Lots to Gardens takes vacant downtown lots and turns them into fertile, beautiful neighborhood spaces.

The program has three main components: community-based neighborhood beautification, community education, and utilizing at-risk youth as agents for change. Under Lots to Garden's direction, beautification projects on vacant downtown lots are designed, established and maintained. Lots to Gardens also includes a large community vegetable garden. An integral part of the Lots to Garden's project is the employment of six at-risk youth. In addition to valuable landscaping/gardening skills, these youth learn basic job-related skills such as working as part of a team and doing what it takes to get a job done.

The Lots to Garden's program also provides after school and summer gardening activities to youngsters. Through the local Parks and Recreation Department, Lots to Gardens offers a Garden Learning Program that introduces language, discovery, and hands on gardening activities to local school aged children. There are also community gardening nights for neighborhood families and children to mingle and learn gardening techniques as well as food processing skills.

Addressing Youth Involvement: The Edge

Capital Kids created The Edge: The Scene for Teens, a popular teen center that has served over 2,700 youth, and, with the Augusta Schools, obtained a 21st Century Learning Centers grant which provided \$300,000 per year for three years to develop after school programs to serve its children and youth.

The Edge has demonstrated the power of youth-designed activities to draw youth participation. The Teen Center averages 80 youth for its 3-4 concerts and dances per month and targets more and more middle school youths.

Increasingly, youth bands inquire about performance and recording time. The Teen Center pays bands a percentage of the door and still pays the rent. There are designations for membership and leadership at the Edge. There are also three student staff positions: Student Office Assistant, Student Plant Manager, and Student Accountant. With 51% youth participation on the board, the Center has done very well to attract youth.

Addressing Youth Entrepreneurship: Big Rock Café

February 24, 2006 marked the grand opening of Big Rock Café, a student-run and built café in Stonington. The project was part of a career preparation class. Stonington Opera House director, Linda Nelson, helped the students write and apply for a \$25,000 grant. Although they did not receive the grant, the students unanimously decided to go ahead with the plan for the café. With help from Linda at the Opera House, the non-profit sponsor, they created a student board, wrote a business plan, and negotiated with the community center to rent the space out for \$200 a month. The space is about 20 x 25 ft, and with volunteers, the seven students from the career preparation class designed and built it.

The students hope to have the café be financially self-sustaining (visitors will pay a fee, or members can pay \$5.00 a month). Membership is for teens between the ages of 13 and 19. The café, run by volunteers, will also have a stage for local peer performers. Other past teen centers in the area have not survived, but the students hope this one will, since it is entirely run and built by students.

Linda Nelson acknowledges the need for more types of these projects, “This project provides a way for students to give to their peers, and is a good lesson in civic engagement. It gives the kids a place of their own, and a sense of responsibility.”

Addressing Agriculture & Young Farmers: Maine Farm Bureau

The Maine Farm Bureau recognizes that today’s young farmers are the future of the Maine Farm Bureau and agriculture in Maine. The Young Farmer and Rancher Program gives young farmers, men, and women (ages 18 to 35) the opportunity to actively participate in Farm Bureau programs. Their objective is to provide leadership in building more effective Farm Bureau to preserve individual freedoms and to expand opportunities in agriculture. The Farmers and Ranchers Program offers opportunities for:

- Leadership development;
- Legislative Awareness;
- Educational Conferences;
- Networking with other farmers and ranchers around the state and country;
- Competitive events such as Discussion Meets; and
- Involvement in the whole Farm Bureau program.

Ideas and Suggestions for Implementation

Traditionally, youth and adult interactions have been thought in terms of the parent / child relationship or the teacher / student relationship. More and more adults have to redefine their relationship with young adults as they become accepting to the idea of working with youth as partners.

"While the strategies for working with teens may differ from those you would use with adults, there are fundamental principles that should be followed when working with both. The bottom line is that teens want to be respected for their ideas, their perspectives and their time. They don't want to be treated as kids and they don't want to feel as if they have been used."

- Ellen Feighery, Stanford Health Promotion Resource Center

What are the benefits of youth-adult partnerships?

A survey conducted by the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development (a division of the National 4-H Council) showed that involving young people in decision-making helps them to build problem-solving skills, social competencies like communication, gives a sense of identity and autonomy, and builds an overall sense of purpose.

While youth learn valuable life skills, adults benefit by seeing them as valid contributors to the community. Some of other ways adults profit are by understanding the needs & concerns of youth, gaining new ideas and different perspectives, sharing knowledge, and increasing their creativity. Advocates of youth / adults partnerships assert that some programs are more sustainable and effective when youth are involved. Consider the following benefits youth have on organizations: (1) youth can help bring clarity & focus to an organization's mission; (2) the organization is more connected to youth in the community; (3) greater value is placed on youth inclusion and representation; and (4) the organization builds the reputation of being truly committed to youth.

What is a youth-adult partnership?

Youth-adult partnerships are founded on the belief that young people have the right to participate in programs and help shape policies that will serve them. Adults see youth as partners who enrich the experience and who helps to enrich the experiences of youths. A true partnership is mutually respectful and is one that allows both sides to make suggestions and decisions that are recognized and valued.

For adults to share the decision-making power with youth means adults must have confidence in young people's judgment, respect their input, and recognize youth as assets. For a partnership to work, adults may need to embrace change, be willing to provide additional support and training, and modify their notion of what works and doesn't work. Youth will need to adapt as well in order to understand the limitations and realities of a program or organization's development, operation, and evaluation.

What are the ways in which youth can be involved in a program or organization?

There are a many ways to engage youth in leadership and in decision-making. No one model is *the* model. Different models work in different programs. The following outlines a few types of models that have been used in service-learning programs. Further reading for each model

provides the following: a brief description, advantages of that approach, implementation steps, and examples (see “Youth Voice: A Guide for Engaging Young People in Leadership and Decision-Making in Service-Learning Programs”). A few models include:

- Youth as Planners
- Youth as Trainers
- Youth as Evaluators
- Youth as Policy Makers

What are the elements of effective youth-adult partnerships?

Organizational Capacity

- Establish clear goals, expectations, and responsibilities for youth and adults.
- Ensure commitment to youth-adult partnerships from all levels of organization.
- Provide support for youth through mentorship and skills-building opportunities.
- Ensure that mentors have time, energy, and resources to supervise youth adequately.
- Ensure flexible meeting times for youth and provide free food or transportation if necessary.
- Monitor needs of youth and adults regularly.

Attitude Shift

- Address misconceptions and biases that youth and adults have about each other.
- Be open to changing attitudes and building skills in working with youth and adults.
- Be aware of different styles of communication.
- Value the skills and experiences of both youth and adults.
- Use training to diminish stereotypes and facilitate collaboration.

Level of Participation

- Assess the current level of youth participation in the organization.
- Determine ways that youth can be involved meaningfully and integrally.
- Ensure that youth are involved in all stages and levels of an organization.
- Avoid tokenism.
- Ensure that youth have ownership and influence in decision-making.

What are some of the logistical and organizational barriers?

Many adults see the need for meaningful youth engagement in organizational policymaking, and young people want more significant involvement. Still the process of creating and sustaining a youth / adult partnership can be difficult. A big challenge is the newness of the partnership concept. The implementation process can be hindered if both parties are hesitant and fear failure from the other. Logistical issues that may need to be resolved include (see Advocates for Youth for more detail on the following items):

- Hours for Meetings and Work
- Transportation
- Food
- Equipment and Support

- Procedures and Policies
- Training

What are some quick tips for a youth /adult partnership?

For Youth

- Do speak up!
- Do invite adults to share their skills, experiences, and resources.
- Do commit time and energy to do the work.
- Do take responsibility seriously.
- Do seek to involve other youth.
- Don't stereotype adults.
- Don't assume all adults will treat you like "you're just a kid."

For Adults

- Do involve youth in the decisionmaking that affects their lives.
- Do listen—really listen to youth and be willing to learn from them.
- Do provide youth with information and training they need to succeed.
- Do be thoughtful about the special consideration and support that is necessary when involving young people. They may need rides to meetings, or may need meetings scheduled to accommodate school hours.
- Do plan meetings so that everyone feels welcome.
- Don't stereotype youth.
- Don't blame all youth for the actions of one individual youth.¹

¹ This section compiled from publications with the following organizations: National Service-Learning Partnership; Education Commission of the States; YouthNet; Advocates for Youth; and Youth Activism.

Case Study Resources

David McDermott
Maine Youth Voices
AdCare Educational Institute
75 Stone St.
Augusta, ME 04330
207.626.3615
dmcdermo@neias.org
<http://www.neias.org/SATadcareME.html>

Seeds of Peace International Camp
183 Powhatan Road
Otisfield, Maine 04270
Phone: 207-627-7202
Fax: 207-627-3121
camp@seedsofpeace.org
<http://www.seedsofpeace.org/>

Lots to Gardens
P.O. Box 7291
Lewiston, Maine 04243
lotstogardens@yahoo.com
www.lotstogardens.org

Kathi Wall
Capital KIDS / Augusta C4CY
The Edge
335 Water Street
Augusta, Maine 04330
207-621-6388
capitalkids@aol.com
<http://www.state.me.us/cfc/HomePage/>

Linda Nelson
Stonington Opera House
P.O. Box 56
Stonington, Maine 04681
207-367-2788
lnelson@operahousearts.org
www.operahousearts.org

Jasmine Jennings
Maine Farm Bureau
Maine Farm Bureau Association
4 Gabriel Drive, Suite 1
Augusta, Maine 04330
1-800-639-2126
jjennings@mainefarmbureau.com
<http://www.mainefarmbureau.com>

Additional Resources

Bangor Daily News, "Dances offer Chem-free Choice," 22 May 2006.
Article on how a VFW Hall in Washington County was converted into a dance hall for teens.
<http://www.bangornews.com>

Changing Maine Directory
An uncommonly useful directory of Social Action Groups, Service Organizations, and Green Businesses in Maine. There is also a youth section of the directory. <http://www.abilitymaine.org/cmdir/index.html>

Communities for Children and Youth: Community Stories
C4CY web page contains links to profiles of their 62 Partner Communities. Each profile contains the contact information for that community, and may feature a narrative of that Community's work.
<http://www.state.me.us/cfc/HomePage/partnercommunitydirectory/partner%20community%20directory.htm>

Constitutional Rights Foundation

Their service-learning network offers examples and a short paper on how juvenile justice agencies have begun to rethink their approach to court-ordered mandatory community service. Called community service learning (CSL), this new, justice-oriented, community-service model borrows from school-based service learning to help reduce recidivism and build civic awareness. http://www.crf-usa.org/network/network12_1/Net_12_1_home.html

Four Square Foundation

The Four Square Foundation is a Maine 501(c)(3) public foundation whose mission is to build community partnerships to support the successful transition of youth from foster care. Its founder, Bert Clifford, of Unity, Maine, established the Foundation in 2001. <http://www.foursquarefoundation.org/news.html>

FusionBangor

Launched in March of 2005, Fusion:Bangor was founded as a collective voice for young professionals who want to make a difference in their region, meet and mingle with folks of like age and mind and make the Bangor Region a better place to live and work and play, for all generations. <http://www.fusionbangor.com/index.htm>

The Holocaust Human Rights Center of Maine

They offer a literature-based resource guide for teaching about diversity, prejudice, human rights and the Holocaust, geared toward grades 5-12 and college. Among many other events and activities, they also sponsor an annual Diversity Leadership Institutes for teenagers.

<http://www.hhrc.org/>

Hurricane Island Outward Bound School

Outward Bound Discovery is an outdoor leadership program designed to serve at-risk and committed delinquent youth and families, schools and communities exposed to factors that put youth at greater likelihood of becoming delinquent or chronic offenders. The mission is to inspire youth to remain crime free and stay in school to reach their full potential in education, community, career and life, through attaining academic achievement, character development and social responsibility. They are located in Rockland, Maine.

<http://www.outwardbound.org/discovery.html>

KIDS Count

Maine KIDS Count is Maine's only comprehensive report of the physical, social, economic, and educational well-being of Maine children. KIDS COUNT is a project of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, and is a national and state-by-state effort to track the status of children in the U.S. http://www.mekids.org/am/publish/cat_index_2.shtml

Maine Children's Alliance

The Maine Children's Alliance is a strong, powerful voice for children, youth and families and provides leadership to create or change policy on their behalf. They collect the voices and data of various organizations, develops, promotes and advocates a substantive strategic plan including desired outcomes to insure positive change for children and their families.

<http://www.mekids.org/>

Maine Children's Cabinet

The mission of the Children's Cabinet is to actively collaborate to create and promote coordinated policies and service delivery systems that support children, families and communities. They also offer an annual report.

<http://www.state.me.us/cabinet/homepage.htm>

Maine Coalition for Peace and Justice

The Maine Coalition for Peace and Justice is a statewide organization of individual citizens and Maine group representatives working collectively and nonviolently for social equality, economic justice, direct democracy, and regenerative environmental policies. <http://www.sullboat.com/MEPJ/index.htm>

Maine Marks

Maine Marks is a set of social indicators that reflect the well-being of Maine children, families and communities. It is an initiative of the Governor's Children's Cabinet in partnership with the University of Southern Maine and other organizations. <http://www.mainemarks.org/>

Realize!Maine

Realize!Maine is a public-private partnership created by, for and of Mainers ages 20-34. Realize! is a catalyst, a collaborative, and a convener of Maine's young people with a stake in our common future. <http://www.realizemaine.org/>

Rippleffect

Rippleffect was born in late May of 1999 when a team of six set out from Lubec, Maine, on a kayak journey to memorialize the lives of several people who had died of AIDS. They were all personal friends of founder Ted Regan, who organized the expedition as both an homage to his friends and mentors, and as a way to educate youth about the disease. It has become a community-based youth development organization specializing in adventure and wilderness experiences that build confidence and self-esteem. http://www.rippleffect.net/about_us/

Winter Kids

WinterKids is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization committed to helping children develop lifelong habits of health, education, and physical fitness through participation in outdoor winter activities. They offer seven programs to promote healthy winter activities across Maine. <http://www.winterkids.org/>