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The Road to Community

By Adrian Ruiz

You have to admit that it is somewhat exciting to see our region changing so fast. It seems like a short while ago that the Youth Development Community was a couple of committed individuals doing their best to showcase some best practices via convenings and brown bag lunches. Well a lot has changed since then—including the quality of the lunch. We (YOU, me, and the hundreds of organizations and thousands of individuals who make up our network) have a lot to be proud of, so let's take a moment to celebrate...Okay, now let's get back to making the world a better place for all the young people in the Greater Sacramento Region. The following are some gentle reminders that we have been talking about at the Youth Development Network (YDN) as ways to stay together, be connected, and enjoy our wonderful community.

Don't just ask, "What's in it for me?" but also ask, "How can I lend my talents to the cause?": At first glance these might seem at odds with one another but if you say it a couple more times you begin to see how well they work together. I call it "the battery to community building". When we go to join a group and we only care about the almighty "WHAT'S IN IT FOR ME?" we actually miss an opportunity to showcase and share our talents within the group. It's no secret that high functioning communities find ways to bring people to the table and just as importantly

let them contribute in significant ways thus keeping them at the table for a long time.

Share Your Story:

Margaret Wheatley from the Kartana Institute says that we do not fear people whose story we know. Sounds basic and simple enough—but do we find ourselves practicing the art of sharing our stories and giving others the opportunity to do the same? It is truly amazing what happens when we allow ourselves to go there. Relationships become richer, you notice the similarities and appreciate the differences, assumptions are conquered, and conflict has positive resolution.

Enjoy The Process but Crave the Goal:

Have you ever been in a group that cared about the process more than the goal? Or how about a group that cared about the goal and paid no attention to creating a process? Don't they both s**k? What happens when we fix our eyes firmly on a goal and create a process that keeps us moving forward and is also, dare I say, ENJOYABLE? They seem so dependent on one another and for good reason--THEY WORK REALLY WELL TOGETHER.

Technology and Handshakes:

Google CEO, Eric Schmidt, said that "high tech" opens doors and "high touch" closes deals. In no other time has this been more evident in our world than now. We can meet vast amounts of people in a short amount of time

by seemingly endless options of online social networking applications (Twitter anyone?). We can also showcase what we do to the world at large by creating amazing websites that tell our story. I recently heard that one of the first things funders do is visit the websites of potential grantees to see if it captures their story well. If they like what they see, they call or set up a meeting for further conversation. I can neither confirm nor deny that this is true but I am sure that your web-tracker can.

Have Fun:

As I am writing this I can see a group of 8 year olds practicing soccer. I have my eye on the little guy wearing my last name on the back of his jersey—call it a hunch but I think he's going to be a star! The soccer coach is amazing—he has found a way to include everyone and they all seem to be having a blast. That was not the case 30 minutes ago when half of the team did not want to be here on this lovely day. Somehow the coach and his assistants made this something that the young people want to do vs. something that they have to do. WOW! It always amazes me how much we can learn by watching young people play.

GEEZ! I guess this is a long-winded way of saying...Let's enjoy changing the world together.

Thanks for all you do and how much you contribute to the Youth Development Network!

YDN Partner Profile Skylab



SKYLAB Staff

YDN: *How long has your organization been around and what kind of work do you do?*

SKYLAB Staff: SKYLAB has been in existence for 5 years. It is the youth development program for Cottage Housing, Inc., primarily based out of Serna Village with plans to serve Quinn Cottages, our sister program downtown and meet

the needs of more as our organization adds expansion sites. The name came out of a summer focus group with the youth as we explored our direction as a program. "SKY" was chosen to represent the limitless potential of the program and "LAB" illustrated the chemistry that takes place when youth have supports and opportunities in a hands-on setting.

Our groups are youth-driven and focus on education, social & recreational opportunities, healthy lifestyle choices, environmental stewardship, and developing a sense of community ownership. Youth voice and choice are integral to the success of the program. SKYLAB empowers youth participants to

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*Partner with us
to create
life-changing
experiences for
youth to thrive
and succeed!!!*

YDN 2.0—The Next Frontier

YDN is excited about the upcoming launch of our new website and our membership program. We are proud to have many collaborative partners and supporters of the network in this region. Our updated website sports a creative new look that will continue

to keep you informed about the work we are doing while providing ongoing support and resources.

Our new membership program will allow all of you to invest into our mission to "create life-changing experiences for youth to

thrive and succeed." Please check out our website at www.ydnetwork.org to learn about all the opportunities for you to partner with us in this work.



2009 YDN Policy Impact

By Bina Lefkowitz

How YDN is being a voice for youth

youth issues and youth development, 3) building the capacity of others to engage in policy work, and 4) advocacy around several critical issues to advance youth development.

In 2009, YDN issued three policy briefs to support advocacy efforts around youth development. Each brief lays out the research

on the selected topics, why the issue matters, and what policy makers and different sectors can do about it. A shorter abstract and a full length in-depth brief for each topic is available. We hope you will help distribute the briefs and promote the policies outlined in each brief.

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YDN's policy work is intended to advance the youth development approach at the community and systems levels. YDN's policy strategy includes: 1) serving as an expert to the community around youth development research and practice, 2) building community awareness about

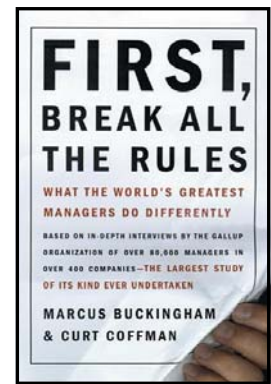


The Chicago Bulls circa '89, the New York Yankees, the original Guns 'N Roses...all good teams.

YDN Staff Highlight—Our Team

But they don't hold a candle to the staff of the Youth Development Network. Combining forces to achieve the incredible on a regular basis, "Team YDN" will stop at nothing to support and further the work of healthy youth development throughout our sphere of influence. Desire networking connections? Got it. Want some programming ideas? No problem. Youth Development training? Bingo.

Looking for a partner who shares your passion for youth? Look no further. At YDN, we're committed to advocating on behalf of youth and providing you with training and networking opportunities that will strengthen your work with young people.



YDN Toolbox

The book: First, Break All the Rules: What the world's greatest managers do differently by Marcus Buckingham and Curt Coffman

Who should read it: Anyone who manages or supervises anyone, especially in the youth development field.

Why: This book takes what some of us know to be true—that creating engaging and friendly environments is the key to keeping your most talented staff—and proves it with in-depth interviews of over 80,000 managers in over 400 companies across sectors. It then goes on to provide many easy-to-read strategies and tips for how to make this happen as a manager. And finally, it's also an excellent overlap with what the youth development framework tells us about creating quality youth programs: that your staff need to feel supported and empowered if they are going to provide the same kind of experiences for your youth.

The Gallup Organization has invested years of research into exploring this topic, identifying great managers (managers who are able to keep staff and deliver consistently great results, whether at a department store or hospital), and conducting thousands of interviews to assemble data and boil it down to their key findings.

Here's what they learned: The world's greatest managers vary in their gender, age, ethnicity, level of authority, and even in the size of the companies where they are found (from Fortune 500 to small nonprofits). But they share a common approach: They don't spend time or energy focusing on staffs' weaknesses, or trying to develop underdeveloped areas. Instead, great managers select staff based on talents and strengths and then they work to further develop those strengths and find the right fit for them within the organization. As a result, these managers develop

tight high-functioning teams that provide amazing results for their company.

Do great managers affect staff retention? Yes! Gallup found that quality staff who work for great managers will stay at the company through thick or thin, despite low wages—even pay cuts—and they won't be lured away by offers of higher salaries or better benefits. More importantly, quality staff whose managers don't provide this kind of work environment for them will leave and go find great managers who do, regardless of salary or benefits. Also of note, Gallup found that mediocre (or less productive) employees will be influenced by the benefits or salary, regardless of their manager. In short, Gallup concludes, quality employees don't leave a job, or a salary. They leave a manager.

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become healthy, valued and engaged citizens of life.

SKYLAB youth participants realize a sense of purpose and tap into their resilience to navigate through real-world experiences that cultivate a sense of belonging, usefulness, and influence.

YDN: How has the Youth Development Network impacted your staff and programs?

SKYLAB STAFF—Over the years, YDN has been an asset in many ways:
In **2006** our team of staff attended the **Youth Development Institute**.

In **2007** we participated in YDN's **Youth Engagement Learning Community**, in which we explored the development of a punch card tracking system that youth, parents, staff and funders could find value in the information gathered. As part of the commitment, SKYLAB received coaching from YDN.

In **2007** and **2008** we utilized the **Youth Development 101** trainings to help orient new staff to the youth development approach.

In **2009** we have been delighted to take part in the **Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA)** opportunity. This happened at a critical turning point in our shift of consciousness as a program and as an organization. We feel our team of staff are

maximizing their potential by harnessing their strengths and are able to be a resource to our youth and parents in the program.

For more information about the SKYLAB program, you can contact Jim Vetter at 916-339-2746 ext. 16, or by email at jvetter@cottagehousing.org.

Check out this highlight video of the entire Cottage Housing Program including SKYLAB. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bUtlitLRH0>

Intern Alley—5 Tips for working WITH youth

By Noah, Kham and Brittany—the YDN Interns

After a long debate we have come up with our top 5 strategies for working with youth. Please read them carefully as they will surely help you in your quest to partner with youth

1. Don't ask me to represent for all the youth. Many of us have different opinions, ideas and experiences just as adults do.
2. Please don't give us meaningless work. We understand that no task is unimportant, however we have more skills than licking envelopes.
3. If you're trying to get my input, schedule a meeting around my time, at a place I can get to. If it's in the evening, a good snack goes a long way.
4. Be more tech-savvy. Get familiar with MySpace, Facebook, and texting. Those are most likely the easiest way to get ahold of us.
5. We respect your age and experience. But we also bring things to the table. So even though there is an age difference, we are equals. Please treat us accordingly.

There are many strategies to working with young people, however these 5 should give you a good start.



Learn While You Serve—the Service Learning Way

By Andy Paul



It's the new craze that's sweeping the nation. Everyone's doing it—community-based organizations, schools, churches--maybe you're doing it, too, but you just don't call it service learning. So let's learn more about it...together!

Service learning is an approach for working with youth that combines meaningful community service with dynamic real-life learning. It takes the basic idea of improving your community and makes it ten times more productive and meaningful by adding in specific learning goals and youth development best practices such as youth voice.

How does it work?

First, imagine your typical community service project: maybe it's your school's canned food drive, maybe it's your neighborhood clean-up day, or maybe your church collects Turkeys at Thanksgiving. These are all great projects that are certainly helpful to the community. However, when we put them through the service learning mixer, they begin to look a little different.

Canned food drive as a service learning project (What it might look like)

Youth do some initial research to find out who needs food the most, and where those people might be located. Speakers from a specific local charity that is knowledgeable in this area come and talk with the youth to help them better understand where food might be needed and what kind. In connection with this, the youth do some research on food banks in the area, looking into levels of need, and rates of distribution of food historically (Are the rates going up or down?). Based on this research, youth decide what kind of food they want to collect and devise their own strategies for collecting the most. At the end of the food drive, youth deliver the food, and maybe help distribute it. Touched by this work, some youth seek to talk to local politicians and organizations to see how they can help reduce hunger as a local issue.

As you can see, service learning projects have the opportunity to more meaningfully engage youth with the topic, teaching them something about the world they live in, showing them ways to have an impact, and building skills along the way, be they life skills or academic skills. Providing opportunities for youth voice is also a critical piece of the service learning model. Youth are much more excited and engaged with a project that they themselves have selected. With even more authentic youth voice, the above example might not have been a food drive at all. After talking to community leaders and learning about the various needs in their community, the youth might have decided to do something different entirely. Maybe they would decide that availability of alcohol or teen homelessness were more pressing problems in their community and then seek ways to start working on that issue.



Tip: Check out the **Seven Elements of Quality Service Learning** on page 7 of this newsletter.

YDN Policy Impact continued from page 2

Why Invest in Youth Development provides an overview of the youth development research, why youth development matters to communities, and what policy makers can do to increase quantity, quality and access to supports and opportunities for youth. Both risk and asset data is provided for the region.

Civic Engagement and Service Learning defines key terms (such as volunteerism, community service, civic engagement and service learning), describes the key aspects of service learning, provides examples from the region of diverse kinds of efforts around service and service learning, and offers policy recommendations for municipal governments, educators, and community agencies.

College Access and Success This brief is a case study of a local college access effort at Hiram Johnson High School. The report also offers recommendations for communities and schools for increasing college access for students, based on what was learned from the case study.

Regional Compact for Children and Youth

In 2008, YDN, along with the City of Sacramento, County Office Of Education, Sacramento County Children's Coalition, and other members of the EMERGE coalition (formerly the Capitol Region Ready By 21 Coalition), created a regional compact for children and youth. The compact articulates six commitments we are asking policy makers to support in order to make Sacramento a "youth-friendly" community. These commitments are:

- a. **Invest in Children and Youth**
- b. **Foster Caring Adult relationships**
- c. **Provide Safe Places**
- d. **Ensure a Healthy Start**
- e. **Ensure an Effective Education and Development of 21st Century Skills**
- f. **Provide Opportunities for Youth to Meaningfully Participate In the Community**



Through a grant from the California Endowment, YDN is supporting the development of the EMERGE coalition that is dedicated to advocating for the compact's adoption and working to create policy changes that align with the compact. EMERGE seeks to have 300 organizations adopt the compact by the end of 2010, including 5 government bodies, 10 school districts and also 10 CBO/Businesses/Faith-based organizations. For a copy of the compact, go to www.ydnetwork.org. If you desire to have your organization (or an organization you are affiliated with) adopt the compact, please contact Summer Thommen at summer@ydnetwork.org. YDN is also working with Yes to Youth, who successfully led the charge to get the compact adopted by the City Council of Sacramento. Yes to Youth is organizing to approach the Board of Supervisors on May 12th for adoption of the compact and is gearing up for organizing for a tax for youth development. For more information on Yes to Youth, contact Kula Koenig at (916) 446-7600.

Quality Counts (QC). YDN, in partnership with the Georgetown Divide Ready by 21 Coalition, is increasing community awareness of the need to invest in program quality support for youth programs. Through QC, YDN is providing training and technical support for use of the Youth Program Quality Assessment tool to 18 organizations. In addition, we are developing a new managers' training that can help organizations integrate youth development practices into management systems. In 2009 and 2010, YDN will be rolling out new trainings on core skills for youth workers. Furthermore we are mapping local training capacity around youth development competencies. Finally, YDN is spearheading efforts in partnership with SETA and the Workforce Investment Board, to change policies and pilot new efforts to strengthen the human services workforce. For more information on this effort, contact Bina Lefkowitz at bina@ydnetwork.org.



Seven Elements of Quality Service Learning

By Andy Paul

YouthService California, a statewide nonprofit dedicated to making service a part of every young person's life, offers a list of seven elements that make up a quality service learning project. Check these out. You might find that you are already doing a lot of these as part of your work. If so, then great! If not, take a moment to think about how you can build some of these into your future service (learning) projects. Your youth will really appreciate it, and they will definitely be more engaged in serving their community—which is the whole point, right?

Integrated learning – The project is intentional about building in real opportunities for youth to learn new skills and/or practice current ones.

High quality service – The project meets a real community need that has been identified through some kind of previous research or collection of information.

Collaboration – The project involves partners who contribute meaning and expertise to all aspects of the project, especially planning and evaluation.

Youth voice – The project allows for high levels of youth voice in various roles: choosing, planning, implementing, and evaluating the project.

Civic responsibility – The project develops a sense of responsibility in the youth to care for their community. It also builds youth awareness about how they can impact their community.

Reflection – The project helps youth make connections between the service experience and what they are learning. This should take place before, during, and after the project.

Evaluation – The project involves all partners, including youth, in evaluating the learning, and service, goals of the project.



Need some reasons to pursue service learning besides the obvious ones (i.e. it's great for youth, it excites them, teaches them things, and encourages them to be better citizens)? How about this: Service learning is fast becoming the most widely-recognized proven strategy for reducing student dropouts. This is great for schools who want to pursue service learning (and for those who would partner with them—meaning everyone else), but it's also great for anyone who is interested in more funding for their great youth development work. And did you know that Arne Duncan, the new U.S. Secretary of Education, presided over an implementation of district-wide service learning requirements (not community service) in one of the largest school districts in the country, Chicago Public Schools? The even money, then, is on service learning growing as a nationwide strategy for years to come. So what are you waiting for? Join the growing wave of youth development organizations, schools, and faith-based organizations that are making quality service learning projects happen—to change youths' lives, to change their communities, and to change the world.



Share Your Story with Us!!!

The Youth Development Network is looking for a few good women, men and organizations to tell us their story about how our organization has helped you. Please include a brief bio of yourself and/or your organization and how the Youth Development Network has impacted your life and your work. Some of the submissions will be highlighted in our Partner Profile section of the newsletter. You can email your submissions to scott@ydnetwork.org.

Toolbox continued from page 3.

Therefore, to retain the kind of staff you want to retain, there are certain critical things that need to be present in the working environment, all of these directly attributable to a manager who cares enough to make them happen. (I bet you'd like to know what these are.)

Gallup found that there are 12 questions which, if the employee could answer them with an enthusiastic "Yes!" are the indicators of a first-class manager and an attractive working environment. The 12 questions are:

1. Do I know what is expected of me at work?
2. Do I have the materials and equipment expected of me at work?
3. At work, do I have the opportunity to do what I do best every day?
4. In the last seven days, have I received recognition or praise for doing good work?
5. Does my supervisor, or someone at work, seem to care about me as a person?
6. Is there someone who encourages my development?
7. At work, do my opinions seem to count?
8. Does the mission or purpose of my company make me feel my job is important?
9. Are my co-workers committed to doing quality work?
10. Do I have a best friend at work?
11. In the last six months, has someone at work talked to me about my progress?
12. This last year, have I had opportunities to learn and grow?



"I'm looking for a workaholic who feels the great job he does is compensation enough."

These questions alone can help provide any manager with a road-map to creating a workplace that consistently attracts and retains high-quality and high-performing staff. What's more, with careful reading it becomes clear how these 12 statements are an excellent match with the five youth development supports and opportunities that all youth need to experience in order to develop into successful, healthy adults (safety, relationship building, youth participation, community involvement, and skill building). To paraphrase and combine the 12 statements above, all youth need a place where:

- They understand what's expected of them and have sufficient resources available
- They get to do what they do best, and receive praise for doing good work
- They feel cared about by an adult or peer and have peers that they consider "friends"
- They are encouraged to grow, build their skills, and try new things
- They feel that what they do matters and that others around them are similarly committed to the project or work

The book also does a great job of helping you understand what you need to do to become one of these great managers. It offers strategies for: defining outcomes for your staff, interviewing for talent, managing around a weakness, the art of tough love, and even what to do if you work for a traditional top-down manager, or a manager who is strong in some of these areas but not in others. So check it out (currently \$19.80 on Amazon new, or \$6.49 used)! I guarantee you'll learn something.

YDN Upcoming Events

Youth Development Network - Reunion Mixer

May 12, 2009 5:00-8:00pm

LOCATION: Downey Brand LLP Community Room, 18th Floor -- 621 Capitol Mall -- Sacramento, CA 95814

Join us for an evening of mingling with champions of youth development from all over the greater Sacramento area.

Enjoy live music, business card raffle, appetizers & beverages.

\$10.00 donation appreciated (which may be applied toward your **new** YDN Membership)

Please RSVP to: Cathy at 916.231.5333 ext. 13, or cathy@ydnetwork.org.

Youth Development 101

May 6-7, 2009

Youth Development 101 is an introductory course on best practices for working with youth. This popular two-day course is praised by youth providers, teachers, after-school practitioners, tutors and young people around the region as being one of the best hands-on trainings in the field as well as being dynamic and experiential. You'll receive insight on:

- Safety Techniques
- Relationship Building
- Youth Participation
- Community Involvement
- Skill Building

ITS NOT JUST A VOTE: Engaging Youth on Boards and Advisories

May 20-21, 2009

Join the YDN for a two-day learning community about:

- Understanding different models of engaging youth voice as part of your organizational culture
- Exploring best practices of engaging youth in an organization's decision-making process
- Assessing your organization's readiness for youth in positions of power, and
- Supporting youth (and adults) through this challenging process

And since it's YDN, you know it will be FUN, engaging, and filled with opportunities to network and share ideas.

Though adult-focused, this training would also benefit from the attendance of your leadership youth and/or board members from your organization.

2009 Sacramento Youth Leadership Camp

Organization/Agency Sponsored group applications currently being accepted

YDN is ramping up to deliver the sixth annual Sacramento Youth Leadership Program. The program delivers a highly engaging leadership curriculum while simultaneously exposing youth to the outdoors. In an effort to keep participants connected after camp, YDN interns have created a MySpace page that has become a virtual meeting place for SYLP alumni to share how they are practicing youth leadership in their community (www.myspace.com/youthcreatingchange). Check it out!

Intel Summer Intern Program - 2009

SETA/Sacramento Works is partnering with Intel Corporation to recruit high school students between the ages of 16-18 for paid internships at Intel Corporation's Folsom Campus this summer. If you are a youth 16-18 years of age, who attends school within the greater Sacramento region and has a GPA of 3.0 or higher, this opportunity is for you. The application and details for the program can be found at: www.seta.net/youth_summer.html.

**For information on other upcoming YDN events, please check out our website at
www.ydnetwork.org**