



Building on the Strengths of America's Youth

Report from the
Second National Youth Summit

November 6–8, 2003
Washington, D.C.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Administration for Children and Families
Administration for Children, Youth and Families
Family and Youth Services Bureau



Acknowledgments

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services would like to acknowledge the enthusiastic participation of the youth who attended the 2003 National Youth Summit, and the contributions of the following individuals and agencies:

2003 Youth Planning Committee

Kelly Wright
Fox News Correspondent

Nobel Schuler
Executive Director
Heaven Word Design

Mason Bishop
Deputy Assistant Secretary
Employment and Training Administration
U.S. Department of Labor

J. Robert Flores
Administrator
OJJDP/Office of Justice Programs
U.S. Department of Justice

U.S. Department of Labor

U.S. Department of Justice

U.S. Department of Agriculture

U.S. Department of Education

AmeriCorps
Corporation for National
and Community Service

Preface

“Across our Nation, millions of young people are participating in projects that help their neighbors in need. By using their time, talents and compassion to make a difference in the lives of others, these young people are learning to become responsible and engaged citizens in our democratic society.”

—President George W. Bush

The Second National Youth Summit, “Building on the Strengths of America’s Youth,” was a celebration of the successes and healthy choices made daily by the vast majority of America’s youth. The 2003 Youth Summit focused on Positive Youth Development (PYD), an approach that supports the strength, energy, and vitality of young people. PYD is the cornerstone of the work done by the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) within the Administration on Children, Youth and Families; Administration for Children and Families; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Over the past two decades, FYSB has provided national leadership on youth issues and has assisted individuals and organizations in providing effective, comprehensive services for youth. FYSB programs focus on positive alternatives for youth, which strive to ensure young people’s safety and maximize their potential, resulting in a greater likelihood that young people will become empowered and civically engaged. With support and guidance from family, friends, schools, programs, and communities, young people have the opportunity to exercise leadership, build skills, and become actively involved in their communities.

At its First National Youth Summit in 2002, FYSB increased the national awareness of PYD. Members of the President’s Cabinet and numerous other Government officials joined with youth workers and researchers, program managers and volunteers from community- and faith-based organizations, and youth themselves to emphasize that we all must talk **with, not at**, young people and we

Why Do We Focus on Positive Youth Development?

“Because we believe in the worth and dignity of every young person...”

“Because we believe youth have something important to say...”

“Because youth need positive outlets...”

From remarks by Wade Horn, Ph.D.
(Assistant Secretary for Children and Families)
at the Second National Youth Summit

must **not focus solely on problems**. Instead, Summit participants partnered with youth, talked with youth, and reminded us that **young people live lives, not issues, problems, or social service interventions**.

The 2003 National Youth Summit, held November 6–8, expanded upon the focus of the 2002 Summit. “Building on the Strengths of America’s Youth” showcased youth programs that are associated with Federal agencies as well as programs that have been established by State or local organizations.

The variety of workshops reflected the many ways PYD is approached across the country, as well as how Federal agencies can partner on behalf of young people. Youth were presenters, moderators, artists/musicians/photographers, and planners of the Summit. A group of 13 young people from around the country (the Youth Planning Committee) contributed time, energy, ideas, and skills for many months before the event and during its 3-day schedule.

During the year leading up to the 2003 Youth Summit, FYSB demonstrated how PYD can be incorporated by Federal agencies through successful implementation of two strategies which empowered youth. First, it partnered with the Head Start Bureau in establishing mentoring relationships between youth and young children, initially in 169 Head Start programs across the Nation. Based on its success and inspiring results, the program has received additional funding and soon will engage many more youth as mentors to larger numbers of Head Start children.

Second, FYSB placed youth (25 percent of panel members) on review panels for three of its major grant award programs: Basic Center Programs for runaway and homeless youth, Transitional Living Programs for older youth, and the



Mentoring Children of Prisoners Program. Youth as grant reviewers was a first for the Department of Health and Human Services. Based on its success, FYSB will continue to include youth on future grant review panels.

In addition to these PYD strategies, FYSB personnel participated on a White House Task Force designed to look at youth programs across Federal agencies,

articulating the Bureau's PYD message and initiatives. In many ways, these FYSB activities set the stage for the National Youth Summit.

Heather Guidry, Louisiana State University, Member of the Youth Planning Committee

"The (youth) committee began meeting in July 2003. For the first three months we (13 members) met once or twice a month, for about 1½ hours, on a conference call. We talked about everything that had to be decided for the Summit. This ranged from what workshops we thought would engage youth to what food we thought the youth would enjoy. Our opinions and ideas were so important!! . . . We usually had someone come up with an idea, and then we would all discuss it. The discussions were really exciting, because we all have different backgrounds and different viewpoints.

"Now that I have returned home, I feel as though the whole world is talking about Positive Youth Development, and I couldn't be more excited! I know that we, the youth of America, have so much to offer, and it is a good thing because, after all, we are the FUTURE!"

Summit Overview

From November 6–8, nearly 1,000 people gathered in Washington, D.C. to attend the Second National Youth Summit: "Building on the Strengths of America's Youth." The Summit offered participants a variety of youth engagement skills, tools, and resources to help create and enhance opportunities for youth to succeed. Attendees came from 48 States, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. More than 40 percent were youth between 16 and 24 years old. Participants included youth workers and program managers from a range of community- and faith-based organizations; national, state, and local policymakers attended, as did researchers, educators, and youth service providers.

Welcome to the Summit
 "This is not your usual conference or Summit", was the opening greeting from Harry Wilson, Associate Commissioner, Family and Youth Services Bureau. His welcoming remarks explained that the Summit was designed as an event for listening and talking among young people and furthering partnerships between youth and adults.

Different venues during the Summit would promote dialogue and opportunities to meet new people, observe a wide array of Positive Youth Development (PYD) efforts from around the country, and enable attendees to share their views with one another. In order to accomplish this, 34

workshops, a youth town hall, addresses from government officials, and speeches by two outstanding youths were featured during the Summit.

Mr. Wilson told the audience that the very first activity of the Summit had, in fact, already taken place. A youth collaborative art project (consisting of four huge "quilted" panels, beautifully designed and completed by the young attendees, under the direction of Nobel Schuler), was completed that morning. The stunning panels would be installed the next day, becoming a visual testament to the energy and enthusiasm of the young people who worked together on the project. (The project will be displayed as part of a large international art initiative later in the year.)

After further describing the Summit's activities, he reminded participants that the closing Summit event on Saturday would be equally "colorful" and interactive: a *Dispatch from the Summit*. The *Dispatch*, by way of a unique and lively exercise, would give attendees the opportunity to inform government officials of their suggestions, ideas, and advice for supporting America's youth and youth programs.

Programs at the Summit

There was a variety of events at the Summit. Throughout the 2½ days, *workshops* were held that focused on PYD and youth engagement in different settings. People selected the workshops they wanted to attend from the nearly three dozen being held. They then heard from adults and youth presenters who described their programs, shared their skills and knowledge, and answered questions from the audience.

Three *plenary* sessions were held during the Summit, featuring presentations by both youth and government officials. Each speaker shared her or his views on young people in our communities and the importance of supporting and learning from youth. At two of the sessions, young guest speakers delivered compelling messages of empowerment and their visions for the future.

The *town hall meeting*, moderated by a member of the Youth Planning Committee and a national news correspondent, saw young



people sharing their thoughts with—and asking questions of—leaders from the U.S. Department of Labor's Employment and Training Administration; the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice; and the Administration for Children and Families, and the Office of the Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

"The future belongs to those who believe in the beauty of their dreams."

—Eleanor Roosevelt,
as quoted by Gregory Smith

Plenary Sessions: Youth and Adults Speak Out

Youth Presenters: Gregory Smith and Julie Hocker

"We have the power to change the world" was *Gregory Smith's* message to the Summit. Gregory is the 14-year-old founder of International Youth Advocates, and two-time nominee for the Nobel Peace Prize. He brought his campaign for a peaceful and just world to the audience. He asked for their help to protect and guarantee the rights of children around the world and in their own backyards.

Julie Hocker, Chairperson of the Youth Planning Committee, used the children's story of Miss Rumphius and her journey to plant lupine seeds as a way of helping others see the need to nurture and



grow a more beautiful world. Young people must put their "hands in the dirt" and make their own discoveries, while still recognizing their need for adult guidance. She reminded the audience that youth are the future and "we" will be the leaders of tomorrow—beginning now.

"Make the world a more beautiful place."

—From *Miss Rumphius*,
a children's story by Barbara Cooney,
as quoted by Julie Hocker

Leaders in Federal Youth Policy: Claude A. Allen, Wade F. Horn, John Bridgeland

Claude A. Allen (Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), encouraged the young people in attendance to "soak up as much as you can ... Go back to your communities, to your schools, and challenge your classmates to live lives worthy of the heritage that they bring with them, to live lives that are positive, that are focused on the future and achieving ... dreams." He sent a message to parents and grandparents: "You need to make sure you know the values you hold, and express them to your children."

In the words of **Wade F. Horn**, (Assistant Secretary for the Administration for Children and Families), “When youth are empowered to share [their] gifts, it is not just the youth that benefit. It is our communities, it is our Nation, and it is our world.” Asking Summit attendees to look for meaningful ways to empower youth and connect them with local institutions and organizations, he continued, “When we empower youth, we release their positive potential to make good decisions for themselves.”

“Whatever your passion is, pick that passion and do it greatly.” **John Bridgeland** (Assistant to the President and Director of USA Freedom Corps) issued a challenge to young people, on behalf of the President’s Council on Service and Civic Participation, to “be part of the culture of service.” Citing the civic life of figures who exemplified this culture—from George Washington, to Martin Luther King, to Senator John Glenn, to high school student and activist

Salmah Rizvi, member of the Youth Planning Committee and the Maryland Student Service Alliance—he described many Government initiatives (Citizen Corps, the Medical Reserve Corps, Senior Corps, AmeriCorps, and the Peace Corps) as well as corporate and privately funded civic engagement initiatives.

With compelling statistics about unmet needs across the Nation and the world, he indicated that “often it’s the citizen who is closest to the needs of people who is able to meet these unmet needs.” “Why serve?” he asked. “Because ... [service is] fundamental to our own happiness.” It gives us “a happy and complete story to tell.” And finally, “because we are Americans and we love our country.”

“What happens to the country, what happens to the world, depends on what we do with what others have left us.”
 Robert F. Kennedy
(as quoted by John Bridgeland, Director of USA Freedom Corps and Assistant to President George W. Bush)



The Summit’s “creative spirit”

Surrounding the Summit’s *working sessions*, there was dynamic energy, enthusiasm and fun (great food, too). An exhibit of striking black and white photographs and writings from the youth photography program, VisionWorkshops, of Annapolis, Maryland, was on display. A dynamite jazz performance by the Blues Alley Youth Orchestra Ensemble of Walter Johnson High School, Rockville, Maryland, kept people smiling, tapping, and clapping. And, thrilling performances of popular and patriotic music by 16 singers and dancers of the Tennessee 4-H Performing Arts Troupe had people on their feet cheering and asking for one more song. . . .

Workshops

“Youth can be introduced to a program and then take charge. When adults understand this, the youth grow in skills & self-esteem. Youth are transformed by being trusted.”

Workshops: How did they work?

A major activity at the Summit was the workshop presenta-

tions. Thirty-four 1-hour sessions (repeated once) were held over 2½ days. The majority of workshops were single presentations, though several workshops combined presentations from two programs. Each presentation was delivered by an adult-youth team and was moderated by a colleague in the field or a member of the Youth Planning Committee. Presenters were asked

to provide a “toolkit” to serve as a takeaway guide for attendees interested in beginning or enhancing a similar program in their own communities.

Workshops represented the five overriding **Positive Youth Development (PYD)** themes of the Summit: safe places, healthy choices, civic engagement, skill

acquisition, and mentoring. These tracks complimented the design of the White House Task Force designed to look at Federal youth programs. For 9 months, the Task Force had identified, reviewed, and analyzed agency youth programs, preparing a report to the President on their findings. This information became the starting point for developing the Summit’s workshop agenda.

A multi-agency National Youth Summit planning team, organized by Harry Wilson, Associate Commissioner of the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB), drew on experiences from serving on the Task Force. Team members were invited to an initial meeting and asked to bring suggestions of programs from their agencies that could be included at the Summit. Over the next few weeks, ideas and recommendations were submitted.

Based upon suggestions from the Planning Committee and Administration for Children and Families staff, and reviewed by the Youth Planning Committee, faith- and community-based organizations were contacted, along with a wide range of programs throughout the country, to invite them to present workshops. In addition, two unique workshops were proposed, one to discuss research concerning positive youth outcome measurements, and the second to report on a 5-year FYSB-funded demonstration project supporting State-level positive youth development efforts. (Descriptions of all workshops can be found in the Second National Youth Summit printed program.)

“ENGAGED YOUTH ARE SUCCESSFUL YOUTH.”

What worked?

As noted in workshop reviews by Federal staff, in Summit evaluation forms from youth and adult attendees, and in the buzz during the Summit, *the workshops that stood out were interactive, with youth playing a prominent role during the presentation and question-and-answer periods. Not surprisingly, these workshops also provided useful takeaway toolkits*

- “...presentation materials all done by youth!” Useful toolkit? “Absolutely. This is a fabulous workshop!”
- “Workshop predominantly led by youth.” Toolkit? “Yes, info on how to start a program or journey like this.”
- “This workshop demonstrates the essence of PYD!” “Very interactive throughout whole presentation.” Adults and youth shared presentation. “Excellent info. This program should be replicated.”
- “This was wonderful. The young man was truly an incredible man with an amazing story.”
- “Youth can be influential, passionate, positive and educated forces in their school, even more than adults/teachers.”
- “The aspect of the presentation where youth tell their story was the most powerful. The passion of the youth was fantastic.”

Furthermore, the degree to which youth were actively involved in the workshop presentations reflects the degree to which they are active partners in their community programs.

Let’s look at five workshops where youth successes came through loud and clear:

- **S’Klallam Canoe Project: Reaching the Hearts of Our Youth**
- **Youth Community Resource Mapping**
- **Designing a Positive School Culture: Focusing on Student Success in a Family Friendly School**
- **National Youth Court Initiative**
- **Youth Mentoring Children: A Double Win!**

S’Klallam Canoe Project: Reaching the Hearts of Our Youth



Every year, the Port Gamble S’Klallam Tribe participates in the annual Tribal Journeys event.

The event involves over 40 tribal communities throughout the Pacific Northwest traveling by canoe to gather in one community for a multi-day celebration of cultural heritage. The Port Gamble S’Klallam canoe is unique in that its crew is filled with more youth than adults. Participation in this journey by youth supports healthy living by exercising the body, mind, spirit, and heart.

The workshop, presented by three youth leaders and one adult youth specialist, demonstrated the Port Gamble S'Klallam spirit by sharing a traditional dance with everyone in the room, as well as presenting gifts of miniature canoe paddles and magnets. "This workshop demonstrates the essence of PYD! It inspires youth to keep strong and healthy and develop cultural pride," commented one observer.

Toolkit

The toolkit describes, in detail, this particular Tribal Journey. It also suggests ways for others to create meaningful youth programs for their communities.

Youth Community Resource Mapping



Two groups of young people from the Alaska Jobs Corps and Nine Star Enterprises began a pilot Community Youth Mapping Program in Alaska in summer 2003. The mappers gathered valuable data on services and resources available to youth, ages 11–24, in Anchorage and Palmer (a small community outside Anchorage).

Young people not only learned more about the communities in which they live, but refined their skills in written and oral communications, team work, creative problem solving, critical analyses, organization, planning, and team management. The information they gathered was entered into the Community Youth database in Washington, D.C.

Two youth mappers, the adult Project Director, along with the Professor of Geomatics, shared the presentation. The young mappers explained their reasons for becoming involved with the project—one took the class only to fulfill a graduation elective—and then offered very personal commentaries of what the program came to mean to them.

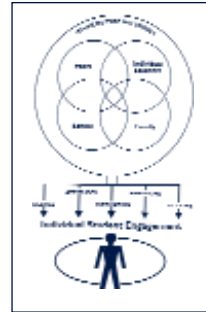
After returning to Alaska, Linda Tomaganuk, one of the youth presenters, was interviewed by a local newspaper for a front-page article on her experiences going to the National Youth Summit in Washington D.C. "I could hardly wait to get back home and start to make a difference in Anchorage. . . I will never forget what one speaker said, 'making a difference is as simple as making an effort.' That statement just inspired me."

The discoveries they made about their community's resources were matched by the discoveries they made about themselves. The young people found they were able to meet challenges while developing skills which, they came to realize, will serve them well—in any situation. The more they spoke of their experiences, the more the audience was able to understand the program's impact and ask follow-up questions of the youth and adult presenters.

Toolkit

The workshop's toolkit furnishes background material on the project, and information on who to contact to find out if a particular community has a youth mapping program, and how to use the Anchorage experience as a model and guide for establishing a similar mapping program.

Designing a Positive School Culture: Focusing on Student Success in a Family Friendly School



The workshop, led by youth, summarized background research, how the school's program was developed, and how students and their families became an integral part of this school's success.

According to research, less than one-third of America's secondary students are engaged with their school or their learning. At Stonewall Jackson High School, a program entitled the Student Activities Leadership Council was initiated to tap into the great potential of student leadership.

This unique model consists of student leadership through school-wide elected officers: President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary, and Historian. Along with the elected positions, there are 18 appointed positions (including Boys and Girls Athletic Commissioner, Election Officers, and Public Relations Officers) giving more students a role in the school's culture.

The program places significant responsibility within the student body for the operation and culture of the school, taking into account the culture, values, and ideas shared by students and families. One visible demonstration of this is that student signs posted throughout the school are in a variety of

languages, since approximately 23 different languages are spoken at Stonewall. As one workshop attendee put it, she came away realizing that “changing the face of student government accounts for a more diverse interest [in school].”

Toolkit

The toolkit includes a Student Activities Leadership Council (SALC) course description, an explanation of the value of a Leadership council, and the booklet produced by SALC for incoming students at Stonewall Jackson High School.

National Youth Court Initiative



Schools, local and State governments, and communities are searching for ways to provide

civic engagement programming for youth. Youth Courts play a critical role in supporting this need, with 950 sites in 47 States and the District of Columbia. Easily established and low cost, a Youth Court program gives first-time youth offenders a second chance while it teaches civic participation and engages volunteer youth directly in community-based crime prevention. Through Youth Court, young people learn to become participatory citizens and experience actual civic engagement.

Youth presenters described their experiences as a volunteer jurist and as a prosecutor. One youth, who had been arrested for shoplifting, shared what it felt like to be a defendant at Youth Court

and how that experience had been instrumental in turning his life around.

Young people learned that they can make just decisions, that they need to be accountable and responsible in order to live healthy lives, and that restitution can heal victims and move offenders in the right direction. One observer saw that, “To many adults, giving youth more responsibility is counterintuitive. This program suggests otherwise.”

Toolkit

The toolkit offers comprehensive tips for starting a Youth Court (a true step-by-step guide) and a descriptive list of easy-to-access resources for help along the way.

Youth Mentoring Children: A Double Win!



While many mentoring programs focus on adults mentoring youth, the 2002 Head Start Youth Initiative, a collaboration between the Head Start and Youth Services

Bureaus, provided grants to nearly 170 Head Start programs throughout the country to engage youth as literary mentors to Head Start children. Head Start programs designed a variety of youth involvement activities, including one-on-one reading and story writing, family literacy outreach, book-mobiles, library visits, curriculum preparation, and child development training.

Stipends and/or high school credits were offered at many sites. Two Head Start grantees (the adult coordinator and two high school mentors from each program) shared the experiences in establishing, coordinating, and implementing their programs. The value of youth as mentors to young children was evident in each presentation.

The two presentations showed the resourcefulness of Head Start centers in building Youth Mentoring programs for their unique communities. As a result of the programs—regardless of the settings—youth mentors became civically engaged, often grew more interested in their school work, and realized they had a lot to contribute and were valued members of the Head Start team. And, perhaps most importantly, they felt the unconditional affection and delight of the children in Head Start.

Toolkit

The toolkit from Clackamas County, Oregon, describes its “Give Reading A Hand” program and provides the curriculum developed for and utilized by the high school mentors.

Upon returning home, a Head Start presenter learned that a local high school drama teacher will have his drama students act out three stories used this year in the Head Start classroom and on home visits. The children in Head Start and their sixth grade mentors will go see the high school performances this spring. “I have become a big fan of these youth collaborations and just wanted to let you know about unforeseen side benefits,” she wrote.

Dispatch from the Summit



The closing event of the 2003 National Youth Summit was “Dispatch from the Summit.” It was designed for a large group of participants to voice their opinions, observations and proposals by responding to these questions:

1. **What is an empowered young person?**
2. **What must adults do to help youth make healthy choices and succeed?**
3. **How can we craft meaningful partnerships between adults and youth?**
4. **What recommendation do you have for government (at all levels, broadly defined) to help support youth and adults, and make these partnerships happen?**

How Did It Work?

A room was set up with 45 large round tables, each with 10 chairs, 4 colored poster boards, marking pens, and newsprint pads. As people entered the room, they were asked to find a seat at a table—preferably not with others they knew well—and then designate a

“writer/leader” to remain there throughout the exercise. The writer/leader was asked to summarize and capture, on the colored poster boards, the group’s responses to each question. The group could doodle, take notes, and leave messages, etc., on the newsprint during the response time.

The four questions were asked to the entire room—one at-a-time spaced out over 1½ hours. Following each question, discussions, exchanges, ideas, and insights were shared, summarized, and then written onto the poster boards at each table, becoming a colorful “Dispatch from the Summit.”

After 20 minutes, and before the next question, everyone (except the writer/leader) was asked to find a new table. Youth and adults moved randomly to tables across the room, or one over, or a few down and over—forming new groupings where they sat chatting, meeting one another, waiting for the next question to be asked. Once again, they explored a question together, and their responses were written down. This exercise was repeated for each of the questions.

At the table, the writer/leader shared the poster board answers from previous questions with the new group. By the end of the fourth question’s 20-minute discussion time, almost everyone in the room had had the chance to meet new people, find out what was on their minds, listen to their

perspectives, and let them know where they were coming from on youth issues.

WHAT WAS LEARNED

1. What is an empowered young person?

This first question provided the opportunity to help define who an empowered youth is, and what it takes to be one. The responses ranged from single-word insights (“respected,” “hopeful,” “enthusiastic,” “connected”) to an array of descriptions of youth empowerment. Generally, these fell into five areas: attitude, contribution, resources and support, success, feelings. It’s striking how similar the hundreds of responses were in their views and comments.

Attitude: Youth who have a “can do attitude” are able to make changes, taking past experiences and learning from them. Youth are interested in learning, feel there are no limits, and “believe they can make a difference.” Youth feel they have some control and “create opportunities for themselves.”

Contribution: Youth who are included in decisionmaking feel their “opinion is taken seriously” and see themselves as valued participants who care about making a difference. Young people believe “there are actions being taken as a result of what I am saying” and feel connected.

Resources and Support: Youth who access “knowledge and tools to get what they want” are

empowered. They are open to exploring new skills. Resources include connections that can lead to opportunity. Empowered youth understand the importance of resources—both internal and external. Mentors and adult support are resources. Support encourages and brings connectedness to mentor, family, friends, and community.

Success: Youth who experience success “build off success.” Empowered youth are given choices on positive activities. They are confident and goal oriented, “living out their goals.” Youth are respected, speak their thoughts, know themselves, and have courage and strong beliefs.

Feelings: Here’s a list of words used to describe some of the “feelings” associated with empowered youth: resilient, happy, dreams, prayer, hope, faith, friendly, fun, good friend, good listener, vivid imagination, confident, funny, enthusiasm, wants to make a difference.

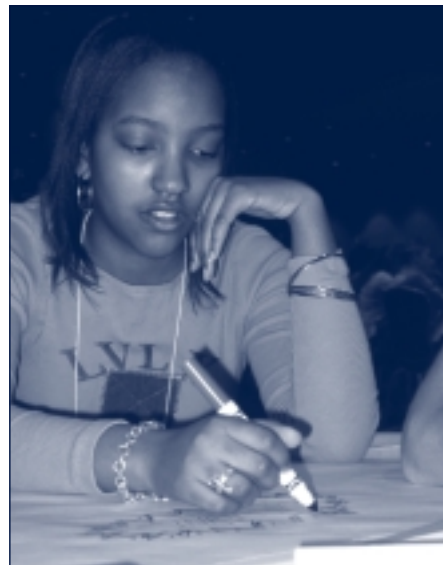
ONE SUMMIT ATTENDEE OBSERVED:
AN EMPOWERED YOUNG PERSON IS SOMEONE WITH AN IDEA

2. What must adults do to help youth make healthy choices and succeed?

The second question gave youth and adults the chance to talk about what young people look for from adults—particularly those who are in their lives. Again, from

the hundreds of listed responses, there were noticeable groupings: role-model, encourage & support, listen, teach/decisions/choices, involvement, feelings.

Role Model: An adult should be a “good and positive role model” who leads by example. Adults should equip youth with knowledge. They should be “a mentor” and “guide by example.” Adults need to “practice what you preach” and “make good choices themselves to influence youth.”



Encourage & Support: Youth want adults to “TRUST and communicate” and believe in the abilities of young people. Adults should acknowledge youth’s gifts, skills, and strengths. They should congratulate youth when they do well. Adults should always be encouraging, positive, and supportive. Adults should keep youth involved and safe. Youth look for guidance, not force. “Intervene for youth safety.”

Listen: Youth want adults to “listen to what we have to say because we are the future.” Adults should

“give respect to get respect” and offer advice—don’t just give it. Youth want talk and communication to go both ways and want adults to “listen to youth opinions—live in 2003, not 1953.” “Listen! Listen! Listen!”

Teach/Decisions/Choices: Adults need to teach youth to think critically. They should explain “WHY they say what they say.” Youth want suggestions, not demands from adults. “Talk, don’t lecture” and utilize teachable moments. “Teach your kids your personal values.” Adults should tell the truth about consequences of choices, while allowing youth to make their own choices. Let youth learn from their mistakes—that’s how they grow. Adults should “teach your kids your personal values.”

Involvement: Youth believe adults should be more involved in youth interests and “be available” to them. Youth want to “be responsible for activities (ownership).” Adults should create structured environments for youth and create opportunities together. Letting “kids know expectations and consequences” is important. Talking with youth about “spirituality and setting morals” is important for adults to do. “Have fun together.” Have elders share their culture with youth.

Feelings: “Believe in us!” “Don’t forget that you were once a youth,” “Talk with us, not to us,” “Don’t be condescending,” “TRUST, Love, R-E-S-P-E-C-T .”

3. How can we craft meaningful partnerships between adults and youth?

The third question expanded upon the first two by looking for ways to make connections between youth and adults. The responses were fairly general. Many carried over from the first two questions. Recurring themes of communication/relationships, interaction/opportunity, and role models/mentoring were listed throughout the written comments, suggestions, and insights.

Communication/Relationships: Youth want to “build long-term relationships with adults” in which they can spend time together and get to know each other. Mutual understanding of common goals is important. Adults should “practice what they preach—with some humility.” Youth believe that respect, trust, honesty, loyalty, and a sense of humor are important in a relationship with adults. They want encouragement, but no controlling, from adults.

Youth would like to “form a bond of friendship” with adults. They would like to learn how to feel comfortable around adults. Training for both youth and adults to enhance communication was suggested. Volunteering together was proposed as a way for youth and adults to become partners.

Interaction/Opportunity: Youth would like to have activities that bring youth and adults together where they can become partners. Youth want to lead and have their ideas used; they want equal power. “Cannot give some-

one something they don’t want.” Sharing “our stories” with adults and family members is important. A space or organization where youth and adults have the opportunity to interact, where activities for learning can be provided for both is needed: “Offer opportunities for adults + kids to interact in safe settings—e.g., after-school programs.” Occasions to serve on advisory boards and participate in youth forums are a good way for youth to be involved, and they want more chances to participate on such boards. Youth want an



“equal voice and equal vote.” They want more internships—“not just for ones who get best grades.” Youth are seeking memorable experiences planned together with adults that include having fun. “Create a safe and welcoming atmosphere.”

Role Models/Mentoring: Older youth should set examples for younger youth. Adults should be invited to “youth’s world” and experience it. Adults need to learn from youth and be honest about “what can and can’t be done.” Adults need to find quality and family time for youth—they often are too busy. Youth are very interested in mentoring opportunities (it was suggested that youth mentor

adults). Youth feel resources need to be donated to support youth causes. Community support is very important—it comes from family, friends, church/synagogue/mosque.

4. What recommendation do you have for government (at all levels, broadly defined) to help support youth and adults, and make these partnerships happen?

The final question sought advice from participants on how different levels of government across the Nation can best serve the interests of youth. This question moved participants beyond the relationship between youth and adults (Question #3), which appeared more manageable, to the relationship between young people and government institutions. It is a more complex question, one to which ideas were suggested for giving youth an active voice in government policy. The responses to Question #4, generally, are in five areas: national, State, and local actions; additional funding and resources; government policy and practice; youth summits, forums, and conferences; and training and education opportunities.

National, State, and Local Actions: Establishing a national framework for involving youth would provide an opportunity for youth to have their views heard on broad, overarching issues. In addition, several participants suggested State- and local-level youth advisory boards where young people could be included in public policy decisionmaking closer to home. “Setting up youth advisory boards at all

government agencies” would be one way to get more youth at the table for their input.

Additional Funding and Resources: Federal, State, and Local: More funds for youth programs were recommended frequently as a way government could support youth, such as support for concrete organizations “that are close to home + address needs of the locals.” The overwhelming view was that Federal money for youth programs should be given to State and local governments. More funding for youth programs and Federal programs that affect youth, such as housing, after-school programs, and quality teachers, was also listed. One young person suggested that government officials “lower your salaries and give more to youth.” “Provide more funding for school sports, art, music, etc. programs and teen parents.”

Government Policy and Practice: Participants asked that government simplify policies and be “user friendly.” They recommended local (instead of Federal) funding because “local knows best” what communities need. “Identify and then support grass-roots and community-based organizations that have good outcomes.” Cut the red tape. Take some of the bureaucracy out of the Federal Government and provide follow-up on government programs. Government needs to focus on all kids and “concentrate on good rewards for good kids.”

Programs should also support youth who make good choices and stay on track. Youth would like

a higher level of support for youth initiatives. There were several suggestions that government needs to get out in the community and see what’s going on. “Keep promises/ listen to youth/pay attention.” “Encourage more youth boards.” “Support programs that bring youth together with adults.” Have a “National Clearinghouse for Youth Services.”



Youth Summits, Forums, and Conferences: A frequent recommendation was to have events that allow youth, and those who work with youth, to come together, exchange ideas, and learn from each other. Young people want to be educated as to “opportunities to get involved—how can we get involved?” one person wrote. Another asked “how to get involved in service or HOW to get help.” Having meetings where youth can ask questions and talk about “our issues, not what you think are our issues.” “Don’t assume that you know what youth need.” Youth asked to have young people as speakers at “youth conventions.” “Offer fun programs for healthy youth/adult partnerships in all

areas of communities.” Also, “more interaction for youth nationally— representation of youth from rural communities as much as from large cities” should take place.

Training and Education Opportunities: Several suggestions were given for future youth summits, conferences, and workshops, along with an array of other opportunities to engage youth. These included: “support for adults on how to interact with youth”; ways to “educate kids on how to participate in government”; “teach us something we don’t know”; “provide education for leadership”; mentoring programs; “create an interaction program between politicians and youth”; a day at the State capital open to youth; encourage youth to lobby their opinion; “educate us about opportunities to get involved”; youth forums “to voice concerns” at local, State, and national levels; create and offer job opportunities/paid internships in city, State, and Federal Government, thereby valuing young people’s time and effort; pay for college— “incentives to give back” in lieu of paying tuition; “encourage parents to get involved in school.”



At the suggestion of Thanh Nguyen from HoustonWorks, USA, everyone at the town hall meeting was asked to write down “where they want to be in the next six months.” They sealed their responses and placed them in self-addressed envelopes which were collected by FYSB staff. So in May, check your mail—you’ll want to read that letter!

Conclusion

The National Youth Summit represents the covenant that the Federal Government promotes with youth themselves and with the people, families, communities, programs, and foundations that support their positive development. This effort is an emerging process with lessons learned at each step along the way. Our work is to identify and analyze how informed and enlightened Federal programs can work together to empower youth in reaching their greatest potential. When we all do this, young people won't be trapped in "problem categories," with resources directed toward only fixing specific problems. Rather, youth will attain a meaningful role in our society based on their unique strengths and abilities.

It is the partnership of Federal agencies working together that has brought about change in youth programs and services and produced a synergy of hope for our Nation's greatest resource . . . its youth.

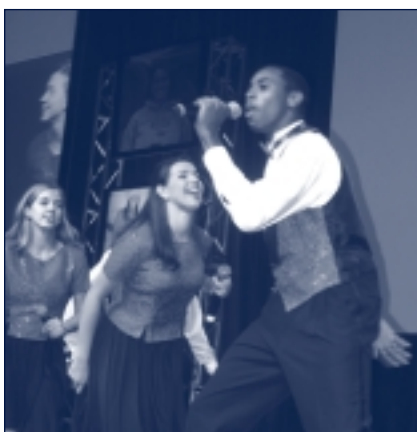
In November 2003, Summit participants were asked their suggestions and recommendations (discussed in the "Dispatch" section of this Report) for what they would like to see at future National Youth Summits. In written comments, informal talks, and discussions, the overwhelming consensus was that young people want to be more civically engaged.

Youth want to learn how to participate effectively in leadership roles in schools, programs, communities, and government. They want government to focus on leadership skill-development and share local, State and national youth leadership resources and opportunities (such as internships, participation on municipal boards, etc).

Young people are not ruling out the importance of adults, but rather welcome the chance to partner with them as long as adults listen to them and respect their opinions. How do adults respect youth? By valuing their input and acting on their suggestions.

In response to this guidance, we are pleased to announce that **youth leadership and working together to build stronger communities** will be the focus of the 2004 National Youth Summit to be held at the end of July in Cleveland, Ohio.

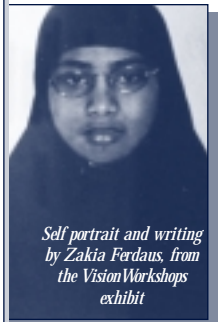
Finally, with thanks to Jesimiel Riviera, an 11th grader from Crawford High School in San Diego, California, we conclude this report in her words: "We were there not only to meet new people, but most importantly to build strength and pyramids of information such as youth engagement, youth sports, youth development, engaging youth to the community, youth tough topics, and to learn the secret of success. Then take all these great introductions and transfer them to your community, family, school, etc. I feel very proud of myself because I have learned that there is no obstacle that could stop me from reaching my goal or my dreams."



Zakia Ferdaus
7th Grade, Bates Middle School

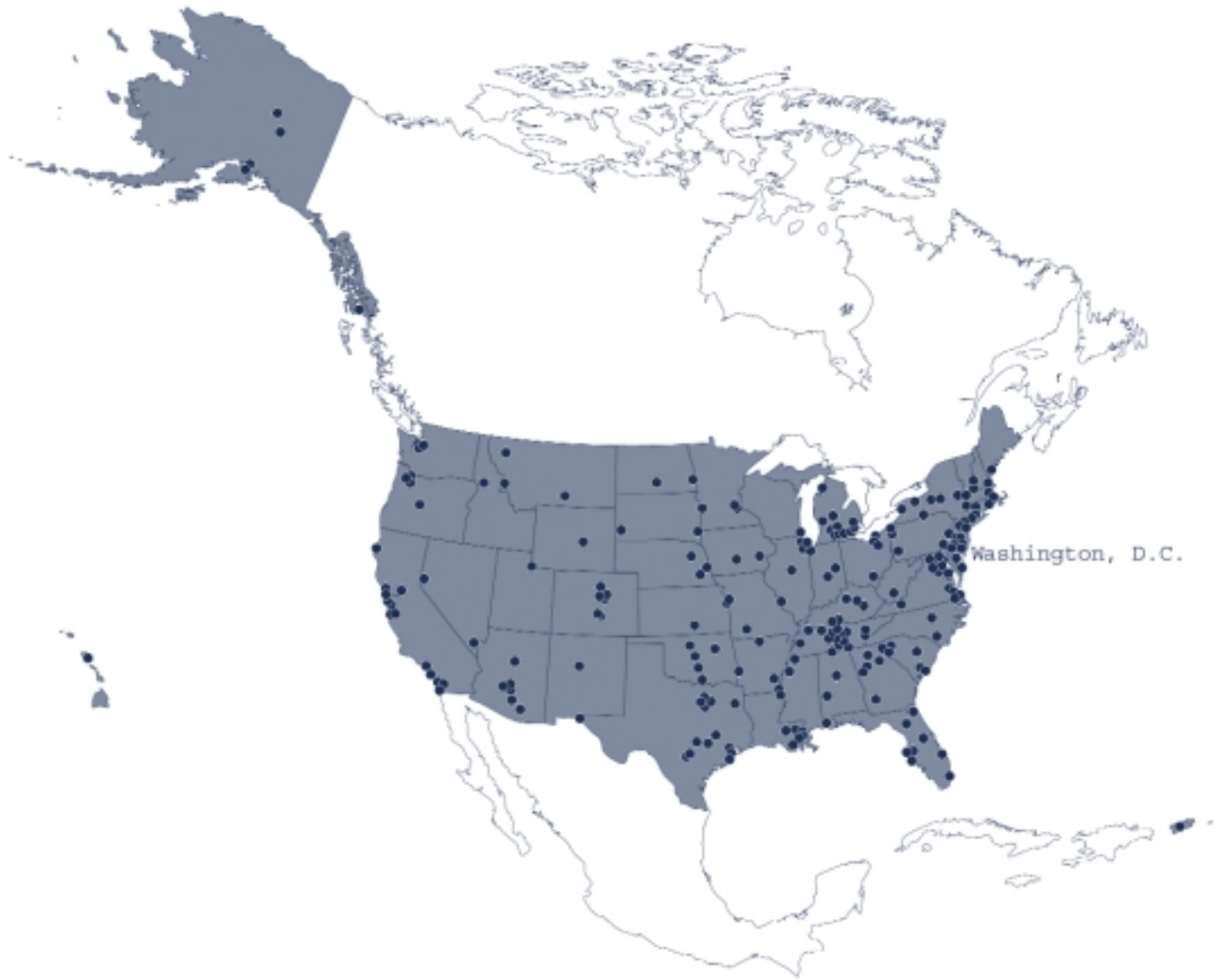
What are you most hopeful about?
I came to live in America on my last year. When I got here, I didn't understand English and school, and I had to work hard to understand.

Now I dream in English.
I am hopeful that I can live in America because people are good here. I would like to become a doctor and an teacher.



All photographs in this report were taken by Matt Lerner of the Youth Planning Committee

Where We Live
(Attendees at the 2003 National Youth Summit)



Map courtesy of Cherie Northon, PhD, Mapping Solutions, Anchorage, Alaska