

YOUTH COMMISSION STAFF E-NEWS

From the Collaborative Governance Initiative

A Program of the Institute for Local Government

February, 2010 - Vol 3, Issue 1

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Greetings!

Welcome to the Winter 2010 issue of the Youth Commission Staff E-News brought to you by the Collaborative Governance Initiative at the Institute for Local Government.

This tri-annual e-newsletter provides useful information to help inform and strengthen county and city youth commissions and councils. Each issue features stories and strategies from local youth commissions in California, as well as youth engagement news, resources, grant opportunities and program ideas from throughout the country.

This e-newsletter is produced and distributed to youth commissions in California (as well as to interested others) with the generous support of the Surdna Foundation.

You can forward this newsletter to youth commissioners, council members, or others with the "Forward email" link below. Also, archived issues of the newsletter are available on our website at www.ca-ilg.org/youthengagement.

We now have a case story form that you can use to submit your own commission's or council's story for our website and newsletter (see www.ca-ilg.org/youthengagementstory). Other content ideas for the Youth Commission Staff E-News can be submitted to Carmen Pereira at cpereira@ca-ilg.org.

News Flash!

Possible Two-Day Youth Program at League's Annual Conference this September - Your Input Needed.

In conjunction with their Annual Conference in September, the League of California Cities may hold a special youth program for youth commission members, their staff, and other local officials interested in youth engagement. This may take the form of an afternoon program on September 17th and additional sessions the following day. The program content would be directed to youth commission staff and members, and would feature opportunities for other local officials to learn how to establish youth commissions and councils.

The League's Annual Conference will be held in San Diego this year. For this youth commission-related program, there would be costs for lodging and probably a modest registration fee. As we understand it, this would not require registration for the full Annual Conference.

A survey will soon be coming your way (not sure exactly when yet) to ask you about the potential for you and some of your

commissioners to attend. Especially in a time of such limited city revenues, the League wants to see if this is an idea that would attract attendees. More information soon.

Youth Engagement in Local Planning: A New Briefing Paper and California Examples

A new *Youth Commission Briefing Paper* on youth engagement in city, county and regional planning processes will be published in February by the Institute for Local Government's Collaborative Governance Initiative. This will be the third in a series of Briefing Papers distributed to youth commission staff throughout California as a resource to encourage and support the engagement of young people in community decision making and service.

The first two *Briefing Papers* focused, respectively, on [health care coverage for children and youth](#), and on [youth engagement in climate change](#).

The upcoming briefing paper on youth engagement and local planning will highlight how cities and counties in California creatively involve youth in short and long-term planning. For example:

- In 2006, the *City of San Carlos* formally included youth in city planning for the first time, asking high school students from the city's youth advisory council to serve as rotating members of an official voting position of the general plan advisory committee. This committee organized a series of forums to get input from the greater community, including one where 60 middle and high school students gave input that influenced the city to zone more areas for commercial development, in hopes it will bring in more youth friendly entertainment options. Read [San Carlos Youth Involvement in General Plan Updates](#) on our website to learn more about San Carlos' youth involved in planning.
- The *City Council in Lafayette* asked a member of the city's youth commission to serve on a citizens' advisory committee that selected and advised a consultant for a two year long downtown planning process. The high school student attended almost all of the 23 committee meetings and many of his ideas were reflected in the draft plan that was released in 2009.
- The *City of Fremont's* Climate Action Plan project manager formed an eleven member citizens advisory group that includes 5 high school students who were interested in encouraging the community to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The committee will work with city staff to craft a plan to present to the city council in 2010.
- The *City of Santa Monica* engaged over 500 local students of all ages in their General Plan update through partnerships with public schools and local youth programs. City staff developed a youth planning toolkit with recommended activities to make it easy and fun for youth to choose from a variety of issues to weigh in on.
- The *City of Delano* involved youth in a long-term planning process by giving disposable cameras to 140 local students and asking them to capture what they considered healthy and unhealthy things in the city, and to design a presentation on their findings for the planning commission and city council.
- The *City of Mountain View* engaged over 60 youth in updating the city's General Plan, and the Mountain View Youth Advisory Committee and the Council Youth Service Committee (made up of 3 councilmembers) are working on updating the fifteen year old Youth Action Plan that adopts goals for youth services city wide for the next ten years. Youth Advisory Committee members will be trained to interview peer groups, hold focus groups, and capture the thoughts and ideas of both middle and high school students. Youth will write portions of the plan and advise staff on the vision and goals for youth services that will ultimately be adopted in the plan.

Watch for the Institute for Local Government's upcoming *Briefing Paper* on this topic for more examples, guidance for youth commissions on how to get involved, and informational resources.

For questions, or to send us information about your commission's involvement in local planning, email [Greg Keidan](mailto:Greg.Keidan).

Youth Involvement in Regional Planning to Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Municipal Planning Organizations (MPOs) are increasingly involved in regional planning to address climate change, as directed by Senate Bill 375. The San Francisco Bay Area MPO, known as the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, sought to engage more youth and low income people in regional planning and finding ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by partnering with local nonprofit organizations serving these populations during their last two Regional Transportation Plan updates. One local community based organization was paid to organize educational meetings and focus groups to solicit informed input specifically from local teens, and the youth were paid for participating.

To learn more about State Bill 375 and regional planning to address climate change, visit the Institute for Local Government's [SB 375 Resource Page](#).

Youth Voices for Change Project at UC Davis



The *Youth Voices for Change* project at U.C. Davis is helping teens in West Sacramento use digital media and art to strengthen their communities and get engaged in local and regional decision-making. High school students collaborated with artists and researchers to develop a "web-map" featuring photos, audio and video recordings to help policy makers design programs that better reflects the voices, concerns, and dreams of typically underserved youth.

The group is now working to create a comic book style policy briefing for the West Sacramento City Council. To learn more click [HERE](#) or call Jessica Maria Ross at 530-320-1819. *Youth Voices for Change* is a project of the Art of Regional Change Program and the Healthy Youth/ Healthy Regions Initiative at U.C. Davis.

San Mateo Youth Stepping Up to Ditch Obesity and Increase Healthy Options



Healthy Neighborhood Stores Campaign

San Mateo County has one of the highest percentages of overweight (at or above the 95% percentile of Body Mass Index for age) youth among low-income children between the ages of 5 and 19. YO! Mateo has stepped up its fight against obesity and for access to healthy food for all young people by launching a *Healthy Neighborhood Stores* campaign in Redwood City. They were awarded \$3,600 by the Get Healthy San Mateo County Task Force to help fund their plans for an extreme store makeover.

Youth are gearing up to conduct an assessment of stores within a 0.5 mile radius of Redwood High School and Sequoia High School they have identified as high youth traffic areas. "We want to make our community a healthier and safer place for everyone, especially youth," says Sarena Smith, YO! Mateo member. They will be checking the availability of fresh produce, organic options, affordability, display attractiveness, advertisements, recycling options, and safety. They plan to document their project and hopes other youth will be inspired to replicate their efforts in other communities and launch store makeovers throughout San Mateo County and beyond. Contact ksocco@yli.org.

Michigan Youth Address Local Policies

An article documenting youth engagement in local decision making in communities across Michigan makes a strong case for youth participation in their local governments. The article, "Youth Participation in Public Policy at the Local Level: New Lessons from Michigan Municipalities" is published in the current (Winter 2009) issue of the *National*



Civic Review.

Recounting stories of the Grand Rapids Mayor's Youth Council, the Mayors Youth Council of Farmington and Farmington Hills, and the Southfield Youth Advisory Council, the article's authors claim the following:

Young people should participate in public policy at the local level. They should advise the mayor and city council members, participate in public proceedings, and serve on the boards of community agencies. They should identify their own policy issues, plan their own programs, and organize their own action groups. They should view democracy as a process in which they can engage, policy as a way to achieve their goals, and the municipality as a vehicle for their actions.

The article notes that the origin, structure and objectives of each of the youth councils described are different from one another, and there is no single approach to success. While perhaps not stressing sufficiently the importance of staff to support youth leadership and youth council efforts in general, the authors, Katie Richards-Shuster and Barry Checkoway, make a strong case for the positive impacts of youth participation on "the institutions and agencies with which they work, and on the community of which they are a part." Find the article in the winter 2009 *National Civic Review* at www.interscience.wiley.com. See www.youthandcommunity.org for more information about the authors, the University of Michigan's Youth and Community Program, and many excellent resources for youth commissions and councils.

Featured Youth Commissions and Councils from Around the State

La Mesa Youth Advisory Commission

In the fall of 2009 the La Mesa youth commissioners developed a five minute presentation on the importance of recycling and sustainability. They presented their program to an elementary school in La Mesa, visiting all third through fifth grade classrooms. Two commissioners per classroom discussed recycling with the younger students. The commissioners were supported in their educational mission by the city council members, who learned of the project during their annual joint meeting with the youth advisory council. The council members each donated money to allow the youth commissioners to purchase environmentally friendly markers to donate to each class they spoke with.

The La Mesa Youth Commissioners are concerned about obesity rates and the need to get youth physically active and eating healthy. They are interested in a program called "Power Play," a campaign to get youth ages 9 to 11 years old to eat 3 ½ to 5 cups of fruits and vegetables and be physically active for at least 60 minutes a day. They invited the "Power Play" health educator to attend one of their commission meetings to discuss the program. The commission was sold on the program, so each commissioner received a tool-kit. The City of La Mesa has an existing afterschool program at one of the local elementary schools called KAST (Kids and Seniors Together). The commissioners will test drive the program and lead these children through 20 activities that include physically active games and educational, nutritional activities. If it goes well, the Youth Commission will take the program to other elementary schools in La Mesa.

Future activities:

February 12th - A movie night for youth in elementary school is from 6:00 - 8:00 pm featuring "Lady and the Tramp". Cost is \$10 per child which includes the movie, games and nutritional snacks. Reservations required. Funds received will be used to cover cost of food, flyers and seed money for future projects.

February 22 - La Mesa Youth Advisory Commission will host a joint meeting with the City of El Cajon Teen Council. Each group shares ideas and projects they each are working on. They meet jointly once a year.

Teen Career Fair begins April 12th and lasts for four consecutive Mondays. The City of La Mesa and Youth Advisory Commission will partner with San Diego Workforce to present "Keys to Success." Teenagers need the skills to get a job; they have to compete not only amongst each other but now with adults. Let's give them the tools to shine! Workshops include: First Impressions, Resumes and Applications, and Interview Prep. At the conclusion, the teens will be able to dialogue with some of East County's top professionals.

For more information on La Mesa's Youth Advisory Commission please call Michele Greenberg-McClung at 619.667.1333 or email mgreenberg-mcclung@ci.la-mesa.ca.us.

Seeds for Change



The Spring Valley REC Club youth advocacy group, Seeds for Change, has met for the last few months to identify and make changes that would improve the community. The group is organized by the County of San Diego Department of Parks and Recreation. The twelve middle school student members have learned different methods of analyzing environmental issues in their community, such as safety and cleanliness, as well as social issues that include needs of homeless and hungry residents of Spring Valley.

This current group of youth has decided to focus on assisting the homeless in Spring Valley for their final project. The group is also helping to increase physical activity in Spring Valley by promoting the 'Take a Walk With Your Community' event which is being sponsored by the Live Well Initiative, the Spring Valley REC Club and other community agencies. This 30 minute walk will take place on Saturday, January 30, 9:00-10:30 a.m. at Lamar Park in Spring Valley.

Future 'Seeds for Change' groups will perform their own community evaluations to determine how they want to create change and make Spring Valley a better place for all residents. The youth have also been invited to attend a County Supervisor's meeting on revitalizing Spring Valley to offer recommendations.

For more information regarding the Spring Valley REC Club teen center or the Seeds for Change youth advocacy group, please contact Program Coordinator Kristin Rounds at (619) 667-6839.

Youth Summit 2010

The Endowment for California Leadership in collaboration with Youth and Government of the California YMCA, Junior State of America, and the Chicano Latino Youth Leadership Project has launched a yearlong youth civic engagement effort dubbed, Youth Summit 2010.

The goal of the Youth Summit 2010 is two fold: 1) empower young people in California to voice their concerns and protect their interests as the state of California rearranges its priorities and makes painful budget cuts; and 2) launch a pilot project to develop a sustainable civic access point for young Californians that will enable each generation to develop and utilize civic skills as active citizens.

Youth Summit 2010 consists of five major phases:

1. A poll to be released on January 16, 2010 to identify the issues most on the minds of young Californians as we head into the 2010 state elections.
2. A Summit April 16th - 18th 2010 in Los Angeles of 250 diverse youth from across the state's political, racial, and ethnic spectrums to build an integrated and coherent statewide

network of youth leaders and to identify key public policy ideas that young Californians wish to advocate.

3. A 5-day Institute to be held in Stanford and Sacramento in the summer of 2010 that will be a group of the original 250 Summit participants. At this Institute young people will: attend seminars on local and state politics and identify contemporary policy disputes; develop leadership skills through group project and effective meeting simulations; and issue advocacy and campaign skills training. During the summer institute, youth leaders will begin developing a fall campaign that will coincide with the 2010 state elections.
4. The fall 2010 campaign, led by young people, to make their views known to elected public leaders, civic leaders, school administrators, the media, and their peers.
5. A meeting of the key participants at the end of 2010 to review the work done over the year and to lay plans for a continuing, non-partisan voice for California youth.

The online [Youth Poll](#) will be open until February 14th. The results of the poll will determine which issue, policy innovation, or youth message becomes the rallying cry of the fall Youth Summit campaign. Encouraging youth commissioners to respond to and distribute this poll to their peers will ensure that the April Youth Summit agenda will be legitimate and representative reflection of contemporary youth and their concerns.

Go to the [Youth Poll](#) to give your input. For more information about the Summit, contact Daniil Karp at 415.442.0608 or karp.daniil@gmail.com.

California Youth Advisory Council

The San Francisco Youth Commission, Marin County Commission and other youth organizations are working to create California's first statewide representative group of young people. The proposed California Youth Advisory Council (CYAC) would be a permanent body serving as official advisors to the governor, the state legislature and all state systems or organizations that impact young people in California. The CYAC would:

- Provide input on the state budget, making sure that young people get their fair share of the pie;
- Convene public hearings to gather information; and
- Weigh in on all major youth policy changes being considered by the state.

The California Youth Advisory Council would be the representative youth voice to California state government for the entire population of people under the age of 23. If you would like to participate in this effort, contact the Youth Leadership Institute at www.yli.org.

First Annual State Youth Service and Civic Engagement Forum

The idea is brewing to hold a statewide forum on youth service and civic engagement in the fall that would present exemplary projects in these areas and provide an opportunity for youth leaders to dialogue with education policymakers on how youth can become more engaged in education policy making.

This idea was inspired by the California Youth Graduation Empowerment Project, a year-long project by the Center for Multicultural Cooperation. Over 1,000 students from across the state were engaged in this project that culminated in a presentation to the California State Superintendent of Schools Jack O'Connell of four youth recommendations to increase California's graduation rate. The experience of organizing youth around an issue, collaborating with like-minded organizations to accomplish the goals of the project, and presenting recommendations to policymakers was an empowering experience for the youth involved, and they don't want to stop here.

If you are interested in participating in or helping with the planning of this event, please contact John Minkler, Executive Director of Center for Multicultural Cooperation, at 559.445.0015 or info@cmcweb.org.

Upcoming Youth-Related Trainings and Events

Youth Leadership Institute

YLI is excited to offer a *Photovoice* training system in February and March for the Friday Night Live system, a youth development system working to building partnerships for positive and healthy youth development which engage youth as active leaders and resources in their communities. *Photovoice* is a proven participatory research and evaluation method in which participants are given the opportunity, through photography and dialogue, to capture their voices and affect important decisions in their community. (Wang, Burris, & Xiang, 1996).

This tool can help you increase the relevance of a group's action steps, environmental prevention strategies and community recommendations. The main goal of a *Photovoice* project is to deepen participants' awareness and understanding of your community's issues and assets while at the same time engaging youth in local knowledge generation and dissemination and fostering youth development. If you are interested in learning more about this training for your community [contact us](#).

National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education and Families

The YEF Institute is hosting a series of free, hour-long audio conferences featuring interactive discussions between national experts, city leaders, YEF Institute staff and listeners. [Online registration](#) is now open for the following audio conferences:

- Thurs., Feb. 18, 9:30 a.m. West Coast Time: "Curbing Childhood Obesity: Lessons from the Six-City Community Wellness Project"
- Thurs., March 25, 11:30 a.m. West Coast Time: "Using Out-of-School Time Programs for Older Youth to Improve College Access and Workforce Development"

Registration is online only (click "online registration" above the schedule). One day prior to the call, registrants will receive an email providing instructions for dialing into the audio conference.

For an updated list of audio conferences, and recordings and transcripts from past YEF conferences and webinars including the recent session *What Makes Youth Civic Engagement "Authentic"? Listening to the Perspectives of Youth and Municipal Leaders*, visit <http://www.nlc.org/lyef/yefevents.aspx>.

David Mathews Center for Civic Life

The David Mathews Center for Civic Life is sponsoring, "Connect the Dots: A National Student Conference on Public Dialogue, Deliberation, Community Problem Solving and Action," March 3-6, 2010 in Point Clear, Alabama.

The David Mathews Center for Civic Life strives to stimulate citizen engagement in public policy making through research, education, and collaboration.

To learn more about the conference or to register, click [Registration & Information](#).

California Parks and Recreation Society

California Parks and Recreation Society District 4 Teen Recreation Services is hosting its annual one-day "YAC ATTACK" conference on Saturday, March 6th in Santa Clara, CA. The theme for the 2010 conference will be, "The Choice is Yours," and it will include educational sessions, thought-provoking debates, quality networking opportunities and innovative ideas for teens to bring back to your community. This conference is designed for youth by youth; youth groups are encouraged to propose workshop, roundtable, or debate related session ideas for the conference by Friday, January 29th by contacting Kristine Pardini at (650) 903-6410 or by email at Kristine.Pardini@mountainview.gov.

Registration is \$20 before Feb. 5th and \$30 thereafter. For registration information contact Adam Howard at (650) 329-2192 or Adam.Howard@cityofpaloalto.org.

National League of Cities March 2010 Congress of Cities

The National League of Cities invites youth to participate in the March 13-17 2010 Congress of Cities in Washington, DC.

Benefits of participating include:

- Engage in small group discussions with local elected officials on various youth-related issues
- Attend "how-to" workshops on various topics such as developing innovative youth council initiatives, preparing a "State of the Youth" address, and more.
- Share advice and information with youth from around the country
- Return home with new ideas and strategies for your youth commission

To learn more about opportunities for youth to participate in this conference, contact Claire Libert at (202) 626-3014 or fellow@nlc.org.

Funding Opportunities for Youth Commissions



Miley Cyrus is partnering with Youth Service America (YSA) to create "Get Ur Good On" (www.GetUrGoodOn.org), a social network that brings together youth to support each other in their mission to do "good" in their communities.

YSA has launched "Get Ur Good On Grants" to support youth-led service initiatives on Global Youth Service Day, April 23-25, 2010.

Available to children and youth around the world, YSA's "Get Ur Good On Grants" will award 100 \$500 grants to projects addressing important community needs such as poverty, education, and environmental sustainability.

Grant applications are due February 22, 2010. For more information, click on the link above.

Developing Leadership Skills Outdoors



Sierra Nevada Journeys strives to inspire and educate young adults by providing opportunities for tomorrow's leaders in an outdoor setting. The Secondary Education Leadership Institute is a multiple-day residential program for 7th to 12th grade students that reinforces critical thinking and everyday decision making skills by providing outdoor education and promoting leadership development.

The program is located at Grizzly Creek Ranch in Portola, CA. This 1,500 acre ranch on the eastern slope of the Sierra Nevada Mountains provides a unique outdoor classroom. Sierra Nevada

Journeys works with teachers to develop a customized set of modules taught by professional instructors. Students will experience group initiatives and foster collaboration, creativity, and awareness while discovering individual leadership and communication styles.

To learn more, contact Adam Yarnes, Residential Education Director, at adam@sierranevadajourneys.org or visit www.sierranevadajourneys.org.

Seal the Deal Global Town Meeting

Global Voices, the international arm of AmericaSpeaks, partnered with the United Nations Environment Program



(UNEP) for *Seal the Deal*, the largest-ever truly global youth town hall on climate change, in Daejeon, South Korea. Seven hundred young people from around the globe called on world leaders to stand up and take substantial measures against climate change. Participants gathered in Daejeon and were joined by young people in 15 sites around the world, who participated through an interactive online webcast program. Global webcast sites included Cuernavaca Mexico, Bangkok Thailand, London England, Pune India, and Nairobi Kenya.

The *Seal the Deal* campaign was spearheaded by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. He delivered the youths' joint statement at the opening of the 64th session of the U.N. General Assembly in September 2009 and to global leaders this month in Copenhagen, Denmark, for the United Nations Climate Change Conference.

[Read the Final Report](#)

[Watch the video UNEP created of the Global Town Hall](#)
(Let it download fully before you press the play button.)

[New Guides, Reports, and Articles on Youth Public Engagement](#)

Click [read more](#) to learn about new guides, reports, and articles on *youth as change agents*, the *National Youth Summit Advisory Board*, and more.

[Youth Engagement Resources at the Institute for Local Government](#)



The Institute for Local Government has recently launched a newly revamped Web site (www.ca-ilg.org) that will make it easier to access information and resources, and will allow for greater interactive capabilities. Now users will be able to exchange information and to provide feedback to the Institute.

In the Youth Commission and Engagement section of our Web site:

- **California Youth Commission & Engagement Resources**
 - Roster of California Youth Commissions and Youth Councils
 - Youth Commission Briefing Papers that provide background information and ideas for youth commission or council activities and action
 - List of CGI and other publications on youth commissions and youth engagement
 - A sampling of youth commission and council charters (in development)
 - Youth Master Plans from communities throughout California (in development)
- **Access to [archived issues](#) of the Youth Commission Staff E-News** online tri-annual newsletter
- **Youth Commission and Council Stories** offer a growing number of brief stories about youth commissions and councils in California. To view all the collected stories to date, see the [Youth Commissions & Engagement Stories](#) section of our Web site. There you will also find our [Youth In Public Engagement Story Form](#) to add new stories.
- **Youth Engagement-Related News and Upcoming Events**

We want the **Youth Commission Staff E-News** to be useful to you! If you have an item for the

next e-newsletter, please send it to us. If there are resources you would like us to highlight or topics you want to see covered, please let us know. **We want to help you support your youth commission or council.**

Please forward any ideas or resources to Carmen Pereira, ILG Program Assistant, at cpereira@ca-ilg.org.

If you are not the current youth commission or council staff member, please provide the contact information for or forward this email to the current staff member.

Again, if you think this e-newsletter would be useful to youth commissioners or others, please forward it to them using the "Forward email" link below.

Best wishes,

Terry Amsler, Program Director
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