

**NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES
INSTITUTE FOR YOUTH, EDUCATION, AND FAMILIES**



**THE E-NEWSLETTER OF NLC'S METLIFE FOUNDATION YOUTH-CITY CONNECTION PROJECT –
PROMOTING YOUTH PARTICIPATION THROUGH A NETWORK OF MUNICIPAL OFFICIALS AND OTHER COMMUNITY LEADERS**

ISSUE 4 – DIVERSITY

JULY/AUG/SEPT 2003

Thank you for your ongoing interest in promoting youth participation in your community. This e-newsletter is designed for municipal officials, city hall staff, and their community partners in promoting youth participation and civic engagement through youth councils, teen courts, youth service, youth mapping, and appointments of youth to boards and commissions.

NLC NETWORK NEWS

1. This edition is being sent to those who have already signed up for the network – approximately 200 individuals. If you have questions about this e-newsletter or the network, or if you wish to join the network, please contact DeBrecca Pressey at fellow@nlc.org or 202/626-3035.
2. Future network e-newsletters will discuss themes such as development of youth councils, achieving diverse representation, teen courts, youth mapping, and appointment of youth to boards and commissions in the strategy spotlight. **If you have information to share about related strategies and/or programs in your city or town**, please contact DeBrecca Pressey at fellow@nlc.org or 202/626-3035.

STRATEGY SPOTLIGHT: INCLUSIVE YOUTH ENGAGEMENT EFFORTS

NOTE: Strategy spotlights can help you learn about and implement ideas appropriate for your community. If you have additional approaches to contribute on this issue's topic, please pass them along so we can add them to our resource database.

Diversity in Youth Participation Efforts

Most cities and towns would agree that building a community where individuals from different backgrounds can work and live together is an important goal. Indeed, there is a basic need in cities to get citizens to live in harmony.

But what does diversity mean when the issue is a city's youth engagement strategy? How can youth engagement efforts contribute to a community's overall goal of forming an inclusive and respectful environment? And how can youth engagement efforts be successfully inclusive when the broader community still struggles with these issues?

This newsletter begins to explore some of these questions and provides some guidance to adults working to create more inclusive youth engagement strategies - whether you'd like more diverse youth to apply for your youth council or if you're trying to attract a different group of youth to participate in service projects.

Broadening Perceptions of Diversity

In today's society, people often think about diversity as defined by racial groups- Caucasian, Asian-American, African-American, Hispanic-American, and Native-American. Although it is important to acknowledge and respect these racial identifications, it is critical to consider other categories in thinking about the kind of diversity you wish to see in your youth engagement program.

In any community, youth can be diverse in other ways including:

- Ethnicity
- Socio-economic status
- Level of achievement in school (not just A, B students but also C, D students)
- English language abilities
- Physical disabilities
- Religious faith
- Sexual orientation
- Social networks (i.e., the "jocks," the "student council kids," the "bad kids," etc...)
- Neighborhood of residence
- Family situation (i.e., foster youth)

The Youth Council of *El Dorado, Kan.*, a town that is 93% Caucasian, is conscious of the need to involve youth participants who are not the "usual suspects" when thinking of leaders among their peers. Says the adult advisor, "One method we have used is to involve our School Resource Officers from the police department to help us recruit applicants. They know the kids not so much from an academic standpoint, but from a behavior standpoint. They also know which kids are "leaders" among their peers whether in a negative or positive way. We've also done some recruiting through church youth directors, who meet with all kinds of kids."

Why Diversity Matters

As communities engage youth in civic affairs, it is critical to think not only of the "natural leaders" or the "A students." It is in a community's best interest to include youth of all backgrounds. Youth and adults of all backgrounds can, and do, make an impact on the community. Indeed, as NLC often emphasizes, it is not only the A-students who will become voters or run for office, but also the C, D, and F students as well.

Communities often expect the youth in their youth councils and other youth leadership programs to act as representatives of youth in the broader community. For example, Parks and Recreation may ask the youth council for its input on a new facility, or the Mayor may ask it to help plan a citywide youth summit. If youth council members represent just one part of town or just one ethnicity, their input and activities may not be representative of their peers. While perfect representation is not the goal, cities must make an effort ensure that the young people involved in these groups represent, reflect, and/or understand the diversity of backgrounds and experiences present in the community.

Diversity of participants in youth civic engagement programs can also contribute to the overall goals of the city or town, such as increased accessibility and accountability to all residents of the community. Improving relations among diverse groups of young people can be an important first step toward building a more inclusive community.

The city Human Relations Commission in *Phoenix, Ariz.*, in cooperation with the Equal Opportunity Department and Phoenix Channel 11, produced a 35-minute video for youth addressing race relations and cultural diversity to be shown in Arizona schools and on Channel 99, the City's educational television station. The video, "United Minds: A Youth Perspective on Diversity," focuses on ways for youth to build tolerance and a sense of community at school. The tape features 13 high school students gathered together for a roundtable discussion on diversity issues affecting young people. An accompanying discussion guide was created in collaboration with the National Conference for Community and Justice. The aim of the tape is to stimulate positive discussion about issues of diversity and equality and to help both adults and young people learn to value, appreciate, and respect differences in society.

How to know if your group is inclusive – Self-Assessment Questions

Are the same few people coming to your group? Are there people you think would be great for the group, but they just don't come? Are the demographics of your group members pretty homogenous--meaning that there's not a lot of diversity?

Unfortunately, there's no quick and easy way to outreach and diversify your group. It's going to take commitment and hard work. Think about times that you didn't feel 100% welcome in a group. What would have made it easier for you to become a member?

The first thing to do is to look inward... Ask yourself these questions:

- Is your mission statement inclusive and welcoming?
- Do your flyers say and represent everyone that you want to outreach to?
- Do you or members of your group carry stereotypes?
- Do you use inclusive language that doesn't offend or exclude anyone?
- Do you use gender-neutral language?
- Are you good at not making assumptions?

The best way to get diversity in the group is for group members to get involved in other groups!

Adapted from Gay Straight Alliance Manual from The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, & Transgender Community Center Youth Enrichment Services. For more information on the Gay Straight Alliance Manual visit <http://www.centeryes.org/SIGNS/welcome/>.

Recruiting Diverse Participants

Whether planning a service project, accepting applications for a leadership program, or asking for youth grant applications, communities are frequently frustrated by the fact that the same young people are always involved. Several cities have used innovative methods for reaching out to diverse groups of young people:

Organizational Partnerships. Organizations serving a broad range of young people can be key partners in the process of enhancing your youth program through diversity.

- Reach out to organizations serving minority communities including churches and other faith-based institutions and programs, cultural organizations, and language centers. They may be able to recommend youth leaders from their constituencies. In *Galveston, Tex.*, youth participation efforts gathered a diverse group for their youth participation efforts by working with a local Boys and Girls Club and a high school magnet program for aspiring teachers.

The city of *Springfield, Ill.*, partnered with the United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) of the Land of Lincoln, and other groups, to ensure the city's youth council had a diverse mix of members. The UCP provides leadership training to a group of 30 teens of different ethnicities and a range of disabilities. The program is given over the course of the school year, with a different topic each month, ranging from public speaking, diversity awareness, to career exploration. To apply for the mayor's youth council, youth must have participate in UCP's leadership program. The youth council application is built around what the teens have learned through their experience with UCP.

- Include adults (parents, college students, agency heads, religious leaders, etc.) who belong to the communities from which you are trying to recruit the young people. Many youth will respond more positively if someone they trust, or relate to, invites them to participate. In addition, if the initiative is being led by a diverse group of people it is likely to elicit greater credibility. In *Des Moines, Iowa*, youth advisory board members have asked community organizations to help them to redesign their structure and make them more inclusive of all of the youth in Des Moines.

Peer Recruitment. Young people themselves can be your biggest recruiting asset.

- Asking existing and new participants to recruit where youth are: afterschool centers, 4-H programs, youth employment offices, basketball courts, and shopping malls.

The *Greeley, Colo.*, Youth Initiative office is located in the Greeley Mall. The office is a community resource for those new to the area, current residents, or those just wondering what Greeley has to offer youth and families. The office is available during its set business hours, but anyone can access the Free Public Resource Area during all mall hours.

- Listen to youth ideas in planning outreach strategies.
- Ask youth members to give presentations to student groups like the Key Club, the Chinese Club, or the Drama Club. For example, the youth in *Salt Lake City, Utah*, gave a presentation on the Youth City Government program to a group of mostly Latino youth at the Hispanic Youth and Unity Leadership Conference.

Targeted Outreach. Oftentimes, to reach youth from immigrant or other minority backgrounds, some targeted outreach will be important.

- Get advice from people who have experience working with these communities about the best ways to communicate with them—is there a foreign language newspaper/newsletter you could use to reach the parents? Are there key leaders in this community who will help to bring others on board?

The city of *Miami Beach, Fla.*, sponsors the Youth Empowerment Network, a group created as a mirror to the city's Community Relations Board. YEN is comprised of students from both public and private schools. Previously, most engagement programs targeted public schools students. Through YEN, invitations were extended to all private schools in the city as well as to public schools. While not all schools accepted the invitation, the major parochial and Jewish day schools did. To make these meetings welcoming, kosher foods are included, and events relevant to all youth are planned. YEN also hosts a youth summit to encourage leadership roles in selecting service areas and to suggest ways that schools can work together.

- Publish fliers and conduct other marketing in multiple languages and post in places where youth and adult members of that community are likely to see them. For example, post Spanish language fliers in a local Latin grocery or put an advertisement in the church bulletin of a large African-American congregation.

Columbus, Ohio, recently created a Spanish-language version of a promotional Youth Commission flyer. The Youth Commission staffed an informational table at the Dia de los Niños Festival in Columbus and wanted to have something available in Spanish. In the future the group hopes to fully translate their informational flyer as well as the commission's fact sheet into Spanish and Somali.

- Consider publishing other bilingual materials, such as your activities list and services directory. For parents who cannot read English this will be an invaluable tool and will make them comfortable allowing their children to participate in city-sponsored youth activities.

Greeley, Colo., publishes a bilingual Youth Services Directory. It is free to anyone and helps agencies make better referrals and families to find the services they require. By publishing the Directory in both Spanish and English, the city is able to reach the maximum number of those in the community who can use this resource. Directory agencies are indexed alphabetically, as well as by service topics to help users find the best match for their needs.

- Co-sponsor a youth event, such as a party featuring local youth musicians from different communities. Recruit through the planning of the event and at the event.
- Send a letter that is signed by the Mayor, or co-signed by the Mayor and a youth, to targeted youth in the community and encourage them recruit their friends. The Mayor of **Galveston, Tex.**, sent letters inviting high school students to become involved in planning the city's youth engagement strategy.

Institutionalizing Diversity

Now that you have a diverse youth council, summit, or other engagement strategy, how do you maintain it? Several cities have found ways of introducing diversity into their future planning.

- **Make diversity part of your goals.** Your community may not be as diverse as others, but by making a conscious effort to include all youth as participants, you will be cognizant of your actions.

The city of **Ithaca, N.Y.**, has the following among its Youth Bureau's goals: Actively encourage participation by all who want to, regardless of race, ethnicity, social status, gender, disability or other differences; and contribute to the quality of life and sense of community in the greater Ithaca area.

- **Include diversity in your by-laws.** You can select members of your youth council according to districts of a city to ensure that each area of your community is represented.

The **Boston, Mass.**, Youth Council members are selected as representatives of the city's diverse neighborhoods. Applicants apply for this volunteer opportunity by completing a written application and participating in a group interview with staff and mentors from the Youth Council partnership.

- **Institutionalize diversity in your city's programming.** Many cities across the country celebrate their diversity with festivals. Participate! Have a youth council information table. Or, you can ensure that diversity is carried throughout other city programs, a Heritage commission, Sister City commission, or your Parks & Recreation department.

The *Phoenix, Ariz.*, Youth and Education Commission (YEC) is comprised of youth and adult citizens appointed to advise city leadership on important youth and education issues. The YEC, in partnership with the Human Relations Commission, offers grants to Phoenix schools for the Youth Diversity Grants Initiative. The \$60,000 fund provides grants of up to \$12,000 each for school diversity initiatives that are youth driven. For example:

- Trevor Brown High School implemented a monthly “Crossing the Bridge” program for sophomores and juniors, in which students and teachers worked together to promote mutual respect and cultural inclusiveness in classrooms and the overall campus.
- Metro Tech High School funded a Metrotown camp, their own version of the Anytown program, which included students from the Phoenix Day School for the Deaf. The school also implemented a World Cultures Club with activities, projects and field trips to promote cultural awareness.

Embracing Diversity in a Community Context

The journey of incorporating diversity into youth engagement efforts is one that must always take into account pre-existing community attitudes and perceptions. Young people are often much farther ahead of their adult counterparts in their thinking around diversity, tolerance, and acceptance. As adult partners, it is critical that you take some steps to address the broader supports that need to be acquired and issues that must be confronted to make this a success.

- **Engage diverse adult leaders.** Parents and community members may be more willing to allow their children to participate in these efforts if they realize that adults they know of or trust endorse the program. This will also demonstrate to the youth that you are committed to “practicing what you preach.” Although this task may prove more difficult if mistrust or a history of tense relations exist between communities, it is still an important step.

Mountain View, Calif., has sent staff to all Back-to-School nights to do outreach on recreation programs, including the Youth Advisory Group, offered to all families. The city usually sends two representatives, preferably a male and female, at least one who is a Spanish speaker, and someone who is in some way connected to the particular school or neighborhood. This makes parents more comfortable allowing their children to participate in city-sponsored activities.

- **Acquire expertise if needed.** Even the most experienced of youth directors may not have the skills needed to bring together youth of such varying backgrounds. Adult partners must be willing to work with others who may have more experience in this area. In addition, diversity training can often be of great help to both youth and adults. Check with your city’s Human Resources Department, local universities, or state/local human rights commissions to find local opportunities.

Mountain View, Calif., works with disabled parents when their children are involved in city-sponsored activities. The city has had instances where a hearing-impaired parent has wanted to participate in a parent/child class (one swimming and one dance). The city has responded by providing a sign language translator.

- **Prepare to face resistance.** Breaking through the stereotype of the typical student leader may take time. Some youth and adults will want to screen youth based on GPAs or teacher recommendations. Exclusion based on ethnicity, race, or socio-economic status may be less overt but nevertheless the norm. Youth and adults can work together to define youth engagement outcomes related to diversity and then create policies and practices that reinforce this.

- **Consider resource constraints.** Consider whether engaging youth from diverse backgrounds will place a greater demand on the organizing program or structure. For example, issues such as transportation are amplified when a large number of youth don't have cars or can't depend on a parent to pick them up after meetings. Translating materials into multiple languages takes some investment of time. According to the Youth Director in *Boston, Mass.*, they make an effort to include youth who are facing extreme challenges in their lives, as well as youth who have fewer hardships. They attempt to keep a balance that allows them to give extra attention and support to those youth who need it.

To ensure diversity among income groups, the city of *Mountain View, Calif.*, has implemented fee waivers for recreation programming that are readily available to all families that qualify for reduced or free lunch in school. No other forms are necessary, which makes it a lot easier for families and their children to participate in city-sponsored programs. This includes afterschool programs, all recreation classes, camps, and other child/youth activities.

NATIONAL PROGRAMS THAT CAN HELP PROMOTE DIVERSITY IN YOUR CITY

Anytown/Unitown Programs

The National Conference for Community and Justice (NCCJ) Anytown USA Residential Youth Leadership Program was established in 1950, and is now held in over 40 cities throughout the country. High school-aged youth are prepared to enter diverse educational, work and living environments and not only succeed, but excel and take on leadership roles. Anytown is recognized as one of the premier residential human relations and leadership programs for youth in America. Campers spend from two to seven days in a residential camp, and then expand on their experience upon return to their schools and hometowns. Many Anytown participants go back to become Anytown trainers, or even start their own Anytown clubs at their schools. The Unitown program is another adaptation of Anytown that provides interactive leadership experience for high school youth.

Another form of the Anytown program is the Minitown program, which works with middle school youth and provides interactive leadership experience, diversity appreciation, prejudice reduction, and human relations skills.

Plantation, Fla., has been working with its regional NCCJ office to sponsor Unitowns. The city funds the actual camp, and is in charge of recruiting youth, contacting schools, providing transportation and facilities. Through the Unitown program, participants become more aware of what the city has to offer and become more involved. The city has seen its youth become active citizens and leaders in both their schools and the community.

For more information on Anytown and other diversity initiatives from NCCJ visit www.nccj.org.

Study Circles

The Topsfield Foundation created the Study Circles Resource Center (SCRC) in 1989. Since then, SCRC has worked with many kinds of communities, on many different issues, to develop a process for bringing people together for creative community change.

Hundreds of communities across the country have organized study circle programs. SCRC works directly with these communities to refine and improve the process for organizing large-scale community dialogue that leads to action and change. Some communities have focused on topics such as education, growth and sprawl, and neighborhoods and families; others have focused on immigration, police community relationships, and criminal justice.

What is a study circle?

A study circle is a group of 8-12 people from different backgrounds and viewpoints who meet four to six times for two-hour sessions, to talk about an issue. More meetings can be arranged depending on the specific city and issue being discussed. In a study circle, everyone has an equal voice, and people try to understand each other's views. They do not have to agree with each other. The idea is to share concerns and look for ways to make things better. A facilitator helps the group focus on different views and makes sure the discussion goes well.

Many communities are finding ways to bring large numbers of young people into study circle programs to address today's most pressing social issues.

The **Aurora, Ill.**, Study Circle program has produced a youth-driven group, Many Young Voices, which aims to build bridges between racial and social groups that don't typically interact. Since being formed four years ago, MYV has served about 500 middle and high school students each year. For Mary Jane Hollis of Aurora Community Study Circles, the youth discussion groups move past race and ethnicity into other social boundaries. "A lot of the divisions that these young people are experiencing are about subcultures," Hollis said. "It's about stereotyping people into groups: nerd groups, jock groups, preppy groups, burnout groups. There are a lot of divisions on top of race and ethnicity that arise in schools."

For more information on the Study Circles Resource Center visit <http://www.studycircles.org> or call 860/928-2616. The Study Circles website offers guides on *Organizing Study Circles with Young People*, *Training Young People to Facilitate Study Circles*, along with other resources.

Mixing It Up

Another project of the SCRC is the Mix It Up initiative, in partnership with the Southern Poverty Law Center's Teaching Tolerance project. The initiative is about self-segregation, and the fact that students are quick to put people into categories based on appearance, race, style and athletic and academic achievement. On November 21, 2002, more than 200,000 students across the country took a step toward breaking down those barriers, when they participated in the first Mix It Up at Lunch Day. They sat somewhere new – with someone new – in their school cafeterias.

On November 18 – Mix It Up at Lunch Day 2003 – students are going to stir things up in their school cafeterias - again. Accept the challenge. Visit Mix It Up at Lunch Day [\[http://www.tolerance.org/teens/lunch.jsp\]](http://www.tolerance.org/teens/lunch.jsp) to learn how to Mix It Up, order a free starter pack, download some posters, make your own Mix It Up iron-on t-shirts, and spread the word with e-cards.

The initiative also provides a Mix It Up Grants Program that funds youth-directed activist projects that focus on identifying, crossing and challenging social boundaries in schools and communities.

In **Chapin, S.C.**, members of Students Together Overcoming Prejudice used the Mix It Up grant toward the cost of the school's Unity Day. This included Unity Day t-shirts, hiring a DJ for a school pep rally, morning diversity workshops, and a Mix It Up exercise at lunch where students were given colored lifesavers in the lunch line and asked to sit with people who had the same color lifesaver. The lunchroom theme was "So many colors, one great flavor."

New Fall 2003 Mix It Up Handbook available

Help students talk openly about the social climate in their school, brainstorm ways to improve it, and act on their ideas. Learn how to start Mix It Up Dialogues with the new Fall 2003 Mix It Up Handbook. The nationwide Mix It Up campaign helps young people identify, question and cross the boundaries that separate them from each other. Order the free handbook, get more information, see stories from participants, and find great resources for teachers and organizers at www.mixitup.org.

Prudential Youth Leadership Institute

The Prudential Youth Leadership Institute (PYLI) provides youth with the encouragement, peer networks and leadership skills necessary for them to make meaningful contributions to their communities and begin a life-long journey of leadership and service.

PYLI employs a specially designed curriculum developed by the Center for Creative Leadership, one of the world's foremost authorities on leadership training. It incorporates the latest methodology for teaching key leadership skills - such as goal setting, understanding diversity, team building, project planning and decision making - while emphasizing the importance and means of applying these skills to community service endeavors. The training program consists of approximately 30 hours of classroom instruction, plus hands-on field exercises and a community service project.

The city of *Redwood City, Calif.*, recently sponsored the PYLI program in their community, in conjunction with the local non-profit Young Latino Leaders (YLL). YLL partners with three near-by cities to bring the program to local youth. "At a time when communities and non-profit organizations are feeling the pinch of reduced resources, we're delighted to join with Prudential in a program that will ultimately expand the opportunities for leadership and community service for hundreds of local students," said Paul Vega, YLL Executive Director.

Form more information on PYLI visit www.pyli.org.

LOCAL PERSPECTIVE: Recruiting Inactive Youth in Elkhart, Ind.

The city of Elkhart, Ind., created its Youth Action Committee (YAC) in 1999, and it was restructured in 2002. Recently, NLC spoke with Hans Frohreich, Program Director for the YAC, about the challenges around recruiting diverse youth for its youth engagement programs. Below are excerpts from this interview.

Is diversity an issue for the Elkhart Youth Action Committee?

I have expressed concern for a long time. I consider it to be one of the biggest threats to the Youth Action Committee (YAC). The threat is not as much racial or ethnic diversification, as much as it is attracting "NOT the best" students.

I claim the YAC is not a diverse organization because we mostly have participants who already lead active lives. Therefore, we see the challenge as attracting the **inactive** youth.

What do you see as the difference between the active youth and the inactive youth?

Active youth are generally: already good students, already have community values, already are extremely busy, already have good character skills, already have been exposed to many life experiences.

Active youth are good for our organization because they already have skills. They are natural leaders. Their prior leadership experience makes the organization run smoothly, and make our jobs as program staff easy. However, they are often already too busy to contribute to the extent needed.

Inactive youth are tough to work with because they don't already have many of these skills. We want to work with them and help them to develop into good leaders but they require a lot of training and staff attention. Adults may require additional training to work with them. It takes extensive staff time just to find these youth because they are not out there looking for me. I have to go and find them. They need to be convinced of the need for their involvement.

After stating all of this, the YAC still feels it can do the most good, and accomplish our mission best (*mission: to create more developed and more active kids*) by working with inactive youth.

How do you initially recruit them and maintain their participation?

Inactive youth have to be convinced their involvement will pay off. And, we can't recruit from school clubs because, by default, these are already active youth.

Then, tell us, where are the inactive youth?

They are riding bikes on the street, sitting with their friends in coffee shops, and at home playing video games or watching TV. We know where they are, but how do we reach them? Especially the males, who are more inactive than females?

Two effective ways the YAC has found: (1) encourage existing participants (who were originally inactive) to bring their friends (2) recruit a select few of the most inactive students within a school club or other organized group. Obviously, they have interest in being involved, but maybe that club doesn't do it for them.

In my opinion, targeting inactive youth will also naturally diversify an organization's participant base with various ethnic, racial, and social elements. This opinion is based on the social dilemma of minority individuals refraining to become active in a community that doesn't represent them well.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT: Salt Lake City

NOTE: The city spotlight provides an opportunity to learn about ideas from other network members. Each issue will spotlight one or two cities. Please share information about your local efforts, so that we can spotlight them in a future e-newsletter.

CITY OF Salt Lake City, Utah – Population: 182,000

Youth City Government works a lot on inclusion and recruitment of diversity. “We are not asking them to be best friends – we are asking them to understand each other,” says Angela Romero, Youth Programs Coordinator for Salt Lake City

Youth City Government (YCG) in Salt Lake City recruits through word of mouth, high school counselors, community functions, and YCG’s own conference.

The group has a core membership of ten to twenty members, but the membership can expand to up to 50 depending on the project the YCG is working on. Depending on the current project, a different audience is attracted to the YCG.

The YCG believes in collaborations with other youth-serving organizations.

YCG participants hosted a Gender Justice Summit in collaboration with the YWCA, UP-Net and a variety of community organizations in November 2002. The summit featured the film “*A Passion for Justice*.” After the film, YCG members lead a discussion about the images of women as portrayed by media and popular culture.

In August 2002, Candace Gibson, YCG member, testified before the City Council on behalf of the Cesar Chavez Boulevard Committee. Prior to Candace’s testimony, YCG members discussed the importance of teaching young people about the role of Cesar Chavez in establishing the United Farm Workers Union. Members committed to learning more and teaching others about this pivotal historical figure. YCG members also celebrated the unveiling of Cesar Chavez Boulevard with leaders of the Latino community.

The following text comes from the annual Youth State of the City Report, which the YCG prepares annually and presents before the mayor and city council:

“As part of our leadership training many YCG participants attend the National Conference for Community and Justice, Camp Anytown. In January, YCG members from Highland High School attended camp. During their stay, they participated in leadership workshops and anti-bias training. We were able to gain valuable skills through group education and conflict mediation on issues such as bias, bigotry and racism.

“One of the main items of discussion revolved around the segregation of refugee students at Highland. A majority of the refugee participants felt isolated from other students. Participants acknowledged that the lack of communication at their school leads to racial segregation and stereotyping. Many students feared the discussion of race might make some people feel defensive. Everyone agreed that something has to be done to change the racial dynamics at Highland High School.

“One of the most significant suggestions made at camp was to learn to respect and celebrate the differences that exist at Highland High. In April, many of us returned to camp as counselors and participants with students from East High School and Highland. Representatives from the NCCJ also attended several meetings to provide us with training on how to conduct productive focus groups. The collaboration between the NCCJ and YCG has helped us reach out to a diverse body of youth.

“The skills acquired through our involvement with the NCCJ helped us organize and facilitate focus groups at the 2002 Hispanic Youth Unity and Leadership Conference and the 2002 Utah Student Safety Program.

“At the Hispanic Youth and Unity Leadership Conference, YCG members explained the Youth City Government program. Students that participated in our workshop were from junior high and high schools in Salt Lake City. We did an icebreaker called cultural bingo. Students were asked to have their bingo card signed by somebody they did not know. Cultural bingo allows students to recognize the diversity that exists within our city. The icebreaker was a great success and we were able to discuss many of the concerns that the participants were facing in their schools. A majority of student participants were of Latino origin. These youths had similar concerns regarding race relations as the refugee students did at Highland High School. Many felt no connection to their school, peers, or teachers. YCG plans to follow up on these concerns at all Salt Lake City schools by conducting focus groups during the fall that address diversity.

“As part of our leadership training YCG members participated in a variety of youth forums including the *Youth Forum: Refugees Voice Their Power*, hosted by National Youth Network and the Utah Peace Institute. YCG members joined 100 youth from across the country to discuss the struggles that many of their refugee peers experience in Salt Lake City High Schools. One item of discussion revolved around the segregation of refugee students in area high schools. A majority of the refugee participants felt isolated from other students. All participants acknowledged that the lack of communication at their school leads to racial segregation and stereotyping. They also committed that their organizations will work with local school officials to address concerns raised at the conference.

The YCG mission is, “As young leaders, we are committed to creating more opportunities for youth to participate in the political process through collaboration and community outreach.”

For further information, contact Angela Romero, Youth Programs Coordinator, City & County Building, 451 South State, Room 306, Salt Lake City, Utah 84111; phone: 801/535-7919; e-mail: angela.romero@slcgov.com; website: <http://www.slcgov.com/boards/ycg/default.htm>.

Share information about your local efforts, so we can spotlight your activities and best practices in a future e-newsletter. Include information about activities, website, brochures, reports, etc. that you think network participants will find useful. And, photos are worth a thousand words ... we can use them in the e-newsletter or in NLC's weekly newspaper, *Nation's Cities Weekly*.