



NATIONAL LEAGUE OF CITIES
Institute for Youth, Education, and Families

Youth Service – Teens Making a Difference in their Communities
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Moderator: John E. Kyle, Program Director, Outreach and Strategic Planning
Institute for Youth, Education, and Families

Speakers:

Karen Larson Daniel - Director of National Youth Service Day,
Youth Service America, Washington, D.C.

Deborah Dillon - Education Programs Director,
Youth and Education Commission, Phoenix, Ariz.

Tamara Garfield - former member of the Youth and Education Commission, Phoenix, Ariz.

Daniel Young - President of Youth Leaders in Action, Virginia Beach, Va.

KYLE: Good afternoon and good morning. My name is John Kyle with the Institute for Youth, Education, and Families at the National League of Cities. Welcome to our latest audio-conference call. Today we're talking about youth service. We have had about 17 of these calls over the past two years. Thank you very much for your support. In particular, we also appreciate the support from MetLife Foundation, which has contributed to our ability to make today's call possible.

We have several speakers joining us – young people and adult leaders from around the country. We hope that you will find this conversation today very enjoyable. First, we have Tamara Garfield from Phoenix, Arizona.

GARFIELD: Hi, my name is Tamara Garfield. I'm a freshman at Pepperdine University. I was formerly a member of the Phoenix Youth and Education Commission. I also worked on the Nothin' But Positive, and still work on the Nothin' But Positive Youth Giving Back Service Fund. [This Fund provides money to middle or high school students who want to organize a service project to benefit the Phoenix community. For more information, go to: <http://www.ci.phoenix.az.us/YOUTH/nbp.html>.]

KYLE: And we'll find out more about that in a few minutes. We have Karen Larson Daniel, who is the Director of National Youth Service Day.

DANIEL: Hi. I direct National Youth Service Day, which is a nationwide event where young people get involved in community service. The dates this year are April 11 to 13.

KYLE: I bet we'll hear more about that. And we have a young man in Virginia Beach, Daniel Young.

YOUNG: Hello. Yes, my name is Daniel Young. I'm a senior in high school in Virginia

Beach, and I currently serve as the President of Youth Leaders in Action, which is a group of students dedicated both to creating leaders in the City of Virginia Beach and promoting municipal/young person connections in the city.

KYLE: Great, and Deborah Dillon in Phoenix.

DILLON: Hi, I'm Debbie Dillon. I work for Tamara and other youth on our Youth and Education Commission. I am the Education Programs Director in the Office of the City Manager. And we staff the Youth and Education Commission.

The Phoenix Youth and Education Commission is a thirty-five-member commission comprised of youth and adult citizens appointed by the Mayor and City Council to advise city leadership on important youth and education issues. For more information about the Commission, go to: <http://www.phoenix.gov/EDUCATN/educomm.html>, or call the Youth and Education Office at (602) 495-0314.

KYLE: I'd like to start first with Tamara and then Daniel and ask about what youth service means to you. What do you think youth service is all about and why are you involved in it? Tamara, could you kick us off?

GARFIELD: Well, I think it's important that young people have a chance to go out into the community, that we also have a voice and also have a say in what goes on, and that we do care. I know that I started doing this sort of thing because I do care, and I was kind of tired of watching adults take over everything. I just wanted to see some things done myself.

KYLE: Daniel, can you add to that? What do you and young people you know in Virginia think?

YOUNG: Well, I'd just like to start by echoing what Tamara said: it is important that young people have a voice. But at the same time, one of the things that I've noticed just in my life experience, I guess you could say, is that there is a lot of cynicism about young people not having any voice at all. I find the exact opposite is true. Whenever a group of young adults or young individuals gets together and speaks with a clear voice or wants to get something done, there actually are a lot of people who listen. I think to a large extent youth service is about providing that mechanism for young people and making sure they know it's out there. Not only *should* they have a voice, but they *do*. It is heard if they take the opportunity to make it heard.

KYLE: Karen, could you talk about how you're harnessing this kind of interest and activity in action that young people are desirous of participating in?

DANIEL: On National Youth Service Day, as I said, youth across the country will lead and participate and recruit other youth and adults to participate in service projects that cover a range of different issues that they care about and are specific to the needs of their communities. We encourage youth to get lots of great things done on National Youth Service Day. But it's also a time that we celebrate the good things that young people are doing year round, and also educate the public about the role that young people play as community leaders every day of the year.

KYLE: How does this play out from the city government perspective in Phoenix, Deborah? Is this something that the city comes to easily? Or is it a long process? How does the city get involved?

DILLON: Well, first I'd like to echo something that Daniel said about the cynicism when youth get together. I do think that one of the things is that youth don't have any sense about the power that they have when they all get together and really voice something, as evidenced by both our Nothin' But Positive grant, and another grant fund we have.

I think it comes somewhat naturally with a little bit of education. I think most of our elected officials obviously like to have youth involved. I think sometimes they just do not know exactly how to do it. And also making sure they have enough time to do it in light of all the other stuff that's thrown at them on a daily basis, in terms of their jobs as either elected officials or city government staff. I think most people really welcome youth involvement.

KYLE: How are you finding this, Karen, when you are talking to communities and cities about being lead agencies for Youth Service Day and its projects, and how it goes beyond being an April event to being things that go on year round?

DANIEL: We're excited to have several different cities involved as lead agencies this year. Lead agencies are groups that convene coalitions of organizations in their city or region or state that are interested in planning projects. Instead of having 20 or 50 individual projects in a city, you have a citywide celebration that really brings together all of these organizations in a way that hopefully lasts long beyond when National Youth Service Day is over. For example, the cities of Dallas and Anchorage, the Minneapolis Public Schools, and several governors' offices are all playing the convening role. It's a wonderful way for people to learn more about the services that city government or state government offers as well.

KYLE: Daniel and Tamara, could you tell us a little bit about the kinds of service projects that either you have been personally involved with or that young people in your community have participated in that you think are significant?

YOUNG: One of the large projects that my organization, Youth Leaders in Action (YLA), has put together every year that I speak the world of is something we call our YDAT – Youth Doing Awesome Things – Lock-In. We invite anywhere between 110 and 140 middle-schoolers, sixth to eighth grade, to one of our recreation centers for a night. We have a keynote speaker. We have several what we call rotational speakers that teach a variety of sessions on anything from alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse prevention to teens and the law. While at the same time those kids are divided into councils that are counseled by members of YLA. And we've had a phenomenal response with our Lock-in. We've gotten media coverage in the last year, and we've also received some letters from some of the participants saying that the night has been really meaningful for them. Overall, it's an excellent project for young people to give back to young people, which, I think, is very important.

GARFIELD: We also have a project that's similar to that. That would be our Annual Youth Town Hall in Phoenix. It's similar just because we reach out to kids from all over and try to get them to talk about issues in Phoenix.

But the biggest project that we have going is our Nothin' But Positive Youth Giving Back Service Fund that gives youth a chance to actually give back to their community where they might not be able to because of lack of funding in the past. How it works is students can submit applications to do different service projects. Instead of having to do some sort of fundraising just to raise the funds to do community service, the city gives them funding so that they can go back and do the projects on their own and do something good for the community.

KYLE: What kinds of projects have been funded recently or in the past year or so?

GARFIELD: Well, we've had everything from cleaning up gardens to having diversity days at schools. Actually we have another service fund now that has taken the diversity side of it. So the Nothin' But Positive has mostly moved toward actual community outreach, such as building gardens, cleaning up an area, helping elderly people, or programs for young children.

We've actually funded quite a few schools, and we try to do a few every month with any amount of money. We tell them to put in applications for \$750 or less, but we do have the discretion to fund above and beyond that. We've funded \$25 for garden gloves to clean up a garden, all the way to a couple thousand dollars to produce a magazine for community people who have written poems and literature.

KYLE: When you say, "we decide," who is it that decides how these funds are used?

GARFIELD: It's actually youth ourselves. It's the members of the Youth and Education Commission who have decided to work on the committee for the Nothin' But Positive Grant Fund that are the Application Review Committee. Every month, we look through and decide what applications should be funded. We don't have to fund any. But, we've never not funded anyone because we get such good projects.

KYLE: Karen, the kinds of projects that Daniel and Tamara are talking about, are you seeing projects like that in Youth Service Day activities? Different kinds of projects? What service efforts are you seeing young people getting involved in?

DANIEL: Definitely so, and we actually offer a couple of different grants each year, too, the 2003 deadline for both of which is tomorrow. So our fax machine has just been humming away with different applicants for projects going on. We're seeing a couple of really exciting trends in projects. One is around service learning, which is the process of schools and classes incorporating their service project into teaching and curriculum in the classroom. So for example, in addition to cleaning up a river for their service project, youth are also studying the ecosystem of that river and the effects of pollution on the river and then taking it back to their high school biology classroom. So, we specifically have a grant for the first time this year for teachers and students that are interested in doing those kinds of projects. About a third of all schools now have service-learning programs. It's a really powerful way to improve education, and it's also been shown to impact students in a lot of positive ways.

KYLE: Over the years that you've been involved with projects, Debbie, in Phoenix, these kinds of projects have been evolving. Have there been trends that you've seen? Do some of the things get recycled year after year after year as different youth stumble upon them and decide

they're important? Or, have there been some significant things you've seen change over the years.

DILLON: There are some mainstay ones – graffiti cleanup, a lot of cleanup. I think youth are really concerned about the environment that they live in. We've had a lot of good cooperation with trail cleanup, park cleanup, fencing, and garden cleanups. Tamara mentioned doing things with senior centers.

I'm always touched by projects that combine things like making sure that kids have books and then going out and reading to kids. We had one guy who was pretty clever. He was going to buy kids' books from our Friends of the Library to help the library and then donate those books to a school with one of his service clubs. He pointed out that it was doing two good works at once – helping the library with their Friends of the Library program by buying books from them and then also giving somebody books who might not have a book in their home. So I think what's interesting is that there is always some bright new idea out there, and just giving youth a chance to express those ideas is really gratifying.

KYLE: Daniel, how do the youth in Virginia Beach come to be part of this Youth Leaders in Action and how difficult is it to attract people to do all the projects you want to do? How has it been growing? How long has it been in existence?

YOUNG: Well, it started about three years ago – March of 2000 was our first year. But the process that brought it about was rather lengthy. Essentially the City of Virginia Beach commissioned what they call now "The Youth Plan." And it was the result of several years of study and surveying and identifying youth resources and youth needs in the city. Out of that they decided that they needed some sort of city-sponsored young persons' organization that would do those two things – one, give back to the community; and two, give young people a voice on issues that did impact them. And so that's where we came from. We actually fall under the auspices of something called the Youth Opportunities Office, which is a collaborative of the city and the Virginia Beach public schools, and was created as a result of that Youth Plan

For more information about the Youth Opportunities Office, go to http://www.vbgov.com/dept/yoo/default.asp , call: (757) 474-8620, or e-mail: yopps@vbgov.com .
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We have a very healthy relationship with the city, especially through the Parks and Recreation Department, which has helped us out on numerous occasions with volunteers and resources and things like that.

One of the neat aspects of Youth Leaders in Action is on issues where we go before City Council, which we've done on two or three occasions, and speak formally or something like that. It's interesting that we are an organization that the city itself created coming back around and advising the city. I always thought this is a neat circular process that sort of speaks to the important connections that the cities make with the young people that live in them.

KYLE: Tamara, how does it work to get youth involved? You say that the committee of youth regularly reviews proposals. Are there always proposals coming through? Are there more and more? On the other side, is there always a pool of young people willing to do the review of proposals? Is this something that is increasingly significant? How do you reach out to get new

people to do it?

GARFIELD: As far as the amount of proposals coming in, I think it sort of comes in waves. Sometimes there will only be a couple, and other times we'll get a flood of them. I think it kind of depends on how it got promoted at that time. We've had some different promotions. There was a time when we had movie theaters putting up little things before the movies that flash up on the movie screen that say, "Money available – call this number to get an application." And I think that was pretty successful.

Then, we also had another program called Youth Town Hall where we bring in different high school kids from around the city, and they can have a kind of forum. It's a day down in our City Plaza, and I know that we pump up a lot of our programs then. We also get a lot of kids interested in wanting to be on a review team or being on our Youth and Education Commission from that as well as more schools wanting to apply for it. During those times we get a little heavier load of how many are coming in, because once people are hearing about it, more people are wanting to find out more about it. Sometimes, in between, it gets a little slow, but it always seems word of mouth spreads it around. One student tells another student, "Hey, we got money for this. You should see if you could get this for your project." It kind of circles around student governments and Key Clubs and different groups that usually want to be funded – Girl Scout troops, Boy Scout groups.

KYLE: What's it like in Virginia Beach, Daniel? Are there a growing number of people interested in this? How do you reach out? How do you publicize the Lock-in, for instance? How do you make sure you have enough of the older teens to work with the younger ones who are being "locked in?"

YOUNG: In terms of Youth Leaders in Action itself, we have an application process that is mostly to make sure that we have records. We rarely reject people. I don't think we ever have. But in terms of promoting our projects, knowing that we ultimately want to be in a position where other organizations and individuals in this region would know who we were, we devoted essentially our first two years to doing a variety of service projects. We attended a number of conferences and workshops, not only to learn ourselves, but also to get our name out there by giving back. We finally have reached a point where I guess you could almost call us a regional hub in Southeastern Virginia for young person involvement. Oftentimes at our meetings – we meet every other Monday night – we have individuals, coordinators, young people from other cities (sometimes as far as 50, 60 miles away) come in order to observe what we do and maybe get some feedback from us on the projects they're doing. We started by getting our name out there any way we could, whether it be attending workshops or doing service projects, and everything sort of blossomed from that.

KYLE: Karen, across the country, recruiting and getting more people involved, what are you seeing as some of the trend-setting techniques that communities are using?

DANIEL: Well, first of all, today's generation of young people are volunteering at record rates already. We know that this generation is really the top of the pack in terms of the amount of service they're doing. But certainly we've seen lots of upward trends, particularly in the last year, in the wake of September 11. I think there has been a renewed interest in volunteering and

community service. And, especially at first, some frustration about what young people could do. In other words, they couldn't necessarily give blood in the wake of September 11 or give money, but wanted to be able to participate in some way. So we're seeing lots of exciting things in terms of young people getting involved civically.

One thing we're really trying to do at Youth Service America is to provide opportunities for young people to serve not only on a given weekend, but also on an ongoing basis. So for example, if a young person is serving at a homeless shelter on one weekend, we know that we've done a disservice to that young person if we let him or her think that they've done anything about solving the problem of hunger and homelessness in America. Of course, they've met an important call to serve the hungry. But there needs to be ongoing opportunities to get involved through civic engagement or through advocacy to work on those issues. So more and more, we're seeing young people not just serving on a given weekend, but also taking an issue that they're excited about and working with governments through advocacy to make a difference.

KYLE: What are you all seeing as the challenges that youth face in carrying out their sense of mission? Okay, they're volunteering more and more. In Virginia Beach and Phoenix, there seem to be no dearth of youth who want to be involved either in leading or in carrying out service. You're saying that there are tremendous numbers over the past couple of years without doing recruitment. What are the challenges they're facing? Is this all simple? Is this easy as pie to put in place?

DILLON: Transportation.

KYLE: Talk a little bit about that.

DILLON: Well, I think that's obviously been a real challenge for us. Our city is over 400 square miles. And unless you have a 16-year-old with a driver's license or you have a parent who is willing to drive you, our public transportation system is somewhat limited. That's always been a challenge for us in terms of getting youth involved, particularly if it's something that's very centralized. But it seems like that has been somewhat of a limit. Tamara, talk about that a little bit.

GARFIELD: I saw that a little when I was younger. Before I started being able to drive myself, I was always trying to get a parent to drive. And I'm really lucky that my parents were able to take care of that or were able to find an older person going to the same place that could drive me.

The thing that we did that helped a lot of kids that were working on different projects – at least down at our City Hall – was the city gave us bus cards so that we could get around and not have as much difficulty getting to our projects and to our meetings. But I will say that yes, in Phoenix, transportation – at least the bus transportation – has been limited. And it just expanded. We're supposed to be getting a light rail. But until then, it's a big challenge.

KYLE: Just a side note on bus cards. In Boston, the youth also recognized this as an issue. The hours in which school bus passes could be used were extended as a result of youth lobbying the Mayor and City Council. So that rather than just being good for right after school, they could be used for several hours later so that all kinds of projects that youth wanted to be

involved with could be a little bit more accessible by transportation. If you don't have public transportation in good supply, having a bus card or a fare card is not going to help a lot. What do you find, Daniel – what kinds of challenges do you see for the young people to get involved there?

YOUNG: Regarding the transportation issue, Virginia Beach actually doesn't have a particularly well-integrated public transportation system, and that has been difficult. Luckily, because we do have that relationship with Parks and Recreation, we've been able to use Parks and Recreation vans and cars a lot of times, driven by our sponsors. It has helped great numbers of people to get to events and conferences.

Something that I've noticed is a challenge – and is also an opportunity – is that, while volunteerism is certainly on the rise (and I think that point was made well), I think at the same time the people who are already involved tend to be the ones who seek out further opportunities for involvement. One of the things we focus on a great deal in Youth Leaders in Action is making sure we don't end up with a 25-member panel of student government, honor roll clones. We want to make sure that we are involving people who might not otherwise be involved. And that can be a challenge. The initial composition of Youth Leaders in Action was very carefully balanced in terms of geography in the city, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and previous involvement. But now as members have graduated and moved on, filling those slots has to be a careful focus. Now at the same time, it's also a really great opportunity to get a very diverse mix of opinions. But it's one thing to say, "Well, we want to involve people who wouldn't otherwise be involved." And it's quite another thing to seek those people out, see if they're interested, bring them in, and make them regular members of an organization. And that can be somewhat challenging.

DILLON: Daniel, as your organization is maturing a little bit more in terms of years, you're bringing in probably fewer new people every year?

YOUNG: I think that's a fair statement, yes.

DILLON: Is there something special you do to bring the new people up to speed and get them integrated into the overall work of the group? I'd be curious how you make sure they come in and get involved and stay, because that's one thing that's interesting. When people have known each other for a couple of years, there tends to be a familiarity that a new person doesn't have.

YOUNG: Right. One of the things we did introduce this past term was a six-month officers' terms. We also added to our application process what we call a trial membership period, whereby somebody applies and submits an information sheet along with one nomination from an adult. Then, he/she comes to our meetings, is interviewed, and then has a three meeting period to decide: "Is this something I'm interested in? Are these people who are welcoming me? Is this something that I can see myself devoting two hours every other Monday for a year or two or three years?" After three meetings, if an individual has decided that he or she likes what they see, then we add that individual to the roster, get them an official shirt, and provide a binder with all of our information in it. I think this is going to help a little bit.

When we first experienced that initial wave of graduates or alumni, one of the

things that we did run into was people would give us applications and then come for two, three, four meetings, and then we'd never hear from them again. That obviously was quite a challenge. I think that's still something we're dealing with now in terms of strategies to get to the numbers we want to get. Right now, we're operating with about 15 to 18 young people regularly. We want to get that up to 25 to 30, which was our original number. We just experienced another wave of individuals who left a few months ago. So that definitely is a challenge. I'm curious about strategies that other organizations implement to take care of that.

DILLON: Do you have a problem with youth that are having other activities? Like I know Tamara was in Drama, so she could not be as involved during a play. We've had other youth that have been involved in other activities. How do you deal with that?

YOUNG: Well, that's always a problem. Just the other night – actually on Monday – we wanted to schedule a Saturday workday for our upcoming Lock-in. And 15 people pulled out their planners and there's not a single day for about five years anybody can meet at the same time! One of our policies that we've implemented is that when an individual applies and goes through that trial membership period and decides Youth Leaders in Action is potentially for them, we go ahead and put on the application, "If you know you'll be participating in any other activities, let us know now, and we'll work around those. But that said, please try to keep in mind your commitment to YLA in the future."

So, for example, we have individuals who have joined who have been on wrestling or basketball teams at their schools, and we know during tournament season, we may not see those people every other Monday. But we also know that after that is done, theoretically those individuals should be there because they have made that commitment. "Well, here's up front what I'm already participating in. But beyond that, I'm going to keep every other Monday free and make YLA a priority." I think that policy has helped a great deal because people know that if they're already involved in it, they're not going to be punished for it.

KYLE: Another challenge that people ask NLC about is money. Does it cost a lot to carry out the service and involvement projects? Yes, there is a dollar cost attached to the particular grants that you're giving out in Phoenix, and I want to know more about that. What kind of top limit there is, and how that comes to pass. But in general, the service projects – Karen is this something that you see people needing? You're getting these millions of young people to commit to service in both the weekend and across days and weeks following and before. Are there costs involved? Is it expensive? What are the kinds of costs? What is it that can be done at no cost?

DANIEL: The costs really range across the board from maybe \$50 to making cards for people in a senior citizens' home to several thousands of dollars to build a playground and everything in between. So it really varies. Youth Service America offers grants for National Youth Service Day and other types of service year round, generally in the range of about \$500 with the idea that that's not a lot of money, but enough to really cover some significant costs for probably the majority of projects. We also offer guidance through our National Youth Service Day tool kit on other ways to raise funds and always encourage people to inform other partners and companies in their communities who can help, not just with financial contributions, but also with in-kind gifts, tools, supplies, and also promotional support.

DILLON: That's what Nothin' But Positive was designed to do, to take that fundraising element out of the project for the youth so that they didn't have to necessarily raise the money, then do the project. They obviously are raising the money by writing for a grant, but the grant would be there so they wouldn't have to hold a bake sale to do a community service project.

GARFIELD: At the same time, they also hold the youth that apply for that grant accountable so that we know that they're not just giving away our money to whatever. We ask that when they finish the project, they do an exit survey and evaluation report of their project – nothing major, just a real quick little write-up of how it went and where the funding went. Just to make sure that we really are funding a legitimate project and to see what everyone is doing.

KYLE: Tell me a little bit more about the top limit of the grants in Phoenix? You have \$750 grants theoretically. How many of them are there in a typical fiscal year? What is the city's commitment about that and how long has that been going on? Is this a tough sell every year? Or is it kind of stable? Does it change?

DILLON: Well, the irony is we've actually gone some years where we've given a little bit of money back to the city because we haven't needed to use all of the money to fund the accepted projects. And we're working with a couple of youth right now to do some revamping. We named the project "Nothin' But Positive" after a corporate donor that we had originally. And that corporate donor has since been out of business, so we're free to change the name at this point.

It is not a tough sell to the Council at all. We just recently went through budget cuts, and were able to buffer that project from getting cut, based on some other cuts that we took.

We have a couple of things that we're looking at. One of the things is we don't have a deadline. You can write and turn in applications all year long. I think we're going to look at some quarterly deadlines to help with the publicity. You know, people call and say, "When's it due?" and we say, "Whenever you send it." And I think people respond naturally to deadlines. I'd be interested to hear other people's feedback on that.

But it's really not a tough sell to the councilmembers because they love the idea of youth getting involved, and it also helps our community, like the graffiti cleanup. They've also done some things where they've combined an art project with cleanup with service. So I think it's seen as such a value added to the other good activities that are going on in the community.

KYLE: What is the amount of funding that is allocated by the city?

DILLON: It's only \$10,000. So it doesn't sound like a lot, but it's enough. We fund up to \$750 per project, and, like Tamara said, applicants don't write for the whole amount. We're able to fund maybe 20 to 25 projects annually.

KYLE: I wanted to ask about something else. I think Karen mentioned in particular about the youth and adults working together on some of these projects. I was wondering with the rise in number of young people wanting to do service in Phoenix and Virginia Beach, other communities across the country, what do the adults who are doing service think about this? Is

this something that they embrace wholeheartedly? Or is there some skepticism? Is there some difficulty or some learning that goes on back and forth in order to make it work?

DANIEL: Certainly there are those difficulties, but there are also the great learning opportunities, too. Inevitably, adults tell us that they've learned as much from the youth as the youth have learned from them. Youth Service America and the Independent Sector just did a study of adults that volunteer and found that most adults who volunteer started volunteering as young people.

For facts and figures on youth and volunteering, go to the Youth Service America media room at http://www.ysa.org/news_event/press_release.cfm?pr=St&page=1 .
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So, we know that there's a very strong correlation between youth volunteering and recruiting the next generation of adult volunteers. Lots of adult volunteers have had their own experiences as young people volunteering and can therefore certainly remember what it's like.

One of the challenges is making enough room at the table in terms of planning the project – to make sure that it's not totally adult planned and then young people are just asked to come in at the tail end to actually do the work. We know that one of the most important things for a successful project is that young people be the drivers from the very beginning in terms of picking the issue that they want to work on, reaching out to partners, recruiting volunteers, and all of the steps in between.

GARFIELD: That's actually another criteria that we look at when we evaluate the Nothin' But Positive applications. All applications that we want to consider should be driven by youth, should be written by youth, and be something that youth are going to do. Of course, there are exceptions to this where it's a younger group and they have an adult that helps them write it. But we want it to be visible that the youth came up with the idea, that they want to do it, but maybe they had some help articulating it and getting it onto paper.

KYLE: What's it like in Virginia Beach, working with adults?

YOUNG: I always struggle with the notion that adults who have involved with service would have anything but open arms for young people who are then involved in service. Because I think the bottom line in terms of leadership philosophy, if you will, is that all of our hearts are in the right place. So my experience in Virginia Beach has been extraordinarily positive as we continue to build those links with city agencies, not only within Virginia Beach, but also outside the city as well. I can't recall a single instance, I think, where Youth Leaders in Action as an organization or its individual representatives have gone to adults with ideas, suggestions, questions, comments, concerns, requests for things, and been treated with anything but respect. And there are many instances we've received the aid or the feedback that we've asked for.

I wanted to comment about young people being involved in the planning portion. I just wanted to echo that. I think that's hugely important. We are just starting a Youth Town Hall series in Virginia Beach. We had our first one in November, and we have our next one in April. And there are several young individuals who sit on that planning commission. And Youth Leaders in Action is one of the organizations that is represented. And I completely agree:

I think one of the worst things that we can do is view young people as grunt worker and not as viable planners of projects. I think that is a very important thing to keep in mind.

GARFIELD: Daniel, I have a question for you. With your Youth Town Hall series, how do you go about getting the different youth to come to it? And who is invited to it? How do you make sure that you get different people?

YOUNG: Well, at the first one in November, the planning commission decided to attack that angle through history and social studies classrooms in the city. I personally don't sit on the Planning Commission – there's another representative from the organization – but I assume what they did is send the flyers to every social studies high school teacher in the city because I saw them all over my high school. I know a lot of high school civics or history teachers have community involvement requirements of some sort, such as attending a school board meeting. The Youth Town Hall meeting could fulfill that requirement. So I know a lot of young people who came to the Town Hall meeting, at least that first one, because they had heard about it through school and they had some incentive being offered through their classes.

GARFIELD: How many students did you get and how often do you plan to have them?

YOUNG: Like I said, the next one is in April. I'm not sure what the overall timetable is. Specifically, I think we had at least 150 to 200 at the last one, though that number went down as the night went on because individuals would leave early or whatnot, especially those that drove.

I'm curious about what the mechanics are of the Phoenix version. What we did in our first one was we had a panel of adults – superintendent, chief of police, a councilmember, and some student body presidents from three of the 11 high schools. The participants broke up into groups of about eight that were facilitated by an adult and came up with questions for the panel. Then, the majority of the Town Hall meeting was essentially back and forth questions and answers from that panel about various issues.

Some of the questions were right on point. Some of the questions were a little frivolous or whimsical. But I think that it was a good experience, especially in terms of the young people getting to hear from those individuals in power directly because that's something I don't think happens often enough.

GARFIELD: I could talk a little bit about ours. I guess it's almost a little of an idea coming from the other direction in that we tend not to let adults speak at all.

DILLON: They kicked us out, Daniel. No, it was not exactly that way.

GARFIELD: Well, I think it's stemming from the idea that we have so many adult speakers coming in all the time to all these programs that we wanted to start a day where it would be just students. Students would be more apt to talk about the things that they want to talk about if there weren't people there that might intimidate them just because they are adults.

We do try to include students from everywhere, although the student body presidents and the student council and the captains of different teams do tend to be more articulate and able to speak with adults, sometimes we like to bring in kids that are shy and quieter. We want to make sure that they don't feel intimidated out of talking.

And the format – we usually do it once a year. First, we survey all the schools to find out what’s on teens’ minds at that time so we can pick topics. Then, based on that we look at who a good speaker would be that could integrate those ideas. We usually have about 200 high school students, and they may break up into discussion groups.

We’ve tried a couple of different formats. One was where adults were not allowed in the room at all. Later on, adults were present when ideas were brought to the entire group. We also tried adults in the room that could participate. That’s when we really decided that it was kind of too much – I mean, while they have good intentions, sometimes there would be adults that would kind of take over a group. And we wanted to get away from that. We’ve also tried telling adults they’re welcome to be in the room, but to please refrain from getting engaged too much in the conversation, to just sit and be observers and let the students go where they might go. That’s basically the format of ours. It’s been pretty successful.

DILLON: The youth this year went through about 16 hours of facilitator training. So the youth facilitators facilitated the sessions. Because we had so many adults with some unstructured time, we ended up having a separate session with adults to just talk about things that they’re seeing with youth, which seemed to work out okay.

KYLE: The experience that we’ve had at the National League of Cities with having youth delegates come to our national conferences has been something similar. Adults are relegated to the rear of the room with some purpose and design – allowing the young people to run and manage both the large group and small group sessions. But adults can hear what’s going on, from a distance, as opposed to sitting at the tables with them. And often that means the adults then break off into a group of their own to talk about issues that are of interest to them.

In fact, another angle of these kinds of meetings is what the Texas Municipal League is doing this weekend, which is holding a summit of youth councils and youth commissions from around the state. [It is being co-sponsored by NLC with support from MetLife Foundation.] There are going to be about 250 youth who are representing about 15 or 20 different city youth commissions. It’s a conference that’s planned by youth. It’s run by youth. It’s mostly attended by youth. There are adult chaperones, but the program is for the youth and run by the youth. So there are some very strong variations, and that’s something that you all may want to think about in your various states – whether the state municipal league can provide an opportunity for some of this to go on.

As we come to the last minutes of the call, I want to get back to our focus on youth service and the fact that there are some community leaders and local elected officials out there who are thinking, “This is all well and good. But what should be my first step?” What do you recommend that a local official, community leader, mayor, or city councilmember do to promote youth service? What are the steps that they should do first? What are the things that you would tick off that would make something happen like it did in Virginia Beach or in Phoenix or in some of the examples that you’re familiar with, Karen?

DANIEL: The first thing I would recommend is going on our website and getting a copy of the National Youth Service Day toolkit.

<p>The toolkit and service-learning curriculum can be downloaded in a PDF file if you have Adobe Acrobat, or ordered on the YSA website. The toolkit is also available in a Spanish version. To download, go to: http://www.ysa.org/nysd/nysd_resources_parent.cfm. To order</p>
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resources, go to: <http://www.ysa.org/nysd/material/rfmform.cfm>, or call: (202) 296-2992.

That contains a lot of ABCs about how to plan a service project, not just for National Youth Service Day, but also for any day of the year. This part of the Youth Service America website is <http://www.ysa.org/nysd>.

The second thing I would recommend is putting the word out through your different promotional vehicles to people who are interested in planning projects to get them together - to kind of form a coalition of project planners who may do their own individual thing, but are available to support and build upon one another's efforts as you move closer to the day.

KYLE: Daniel, if you're talking to young people in another city that doesn't have Youth Leaders in Action, a youth council, or significant projects about youth service, and a mayor or city councilmember came up to you and said, "What should I do?" What would you tell that elected official to start with?

YOUNG: I think the most important thing is to connect the dots. What I mean by that is use the resources and tools that are already there. I think one of the most potent resources that the City of Virginia Beach has is our citywide student government. That meets once a month at the high school level. It's just this giant conglomeration of individuals who are obviously already involved from every high school in the city that meet at one middle school every month. That's how I first heard about Youth Leaders in Action when it was first forming. One of the adults who had started the organization came to one of the citywide meetings and spoke before the several hundred students that were there and said, "I'm starting this organization." And since then, Youth Leaders in Action has itself considered going back to citywide when we needed certain resources or needed to promote a tool.

So I think the most important thing is to be aware of what resources, organizations, and tools are already there. And then make use of those, either as promotional tools or as cooperative organizations that can help the organization that you eventually start.

KYLE: Tamara or Debbie, do you have a couple of key steps that you would recommend?

GARFIELD: I would just reiterate what Daniel said – a lot of times going toward already established help. But if there isn't something, maybe then when you are speaking to the councilperson, letting him know what you're interested in and having that councilperson help get the word out and maybe talk to other councilpersons. Sometimes when they speak to each other, they will speak to people that they know because there is a connection among youth that they may have known, and approach other councilmembers. And get them together so that they can talk and try to form something.

DILLON: I'd pretty much say ditto. I think most communities probably have some form of something going on, internally within their city that they may not even be aware of, even within municipal government. But also externally, I think a ton of schools are starting to have a service-learning requirement. I suggest that they get a sense about what's going on and how to help and reinforce and recognize the good works that are happening.

I'm amazed also at how many youth are not in this for recognition. They really are in it to do the service. But giving them some recognition is not a bad thing. But I just don't

think that's what motivates most of the youth that are involved.

KYLE: I agree. I think the youth that I have been in touch with over the past few years through NLC want to do this, and it's not for recognition. It's because they feel that this is something that they can really give back to.

I like Daniel's phrase of "connecting the dots" because I think that too often when I talk to community leaders, they just don't think about the dots that they could connect. There is a young person that they already know, and reaching out to even just one young person can help them understand what's going on, and then connect them to another and another. And then to find groups of young people and not just young people that are interested in student government, but young people in service clubs and young people connected in religious groups where they are doing service.

There are a lot of ways to begin to connect those dots and figure out what are some missing links that the municipality might be able to help with. It may be recognition. It may be media. It may just be the bully pulpit. Or it may be something like the Nothin' But Positive \$10,000 grant program. I'm amazed at how many cities are beginning to do some version of this, sometimes with business support, sometimes figuring a way to carve out a federal or state grant to help support it. But often, as it is in Phoenix, it's from the city's general fund. This is something from which there is much more return than just the spending of the \$10,000.

DILLON: I think also, looking at some of the traditional youth serving agencies like the Boy Scouts, the Girl Scouts, Boys' and Girls' Clubs and some of those traditional places, many of them are also incorporating service learning projects into what they are doing as well. And I think someone mentioned some of the civic participation requirements that social studies teachers have. I think the reality is that much stuff is going on. I think people are starting to label things a little bit differently now. But that giving back is being instilled in a lot of different ways.

KYLE: I want to thank everyone for being part of our call today. This is one in a series of audioconferences. MetLife Foundation has generously supported today's conference on youth service. This series of audioconferences are part of the ongoing work for the Institute of Youth, Education, and Families of the National League of Cities. You can find out more about all of our work at <http://www.nlc.org/iyef>.

There are some exciting new things that IYEF is doing including: (1) a regional conference in Indianapolis on May 14 for youth and adults to learn more about developing and implementing youth participation in cities and towns around the country; (2) A new program for technical assistance to help cities with connecting afterschool and education; (3) A network of those in municipalities who are working on youth participation efforts.

Thanks again, Daniel, Tamara, Debbie, and Karen. Thank you all for joining us today. Thank you for listening in across the country, and we look forward to hearing from you again. Thanks a lot. I appreciate your time and efforts.