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Institute for Youth, Education, and Families

Getting Youth Into the Act: Strategies to Promote Youth Community Participation
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Moderator: **John E. Kyle**, Program Director, Outreach and Strategic Planning
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Speakers:

Mayor Nancy Bates of Farmington Hills, Michigan
David Kinchen, a former youth member of the Commission for
Children and Youth in Farmington Hills
Cindy Carlson, Director of Youth Services in Hampton, Virginia
Matt Turman, a member of the Hampton Youth Council

KYLE: Welcome. My name is John Kyle with the Institute for Youth, Education, and Families at the National League of Cities. We're glad to have you with us on this audioconference about strategies to promote youth community participation. We hope to get into issues concerning youth councils, youth summits, youth mapping, having youth participate in various civic affairs, youth service. We have a panel of speakers that we think will help us understand this more and get some good ideas about it.

Today, we have with us from Farmington Hills, Michigan Mayor Nancy Bates. And, David Kinchen, who is a college freshman and a former member of the Youth Council in Farmington Hills and also a former member of NLC's Council on Youth, Education, and Families, one of the first youth members to be on one of our standing committees. And, in Hampton, Virginia, Cindy Carlson, Director of Youth Services. Also in Hampton, we've got Matt Turman, who is a member of the Youth Council there.

I'd like to ask each of you to answer the same question -- what do you think the value of youth participation is? When you talk about and mention youth participation to others, what do you mean? What kind of value does it have for you? Nancy, you've worked on this for a long time. Could you tell us a little bit about what your feeling about this is?

BATES: I really think it's important to connect the youth to the community. I think they have good ideas, and they have perspectives that adults don't have and a lot of energy. A lot of intergenerational activity is very constructive for the community. It's an important thing to do.

KYLE: Cindy, what do you think?

CARLSON: I absolutely agree with the Mayor. In Hampton, we see it as a real essential part of city government, that we really need young people involved in a lot of different layers and levels in order to make good decisions here. We really can't do it without them.

KYLE: Let me ask the young men who are with us. David, how does the Mayor talk about this? Do you think that's the right way, or do you have other perceptions from your vantage point?

KINCHEN: Well, I agree with the Mayor. We've worked for about five years to get this initiative done. And as she has said many times, it doesn't matter how strong your community's economy is, and your schools should be strong and vital. But the core value, the core determinant of a successful community is having strong young people. As a youth coordinator for the Michigan Municipal League, we're really taking that message to the state level now and helping communities across our state invest in young people. And it's really the essence of philanthropy, I think.

KYLE: Matt, what do you have to say about this view? What's your take on the importance of youth participation in municipal affairs?

TURMAN: I think youth are a critical part of it because sometimes you see before and after where youth weren't involved, and then after youth becoming involved, it kind of did a 180 and went down a more positive track.

KYLE: Can you describe that a little bit further? Can you mention an example where you think that happens, that something turned around 180 because of youth participation?

TURMAN: An example would be for our local school system. About three or four years ago, we didn't have an advisor to our superintendent. After that happened, the superintendent and his council came to the students more often, asking them for advice on things ranging from violence in schools to suspension to tardy policies. And our school system became much friendlier to youth.

KYLE: Did some of those policies change as a result of the youth input?

TURMAN: Yes, they did.

KYLE: Were there experiences like that in Farmington Hills, Mayor, that you can point to where youth changed things or made things happen differently?

BATES: There really did. And I think one of the crucial things to membership for youth councils or youth participation is that this sometimes reaches young people who are not programmed. It's not just the jocks. It's not just the "A" students. These are kids that aren't programmed very often that become involved in a very meaningful way. In our community, we had a fatality in front of a high school. And when I began to really catch on to the value of having youth input is when those kids on their own put together a video, did an entire presentation, came to city council, asked us to put some stoplight changes there, things for safety. They did an incredible job. It wasn't even our road. We involved the county and the state, and we made a change for the kids. The way they honored the loss of their friend was to come in and try to make a difference. And I thought, "We've got a whole resource out there that we're not touching. Kids are bright, they're articulate, and they're positive." I looked at my

own community and I thought, “I’ve got a commission on aging, on the arts, on historical buildings. But there’s no place in this community do I have to go for youth input.” And that’s when we got busy and started doing something about it.

KYLE: So you at that point started a youth council. Can you talk a little bit about starting a youth council?

BATES: The first thing I did is say that I’d like to have “Meet the Mayor” night. And it was pretty widely publicized. We had Meet the Mayor night, and a lot of young people came in. I had no idea what to expect from them, and I don’t think they did from me. I had horrors that they were going to want extensive ballparks and all kinds of things that I couldn’t see in our budget. And it wasn’t like that at all. I’ll always remember what one of the young people said: “You know, we’re sitting here theater style. Could we put our chairs in a circle so we can look at each other’s faces?” And it was a wonderful heart-to-heart conversation, and that was the beginning of our Youth Council.

KYLE: How did the Youth Council get started in Hampton, Cindy?

CARLSON: Actually it came through a neighborhood planning effort. We already had a youth council. We’ve had the Mayor’s Youth Council since the 70s, but they tended to be kind of a typical -- just do a few activities, some young people would join it and raise some money, have a dance, put it on your resume and go home kind of council. Some youth were involved in some neighborhood planning efforts, and the Director of the Planning Department was so impressed with the work that the young people at the neighborhood level were doing to help shape what neighborhood plans would look like. He said, “Gosh, we really need to figure out a way for young people to be involved throughout the city decision making in planning.” From that he hired two young people to work on his staff as city planners. They sat down with me and some other folks and talked about what we could really do to kind of kick this Youth Council up another notch and really make it an empowered commission, kind of on the same level of the other commissions in the city. And so we did. We went to City Council with the youth planners and a couple of us adults and said, “We really need to do things differently. Let’s start changing the nature of our council.”

KYLE: In Farmington Hills, are youth involved in municipal affairs other than just the Youth Council, David? I think you’ve been serving other than just on the Youth Council.

KINCHEN: Yes, John, they are. About three years ago young people were appointed to the Commission on Children, Youth, and Families. It’s almost a multilateral combination of interests from the City Hall to the public service departments. Our Police Chief and our Fire Chief are both members. This commission is also a joint commission between the city of Farmington as well as the city of Farmington Hills, and so they have representatives on that commission and youth from their city as well. This group of young people -- there were three high school students, I believe -- work alongside a multiple level of community interests to promote issues in relation to youth, education, and families and to really get down to the major issues that effect young people.

We produced a suicide video on teen suicides -- and not actually just teen

suicides, but suicides among adults as well -- that we released. We are actually distributing that across the country now, as well as across the State of Michigan so that communities can learn how to better identify the signs of youth suicide or actions that would lead up to that or youth violence related issues. In Farmington Hills, we've lost about three or four students in the last three years to either suicide or violent acts. We really think it's important to prevent these kinds of things from happening.

Young people have served on our cable commission for about three years. The Cable Access Committee is a commission of joint members similar to the Commission on Children, Youth, and Families in which young people have a voice in the way their cable service runs throughout three cities -- Farmington, Farmington Hills, and Novi. They also have the opportunity to help develop programming through the public access video production unit, where they can actually produce television shows. Much like this one show called "Teen Extreme" that we have. Different high school students every month show students from across the three cities that the cable channel reaches about some of the major activities and recreation that they can participate in. And also give them some information on how to make better decisions in their lives. It's all about giving young people a chance to take a leadership role. And that's what Farmington Hills has done.

KYLE: What are some things, Matt, that your Youth Council has been involved in? You've been there for a couple of years now. What are you proud of as accomplishments that the Youth Council has been active in?

TURMAN: We have formed liaisons to many of the city departments such as Parks and Recreation, the City Neighborhood Commission, the school system with the Superintendent Advisory Council. We also made an organization called "Alternatives" to promote the 40 developmental assets that the Search Institute came up with (<http://www.search-institute.org/assets>). We also provide helpful information to any organization that comes to us that needs help involving youth, from the Boy's Club to Boy Scouts of America.

KYLE: You began talking about the youth planners in Hampton, Cindy. Can you tell us a little more about that?

CARLSON: Sure. There are two high school-age young people who --

KYLE: -- Are they paid?

CARLSON: Oh, yes. They're paid.

KYLE: How much are they paid?

CARLSON: They're paid well. I think they make \$8.50 an hour, don't they, Matt? They make much more than minimum wage. And they work really as professional city planners, except they only work 15 - 20 hours a week instead of full time. They come after school and they are actually responsible for their own section of the city's comprehensive plan. They also help staff the Youth Commission. So they use, much the same way as the Planning Department works with the Planning Commission, the Youth Planners have the Youth Commission to

approve their recommendations. It's a much more hands-on kind of process, but it's very similar.

KYLE: Do situations like this occur in Farmington Hills? Have you, Mayor, thought about ways to use youth in different ways besides the cable commission and the Commission on Youth, Education, and Families?

BATES: One thing that was pretty successful was when we brought the youth group into the City Council meeting. Each member of council had a youth sit next to him or her. The City Manager did, the City Attorney, even the press. We had a shadow day where they followed us around, and then sat at the bench with us. Of course, they could not vote, but they did participate in the questioning. I was so impressed with the fact that there really don't seem to be youth issues. Young people are interested in the kind of varied things that older people are interested in. I find that when we take our kids to conferences with us, and you watch them up and down the hall, that they're going in meetings on waste management, the environment, and land use things. It's interesting that they don't consider themselves as just having "youth" issues, but that they have this whole range of interests. And they're happy to come to a meeting that gives them some more information on it.

CARLSON: I thought about that earlier, Mayor, as you folks were talking from Farmington Hills about the young people getting involved with the issue of the stoplights and the traffic flow at a dangerous intersection and that kind of thing. We don't often think of transportation as an issue that young people are interested in. But our Youth Commission just recently set up a liaison with the local transit authority. They're working on trying to increase ridership on the buses. They also changed a bicycle ordinance that we had in the community that kids weren't allowed to ride their bikes on the sidewalk. Some young people came to the Youth Commission and said, "How come we can't ride our bikes on the sidewalk?" So the youth planners and the commissioners got to work on that and actually ended up rewriting the city ordinance to make the city more user-friendly.

BATES: In Farmington Hills, we did the same thing. Something some of the youth didn't like very much was when we had another injury of a youngster without a bicycle helmet. The Commission for Children, Youth, and Families, with the youth participating in that discussion, proposed an ordinance that required kids 16 and under to wear bicycle helmets. They promoted that to the youth and tried to sell it to some of them. Some of them still don't like wearing a helmet. But in our community now, we have high participation of helmet use that was really started and pushed forward with our young people.

KYLE: I'd like to talk a little bit about ways that you've been recruiting and encouraging youth to be participants in various activities. Matt, what do your friends in school and out of school think about your participation? How have you encouraged other youth to become involved? How do you go about raising awareness among young people themselves about getting involved with the Youth Council or involved with some of the activities you've been involved in?

TURMAN: Well, to answer your first question, many of my friends are participating in the

same things that I do. So we're kind of a tight-knit group, and we all are able to share information from the different organizations we're part of.

But to encourage young people at my school, actually first I encourage them to participate on the high school level because I think they need a firm base. In Hampton, the Youth Commission is what we call a shared leadership. And I encourage them on a community service basis and work their way up where we have a small pyramid to that shared leadership. And when they get there, they'll be prepared.

KYLE: David, how do you get involved as a young person, and how do you think other young people are coming to get involved?

KINCHEN: John, I think there are many ways that's occurring. For me personally, it started actually in middle school when our city realized that middle school students between the hours of 2:30 and 5:30 or 6:00 were getting into the most trouble because their parents weren't home.

KYLE: But why did you get involved?

KINCHEN: I got involved because I saw an opportunity to really make a difference and to really contribute to the community. In 7th grade, we launched Teen Age, a television show in which, I was able to pursue an interest in television, and at the same time help get some information that I thought young people in our community needed at the time. It was a way for me to really make a difference in a way that I used an interest or a talent that I had. And I think that's what the Youth Program has done for many people as well. It lets them utilize their talents to get involved.

That's also occurred in high school. I maintained my involvement due to those interests, and also due to the interest I have in government by working with committees in our city and helping to draft our resolutions or our policies or proposals such as the bike helmet ordinance. We've been able to give young people that have an interest in government, including myself, the ability to pursue that interest and gain experience, yet at the same time give back to their community. You know, I've learned so much just by the work that I've been able to do in Farmington Hills. There really isn't anything like grassroots involvement. I'm not talking about political involvement. I'm talking about personal involvement of whether you're involved in your school or your church or any kind of civic organization. The lessons that I've learned such as: communication with others; my writing skills have improved; my speaking skills have improved. These skills that you learn are life skills for any kind of field that you want to go into, any kind of venture you want to pursue as an adult. And I know personally it has had a profound impact on me.

BATES: If I could say something here, too. In Farmington Hills, as any place, before you involve young people, you better be clear in your mind why you're doing it. You better be certain that you don't just need somebody to set up chairs or clean up afterwards. Their involvement has to be meaningful. You can't fool young people for very long. If you don't mean it, and you don't sincerely want them at the table, they're going to figure it out. The meetings that you have with them have to be fun, they have to have some kind of meaningful involvement for them. From there, you can build a really solid youth involvement program that makes a big difference in their lives and makes a difference in the community.

KYLE: One of the things I want to ask about is how to encourage and ensure that the young people are coming from diverse ethnic, economic, cultural, and language backgrounds in youth councils and in the various activities. How do you make sure that you've reached out beyond the "A" students, beyond the jocks that you mentioned earlier, Nancy? Both of your communities have a lot of diversity in different ways. I know that. So how have you made sure that your youth council reflects that diversity? What are some of the techniques and tools that you've used to outreach?

CARLSON: One of the things that Matt mentioned earlier is how we see youth engagement as kind of a pyramid. At the base of the pyramid are a lot of service opportunities, projects, tasks that are going on, and hands-on things in the neighborhood that people can get involved in. And then kind of working your way up the pyramid through advisory roles, and then into shared leadership roles. We spend an awful lot of time in neighborhoods. We really do a lot with young people on building skills at the neighborhood level and developing leadership and getting kids involved in just really the day-to-day things that go on in a community. From that, you attract a whole different type of young people that aren't necessarily attracted to something that happens at the school level or at the city government level. Then, once young people get involved and interested and excited about things, maybe from just being part of a neighborhood cleanup the first time, then they get turned on and more and more involved. Then pretty soon you invite them to come to the Youth Commission meetings, you get the History teacher to offer credit for kids to come to the Youth Commission meeting. And pretty soon you have a real diverse base of young people who are interested in what you're doing.

BATES: In Farmington Hills, there are 92 languages spoken in our schools now. We are a very diverse community. So a lot of the diversity comes to us rather naturally. One major source of membership for the youth council comes from the young people in our afterschool program. The youth director we have there, from the beginning starting when these kids are in the 5th and 6th grades, has always had them be involved in the planning of the programming that goes on there. So, they had a taste of leadership through that, and a lot of those young people come right on to us.

There are barriers to youth groups, and I think you need to think about them seriously. Transportation can be a major barrier. You have to work on that if it's a problem. Sometimes skills are important. How do you conduct a meeting? What are the responsibilities of officers?

CARLSON: At a workshop that I had, I invited a woman that teaches Robert's Rules of Order and organization skills, and she came in and talked with them.

Sometimes when you want to put young people on boards and commissions, they're shy. And they really need a buddy. They do better if you appoint two young people to a board and commission, so they have someone who they can feel comfortable with and someone that they can talk with before and after until they get more comfortable in that adult situation. There are a lot of things I think that you have to think about. The time schedule for kids is an important thing. Sometimes they can't come to meetings, and you have to adjust the time. It's important to take a look at the barriers to make certain you're not losing anybody because of some kind of restriction that's out there that you don't see at the beginning.

KYLE: I think the time of day for meetings for adults versus the time of day for meetings for young people is a very important consideration as well as transportation and skills issues that you're mentioning. And it's often adults sometimes just forget that they need to think about the time commitments that the young people that you're thinking to involve have.

I wanted to ask the reverse of my recruitment question. Are there things that it's important not to do, things that you just know don't work, that you should not do because they discourage participation by young people from diverse backgrounds?

BATES: I don't know that that's been a challenge for us. We're pretty integrated here. I don't know that that's been a big challenge for us in our community. David, did you feel that there was a challenge to getting diverse groups of kids in?

KYLE: Were there ever situations in either city, or situations not necessarily in your city, that you've heard about or think could happen in some places that would discourage participation by youth, especially from diverse backgrounds? Are there things therefore that haven't been a problem necessarily in Farmington Hills or Hampton, but that you've seen it happen and you say, "those are the kinds of things that discourage youth from participating?" Are there things not to do, in other words?

KINCHEN: I know that one of the things that many young people, both from diverse backgrounds and youth in general, have been somewhat leery over is the idea of having meetings strictly formalized. As a city commission, at the City Manager's Council, we'd have to follow Robert's Rules of Order and different procedures. But what we also do is we wanted to make sure that young people could feel as natural in that environment as they could. We didn't have any dress codes. We always had pizza for dinner. We many times would laugh and tell jokes. It's a very friendly atmosphere in addition to getting business done. So that's one of the main things, keeping it fun and keeping it friendly. We've held meetings in different areas on retreats as well.

In terms of diversity, one of the issues that we were really sensitive about in creating our Mayor's Youth Council is, as the Mayor said earlier, and John, I think you alluded to this also. It's not just going after the natural leaders, the overachievers, and the students that are in the National Honor Society and so forth. And I think the reason that, at least in Farmington Hills -- and not just Farmington Hills, but from what I've seen with the Michigan Municipal League. Cities such as Grand Rapids, cities such as East Lansing -- what they've been able to do to get multiple groups of young people together is they've gone into the schools, and they've talked with different groups instead of just going to the organization such as the National Honor Society and the other groups where students are already pretty actively involved. That's just one of the many ways that we've been able to do that in many cities across the state.

KYLE: You talked about your pyramid in Hampton, for instance, Matt and Cindy, and David was talking about working through the schools in Farmington Hills. Have you worked through other ways of reaching young people that aren't just at school-specific kinds of groups or organizations?

CARLSON: I mentioned neighborhoods. And we really have a strong neighborhood effort

here. We're a city of neighborhoods. We put a lot of emphasis on supporting and building stronger neighborhoods and getting young people involved in that. So, each one of our districts - - the neighborhoods -- have youth leadership groups, young people who have come forward and wanted to get involved and get a lot of training. We had tried at one point to have two young people sit on the Neighborhood Commission, which is made up entirely of adults, and they were going to put up two seats for the young people. It didn't really work. It wasn't a very youth-friendly setting. What we ended up doing is setting up a whole neighborhood youth advisory board where a couple of kids from each one of the local neighborhoods come together and talk about neighborhood issues. That has really grown into a wonderful thing. They now send representatives to the adult commission, and we then have relationships back and forth with the youth commission. So if we're dealing with an issue at the youth commission level and we say we really want to get a feel, kind of a pulse for the kids in the community, we just shoot it over to the Neighborhood Youth Advisory board. And they've got their hands on hundreds of kids who are their peers in the neighborhood, and we can get good feedback from them. And it works the other way around. So that's been kind of a neat thing that's happened.

KYLE: I wanted to mention one of the tools that we have pointed out as we prepared for this audioconference is the National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education, and Families recent action kit on "Promoting Youth Participation." The MetLife Foundation, with whom we plan to work in the future as well, supported its publication. This action kit has been sent out to many of you. But I think one of the questions I want to draw from it is that it points out several ways for youth to be participants. We've talked about youth councils, but the action kit also talks about youth mapping, youth summits, and youth service.

What I'd like to ask is if Farmington Hills or Hampton have experience in one of these other aspects of youth participation or know of examples in either its own city or in other cities across the country? I seem to hear that you talked about service, Cindy. Is there an active movement to have youth service in Hampton or the environs there?

CARLSON: It's definitely part of what we see as youth engagement. It really has as much support I think as some of the glitzier things or things that get more notice, like the Youth Commission. We try to get as much support to young people being involved at that level, too. Just Monday night we gave out grants. How many grants did we do for youth service, Matt?

TURMAN: About 16.

KYLE: Can you talk a little bit more about that, Matt? What kinds of things got grants?

TURMAN: Different service projects around the area such as cleaning up a park, providing food baskets for the homeless, involving youth in art projects around the city such as painting murals or rundown buildings possibly. A program we call something like "Hat For Hair" where hair is turned into hats and given to people who have had leukemia treatment. There are a wide variety of different projects. The key to the projects is that youth are involved somehow in the planning of it.

CARLSON: We're really trying to promote these projects as being either kicked off or culminated during National Youth Service Week so that we can put some concentrated publicity

about the whole idea of youth and service.

KYLE: Are these grants meaning actual dollars given to these service projects?

TURMAN: Yes, they are.

KYLE: And if so, where does the money come from to do that? How much money are you talking about for these 16 grants?

TURMAN: At the beginning of every fiscal year, the City Council appropriates the Youth Commission \$45,000. And with that money, the Youth Commission is allowed to dole it out in any cash value that we prefer. This last grant process we gave out in \$500 increments. For the grant process before that, we gave it out in \$2,000 increments. So it's a wide variety of money. If an organization wanted more money, it was possible that they apply for them at the first grant process, which was early in the fall.

CARLSON: The Youth Commission has the final say on who gets the money. Then, they're also responsible for doing the site visits to monitor and make sure that the money is being spent appropriately. It's really their own philanthropy program that they do.

KYLE: Just while we're talking about budgets, the \$45,000 is for the service projects?

CARLSON: It's for grants of all kinds. As Matt said, we did one round of regular youth involvement, youth engagement grants, and then one round just recently specifically for service projects for National Youth Service Day.

KYLE: What kind of budget is involved in actually implementing the Youth Council?

CARLSON: It's about \$30,000 altogether -- 35 maybe for the general operating budget within my office. And that pays for a part-time coordinator. We also have a young person who is a high school senior who is a paid staff position. And she serves as Secretary to the Commission. We give stipends to the commissioners, and then pay for pizzas and all those kinds of expenses that David was saying. And we have a retreat for the commission once a year. So that pretty much takes care of the budget. And then there's an actual separate line item for the grant program that's their responsibility to disperse in the way they see fit.

KYLE: Can you fill us in about Farmington Hills, Nancy, about how some of this is handled there?

BATES: Yes. They do have general fund budgets for the Youth Council and for the afterschool program. Also about five years ago we started a Community Foundation. The Community Foundation also gives funding for this. But a lot of the funding actually comes from the kids. They do a chili supper. They have a Battle of the Bands planned. Actually two years they've done a telethon, and they did it using their local talent, and they got the cable station for 24 hours. Kids called in pledges and their parents called in pledges, and a lot of the merchants gave gifts for raffling and for people who made huge pledges. The banks pledged to match

everybody's money that worked at the bank and gave them half the day off, so it was a huge community thing. The kids raised quite a lot of money that way. So they're very involved in their own fundraising too for special activities and to support what they're doing.

The committee sends a lot of kids to conferences. We just got back from Washington, from the National League of Cities conference, and we took seven young people with us. And that's not a small expense. A lot of times we can go to service organizations, such as the Kiwanis and Rotary, and they'll help a little bit. Different ways . . . it's a very creative thing to pull all the money together. But, it seems like if it's something we really want to do, somehow we find the resources to get it done, either from the city or from the outside.

CARLSON: Mayor Bates, what size is Farmington Hills? I'm not familiar with its size.

BATES: Farmington Hills is about 85,000 people.

CARLSON: And Hampton is 148,000.

KYLE: So everybody else can figure that out. We talked a little bit about youth service. I wanted to ask whether youth summits or mapping of what community resources you have are something that either of your cities has been involved in. And you can talk a little bit about your experience.

BATES: Actually, I had a meeting this week with the research director from Michigan State University. He is going to put together a youth mapping for us this summer. We tried to get it done last year and just could not.

One of the models he gave us seemed like an employment opportunity for young people, where they went out and did the mapping. Another model used his graduate students to come in and survey the schools, the business community, and the general community population.

We decided we need assistance with trying to understand what we've got in this community, and more importantly, what we haven't got. We're going to do a mapping this summer following the Search Institute's 40 developmental assets (<http://www.search-institute.org/assets>). We want to find out the assets we have available and what we don't. That should take place starting in about a month.

CARLSON: I'm real glad to hear you're going to do that. And I'm just encouraging you to do that. We had a wonderful experience from it because the feedback you get is just so powerful to people in the schools, in the neighborhoods, and in the community. It can really be a rallying point. At least that was our experience, wasn't it, Matt?

TURMAN: Yes, it was.

BATES: I think there's another advantage of it -- as one works through the finances. I think that kind of statistical information makes grant writing easier, if you want to write grants. And it also gives you a starting point and an ending point. Another thing that Dr. Baker is going to do is develop intake and exit surveys for the kids in our youth program, asking all kinds of questions, a lot like the questions you're asking us now. What did you get out of it? How did it impact your life? Why did you join? So that at the end we can understand if we're on track or

not, accomplishing the kind of goals that we really want to.

KYLE: Matt, you were about to say something about participation and youth mapping of assets there in Hampton?

TURMAN: The youth mapping system was in place a year before I got here, but I do know a few things about it. A group of young people was commissioned by the Youth Commission to go around to local businesses and local organizations to see what made a teen-friendly organization and business. They went to our local malls and did a survey of each mall and picked out different characteristics that each young person thought was important to them. Such as if there was positive lighting, if the salesperson was friendly, if the service was up to par, and things of that nature. Recently we did a survey among high school students just so we could update ourselves on what is a teen-friendly environment. And that took place actually three weeks ago.

CARLSON: Now, the young people who are working on that project are going to actually turn it into a guidebook to give back to businesses and organizations on how to make your place more youth friendly. And maybe come up with some kind of a way of rewarding the ones that the young people thought really met the criteria. The first time, we actually used community YouthMapping the way it's described through the Center for Youth Development (<http://cyd.aed.org/cym/cym.html>). That was many years ago before Matt was involved. We hired young people to go around and them to go around and do that inventory. We ended up turning that information into a website of where to go, who's hiring, where to go if you need this kind of help, what are the services around town. Like Matt was saying, the thing that's really come out that's mostly of interest to the teens is where the really youth friendly places are. So that's more of the focus of our mapping now -- the kind of hands-on mapping. And then in addition to that, as the Mayor of Farmington Hills was talking about, we've also done the survey of developmental assets, and that's just been a really important part of the data that we have.

KYLE: One of the things that I meant to ask earlier when we were talking about youth councils is how the members of the youth council in each of your communities are selected. And any other models, either that you know about or had tried and decided they didn't work or that work for some places? What model of selection for the members of your youth council are you using in Farmington Hills, Mayor?

BATES: I thought it was terribly important, no matter who was mayor, to have a youth council. So we actually put it in our city ordinance. And we're a combined youth council with the City of Farmington and Farmington Hills. With the population ratio, that means that there are three students from Farmington and 11 from Farmington Hills. The selection process is anyone can join the youth council. These 11 members from Farmington Hills are the voting members.

KYLE: How do you determine who the voting members are?

BATES: The youth vote from among their membership. They select the ones that they want to be the voting members. And that's never been a problem. The challenge we had from

the beginning -- the kids wanted no officers. They said, "This isn't going to be an honor society thing. We don't want to lord it over anybody. We want all this to be the same." We finally said that just from an administrative standpoint, we had to have some kind of flow or chain of command there. They agreed that they if they could select their own voting membership from among their general membership, that would be fine. And that's what we did.

KYLE: In Hampton how are members selected?

TURMAN: Actually that passes back upon the Youth Commission, in which the Youth Commission is commissioned to go back to the high schools and recruit students who might be their fellow classmates. The high schools may do things such as put out announcements or have a little social after school just to bring kids in and explain to them what we do and see who are interested. From there the students get applications. And the applications are turned in to the Mayor's Office in about March or April. Once we go through the applications, we call each individual in for an interview. The Commissioners themselves hold the interview to see who they feel would be the best candidate for that position. Just so we make it less tense, we do it as a group. We'll have a round table discussion with maybe two or three commissioners and six candidates.

KYLE: That's a system that I'm familiar with in Boston as well, where the youth have the primary -- perhaps sole -- responsibility for selecting succeeding members. There are also examples in other cities where they are appointed, that there may be one from each high school. Sometimes they appoint one from each council member district or two from each district or two from each high school. And so there are some different kinds of selection processes. But you're hearing more and more I think about selection processes that involve this year's council helping to select next year's council so that it is self-perpetuating among the youth, so that they can be responsible for this.

BATES: I think ongoing membership is always a challenge because of the fact that kids graduate and go on. So you're always in a recruiting phase. I would like to tell the listeners that when we first started our youth council -- and we're very young here too in Farmington Hills -- I thought there would be advantage to having a lot of youth councils around, and not just ours. So, I hosted a conference on how to have a youth council. And at this workshop, we had John Kyle from the National League of Cities and someone from the Community Foundation come and speak. It was a day and a half workshop. I have video of that, if anyone is interested. It's about an hour tape. My e-mail address is Nbates@ci.farmington-hills.mi.es. And we would be glad to make one available to you. It has just a lot of nuts and bolts things about starting a youth council.

CARLSON: We have a video and a manual that was written by a young person who was on the commission and myself, and it really goes through the whole process of setting up a youth commission. And then the video is kind of fun. It really shows the Youth Commission in action, the kinds of things that youth civic engagement can really do. It's kind of inspiring, even if it's not specifically shown for a youth commission, but just for the whole idea of what the power of young people is in being engaged. So that's available for folks too. They can e-mail or call us for an order form for that. The best e-mail to use would be our Youth Commission e-mail:

youthcom@hampton.gov. Or you can call the Youth Commission's phone line, which is 757-728-3284.

KINCHEN: I'd like to pick up on a lot of the resources that we're utilizing. One of the things that we found at the Municipal League is that the best resources out there are youth themselves. We held -- in partnership with the Michigan Recreation and Parks Association -- the first ever statewide youth symposium. Where high school students actually put on workshops on how to select students on mayor's youth councils, how to form a mayor's youth council, how to appoint young people to boards and commissions, and most importantly, how to fundraise as well. We're also publishing a kit of those best practice ideas to disseminate among the cities throughout the state and around the country to cities that are interested. We should have that up and running by September 2002 by our convention.

KYLE: One of the things that we've been asked is the ages of the youth who are participating on the Youth Council in Farmington Hills and in Hampton. And what advice or observations you have about why those ages -- how young do you have members participating? What do parents think about this? Are there some reservations you have about one age or another?

BATES: I was pretty impressed, actually. We have a couple of 8th graders. And I thought this likely was just too young for them. They've been very good participating members, and they've grown a lot. And it's worked very well. We have seniors, of course. We have juniors and sophomores and a few freshmen, and then the couple of the 8th graders. High school age is essentially it. And I think because there are some Social Studies classes, Civics classes that they had, maybe their interest sort of is piqued at 15 or so, when they really think this is something they would like to do. So there are a lot of members around that age.

KYLE: Cindy, what about the ages there?

CARLSON: Our Youth Commission is made up of high school age young people. Matt mentioned the Superintendent Advisory Group that he sits on, there are 8th graders on that as well -- 8th grade all the way up to seniors. I think a little bit younger than that. And the content of the things we deal with gets a little bit difficult. But I think from 8th up, that young people really enjoy being a part of it. We have a lot of seniors, and it's always a problem letting them go every year and then replacing them. I've been involved in some of the commissions getting started around here in our region, and I know one of the commissions is struggling a little bit. The predominant members are middle school aged. And I think what's happening is that the high school age young people don't really want to be part of the group because it seems too young. There are too many middle schoolers. So I think that a community has to really think through what kind of group do you want and what do you want it to do, and then decide what the age should be.

KYLE: If you were to give advice to a mayor or city council member or other municipal official where there is currently no youth council, what is the very first step that you think they should undertake in order to get a council going? Mayor, you mentioned the Mayor's Night -- just you advertising a place where you were and inviting youth to come and talk with you.

That's one kind of example. What are some examples besides that that you've either done yourselves or seen other communities do to really take as a first step?

BATES: You know, before I invited an encounter with the young people, I'd get myself educated. The National League of Cities is a wonderful, wonderful resource for this.

KYLE: I didn't pay for this endorsement.

BATES: I really don't think you can do better. And they have all kinds of information from across the country for cities large and small. And some place in there you'll find the information you need that makes you feel comfortable to start your youth council. It's good to sort all of this out in your head before you actually meet with the young people -- to have clearly in mind what you want to accomplish and what your goals are, and then get them in on the planning from the beginning. Don't think you have to have it all together and then get the kids in. But in your own mind, know how you want this to go. And then get the kids in and let them be the planners, because they're the experts.

KYLE: Cindy, what would be your top piece of advice for somebody who doesn't have one?

CARLSON: I would definitely agree that it's just really important to talk with young people, to get to know them, and to get some of their thoughts.

KYLE: How do you go about doing that?

CARLSON: Well, one resource that city government officials would have would maybe be either someone in their organization or in their community who works in the field of youth development. And I'm not just talking about somebody who maybe works with kids in general or just likes young people. But somebody who really knows about youth development and has experience bringing young people to the table and helping them express their views and being a part of youth and adult partnerships. I think that kind of a person can be the mayor's greatest ally in recruiting kids, getting some in, setting up the kind of environment that's conducive to conversation and really preparing both sides -- the mayor and the young people -- to have a successful conversation with each other.

BATES: The other real tool I found that works is called pizza.

KYLE: Food.

CARLSON: Pancakes.

BATES: You've got to feed these young people.

CARLSON: They're into chicken now -- southern fried chicken.

BATES: Ah, well, we haven't gotten there yet. We're still on the pizza phase. But you do

have to feed them.

KYLE: You start with a local official -- a mayor or a councilmember -- who is interested in doing this. What are the strategies for getting the entire city council to support it? What are the strategies to get a \$30,000 or \$45,000 city budget allocation for this?

CARLSON: Bring the youth in front of them.

BATES: Exactly. Youth ambassadors.

KYLE: I'm trying to recap some of your advice. One is to understand ahead of time what it is you want to do and be respectful of the youth and be inclusive of youth before you ever plan and implement exactly what it is you want to do. And what I want to add to that is that when I've talked about youth service or youth councils or youth summits or youth mapping, one of those doesn't have to come first. Any one of those can be first in your community. It depends on where you're ready to go. If service projects are the best place to start in your community, start there. Youth councils can come later. In other communities, youth councils is the place to start. If that's what you want to do first, then do that.

But find out what it is you want to know and include youth in doing that right away. Don't decide it at an adult level and then go back to including youth. Think about the special needs of kids and do that in two ways. One, talk to somebody who knows youth development so that you're better aware of what you're getting into in working with youth. And secondly, looking at time commitments and biological commitments like food that youth have that adults may or may not worry about as much for a meeting of just adults. And make yourself available. Get out into schools and into neighborhoods to meet youth. Get hold of an opportunity where youth can come and just talk to the mayor and city council members so that there is some ease of access. Then those kinds of steps and working with the youth themselves can lead to the actual implementation of a city council resolution or a budget entry, etc. Am I on the right track of saying things that you've said to me?

BATES: Yes. And you know something that's very helpful for me was this commission that I formed for children, youth, and families. It was wonderful to be able to go to the City Council and say that they're supporting this, that they studied it, and that they think it's a good thing to have a youth council. They really gave me a leg up with Council. Because in that Commission for Children, Youth, and Families, all the stakeholders in the community are there - - the Judge, the Chief of Police, Superintendent of Schools. So, it was a meaningful thing to have their recommendation.

KYLE: I want to thank you all very much -- Matt, Cindy, David, Nancy -- for joining us on this call today. It's been very enlightening and I hope helpful to our listeners. I hope those of our listeners who have the action kit will look into it more and make use of it. If you don't have the "Promoting Youth Participation" action kit, please let us know here at NLC and we will provide you with a copy. If you need multiple copies for your entire city council, we can work that out as well. Leave a detailed message at 202-626-3014, e-mail rpd1@nlc.org, or download the action kit at www.nlc.org/iyef.