

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



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

ISSUE 1 -- YOUTH SUMMITS

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2003

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

NLC NETWORK NEWS

1. This first edition is being sent to those who have already signed up for the network, as well as others who we think might be interested. If you have questions about this e-newsletter or the network, contact Rachel Banov at fellow@nlc.org or 202/626-3072. If you have not yet signed up with the network, a copy of the survey for new network participants is attached.
2. The next network e-newsletter will discuss Youth Service in the strategy spotlight. To share information about service activities and/or programs in your city or town, please contact Rachel Banov at fellow@nlc.org or 202/626-3072.
3. A one-day regional conference for adults and youth on youth participation will be held on May 14, 2003 in Indianapolis, Indiana. The conference will be co-sponsored by NLC and the Indiana Association for Cities and Towns (IACT). Details available at www.nlc.org/iyef.
4. National Youth Service Day (NYSD) is April 11-13, 2003. More than 3 million young people from all 50 states and the District of Columbia will participate in service projects on NYSD. For more information, go to www.ysa.org or call 202/296-2992.

STRATEGY SPOTLIGHT: HOSTING A YOUTH SUMMIT

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

A youth summit can be:

- A forum where youth can interact and discuss issues and concerns important to them;
- A meeting that brings youth together around a specific issue or theme;
- A resource fair that informs youth of local activities and services;
- A means of gathering youth views and possible solutions to guide municipal policies and planning;
- An opportunity to engage youth in a community service project; or,
- A combination of these.

Municipal Role

Support from local elected officials for youth summits shows youth that the leaders value their opinions. There are numerous ways for municipal leaders to be involved with a youth summit:

- Host or sponsor the summit.
- Attend or speak at the summit.
- Contribute city resources, such as funding, staff time, meeting space, and in-kind donations.
- Promote the summit among other municipal officials and community leaders.
- Sign or co-sign letters with a youth representative to send to youth and adults in the community encouraging them to join the planning team, recruit their friends, and offer other advice.
- Help publicize the event through press releases or speaking on a public service announcement.

Goals of a Youth Summit

Summits create an opportunity for youth to identify, analyze, and address problems or challenges that affect their lives. Similarly, it can be an effective way for municipal and community leaders to gather youth perspectives and input on improving local policies and programs.

Some cities hold a summit in conjunction with planning or launching a new municipal youth initiative, such as a youth council, a skateboard park, or an effort to map youth resources in the community. Other cities use a summit to educate youth about municipal affairs and provide networking opportunities among youth and municipal/community leaders.

A summit resource fair – tables or booths featuring youth-serving organizations, city departments, internships, volunteer opportunities, and summer camps – can inform youth of local services and activities that promote positive development.

Youth can explore and learn about one or more themes at a summit – themes such as relationships, health and fitness, diversity, media images, and prevention of drug and alcohol use.

In *Indianapolis, Ind.*, the 2002 Mayor's Third Annual Teen Summit focused on "Preparing Teens for the Real World." Youth participated in workshops on job interviews and the stock market, panel discussions on charter schools and college admissions tests, a college and job fair, and student roundtables on various topics selected by the Mayor's Youth Council.

Some cities have collaborated with other cities and/or their state municipal league in order to host a regional or statewide youth summit or symposium.

The *Texas Municipal League*, working with the cities of *Killeen* and *Copperas Cove, Tex.*, will sponsor the 3rd Annual Youth Advisory Commission Summit in Killeen on March 1-2. Workshops for youth – planned and implemented by youth – are featured. Adults in attendance will share lessons, issues, and solutions.

Planning a Youth Summit

A youth council, municipal department, mayor, city councilmember, school district, nonprofit youth-serving organization, or a collaboration of these, can host or help plan a youth summit.

Youth – at least one or two – should be involved from the start of the planning process. These youth might be those already involved in city initiatives, those with whom adults already have relationships, or those recommended by their peers.

The views and ideas of young people are essential. Many youth and adults report that the key to their successful summits is “to involve youth -- let the youth run it.” When it is clear that an event is *for youth* and *by youth*, participants will be comfortable sharing their thoughts. Also, to the extent youth planners represent those invited and expected to attend the event, there is an increased likelihood that the summit will elicit a good turnout and be productive.

Once the planners decide to hold a summit, consider the following first steps:

- Determine and/or recruit a planning committee composed of both youth and adults. Some aspects of the summit will require a small group to meet regularly to make key decisions, while other aspects will require larger numbers for specific tasks (mailings, set-up, clean-up).
- Choose a date, keeping in mind which dates will be best for the youth, based on school schedules, holidays, and the best times of day to meet.
- Create a tentative timeline by counting backwards from the summit date to determine necessary deadlines, such as securing a location, carrying out recruitment, extending invitations, ordering food and supplies, or getting commitments from speakers (if any) and special guests.

Summit Activities

Based on the goals you hope to accomplish, there are numerous options for what to do at a summit.

Some cities hold a “Speak-Out,” in which youth lead their peers in an open microphone session for participants to share their views.

The city of **Tempe, Ariz.** Mayor’s Youth Advisory Commission sponsors an annual Youth Town Hall that attracts more than 150 youth and community-decision makers – including school board members, business leaders, and public service agencies – to discuss community issues.

Youth can facilitate small discussion groups to brainstorm ideas. Each group then reports back to the entire audience.

Youth or adult leaders – or teams of both – can run workshops on topics such as developing a youth council, fundraising, marketing, recruiting diverse youth, or writing mission statements and by-laws.

Through panel discussions, youth, municipal officials, and other community leaders have the opportunity to talk to each other about various community issues.

Guest speakers – youth, adults, or both – could give keynote presentations to the whole audience.

Training workshops can be conducted for *youth* on leadership skills, improving youth/adult partnerships, or becoming group facilitators. Training for *adults* can include sessions on including youth in the decision-making process, respecting youth, recruiting youth, or communicating with youth.

Summits can also be an opportunity to recognize youth accomplishments and leadership.

The city of **Anchorage, Alaska**, highlighted a range of youth successes at their last summit, such as performing over 100 community service hours, being recently elected to student government positions, or receiving a scholarship.

Some summits incorporate icebreakers, videos, role-play skits, presentations in the form of a game, talk, or trivia show, PowerPoint slide presentations, music, and/or other entertainment. Almost all summits serve food, ranging from simply snacks and juice to multiple meals throughout the day.

Outreach and Publicity

Encourage the young people on your planning team to recruit their peers. Listen to their ideas in planning outreach strategies.

- Develop a press release and identify both youth and adult spokespersons.
- Contact the media, including newspapers written in languages other than English, and local television and radio stations.
- Deliver flyers at local schools or other places young people gather: afterschool centers, 4-H programs, youth employment offices, youth clubs, faith-based institutions, and shopping malls.
- Advertise the summit on the city homepage, community calendar, and partner organizations' websites.
- Broadcast the event on a local cable TV public access channel so family members, friends, and interested community members can view the proceedings live or on tape at a later date.

Follow-up

Celebrate early accomplishments and sustain the momentum generated by a successful summit by following through with the ideas gathered. Challenge the participants to take the knowledge and skills that they have learned at the summit back to their schools, neighborhoods, and communities. Many cities document the event to share the concerns and issues raised by the participants with those who could not attend, key community leaders, and the media. Videotapes of the summit can be shown at future events or on a local cable access channel.

The city of *Nashville, Tenn.*, showcases their 2002 Mayor's Youth Summit, "Embracing Diversity – One City, Many People," on the Nashville youth council website, including information about the event's vision statement, history, summary, sponsors, as well as a photograph slide show of the youth throughout the day.

Evaluation forms are also helpful in order to gather feedback that youth can incorporate into presentations to the city council, school board, community leaders, or their peers, or into summaries of the event in reports or grant applications.

Youth leaders of the *Polk County, Iowa* Youth Forum put together a PowerPoint presentation summarizing the event, including who was involved, concerns and solutions generated, future goals based on the outcomes, benefits of youth involvement, and how the youth in attendance evaluated the forum. The youth shared this presentation with the Des Moines, Iowa City Council.

Youth can identify next steps or activities to address the issues raised at the summit, such as by developing an ongoing group or creating an action plan of goals for the future.

The youth council in *Kirkland, Wash.*, creates a two-year work plan after each summit. When members re-evaluate the items on the work plan at the subsequent summit, they are pleased to find that they have accomplished many of their goals.

The city of *Holyoke, Mass.*, Youth Commission worked with local partners, including a university, to condense the ideas and goals brainstormed at the youth summit into a "Youth Visions Map." Next, the Youth Commission developed a "mini-grant" program in which other local youth request funding for youth-run

projects reflecting some of the goals in the Map. The Youth Commission members judged proposals and distributed funds, provided by a local community foundation.

TWO CITIES IN THE SPOTLIGHT: BOSTON, MASS. and SANTA BARBARA, CALIF.

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

CITY OF BOSTON, MASS. -- Pop. @ 589,000

The city of Boston, Mass., has sponsored 8 citywide youth summits, and is planning their ninth for April 19, 2003. Boston hosts two youth gatherings each year, a smaller youth forum for youth planners to brainstorm ideas and then another larger youth summit about six months later that is open to all youth.

Fall Youth Forum

The Mayor's Youth Council sponsors a Fall Youth Forum for young people to bring their ideas and solutions directly to Mayor Menino and other city officials. At these forums, the planning committee, which includes about 100 youth – members of the Mayor's Youth Council, Mayor's Youthline telephone/computer resource service, Boston Community Centers Youth Connection Peer Leaders program, and other community youth groups – convene.

Mayor Thomas Menino, municipal staff, contributors, and sponsors, such as the Police Activities League and a local university, are also involved in the planning process. Youth groups are invited to submit proposals about what they want to do at the spring youth summit, and plan parts of the day.

Citywide Spring Youth Summit

The annual Mayor's Youth Summit attracts over 1,500 young people, who participate in workshops, listen to youth speakers, and enjoy youth entertainers. Resource tables highlight all the positive activities – youth organizations, internship opportunities, summer jobs, and summer camps – in which Boston youth can participate. Each spring, the daylong event shows young people that they have strengths, options, and support. The themes and activities of Boston's summits vary each year.

- The 1997 youth summit focused on creating a positive image for teens. A group of Chicago Police officers who work within the Chicago Housing Projects, the "Slick Boys," made presentations that combined rap music, question/answer sessions, and straight talk to emphasize the disastrous effects of violence, gangs and other criminal activities.
- During the 2000 summit, which focused on the ability of youth to make a difference and offered several ways to become involved, youth council members and Boston Police performed a skit about police/teen relationships. Role reversal and emphasis of stereotypes initiated a discussion that involved the entire audience.
- Part of the 2001 summit showed youth ways to prepare for the future through education, training, internships, and volunteering. In addition, a diverse career panel of professionals – including a plumber, a police officer, a graduate student, and employees of several different city offices – explained their backgrounds and answered questions.

Use of technology

Boston's summits incorporate the use of technology when possible. One year, many of the youth created PowerPoint presentations for the audience. Not only did they turn out amazing presentations, but also some youth learned new computer skills from their peers who had more experience with technology. In another year, a public service announcement to inform more people about the city youth council was created and shown for the first time to the summit participants.

The city finds it helpful to videotape the summit for future use. Because it can be costly to rent the necessary video equipment, summit planners are sure to take full advantage of having it by using it in other ways throughout the day. For example, youth filmed scenes beforehand to intersperse with a live talk show skit about parent and teen communication difficulties.

The Youth Council website provides information about past and upcoming youth programs and initiatives. Summaries about previous summits are posted there, and participants have the ability to register for the summit online. The website reaches a large and diverse group of youth.

Effective Practices and Advice

- Prepare information about featured themes or discussions in advance to enable youth and adult speakers to adequately respond to questions by summit participants.
- Limit the number of adult speakers at the summit.
- Be honest with the youth about what they can do. For example, there may be certain logistics with which the youth will need help from adult sponsors or need guidance on how to proceed.
- Find a venue that already has the types of equipment that you will need, such as tables, chairs, a stage if necessary, etc. to avoid added cost and logistics planning.
- Make sure that the location is easy to get to via public transportation if none will be provided.

For further information, contact Patty McMahon, Director, Mayor's Youth Council, 1 City Hall Plaza, Room 603, Boston, MA 02201. Phone: 617-635-4490;
E-mail: YouthCouncil@ci.boston.ma.us; Website: www.bostonyouthzone.com.

CITY OF SANTA BARBARA, CALIF. -- Pop. @ 90,000

Planning Youth Summits

The city of Santa Barbara, Calif., holds two youth summits per year, using varied formats.

Some formats offer a youth Speak-Out to which the mayor and other municipal officials are invited to attend and listen to youth voice their concerns and ideas.

Other summits provide youth with several topics to explore, such as truancy, drug use, and alcohol. Youth facilitators are provided with information about the topics in order to maintain discussion.

Some inexpensive summits only require the costs of printing flyers, the use of a free facilitator and venue, and the choice not to serve food. More expensive variations have included food, raffle prizes, decorations, and music in the background.

Typically, they start planning about two months in advance, first choosing the date and then the venue. Next, they "get the team going" by creating subcommittees to handle specific assignments. They have found that it is key to have the youth involved. As a result, the planners from the Youth Council and other local youth groups create the goals for the summit. They also seek donations and write letters to the schools.

To select an adult facilitator for the summit, the planners choose a popular teacher from a local school. Though they believe the youth are best suited to plan the summit, they have found an adult is better able to guide the youth throughout the summit day.

Collaboration

The city realizes that collaboration with other local youth agencies and organizations is important. It not only enables them to combine existing resources and reach more youth, but also to rely on each other's connections, i.e. to funds or in-kind donations, that will aid the summit planning.

Collaboration also expands the reach of the summit. They invite youth from foster care agencies and other youth groups to help plan the summit, as well as to bring large groups of youth to attend the event. In this way, a more diverse group of youth is involved.

Incentives for Youth Participation

The city of Santa Barbara has created numerous incentives for youth to attend and participate in the summit. To promote participation during a Speak-Out, they give a raffle ticket to a youth each time he/she speaks at the microphone to increase their chance of winning a raffle prize. Summit hours count toward the community service hours required for graduation. And, some teachers opt to make the summit a class assignment, or offer extra credit for summit participation.

Next steps after the summit

In order to ensure they hear from all youth who attended the summit, including those who did not voice their opinion publicly at the Speak-Out microphones, survey forms are combined with the oral responses. The youth leaders can then incorporate the feedback into presentations for the city council or school board. The city also finds the information useful to have when applying for grants, or to summarize the event in written reports.

In addition, the youth can act upon the concerns raised at the summit. For example, summit attendees complained that there were not enough activities for youth in the city. Therefore, the Youth Council formed a new subcommittee to address those concerns, such as planning a dance. This enables youth to see that their concerns are valid and that they can effect change in their community. They have then followed up on the issue at the following year's summit by looking at the progress made over the year and asking if there are new ideas or solutions.

For further information, contact Susan Young, Recreation Supervisor, City of Santa Barbara -Teen Programs, 100 E. Carrillo Street, Santa Barbara, CA 93102; Phone: 805-897-2650; E-mail: syoung@ci.santa-barbara.ca.us; Website: http://www.ci.santa-barbara.ca.us/departments/parks_and_recreation/recreation/teen_programs.html.

RESOURCES ABOUT YOUTH PARTICIPATION IN GENERAL

1. **What Kids Can Do (WKCD)** is a national nonprofit organization that documents the value of young people working with teachers and other adults on projects that combine learning with public purpose. WKCD features compelling examples of schools and communities working together to challenge young people intellectually, enlist their help with real problems, nourish their diverse talents, support their perseverance, and encourage their contributions as citizens. For more information, call: 401/247-7665, e-mail: info@whatkidscando.org, or go to: <http://www.whatkidscando.org/intro.html>.
2. ***Young Active Citizens Curriculum: Youth and Adults at the Decision-Making Table*** is a comprehensive guide to achieving meaningful youth representation on organizational governing bodies and public commissions. Young Active Citizens is a project of the **Youth Leadership Institute (YLI)**. YLI provides professional, relevant, effective training and technical assistance to people in education, health, and community development systems and agencies, as well as to young people, youth practitioners, policy-makers and other interested parties. For more information, call: 415/836-9160, e-mail: info@yli.org, or go to: <http://www.yli.org>.

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

