5.1 Youth Community Action FY10

Brief Summary of Program

Youth community action involves young people and adults working together in partnership to make valuable contributions to strengthen or enhance NY communities. These efforts have many different foci including preventing youth tobacco use, promoting youth employment, creating youth-friendly spaces, establishing healthy environments, and increasing community safety. Participating youth gain in six competency domains: cultural, personal, civic, political, cognitive, and social skills. Intended outcomes are that youth are respected as learners and teachers, that specific knowledge and skill gains are made, that youth gain positive attitudes about their ability to create desirable change, that participants aspire to continued civic and service activities, that lasting contributions are made to communities, and that adults and communities recognize youth as valued partners. Faculty research covers the study of how adults mentor high school interns and apprentices in workplaces as well as the development of model mentor training program for adaptation in communities.

Situation and Priorities Statement

Purposeful action requires that we design learning experiences for youth to attain a voice; build youth/adult partnerships through staff and volunteer development, and actively engage youth in curriculum and program efforts.

In its broadest sense, YCA refers to the authentic and meaningful engagement of young people in programs, organizations, and communities, where they have or share voice, influence, and decision-making authority. Youth-adult partnerships are more than good youth development. Young people’s fresh ideas, conviction and willingness to work hard make them ideal partners in community change and social justice initiatives. Real youth-adult partnerships require young people and adults to share both power and responsibility, to listen and really hear one another, and to set aside all the stereotypes that each group represents to the other.

The youth community action movement underscores the importance of young people being engaged in leadership and/or decision-making roles now, not only at some point in the future when they have reached ‘adulthood’. Youth-adult partnerships, based on mutual respect and trust, unleash the potential of both young people and adults, and provide a powerful tool to create positive and lasting change for individuals, organizations, and communities.

“Imagine a world where young people are fully engaged in decision-making about the issues that affect them. What challenges might they identify? What solutions might they discover? What would our communities—and nation—look like if youth were a meaningful and vital part of the process? The underlying concept of Youth in Governance [Youth Community Action] regards young people as necessary, fully engaged participants in their communities. Rather than seeing young people as “future citizens” or “future leaders,” Youth in Governance [YCA] regards youth as capable individuals who contribute in meaningful, authentic ways to the organizations and communities where they live, learn, work, and play. – Carole MacNeil, Ph.D. Statewide Director, 4-H Youth Development, University of California at Davis Youth in Governance, Youth in Action: A National 4-H Initiative for Systemic Change.

Assumptions

Positive - Youth Community Action (YCA) empowers youth and adults by building life skills through experiential learning. YCA initiatives support 4-H Youth Development mission to create supportive learning environments in which diverse youth and adults reach their fullest potential as capable, competent and caring citizens.

Negative - People wrongly assumed that YCA was a new program. Adults held the misconception that educators need to be ‘experts’ or ‘in control’ of the program. Educators found it hard to ‘visualize’ YCA contexts.

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2 Innovate, Newsletter of the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development, Fall 2005
3 Youth in Governance in Organizational Settings, Carole MacNeil, PhD, National Director, 4-H Youth in Governance Initiative
Description of Target Audiences

- Youth 5 – 21 years of age and adults.
  - Youth, 5-19 year of age are the targeted 4-H / non 4-H youth audiences
  - 19 – 21 year olds are college students who work well with younger youth and serve as mentors and role models. They will gain personally and professionally from YCA efforts.
- Adults (21+), of any age, ethnicity, religion, etc. They choose to serve as guides for the process, and are a very important part of any youth/adult driven project.
- Communities as whole: educating / informing youth and adults organizations, businesses, schools, and other institutions, to create the paradigm shift necessary to realize the value of youth and adults working together to build ‘community’.

Ultimate Goal(s) of the program

- Youth are community leaders making decisions and taking action on issues of public/community concern that impact their lives.
- Diversity of community is reflected within and engaged as key stakeholders.

Note: Only highlighted outcomes are collected in annual reporting.

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<tr>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Near-Term Outcomes</th>
<th>Mid-Term Outcomes</th>
<th>Long-Term Outcomes</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(5.1.1a) # of youth participating in education programs leading to youth community action initiatives. (no target)</td>
<td>(5.1.1d) # of youth and adults demonstrating knowledge gains related to Youth/Adult Partnerships and Youth Community Action Initiatives. (no target)</td>
<td>(5.1.1e) # of youth documented to have practiced life skills necessary to meet challenges of adolescence and adulthood in authentic decision-making partnerships with adults as a result of participating in the program. (4.500)</td>
<td>(5.1.1g) # of documented instances in which youth and adults partner to improve quality of life within a community as a result of participating in the program. (500)</td>
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<td>(5.1.1b) # of youth participating in train-the-trainer programs related to youth community action. (no target)</td>
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<td>(5.1.1c) # of adults participating train-the-trainer programs related to youth community action. (no target)</td>
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<td>(5.1.1d) # of communities participating in youth community action initiatives. (no target)</td>
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