



*Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”– Margaret Mead*

## **ACT FOR YOUTH – NASSAU COUNTY YOUTH BOARD**

### *Who We Are*

Youth Board is a department of Nassau County government. Youth Board entered its 42<sup>nd</sup> year in 2007 and was established to develop, coordinate, fund and evaluate youth services in the County with special emphasis on youth development and delinquency prevention. The mission of the Youth Board is *to promote: self-esteem, positive values, dignity, competency and the physical, social and mental well-being of Nassau's youth and families through neighborhood-based community development activities.* Youth development and empowerment are central to the mission of the Youth Board and are integrated into all aspects of Planning, Funding, Research and Program/Resource Development. Youth Board is not a direct service provider. This position has allowed Youth Board to facilitate many community development planning initiatives.

Over 35,000 youth and families are served through a network of 44 providers. Over 70% of the Contract Agencies are physically located and serve in the top 15 “high-need” communities (population, poverty, youth offense and drop out data.). Youth Board Policy and Funding Guidelines require the integration of the youth development philosophy into all aspects of contract services: after-school, runaway/homeless, youth leadership and community-service learning, teenage pregnancy/HIV/AIDS prevention, juvenile justice, family life education, crisis intervention, violence and gang prevention, cultural enrichment, employability skills, summer programs, summer lunch, Limited English Proficiency and leisure time programs.

Assets Coming Together (ACT) for Youth is a five-year, statewide initiative funded by the NYS Health Department to: increase youth supports and opportunities, youth voice and engagement, organizational change and policies that reflect positive youth development principles. In Nassau County, this initiative is facilitated by the Nassau County Youth Board in partnership with the Collaboration for Community Change (CCC). The CCC represents government agencies, local coalitions, community and faith-based organizations and young people. The CCC is the engine that drives all ACT FOR YOUTH activity. *We are thankful to the New York State Health Department for supporting this Initiative and know that it will have a great impact on the delivery of youth and family development services and opportunities throughout Nassau County.*

### **NASSAU ACT FOR YOUTH Goals:**

- Create a new way of thinking about youth based on their strengths;

- Provide opportunity for youth voice;
- Encourage adults to learn how to include youth ideas in their organizations;
- Work with youth toward effective and positive change in their community;
- Strengthen community partnerships that promote positive youth development and prevent risky and unhealthy behaviors among young people ages 10-19.

## ***What We Do - Year I in Review***

### **Overview of NASSAU ACT FOR YOUTH Initiative Activities:**

- *Development of the Collaboration for Community Change (CCC):* Nassau ACT FOR YOUTH Collaboration for Community Change (CCC) has been convened and oriented to the goals and objectives of the ACT FOR YOUTH Initiative. Memorandums of Understanding have been created to articulate the functions, roles, relationships and contributions of all members. The CCC is the engine that drives all ACT FOR YOUTH activity.
- *Countywide Planning:* in collaboration with youth, parents, community-based providers, County Departments, faith-based organizations and the broader community the ACT FOR YOUTH AGENDA was developed. This document articulates strategies that youth and health/human service providers want to see happen in Nassau County over the next five years to: increase youth supports and opportunities; enhance youth engagement and youth voice; promote organizational changes and policies reflective of positive youth development principles.
- *ACT FOR YOUTH marketing:* over 65 meetings have been held with stakeholders, funders, providers and government entities to discuss ACT FOR YOUTH and its application;
- *Youth Training:* Six teams of youth and adults were trained in a ten-hour curriculum to facilitate focus groups with youth, ages 10-19 throughout Nassau County between February and April 2007. An additional group of peers from Long Island Crisis Center's, PRIDE FOR YOUTH Program were trained and facilitated focus groups. After each focus group was completed, this information was returned to the host organizations to prompt local community action;
- *Focus Group Facilitation:* CCC members facilitated focus groups throughout the health and human service provider arena;
- *Inclusion in the Nassau County Integrated Plan:* The ACT FOR YOUTH objectives have been included into the Integrated County Plan for Youth and Families;
- *Data Analysis:* Individual Community Profiles have been completed for each community throughout Nassau County;
- *Professional Development and Community Service Learning Projects:* Two CCC sub-committees were developed within the CCC. One focused on the development of provider trainings and the other on the development of a *Call For Applications* and selection of local community-service learning projects "seeded" through ACT FOR YOUTH;
- *Professional Development:* Three trainings have been implemented for health and human service providers: January 25, 2007 – "Organizational Growth through Positive Youth Development"; May 11, 2007 – "Youth Development in Action" and June 7, 2007 "Youth

- Mobilization and Community Service Learning". In total 101 professionals have been trained;
- *Organizational Training:* in addition to the broader training agenda designed for cross-systems participation, individualized organizational training curriculum has been developed and piloted with Department of Social Service Staff and at CW Post for graduate students in mental health and school counseling. This 1.5 hour training focused on translating youth development principles into organizational structures and practice and can be adapted to multiple venues. In total, this curriculum, (and variations thereof), has been piloted with over 110 participants. In Year II, it will be implemented for the broader community with assistance from the CCC membership.
  - *Community Service Learning Projects:* \$16,000 from Grant Funds were used to "seed" three local community-service learning projects focused on strategies identified through focus groups. A description of these projects are is as follows:
    - ***Family and Children's Association:*** Fifteen to twenty High School Juniors and Seniors, ages 15-18 from Hempstead High School comprise the Village of Hempstead Initiative Advisory Group. These young people planned, hosted and evaluated a Senior Prom for approximately 200 Senior Citizens who reside in the Village on June 15, 2007.
    - ***Hispanic Counseling Center:*** implemented a Youth Video Program for teens serviced by the drop-in center. The project educated adolescents about how to create, edit and produce documentaries about their life and family experiences as they deal with acculturation and immigration.
    - ***Long Beach MLK Center:*** implemented the "Telling Stories" Project; a media-based model that challenges High School students to: critically examine their lives and those of family, friends and community; learn essential leadership skills; practice the T.I.P methodology (Think, Imagine, Participate) as it relates to this project and beyond. To launch this project, on April 29<sup>th</sup> a premiere of the "HIP HOP Project" movie was shown to over 275 youth and adults from the region at College of Old Westbury.
  - ACT FOR YOUTH is truly about building bridges, connections and relationships to promote positive youth development principles and practices throughout Nassau County. Since the inception of this Initiative, there has been active communication with the Hagedorn Foundation. The Horace Hagedorn Foundation (HHF) is guided by the belief that all children deserve a happy, healthy and safe start to life. The Foundation considers parents and supportive communities to be essential players in the successful start of a young person's life and transition into adulthood. Based on the synergy of vision between the Horace Hagedorn Foundation and ACT FOR YOUTH, funding was made available by the Hagedorn Foundation to support two additional community-service learning projects as follows:
    - ***Long Beach REACH, Inc.:*** will implement a Community-Service Learning Project with students in three alternative educational programs at REACH - Project Success; Pre and Post Natal Educational Program and the Harriet Eisman Community School. Outreach will be conducted to identify youth interested in learning about and impacting the state and local legislative process. 10 youth will be educated about the legislative process, identify key areas of advocacy and meet with local legislators locally and in Albany. Youth will receive credits towards their

Participation in Government credit, or an elective (integrating this experience into the academic setting). Ultimate goal is to educate youth about the legislative process and empower them with competencies to enhance civic responsibility, leadership and involvement.

- **COPAY, INC.:** will actively work with 10 youth to write, develop and create work that reflects numerous cultures, heritage and the immigrant experience of their parents/families and themselves as "new" citizens. The skits and plays will then be offered as an educational tool throughout the Great Neck community. It will enable children to learn about themselves, their families, their culture and heritage and to feel proud of who they are. It will also assist youth and the broader community to understand "marginalization" and empower them to do something constructive about it.
  
- *Resource Development:* ACT FOR YOUTH also worked with Nassau BOCES, the Hempstead and Roosevelt Public Schools and local partners in the preparation of a Federal Safe Schools/Healthy Students funding application. If funded, two additional community-service learning projects will be supported.

### ***Next Steps***

The ACT WITH YOUTH Agenda is a living and evolving document to be further defined, developed and implemented over the next five years (and beyond). Its purpose is to promote positive youth development principles and practices throughout Nassau County. Year I experiences and the ACT AGENDA serve as the foundation for our Year II Work plan.

ACT FOR YOUTH is a paradigm shift to promote positive youth development and engagement over deficit-driven ideology. As we implement this Initiative and continue to involve people and systems, movement toward achieving our objectives has begun. Idea is that ACT FOR YOUTH prompts thought about how we interface with young people and encourage them be part of the process of service planning, implementation and evaluation – partners as opposed to service recipients.

For Further Information about ACT for Youth please go to [www.actforyouth.net](http://www.actforyouth.net) or contact: Keith Gerber, Coordinator, Nassau ACT for Youth (516) 227-7108 or email: [Keith.Gerber@hsnassaucountyny.us](mailto:Keith.Gerber@hsnassaucountyny.us)

Ybpublic/2007/ProjectWORD/ACTWEBSITEDESCRIPTION