

Citizenship Training for DeKalb's Youth



concrete group contributions for the common good.

Issue: Social responsibility has emerged over the past decade as an expansion of citizenship. Social responsibility encompasses the developing adolescent's social skills while enabling him or her to be an active and responsible member of their larger and political community (Bergman, 1997, 1997). Ultimately, developmental assets are most effectively instilled in youth when many sectors in a community come together to develop a vision for positive youth development and work together to surround every child and teenager with repeated exposure to the assets of support, discipline, structure, and values. Youth involvement is expanding beyond community service to emphasize democratic citizenship that embraces both individual rights and responsibilities and

Situation and Priorities: Ultimately, developmental assets are most effectively instilled in youth when many sectors in a community come together to develop a vision for positive youth development and work together to surround every child and teenager with repeated exposure to the assets of support, discipline, structure, and values. Youth involvement is expanding beyond community service to emphasize democratic citizenship that embraces both individual rights and responsibilities and concrete group contributions for the common good.



Assumptions: When we offer adolescent's participatory experiences that are meaningful, we allow them to discover their potency, assess their responsibility, acquire a sense of political process, and commit to a moral-ethical ideology.



Resources: New York Life Grant, Part-time Program Assistant State Program Assistant assistance with coordination of clubs Scholarships to state leadership and adult training sessions, County Board and Council Advisory System.

Program: Since its inception, 4-H has placed emphasis on the importance of young people being engaged, well-informed citizens. By connecting to their communities and leaders, youth understand their role in civic affairs and are able to expand their role in decision-making processes. It's clear that civic

engagement provides the foundation that helps youth understand the big picture of life and learn the skill sets that will allow them to become wise leaders for the 21st century.

4-H also has a long tradition of providing community-based 4-H clubs for youth to work alongside of adults to learn new skills, organize community service activities, and to strengthen leadership skills. With a \$500,000 grant from the New York Life Foundation, 4-H is forming 10 New York Life Youth in Governance 4-H Clubs in underserved areas throughout DeKalb County, Georgia. New York Life Foundation also provided scholarships for youth to attend Citizenship Washington Focus, a 4-H citizenship skills program that takes place in Washington, D.C. every summer.

Teen and community workers from each community were identified and paired with a teen member with two or more years as an active member in DeKalb-H. County staff conducted trainings, workshops, assisted with club meetings; and developed curriculum. Parent orientation meetings; day camps and other state camps and conferences were implemented and used to develop new club sites.

Clubs met at local parks and recreation centers, private afterschool programs and a local high school twice each month. Clubs met during the hours of 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. Each club identified a local issue or concern to address as a service learning project. Club officers attended regular meetings of the DeKalb County 4-H Council and one member from each center was identified as a County Board representative.

Outcomes:

- Eleven new community clubs were established during the grant cycle including three new high school clubs.
- Three hundred and two new club members at these sites. 185% increase in high school enrollment.
- Ten new community volunteers identified, screened and trained 11 new adult non-supplemented volunteer leaders.
- 57 teens were identified and trained as New York Life teen leaders.
- Forty-five teens attended Citizenship Washington Focus to broaden their appreciation and respect for themselves and others in the world through civic workshops, committees, field trips and social events.
- Increased leadership and communications skills by
 - Participation on the County Board, County Council and as Teen Leaders programs.
 - Presenting ideas to school board members, educators, elected official and community leaders to improve community.
 - Nine participated in Youth Summit
 - Eight NYL Teens served as Legislative pages during 4-H Day @ Capitol
 - Fourteen teens selected to be apart of summer programs and internships to include Young Scholars (three); Blank Foundation (two); Career Works (six)
 - Developed CWF and Youth Summit Action Plans to address the issue of violence in our community.



Results:

- Ten members participated in the November 2007 Urban Rural Exchange Program.
 - 95% indication they learned about connections between urban and rural regions of Georgia
 - 58% indicated they had a negative view of life in rural/urban areas before they visited partner-county; sixty-three percent indicated that their opinion changed regarding life in rural/urban areas.



"This program has helped strengthen my leadership abilities and helped me to grow. During my time in Washington I learned many things. I learned ways to demonstrate citizenship, ways to become of solutions to many issues facing our county, and that I can make a difference."

Brian Golson—North Druid Hills High

"I really appreciate all the things NYL has done for me. They have really influenced my life in a positive way—the way I function, the way I dress, the way I carry myself as a person. I have matured into a strong independent teen".

Alicia Richards, NYL Teen Leader—Lithonia High



"How has 4-H changed me? It is unimaginable! When I first joined 4-H I was a young 10th grader with no idea what I wanted to do with my life. 4-H started as something to do, now it is a lifestyle."

Manean Cohen—NYL Teen Leader, Midway Rec. Center

"The NYL Youth in Governance program has taught me that I have to voice my opinion and put into action things I am concerned about in my community".

Melvin Willis, NYL Teen Leader, Lithonia High