

Youth Scan

May 2007

From the National Youth Council
"Developing a Vibrant, Highly-Connected, and
Self-Sustaining Youth Sector, and Nurturing World-Ready Youth"

Bringing you snippets of youth trends and issues compiled from
diverse sources such as news reports, journals and press releases,
Youth Scan aims to help you stay in touch with the constantly evolving youth scene.

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1. Disadvantaged Teens Benefit from Volunteering, But Do it Less than Better-Off Peers
Corporation for National and Community Service, 9 April 2007

A new federal study has found that volunteering produces many positive benefits for teens from low-income backgrounds - they become empowered, are more likely to volunteer and become politically engaged, and believe they will graduate from college and make a difference in their communities.

The report, "*Leveling the Path to Participation: Volunteering and Civic Engagement among Youth from Disadvantaged Circumstances*," is the third of the Youth Helping America series of reports based on interviews with 3,178 American youth ages 12 to 18 conducted between January and March of 2005.

But the study also found a disturbing "class gap" in teen volunteer rates. Youth from disadvantaged circumstances have a volunteer rate of 43%, compared to 59% for other youth. They are also much less likely than other youth to take part in service-learning or school civic clubs.

According to Corporation CEO David Eisner, "This study highlights service as one of our most effective and positive interventions in a young person's life... [We need to] reach more

disadvantaged youth through service, and help more providers of youth services to engage young people as assets rather than simply treating them as clients.”

The study confirmed that youth from disadvantaged backgrounds who volunteer demonstrated more positive civic attitudes and behaviours than youth from disadvantaged backgrounds who didn't:

- Almost 40% more likely to believe that they can make some difference or a great deal of difference in their community (70% and 51%, respectively);

- Nearly 50% more likely to say they are very likely to graduate from a four-year college (76% and 51%, respectively);

- Twice as likely to discuss politics with their parents, other adults or friends; and

- 3.5 times more likely to say they are very likely to volunteer in the next year (52% to 15%, respectively).

In looking at where youth from disadvantaged backgrounds volunteer, clear patterns emerge:

- They are more likely to volunteer with religious organisations and less likely to volunteer with youth civic or leadership groups. 48% percent of youth from disadvantaged backgrounds say they volunteer because of their religious or spiritual beliefs, compared to 36% of other youth volunteers. This suggests that faith-based organisations are a key pathway for engaging more youth from disadvantaged backgrounds in service.

- School is another key driver of volunteering by youth from disadvantaged backgrounds. Youth are most likely to volunteer because they are asked, and a teacher is the most likely person to make the request. Service-learning – a teaching method that combines academic instruction with community service -- has proven to be especially effective in helping students from disadvantaged backgrounds become more engaged in learning and do better in school.

In looking at motivations to volunteer:

- Both youth from disadvantaged circumstances and their peers from higher income backgrounds stated the importance of helping others as the primary reason for volunteering.

- However, youth from disadvantaged circumstances are much more likely than non-disadvantaged youth to be motivated to volunteer in order to gain work experience. This finding suggests that organisations aiming to attract youth from disadvantaged backgrounds into service should make sure to offer volunteer opportunities that can provide useful work and career skills.

Background of the Study:

Data for the report came from the *2005 Youth Volunteering and Civic Engagement Survey*, conducted by the Corporation for National and Community Service in collaboration with the U.S. Census Bureau and Independent Sector. For purposes of analysis, youth were considered to be from disadvantaged circumstances when their family's income was less than or equal to 200 percent of the poverty level, following the 2005 federal poverty guidelines.

The first two reports in the Youth Helping America Series “*Building Active Citizens: The Role of Social Institutions in Teen Volunteering*” (November 2005) and “*Educating for Active Citizenship: Service-Learning, School-Based Service, and Civic Engagement*” (March 2006) are available on the Research and Policy page of <http://www.nationalservice.gov>.

To read more on the report visit:

http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/role_impact/performance_research.asp#VIA

(Source: *Corporation for National and Community Service*, Accessed on 17 May 2007, http://www.nationalservice.gov/about/newsroom/releases_detail.asp?tbl_pr_id=676)

2. Poll Shows Nearly 60% of Young Americans Feel Strongly that the Government should be Doing More to Protect the Environment

PR Newswire, New York, 18 April 2007

Youthography, North America's most significant full-service research and marketing communications agency dedicated exclusively to youth culture, revealed that nearly 60% (58.7%) of young Americans aged 14-29 believe that "the government should be doing more to protect the environment." Furthermore, close to 75% of young Americans aged 9-29 believe the world will be more polluted in 25 years.

"Younger generations have grown up with recycling and the notion of being 'green', and they're experiencing the most dramatic effects of global warming we've seen," explains Mike Farrell, Chief Strategic Officer of Youthography. "That, coupled with the fact that they feel the government has not taken a leadership role on the environment has left them with a feeling of 'we need to do this, it's our future at stake.' This has brought many of them together, and they are starting to show some momentum as a powerful force. However, these attitudes have not reached a mainstream tipping point in terms of real effects on their actual behaviour - yet."

Still, some results from the same study demonstrate significant disconnects between what young Americans say about the environment and what they're actually doing about it. While more than 90% of youth indicate a social cause is important to them, such concerns do not always map back to anxiety over the environment, especially when it comes to consumer purchase habits.

Few, when making buying decisions, are considering such things as whether products are organic, or packaged with recycled materials. And, while the least of the concerns surrounded whether an item was ethically manufactured, only one in five (20%) are worried about how their product is made and the impact it could have on the earth.

On the upside, when those aged 14-29 were asked about things that go into making a buying decision:

-- 36.9% females put top box importance (a rating of "4" or "5" on a scale from 1-5, "5" being "always consider this"), on 'do you consider buying environmentally friendly products', versus 30.2% males; and

-- When shopping, 27.3% of this group look to reduce the amount of items with packaging 'most of the time' or 'always.'

And, when it comes to recycling, all age groups are taking a more active part with close to 1 in 2 young Americans "always" or "almost always" recycling newspapers, cans, bottles and plastics.

(Source: *PR Newswire, New York*, Accessed on 16 April 2007, <http://sev.prnewswire.com/environmental-services/20070418/NEW04518042007-1.html>)

3. A Checklist for Helping Kids Build Better Lives

Commercialappeal.com, Memphis online, 6 May 2007

If there's going to be a movement that wraps around troubled youth in Memphis as a crime-prevention strategy, it requires a common set of beliefs about what children need to succeed. A good candidate is the Search Institute's "40 Developmental Assets," described by the think tank as "concrete, common sense, positive experiences and qualities essential to raising successful young people."

One of the list's local proponents is Lisa Moore Willis, vice president over the Experiential Learning Center at the youth development organisation BRIDGES, Inc., who believes that adopting the list as a guide shifts the conversation from "fixing problems" to "building strengths" and from "programs" to "relationships."

Thus, the responsibility for developing healthy children and relationships in the community shifts onto everyone's shoulders. The job is not left to a church or a school or a social service agency. As Search Institute president Peter L. Benson has said, if you're breathing you're on the team.

"Everybody in the community can be an asset builder," Willis said. "One of those assets is that youth feel valued by the community. Do their neighbors know them by name? Speak to them eye to eye?"

"That's a critical component to the assets. A community that values youth, provides ample opportunities to engage their free time and provides ample resources -- you're not going to see the violence. . . It's very clear that the more assets we can wrap around a young person, we're not going to have early pregnancies and smoking tobacco. We are going to have kids who volunteer in the community, who go to college. No program will do it."

In the Memphis and Shelby County survey, the top four vote getting developmental assets were No. 40 (positive view of personal future) with 77 percent, No. 21 (achievement motivation) with 76 percent, No. 1 (family support) with 71 percent and No. 19 (religious community) with 70 percent.

The bottom four were No. 17 (creative activities) with 18 percent, No. 25 (reading for pleasure) with 19 percent, No. 7 (community values youth) with 27 percent and No. 8 (youth as resources) with 27 percent.

Also from the survey, 14 percent of respondents reported 0-10 assets evident in their lives, 43 percent had 11 to 20, 35 percent 21 to 30, and 8 percent 31 to 40.

For the Search Institute's "40 Developmental Assets" list, please visit <http://www.search-institute.org/assets>.

(Source: *Commercialappeal.com, Memphis Online*, Accessed on 18 May 2007, http://www.commercialappeal.com/mca/opinion/article/0,1426,MCA_536_5521129,00.html)

4. Participation: Five Steps to Participation

Young People Now, 9 May 2007

Harry Wade, participation team manager at The National Youth Agency, shares his advice on where to begin on getting young people involved in decision-making.

Learn From Others

Setting out to build children and young people's participation into an organisation may feel daunting, so it is reassuring to get advice from people who have already been down this road. Talking to others can help identify the key landmarks and milestones, the paths that are easily trodden, and just as usefully, where the potholes lie.

An increasingly useful guide is the Participation Works web site (www.participationworks.org.uk). It provides a comprehensive source of participation information, including case studies, as well as a series of "rooms" on rights, policy and training. The Participation Works network allows professionals to share their ideas, information and keep in touch.

One room looks at the issue of standards and links directly to The National Youth Agency's Hear by Right web pages (www.nya.org.uk/hearbyright). Here, you can find out information about the Hear by Right framework and download practical tools to help build participation into an organisation as a whole.

Make sure the key players are involved

Successful participation requires having a key set of people on board who are ready to play their part. So make sure you get the early backing from leaders, staff, children and young people. The leaders need to champion the process, to ensure that participation is not abandoned if it begins to falter. The staff need to understand the process and share the values of participation if the organisation wants to change the way it listens and responds to children and young people. Children and young people, as users or beneficiaries of the services, should be involved from the outset. All of these groups may require training to develop the understanding and skills needed to participate effectively.

The other key player is the person with clear responsibility to drive the participation process. This role, with the other key players' backing, is crucial to ensure that momentum is maintained.

Mapping with Standards

Standards provide a public and measurable promise to reach a certain level of activity or service. The Hear by Right standards framework is a practical tool that makes it as pragmatic as possible to build in children and young people's participation. The National Youth Agency published a revised edition in 2005 that allows any organisation to share the participation language and process.

The standards framework is a map to show evidence of where you are throughout your participation journey and where to go next. The Hear by Right mapping and planning tool is free to download and has been used by diverse organisations to set out all the participation evidence in one place. It doesn't really matter how you start the mapping process - by young people, alongside young people or without young people - as long as you start somewhere and involve the key players at some point along the way. One very effective way is to run short workshops with leaders, staff and children and young people to give the evidence-gathering, mapping and planning a flying start.

Planning

All the gaps in your standards map are your friends. The areas that are weak in evidence on the Hear by Right map are the ones that need to feature in your strategic participation plan. As well as helping to identify them in the first place, children and young people will have important views on which areas need prioritising and in which they can help to deliver the solutions. One powerful model is for adults and young people together to sign an agreed participation plan and then sign it off when completed.

Focus on what has changed

Change really must be the goal of participation. The National Youth Agency, recognises two separate but related types of change. The first is organisational change, mapped in Hear by Right, and the second is tangible change in the lives of children and young people, as framed by the Every Child Matters five outcomes. The What's Changed tool records evidence of how children and young people now know that they are safer and healthier as a direct result of their involvement. Above all else, it is essential that children and young people agree, endorse and finally own these changes to make them the real happy ending to the participation journey. Anything less may well be the short cut to tokenism.

For more examples of participation, visit What's Changed on www.nya.org.uk/whatschanged

(Source: *Young People Now*, Accessed on 18 May 2007,
http://www.ypnmagazine.com/news/index.cfm?fuseaction=full_news&ID=14152)

5. New Summer of Service Campaign for Youth Aims for Early Start to Volunteering

Americacorps, 10 May 2007

The Corporation for National and Community Service and 22 national nonprofit organizations launched a campaign designed to help America's youth take their first steps along a lifetime path of volunteering and service by serving their communities over the summer months.

Called the *Summer of Service*, the nationwide campaign will engage youth between the ages of 5 and 21 in high-quality volunteer activities from June through August. The drive, which puts special emphasis on involving youth from disadvantaged circumstances, recognizes the enormous potential of children to identify issues, develop projects, and provide lasting benefits to their communities through volunteer service.

Joining the agency in launching the initiative are some of the nation's largest youth organizations including America's Promise, Big Brothers Big Sisters, Camp Fire USA, MENTOR/National Mentoring Partnership, the YMCA, Youth Service America, and 16 other nonprofits. Collectively these groups reach nearly 60 million youth. The Corporation welcomes other national and local organizations that work with youth to become part of the campaign, and more are signing on every week.

The Summer of Service campaign is the latest step by the agency to advance its national goal of engaging three million more youth from disadvantaged circumstances in service by the year 2010. The campaign comes on the heels of a new study, "*Leveling the Path to Participation*", which highlights service as an effective and positive intervention in a young person's life and recommends strategies for engaging more disadvantaged youth in service.

Children under 14 participating in Summer of Service who volunteer at least 50 hours and those 15 and over volunteering at least 100 hours will be eligible to receive the President's Volunteer Service Award, which honors Americans who have made serving a central part of their lives. Honorees receive a pin, a personalized certificate of achievement, a note of congratulations from the President of the United States, and a letter from the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation.

At the end of the summer, the Corporation and USA Freedom Corps will present High-Five Kudos awards to the five Summer of Service projects that are the most innovative and make the greatest impact. Nominations will come from the National Affiliate organizations. The winning projects will be invited to send representatives to Washington D.C. in October to demonstrate their models and share their success.

In addition to the National Affiliates program, Summer of Service activities include:

-- **NCCC Summer of Service.** The NCCC Summer of Service is a federally funded, intensive service program for youth ages 14 to 17. Presented by AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC), the three-week program, which takes place July 8-28, is designed to introduce teenagers, especially those from disadvantaged circumstances, to national service and to foster in them such values as teamwork, responsibility, and the ethic of serving one's community.

-- **Neighborhood Youth Service Clubs:** Neighborhood Youth Service Clubs is a collaborative effort by the Corporation, including its State Offices and programs; State Service Commissions; and local faith and educational institutions to establish youth clubs in neighborhoods where youth are not connected to any organized summer activities. Led by AmeriCorps VISTA, with support from RSVP and Foster Grandparents, these youths will identify and carry out service projects that address the needs of their community. Youth will be recruited as members of the clubs through distribution of flyers in schools before summer vacation begins.

To read more on Summer of Service visit: www.nationalservice.gov/summerofservice

(Source: *Americacorps*, Accessed on 16 May 2007,
http://www.americorps.gov/about/newsroom/releases_detail.asp?tbl_pr_id=689)

6. Thai Video Game Addicts Get Lectured

Manila Times, 14 May 2007

Ten-year-old Suaravich Charoensuk loved computer games so much he did almost nothing else. The Thai youngster would come home from school and sit for up to six hours a night in front of a flickering screen, ignoring everything else around him.

"He became very emotional, very hostile, and very aggressive," said his mother Chintana Charoensuk. "He used to hit his younger sister when she tried to interrupt him."

Chintana tried everything to wean her son from his pixilated world. She encouraged him to go outdoors and play sports, she left interesting books around the house for him to read, and tried to limit how long he could play video games every day. But Suaravich couldn't keep away. It began to affect his school work, and he was put back in school from Grade Four—the normal level for his age—to Grade Two, and then eventually all the back to Grade One.

Education officials say that cases like Suaravich's are becoming increasingly common, as Internet use explodes in Thailand. "Addiction to online games is among the top nine reasons for poor performance in school, along with problems like truancy, gambling and sex," said Yindee Panweawngam, of the education ministry's Office to Improve Student Behavior.

Surveys of Bangkok youth two years ago highlighted the problem, with some 24 percent of nearly 1,900 people questioned saying they would describe a friend as addicted to online gaming. Another survey in 2005 of youth aged 12 to 25 said they spent an average of 1,114 baht (\$34) a month on video games—equivalent to a week's pay for a minimum wage worker. The young people reported a range of problems they blamed on their online activities, including eye strain, falling school performance grades, financial troubles and even physical weakness due to a lack of exercise.

There is still debate among doctors over whether children can really become addicted to video games in the same way that people are addicted to drugs or alcohol. Some medical

professionals point out that for many teens, a fixation with gaming is just an adolescent rite of passage. But rising concern has led parents like Chintana to search for a cure. Two years ago, when Suaravich was 12, she chanced on a leaflet advertising a new, government-funded *Centre for Game Addiction Prevention*.

Suaravich began attending a weekly two-hour session of adolescent group therapy, and the aggressive edge in his behavior quickly softened. Soon, his mother says, he was spending less time in front of a screen, and his schoolwork was back on track.

The centre opened two years ago, and since then some 1,000 parents and 300 children have received treatment there. According to Bundit Sorn-paisarn, a doctor who leads the program, 80 percent to 90 percent of parents and children who attended saw significant improvements.

The centre borrows some of its techniques from programs that treat other forms of addiction, like group therapy and assigning children tasks to build their self-esteem. But the centre also uses slightly less conventional approaches, like showing the teens a video of a woman giving birth, to demonstrate the sacrifice a parent makes for their child.

Bundit said that like other forms addiction, excessive gaming hinders teens' ability to interact with the outside world. "Some children play for 16 hours a day, or in some cases more than 24 hours" at a stretch, he said. "Others steal money to buy hardware and games, and many stop going to school. There are many symptoms that resemble drug addiction," he added.

Suaravich, now 14, has shown considerable improvement. After attending an initial 10-week course, he went on to complete a family camp with his mother and sister, and then an adolescent camp. Now, his mother says, the youngster has gone back up two grades at school, and only plays computer games for one or two hours a day. "He is much better," said Chintana. "He is no longer hostile, and has other interests. He enjoys listening to music, playing tennis and looking after his pet hamster."

(Source: *Manila Times*, Accessed on 19 May 2007, <http://www.manilatimes.net/national/2007/may/14/yehey/world/20070514wor4.html>)

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