

In Focus presents the first of a series of occasional papers that provide information about the practices of youth workers and teachers; programs that serve youth; the policies that affect their work, and young people. The purpose of *In Focus* is to present ideas that will strengthen community-based youth development. The next edition will also focus on programs for young adults.

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Young Adult Programs in New York City

THE YOUTH DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE/FUND FOR THE CITY OF NEW YORK



Student retreat at Public Allies

Introduction

Today in New York City, there are more than 1 million youth between 16 and 24 years of age. Many of these young people are entering post-secondary education, careers and starting families. But thousands lack opportunities to complete their educations and enter employment. More than 30,000 of these youth are both out of school and unemployed. As many as 40% of high school students drop out or are discharged from school each year.

These youth have great capacity and commitment to becoming self-sufficient and contributing to their families and their communities. Throughout the country, young people of this age group are involved in constructive projects to benefit their communities.

But for NYC youth who are on the margins or have left school, getting back on track is a difficult challenge. For years, programs for young adults have been outside the mainstream – and outside the funding streams of youth programs. As a result NYC needs to build the capacity of organizations in communities where there are large numbers of these youth, but few resources to support them.

Today, there is special urgency. The population is expanding rapidly – there are more young adults in 2003 than ever before in NYC. At the same time, employment opportunities are declining, especially in positions that have been entry points for youth into the workforce, such as the hospitality industries. Recent years have also seen an increase in the high school dropout rate.

However, there are new opportunities as well: NYC's focus on reforming high schools is showing improved attendance already and engaging a broad range of community-based partners, when, historically, schools have been isolated from their communities. New legislation under the Workforce Investment Act will place greater resources in programs for older and out-of-school youth. And, finally, we know a lot about what needs to be done to help these youth make the transition to productive adulthood. But we have to make sure these proven ideas are put into practice.

Inside me there is no color.
Inside me there is a texture.
My texture is transparent,
clear, see through.

Inside me there is silence, no voices,
no sound, no thoughts, no feelings,
This is my lonely side.

In the past there were colors,
figures of people, shapes, sizes.
There were also sounds, voices, thoughts
and feelings.
All that is gone.
Gone from the inner person of myself.

Inside me there is a war going on for freedom.
Freedom to do what I had intended to do.
The results are neutral.
No feeling of winning or losing.
I hope that someday I'll win this war,
be open, and stop leaving people in the dark.

Jose Santana

Inside Me There is a War Going On for Freedom



Young adults supervise children's activities at New Settlement.

program profile

Bronx New Settlement Apartments Creates Pilot Program

In November 2002, New Settlement Apartments (NSA), set out to create a pilot program to engage a core group of neighborhood young adults who are out of school, unemployed, or underemployed in a safe, structured environment. The pilot program is designed to encourage young adults to think about their long-term goals while addressing current problems and areas of concern.

A challenge for NSA is that it had only a small start-up grant from the Young Adult Capacity Initiative (see below), while the neighborhood has large numbers of youth who have left school and are out of work. The agency structured its efforts to take advantage of these funds to learn more about the needs of young adults in the community and to position itself to obtain additional funding.

NSA is well on the way to accomplishing its program goals through the use of informational workshops, one-on-one sessions with youth, an ongoing needs assessment, and the linking of young adults to NSA's existing services. Their work could well be a model for other organizations that have limited resources, but extensive community needs to address young adults.

A central component of NSA's project is hands-on workshops of interest to young adults. At the conclusion of the workshops, the young people have the opportunity to sign up for follow-up services. Workshop attendees are also asked to complete a survey focused on areas of concern, future goals, and obstacles that have kept them from being successful. In the survey, the young adults also have the opportunity to sign up for one-on-one sessions with a NSA staff member to do a more in-depth assessment of their needs and interests.

Connecting young adults with concrete services within the work-

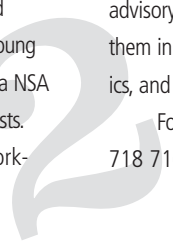
shop format has been extremely successful. Topics have included "Youth and the Law: Questions about the Criminal Justice System," "Education Options, Including Taking the GED," "Need a Job?" and "Educational Options II." These have helped young adults go back to high school, enroll in GED programs, and find advocates in their court cases. In the first workshop, staff from Bronx Defenders (attorneys, a social and outreach worker) discussed their respective roles in helping youth once they are charged with a crime. Four youth immediately followed up with Bronx Defenders. Two replaced their court-appointed attorneys with Bronx Defenders, and a third received a community-service sentence as an alternative to incarceration. After the education and job-training workshop, more than 30 young adults signed up for Stanley Isaacs Center's summer employment program, Public Allies New York, and the Federation of Employment Guidance Services (FEGS).

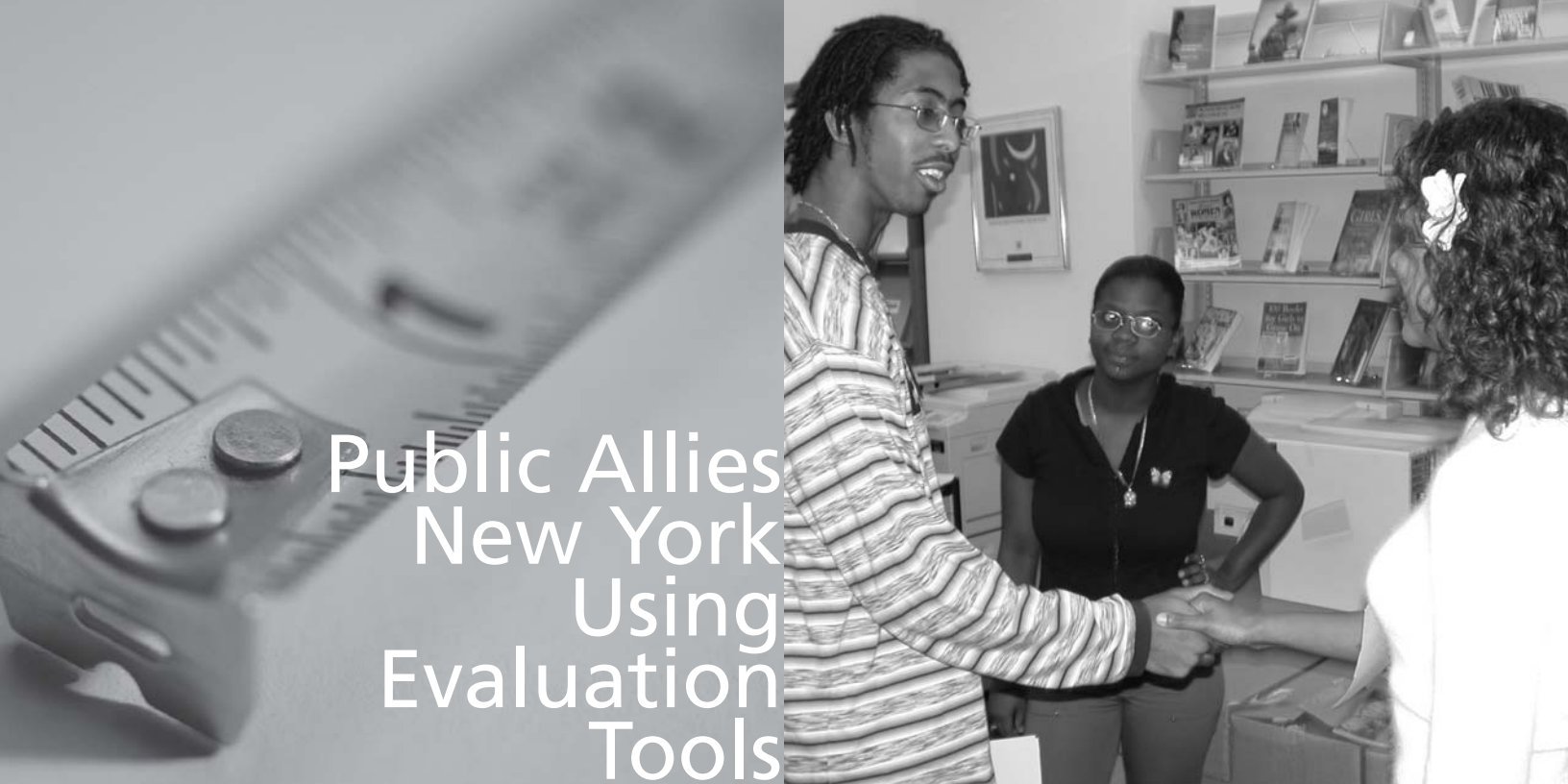
In the second workshop on educational options, staff from NSA's own College Access Center, as well as Highbridge Community Life Center and NYC Division of Adult and Continuing Education, shared their resources and expertise. As a result of this session, ten young adults registered for GED classes. Staff at the College Access Center worked closely with another six young people to help them select alternative high schools. The College Access staff person accompanied the young people on visits to schools and guidance counselors and followed up with them to ensure proper paperwork was completed and submitted. All six of the young people have returned to schools in line with their interests and language needs.

Key to New Settlements' success is its decision to develop a program for young adults over time and draw on the organization's existing resources. Project Director Megan Nolan describes the growth of their program: "In conversations with some of the young people who had aged out of our after-school and teen programs, we recognized that young adults have short-term needs for employment and housing as well as longer term educational, drug-use, or court-related issues that keep them from taking the first steps toward more successful lives. We knew developing a program to meet multifaceted needs would take time, so we decided to take a year to ask neighborhood young adults what they really want and need." NSA formed an advisory council of some of the young adults in its programs and involved them in recruiting participants for the workshops, developing workshop topics, and providing feedback on the structure of the program.

For more information: contact the Young Adult Initiative at NSA: 718 716 8000.

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Public Allies New York Using Evaluation Tools to Strengthen Program

Allies plan a skit.

Public Allies New York provides young adults (Allies) with paid apprenticeships in non-profit organizations, training in leadership development, and opportunities to practice their skills in community services projects. Public Allies uses a number of different evaluation tools to measure Allies' learning at their apprenticeships, in training sessions, and from each other. Public Allies staff meet one-on-one with Allies each month to set goals, assess progress, and solve problems, as part of the Individual Development Plan. Staff members also meet three times a year with the Allies' supervisors, and Allies complete evaluations of themselves, Public Allies staff, their supervisors, and their fellow Allies, as part of the "360 Feedback" process. Prior to the evaluation process, Allies participate in a constructive feedback and communication workshop.

Two of the most unique ways Public Allies measures program effectiveness is through the use of Personal Impact Documentation forms (PISDs) and end-of-year Presentations of Learning (POLs). PISDs document

the Allies' accomplishments at their work sites, hours worked, volunteers recruited, and overall learning and/or observations. At the beginning of the Allies' year, Public Allies asks work sites to complete a job description for each Ally. Work objectives, which must be clear and measurable, are developed based on the job descriptions. The objectives are placed on the Allies' PISD forms, and every two weeks Allies are required to document progress they have made toward meeting their objectives. PISDs help Allies keep their eyes on their goals. PISDs also provide important data for use in reporting and measuring program impact, providing important quantitative data on number of people served. In addition, PISDs serve as a tool for staff to measure whether Allies are on their way to meeting their goals or need additional support.

The second means Public Allies uses to measure program effectiveness is more qualitative: the Presentations of Learning. Satisfactory completion of a Presentation of Learning is a requirement of the program. POLs are fifteen-minute public presentations of the Allies' learning and work from the program year, followed by fifteen-minute question-and-answer periods. Allies have the opportunity to use poetry, PowerPoint slide shows, music, or dance to convey their personal and professional growth and experience.

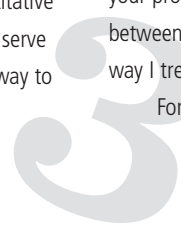
At the conclusion of each presentation, a small group of community members and stakeholders is asked to comment on the presentation and ask clarifying questions. When Allies complete their POLs, they also submit program portfolios, which serve as documentation of their experiences. Public Allies staff meets individually with all Allies prior to their POLs to assist them in developing ideas and themes for the presentations and practicing their delivery.

Carmen Balentine, Director of Community Partnership, commented on evaluation's role in the Public Allies program: "Evaluation, particularly the PISDs and POLs, is so important to Public Allies' work. It helps build support for the program, involves Allies in documenting and reflecting on their own learning, and provides concrete areas where the program can be improved." Indeed, PISDs cannot be implemented until work-site supervisors approve the objectives and sign off on the forms that are submitted every two weeks. In addition, when Allies present their POLs, Public Allies invites funders, board members, work-site supervisors, and other community stakeholders to participate in the event.

The young adults who have participated in the program can best express the impact of this evaluation process. In Dona Tarcetecan's (Class of 2003) Presentation of Learning, she spoke of the training that she participated in prior to completing her evaluations: "This was my favorite training. This was about how people can communicate better both in the work environment and in personal relationships... People like to be talked to with respect and courtesy, and if you can use that to communicate your problems, then it would be a lot easier to hold a conversation between you and that person. This training had such an impact in the way I treat people around me in both my professional and personal life."

For more information, contact: Carmen Balentine at 212 566 0710.

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Young Adult Program Initiatives

The Young Adult Capacity Initiative (YACI) is a partnership between the Youth Development Institute/Fund for the City of New York and community-based organizations. It is one of several initiatives addressing the needs of young adults in New York City. These include the **Neighborhood Youth Employment Program** of the Clark Foundation and the **Neighborhood Youth Workforce Development Initiative** of United Neighborhood Houses, as well as the Federally-funded, **Workforce Investment Act (WIA)**, under the NYC Department of Youth and Community Development. Each initiative will be described in subsequent papers by YDI.

YACI is a citywide effort to help young adults achieve self-sufficiency and productive adulthood. The goal is to build the capacity of community organizations to serve young adults. Currently, 15 organizations are

Policy Updates

IN NEW YORK CITY:

The New York City Department of Education (DOE) is expanding its work with young adults who are at the margins of schools or have dropped out. Two examples are South Brooklyn Community High School (SBCHS), run by Good Shepherd Services in partnership with DOE, and the Bushwick Outreach Center (BOC). With financial support from the New Century High Schools Initiative (NCHSI), a collaboration of DOE with New Visions for Public Schools as well as the United Federation of Teachers and the Council of Supervisors and Administrators, SBCHS is now serving 150 young adults and is in its second year of NCHSI support. BOC, a collaboration of DOE with Manhattan College and Make the Road by Walking, has just received a planning grant to develop *Palante Bushwick*, a new school for young



involved. YACI includes both supports to young adults and opportunities for them to help others through participation in their communities. YACI targets several critical components that are needed to develop support for young adults:

- *Building the capacity of youth-serving organizations to provide effective programs for young adults through small grants to support stronger services. Each organization has created or expanded its programs to serve young adults, some school-based and some community-based.*
- *Increasing the application of promising practices for working with young adults. Through networking among participating agencies, training of youth workers, and dissemination of information, YDI seeks to increase knowledge and use of these practices.*
- *Engaging public agencies. YDI is working with several NYC departments and to strengthen support for young adult programs.*
- *Supporting advocacy for young adults. YDI works with advocacy organizations and community organizations as well as young people themselves to raise a voice in support of strong young adult programs.*

YACI Partners: Alianza Dominicana, Center for Family Life, Cypress Hills Community Development Corporation, East Side House, Good Shepherd Services at South Brooklyn Community High School, Harlem Children's Zone, Make the Road by Walking at the Bushwick Outreach Center, New Heights Neighborhood Center, New Settlement Apartments, Pius XII Youth and Family Services, Public Allies, St. Nicholas Community Development Corporation, Sesame Fliers International, Stanley Isaacs Neighborhood Center

adults that builds on BOCs extraordinary history.

DOE has recently issued new guidelines for student discharges that seek to address gaps in the system that became apparent through a lawsuit initiated by the parents of a student at Franklin K. Lane high school who had been discharged. These are available through the Office of Youth Development and Community Partnerships at DOE.

CUNY, with support from the **Department of Youth and Community Development**, has recently opened its new CUNY Prep Program for youth who have dropped out or are near to dropping out. The program, funded by Workforce Investment Act dollars, is based in the Bronx and will offer courses in the humanities, math, science, art and athletics to 200 students ages 16- to 18. CUNY Prep will enroll students for up to a year and prepare them to return to high school by earning credits toward a regular high school diploma or a high school equivalency diploma. The curriculum will emphasize reading and writing and every class – including physical education – will be structured to include these disciplines.

The New York City Department of Youth and Community Development currently provides funding to organizations that serve young adults, reaching about 1850 youth annually. These are large contracts, in the area of \$1 million or more annually.

NATIONALLY:

The Workforce Investment Act (WIA), the major source of funding for youth who have dropped out of school, is under consideration in Congress and is likely to be re-authorized soon, with an increase in the amount of funds allocated to youth who have dropped out of school. Funding is made available by the Federal Department of Labor. Stay tuned. For more information about this legislation or other youth employment issues see the website of the National Youth Employment Coalition: NYEC.org

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youth words and profiles

This section contains the words of young adults about their own lives and those of their peers.

Inside Me There is a War Going On for Freedom

Inside me there is no color.
Inside me there is a texture.
My texture is transparent,
clear, see through.

Inside me there is silence, no voices,
no sound, no thoughts, no feelings,
This is my lonely side.

In the past there were colors,
figures of people, shapes, sizes.
There were also sounds, voices, thoughts and
feelings.
All that is gone.
Gone from the inner person of myself.

Inside me there is a war going on for freedom.
Freedom to do what I had intended to do.
The results are neutral.
No feeling of winning or losing.
I hope that someday I'll win this war,
be open, and stop leaving people in the dark.

Jose Santana



My Teenage Dream

It's not enough to have a dream
Unless I'm willing to pursue it...

It's not enough to know what's
Right unless I'm strong enough to do it...

It's not enough to join the crowd,
to be acknowledged and
accepted – I must be true to
my ideals, even if I'm left out
and rejected.

It's not enough to learn the truth
Unless I also learn to live it...

It's not enough to reach for love
Unless I care enough to give it.

Kyle Khadijah Ashwood

"Spunky," A Public Ally

Spunky is one of the newest members of Public Allies New York Class of 2004. Like many others, this 19-year-old Bronx native went through the process in the summer of 2003 to become one of 20 new Allies. She made it through the application process, the seemingly endless multitude of interviews, meeting 19 diverse young adults and staff, and core training week, until finally being placed with Pius XII at Stevenson High School in the Bronx where she is a youth coordinator.

I was able to have an intimate conversation with Spunky and get a good sense of what she is about and the things she desires out of life, Public Allies, and the people around her.

Spunky initially heard of Public Allies through a former Ally. What she heard peaked her interest and from there she took it upon herself to do some research, because at 18, Spunky wasn't interested in attending college

in the coming fall like the average high school graduate. But she knew she wanted to do something constructive with her life, and the fact that Allies would get paid over the next 10 months and at the end receive an educational reward didn't hurt either.

At first, Public Allies just meant having something to do for a year, but now Spunky says she was meant to be an Ally. There were definitely some adjustments she had to make, but she said, "You have to make adjustments in life in whatever you do. Some things are just meant for you to do."

Spunky hopes her purpose as an Ally would be to support those around her, empower those who need empowering in her community, and be a good friend to her Allies and peers. At the end of the 10 months at Public Allies, Spunky hopes to have stayed true to the goals she set for herself in the summer of 2003. She hopes to have gained new friendships that will last for years to come, accompanied by new skills, connections, and new experiences.

After Public Allies, she wants to be suc-

cessful, have acquired immense wisdom and have many stories to tell. She would also like to leave a legacy to be remembered by. In life, Spunky's plans are to travel, see the mountains and live in the woods for a month with nothing but the animals and just experience peace.

However, life for Spunky right now is always changing. Struggles are constant. She deals with self-esteem, family issues, and influences that aren't beneficial to her. How does she deal with or try to overcome these things? She wants to have a stronger sense of self, and she wants to go about this by formulating her own opinions and building confidence in her decisions.

To end the interview, I had Spunky evaluate her importance in the world and what she would want to leave with people when she is no longer here. "I'd want them to remember how cool I was," she said. "And that I kept it real. How I constantly encouraged others to be themselves...and to ride life till the wheels fall off."

Interview conducted and written by
Jennette Puella, YDI Intern



Youth Development Institute/
Fund for the City of New York

This Issue:

Young Adults In
New York City

Programs and
Initiatives

New Settlement
Apartments:
New Services in
Bronx Community

Public Allies New
York: Evaluation Tools
Shape Program

YACI, WIA and more

Policy Updates on the
Department of
Education, CUNY
and others

Profiles and Words of
Young People:
Poems and a Bio

Data on Status of
Young Adults.

What Is Happening to Young Adults?

NATIONAL DATA

Percentage of young adults employed:

Dropouts 53%
High School graduates: 76%
Associates Degree or higher 87%

Young adults experiencing long term unemployment

Dropouts 27%
High School graduates 11%
Associates Degree or higher 3%

Educational level among incarcerated young adults

Dropouts 54%
High school graduates – 10%

Median income for young men who have dropped out has declined 25% since 1973.

Many of the difficulties faced by native born young adults are considerably worse for immigrant youth: for example, for out-of-school immigrant youth, 45% lack either a high school diploma or GED, compared to 20% of the out of school native population.

Do you want more information about the status of young adults? Contact Judy at YDI and she will send you information: jlorimer@fcny.org (212 925 6675).



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