

Family & Children First Council
Annual Report
**Youth Advocacy and
Leadership Coalition (YALC)**

Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education
Case Western Reserve University
November 2015

The Family & Children First Council (FCFC) of Cuyahoga County supports youth civic leadership through a 4-H positive youth development initiative coordinated through the Ohio State University Extension (OSUE) of Cuyahoga County. The Youth Advocacy and Leadership Coalition (YALC) is a program for adolescents ages 13 to 18 from Cuyahoga County that develops young leaders by training and supporting them in advocating for youth issues and links them to their communities through service learning experiences.



The Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education at Case Western Reserve University conducted an evaluation of the Youth Advocacy and Leadership Coalition (YALC) in Cuyahoga County. County government provides public funding for the program through the Family & Children First Council. The county contracts with the Ohio State University Extension office to provide operational direction and facilitation of YALC activities under the 4-H program model.

Suggested Citation: Stormann, C., Flannery, D., Walker, T. & Lovell, R. (2015). Youth Advocacy and Leadership Coalition (YALC) Report for the Cuyahoga County Family and Children First Council. Cleveland, Ohio: Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education, Jack, Joseph and Morton Mandel School of Applied Social Sciences, Case Western Reserve University

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Executive Summary: Youth Advocacy and Leadership Coalition

The Youth Advocacy and Leadership Coalition (YALC) is a civic leadership program for youth between the ages of 13 to 18 in Cuyahoga County. Each month, youth teams within the coalition convene to learn, discuss and take action on issues affecting their peers and communities. Young people are trained to advise their adult counterparts and advance ideas for positive change through collaboration, advocacy and service to the community. In the language of the positive youth development (PYD) framework, helping youth perceive the importance of and develop an understanding of how to contribute is essential for youth to thrive in their transition from adolescence to adulthood.¹ Under the umbrella of the 4-H positive youth development movement, YALC members develop: competence, confidence, connection, character, and care/compassion. Active membership changes regularly but over the last several years there has been between 150 and 200 members. Dozens of communities are represented around the county but approximately half of the membership resides in the city of Cleveland.

The YALC has teams focused on topics important to youth and their communities, which help young people build skills and create positive change in the areas of health and fitness, advocacy, and events planning. Though the youth are involved with dozens of different activities throughout the year, notable among them is the Annual Youth Summit that takes place each year at Cleveland State University. Approximately 200 to 300 youth typically attend the event and have the opportunity to see over 25 different presenters and workshops.

Graduates from YALC stay active for many years and often return in the summers or during other school breaks or holidays to assist and build connections for the next cohort of members.

¹ Lerner, R. M., Brentano, C., Dowling, E. M., & Anderson, P. M. (2002). Positive youth development: Thriving as the basis of personhood and civil society. In R. M. Lerner, C. S. Taylor, & A. von Eye (Eds.), *New directions for youth development: Theory, practice, research: Pathways to positive development among diverse youth* (Vol. 95; G. Noam, Series Ed.). (pp.11-33). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

YALC Program Description

YALC is part of the 4-H positive youth development initiative coordinated through the Ohio State University Extension and funded through the support of the Family & Children First Council (FCFC) of Cuyahoga County. Active membership changes regularly, but over the last several years has averaged between 150 and 200 members. Dozens of communities are represented around the county and approximately half of the membership resides in the city of Cleveland. A service learning component is imbued in the YALC experience, which helps youth further develop as leaders that recognize the importance of service to the community. Goals of the programming and membership experience include:

- increased leadership through experience on teams
- opportunities to improve interpersonal communication in a professional setting
- improved self-confidence
- working on a team with partners at local, state, and national levels
- ability to assess needs of the community and facilitate change through advocacy and service
- understanding of local government and policy
- a platform for youth voice and choice
- preparation for academic growth and development

YALC Demographics

Youth Advocacy and Leadership Coalition (YALC) membership has increased over the past four years. In the 2014–2015 program year, 210 youth between the ages of 13 and 18 enrolled in the YALC. The majority of participants are female (75%) and African American (84%). Although all Cuyahoga County districts are represented in the coalition, District 7 has the most participants at 24%. Participants from District 9 comprise 19% of the group. On a related note, the Coalition provides bus passes to members, but it can be difficult for some participants to attend activities from across the county. Transportation can often be a barrier to attendance for members.

Figure 1: Four-Year Enrollment Numbers for YALC

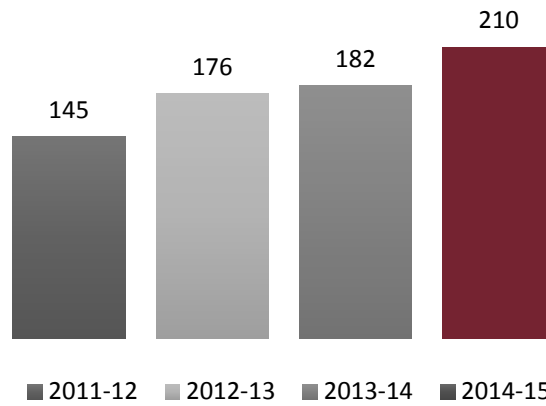


Figure 2: Ethnicity | 2014–2015 program cycle*

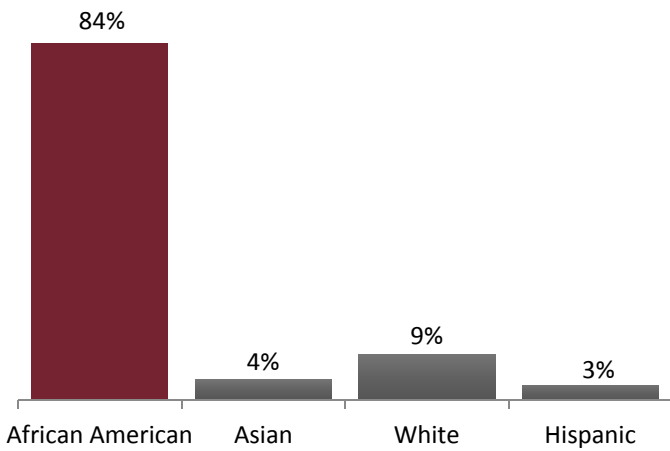


Figure 3: Gender | 2014–2015 program cycle*

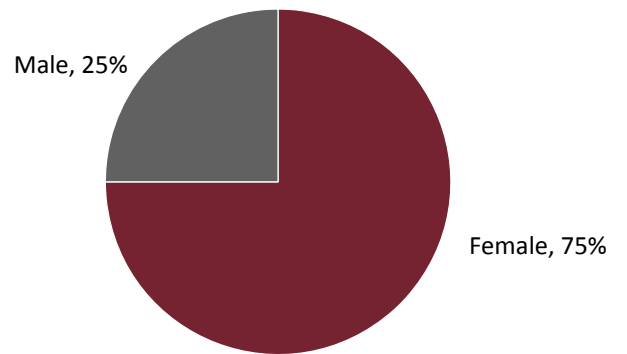
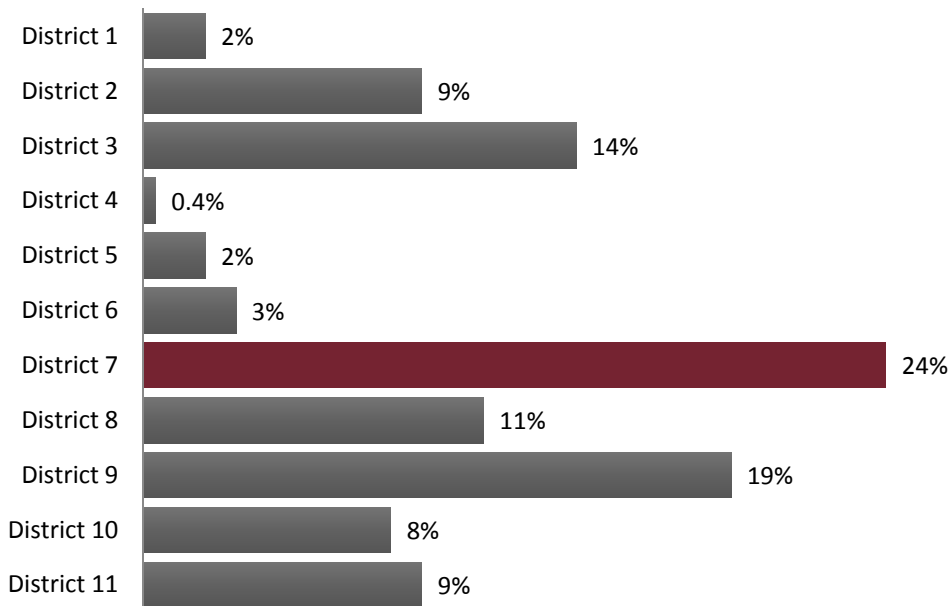


Figure 4: Enrollment by Council District | 2014–2015 program cycle*



* Most percentages are rounded to the closest whole number

YALC Activities 2014–2015

YALC members meet each month with an average attendance of 35 individuals. At the monthly meetings, leadership teams assemble and report on the events in which they have participated and on forthcoming activities. This is a selection of activities that occurred within the 2014–2015 cycle:

- YALC Youth Summit 11/22/14
- YALC Leadership Training and Meeting 1/10/2015
- Human Trafficking Forum 1/26/2015
- Rockets to the Rescue Event 1/31/2015
- Human Trafficking Debrief Meeting 2/15/2015
- 4-H Conference preparation work 3/7/2015
- 4-H Teen Conference 3/14/2015
- Extension Reconsidered Event 3/21/2015
- OSU College Tour 3/31/2015
- YALC Monthly Meeting 4/2015
- Earth Fest 4/19/2015
- College Reality 4/23/2015
- We are the Majority Rally 4/30/2015
- River Clean-Up 5/9/2015
- YALC Monthly Meeting 5/2015
- YALC Senior Celebration Picnic 6/6/2015
- 4-H Exchange Trip with Champaign County 6/15/15 – 6/19/15
- Seat at the Table Conference at Miami University 6/26/2015
- YALC Monthly Meeting 6/2015
- Family and Children First Council 7/9/2015
- Representative Marcia Fudge intern visit 7/24/2015
- YALC Monthly Meeting 7/2015
- Cuyahoga County Fair 7/15/15-8/3/2015
- YALC Monthly Meeting 8/2015
- YALC Monthly Meeting 9/2015
- YALC in the Kitchen 10/10/2015
- 4-H Open House 10/17/2015
- YALC Monthly Meeting 10/24/2015
- Halloween House 10/31/2015

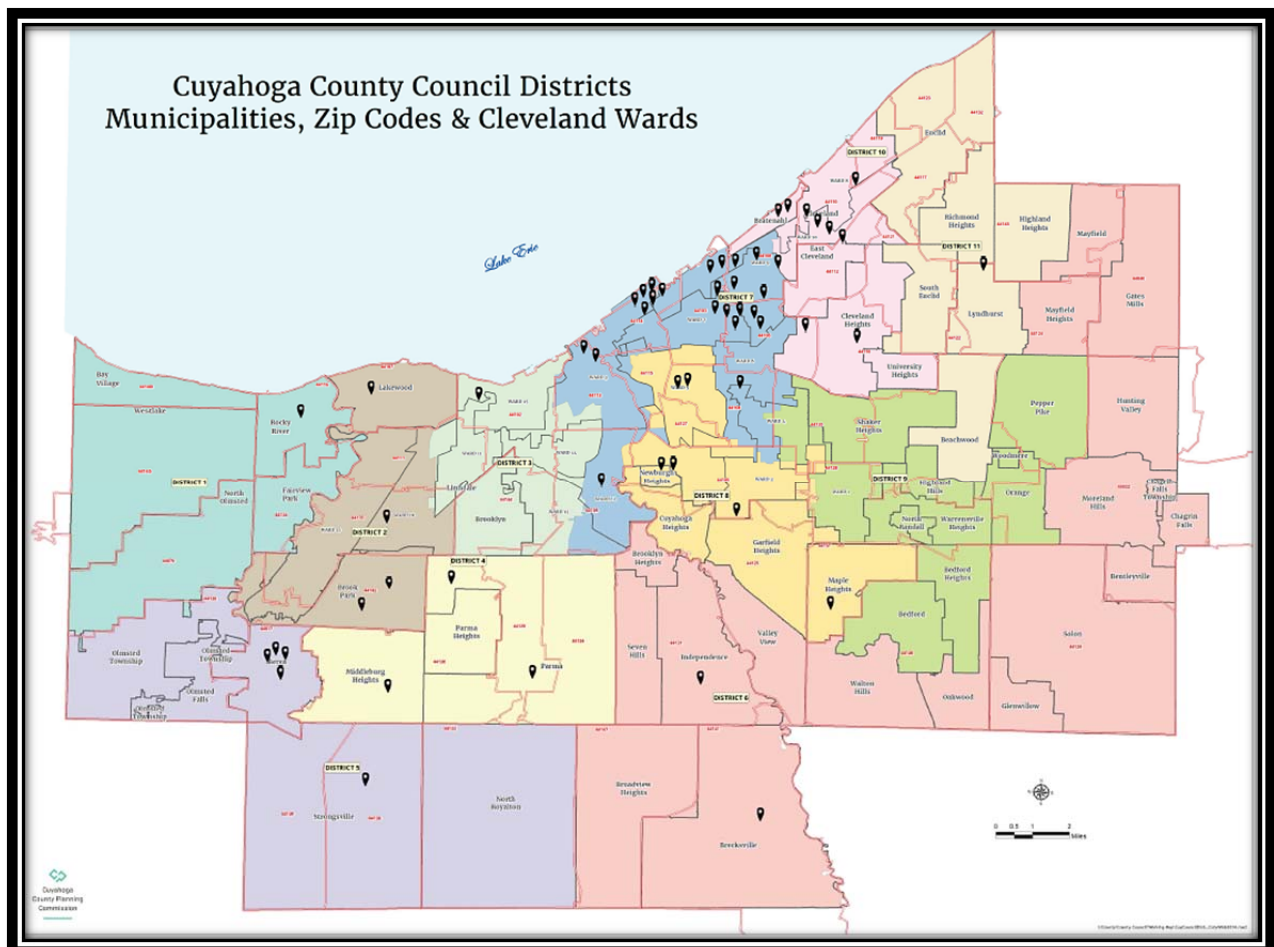


Photo caption: YALC leaders recently tagged a map to showcase their activity participation across the county.

Highlighted events include:

- The National 4-H “Rockets to the Rescue” Science Experiment at schools and a community center in the area including: George Washington Carver, Riverside, Nexus Academy of Cleveland, and Outhwaite Community Center. Coalition members worked with over 500 students to complete this activity.
- A Human Trafficking Awareness Forum hosted at Tower City. Youth learned about the reality of human trafficking in the area along with efforts to prosecute the crime and protect victims. Group members also learned about ways that community agencies are working towards prevention of the crime.

In addition to the activities in the county, members have traveled in and out of the state to present workshops and participate in events. Below is a digital version of the pin map created by YALC members for activities occurring within the county.



YALC Youth Summit: Inside the World of the 21st Century Teen

Each year, YALC members host their signature event, a youth summit. In 2014, the coalition hosted “Inside the World of the 21st Century Teen.” This event, which attracted 235 participants, consisted of 21 workshops facilitated by youth and adults. Workshops were offered on topics identified by youth as important to them, including leadership, violence prevention, health, and diversity.

Workshop participants shared their thoughts about the event in a short evaluation. They described what they liked best about the summit, including learning leadership skills, meeting new people, and feeling encouraged and informed.

When asked how they would use the information from the summit, participants had responses such as:

- Work on teamwork. Communication can be useful.
- Don’t bring others down, build them up. Stand up for those who can’t stand up for themselves.
- Don’t judge others for being different or outer appearances. Accept all.
- Don’t keep quiet if an incident happens. Speak out and tell someone.
- Support others and be a better listener and friend.

Workshop topics for the future suggested from youth participants at the summit include:

- Conflict resolution
- Preparing for college/Career opportunities
- Pregnancy prevention
- Pursuing your dreams
- Religious tolerance
- Literacy

YALC Alumni

After high school graduation, many YALC members pursue post-secondary education, an experiential learning program, technical training, or the military. Of the 46 alumni documented for the 2014–2015 program year, 93 percent are at a college or university in Ohio.

According to researchers Constance Flanagan and Peter Levine, the civic skills, habits, and motivations of young adults result from opportunities for engagement during childhood and adolescence. Children and teens who have opportunities for involvement in extracurricular activities and community institutions are more likely to vote and participate in other forms of civic engagement as young adults.² Of the 46 alumni documented, 41 percent are involved in a service and/or civic organization. Former YALC participants are involved in student governments, diversity councils, women’s organizations, international ambassador programs, and mission trips.

Alumni Spotlight



DaVonti' Haynes

YALC alumni DaVonti' Haynes, who participated in the program for over three years, is currently a fourth-year student at Ohio State University, John Glen College of Public Affairs. DaVonti' majors in Public Affairs with a specialization in Education Policy. In addition to his studies, DaVonti' is involved in a number of civic and service organizations. DaVonti' is the founder and coordinator of “A Day in the Life of a Buckeye,” which introduces inner-city and Appalachian high school youth to life at Ohio State University. The focus is to increase the high school to college path through exposure. Furthermore, DaVonti' serves as the site leader for the Buckeye Reach Central Ohio Youth Center in Marysville. In this role, he works with incarcerated youth and provides direct mentoring and educational experiences in efforts to reduce recidivism.

²Flanagan, C., and Levine, P (2010). Civic Engagement and the Transition to Adulthood. *Future of Children* Vol. 20 (1)

Developmental Assets Profile (DAP)

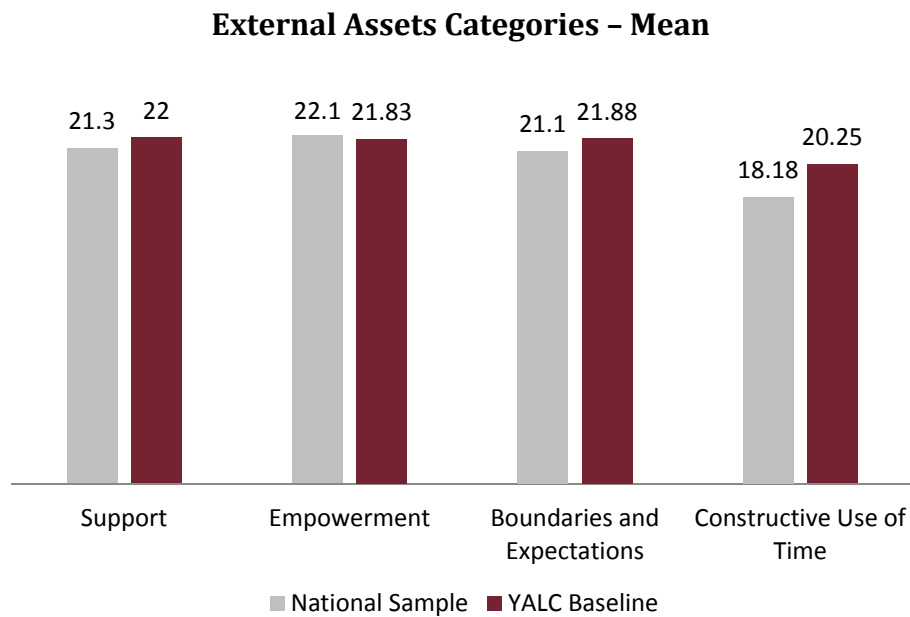
To better capture the elements illustrated by the alumni and that youth often develop in association with YALC, the Developmental Assets Profile (DAP) tool is being implemented. The DAP was administered to YALC participants for the first time in late 2015. After the data were cleaned, results from 33 participants were used as pretest data. These results are compared to a national data set to measure change of participants in the areas of Support, Empowerment, Boundaries and Expectations, Constructive Use of Time, Commitment to Learning, Positive Values, Social Competencies, and Positive Identity.

The Developmental Assets Profile (DAP) is a 58-item survey developed to measure youth strengths and supports. “Assets” are the skills, relationships, or behaviors that can positively influence a young person’s growth and development. External assets include Support, Empowerment, Boundaries and Expectations, and Constructive Use of Time. Internal assets include Commitment to Learning, Positive Values, Social Competencies, and Positive Identity. The DAP also measures contextual areas related to the young person’s environments, including Personal, Social, Family, School, and Community.

National data from a pilot the Search Institute conducted of the DAP instrument is used in this report as benchmark data for the YALC. At the end of the YALC program year, participants will have posttest DAP data which will be compared to national figures to determine assets development. Benchmark and pretest data are provided in Figure 5.

External Assets Categories

Figure 5: External Assets Categories



According to YALC baseline data, three external asset areas (Support, Empowerment, Boundaries and Expectations) fall under the label of “good” and are above national norms. “Good” in the data description (Table 1) is interpreted as assets that are experienced often, but there is room for improvement.

Label	Range of Scores	Interpretive Guidelines
Excellent	26–30	Most assets are experienced strongly and/or frequently.
Good	21–25	Most assets are experienced often, but there is room for improvement.
Fair	15–20	Some assets are experienced but many are weak and/or infrequent.
Low	0–14	Few if any assets are strong or frequent. Most assets are experienced infrequently.

The external asset area with the highest number is Empowerment with a mean score of 22.1. This is defined by the Search Institute as the need for youth to feel valued and valuable. The YALC mean score is 21.83. YALC involve youth in many activities to bolster empowerment. The “We Are the Majority Rally” is an example of 110 youth that assembled to educate the general public and lawmakers about young people in Cuyahoga County that are not partaking in risky behaviors and are involved in positive activities. Participants shared their stories of optimism and wellbeing. YALC opportunities for youth to share and be recognized for positive behavior reinforces feelings of value and empowerment.

Support is defined as being surrounded by people who love, care, and appreciate you. YALC is able to foster this kind of support through adult volunteers that work alongside youth members to accomplish group goals. In the 2014–2015 program year, YALC participants presented workshops at the Ohio 4-H Conference and the National Service Learning Conference. Adult volunteers provided assistance by guiding the presenters, as opposed to “taking over” the presentations. Assisting in this way is a good example of the opportunities YALC provides to offer youth Support.

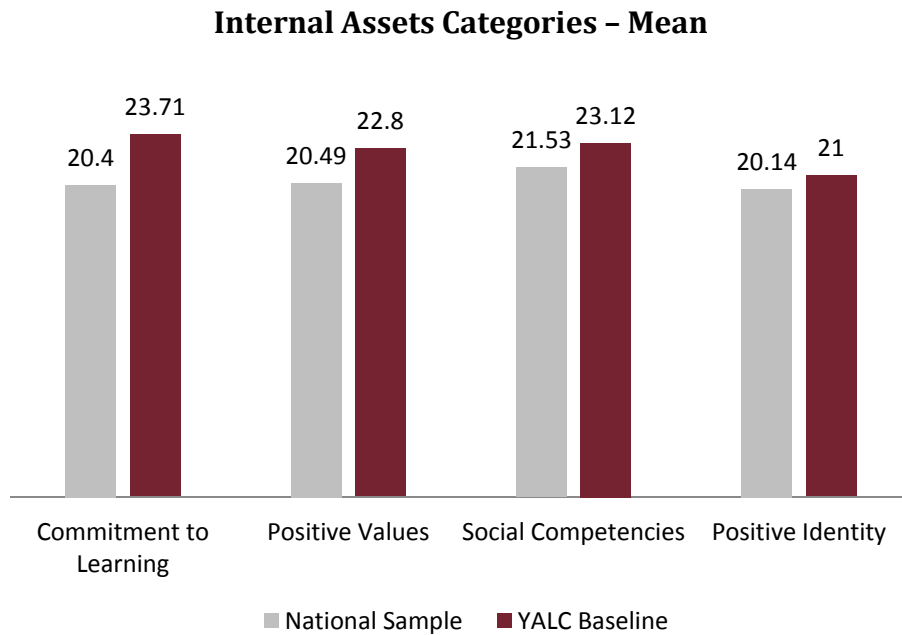
In the category of Boundaries and Expectations, which supports the concept of clear rules for young people and encouragement to do their best, YALC participants assessed scored a mean of 21.88. The national average is 21.1, which is comparable to the YALC baseline score for this category.

Constructive Use of Time is defined as opportunities outside of school to learn and develop new skills and interests with other youth and adults. This area had the lowest average for YALC participants at 20.25, though it is still above the national average of 18.18. YALC participants have monthly discussions about activities of interest as well as receive input from the YALC Coordinator and adult volunteers about skill building. As an example, during the program cycle, YALC participants attended an event called “Seat at the Table” hosted at Miami University. This event teaches participants about fundraising, project development, and implementation. In addition, keynote speakers Ohio State Representatives Christie

Kuhns and Stephanie Howse discussed service to the community and running for elected office.

Internal Assets Categories

Figure 6: Internal Assets Categories



All YALC internal asset scores are above the national norms. The national norm for the internal asset with the highest score is Social Competencies at 21.53. The Search Institute defines Social Competencies as the skills young people need to interact effectively with others, make difficult decisions, and cope with new situations. YALC participants who completed the DAP had an average of 23.12 in Social Competencies. An example of YALC programming to increase social competencies occurred when local members participated in a 4-H county exchange program interacting with teens in rural Champaign County. This exchange provided a platform for developing interpersonal communication and adaptability to new environments.

Commitment to Learning is defined as young people's need for a sense of the lasting importance of learning and a belief in their own abilities. YALC members assessed had a mean score of 23.71, which is above the national average.

Positive Identity encompasses young people's need to believe in their own self-worth and to feel that they have control over the things that happen to them. YALC participants that completed the DAP had a mean score of 21, which is slightly above the national average.

An additional internal asset area where youth from the national data set scored well is Positive Values. YALC members who completed the DAP scored higher than the national average. Youth develop strong guiding values to help them make healthy life choices, including responsibility, empathy, and self-control. As an example of positive values, YALC members recruited youth groups from around the county to compete in physical challenges and raise money for a hunger charity. Events like this help youth develop empathy for others since their focus is helping people less fortunate.

Next Steps For YALC

Program activities and evaluation of those activities are continuing for the Youth Advisory and Leadership Coalition (YALC).

Annual Youth Summit

The 2015 youth summit took place on November 14, 2015. There were 242 attendees at the summit. Sessions on political activism, summer internships, YALC, and music were some of the workshop selections. The summit used a new format this year called Pecha Kucha, where youth chose their sessions based on presentations that were limited to 20 slides with 20 seconds per slide.

DAP Implementation

Implementation activities are well underway for the Developmental Assets Profile (DAP). Justin Roskopf from the Search Institute trained the program administrators at the Ohio

State University Extension office in the use of the DAP and provided onsite technical support for three evaluations to Case Western Reserve University. The Search Institute has also offered other programs for Starting Point grantees under the Family & Children First Council.

The evaluation team has gathered baseline data from YALC and used it to assess YALC levels and changes in the developmental assets relative to the national benchmark data. In the spring of 2016, follow-up DAP data from YALC participants will be collected. This information will be used to identify strengths and gaps that can be used by the various YALC committees to discuss and consider if the data might be addressed with additional programming and activity under the current YALC model.

Qualitative Interviews

Qualitative interviews with a stratified random sample of approximately 15 youth by grade level and age will be conducted in the 2015–2016 program cycle. These interviews will include discussions on the influence of YALC, role of the program on influencing youth empowerment, and YALC strengths and weaknesses.