

YGC Insider



Grand Rapids

community foundation™

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2008-2009 Youth Grant Committee
www.grfoundation.org

The Youth Grant Committee provides funding for programs that address youth needs while teaching youth about leadership, philanthropy and responsibility.

2008-2009 Youth Grant Committee

Gabe Audu, West Catholic
Tiffany Boorsma, West Catholic
Torie Brewton, GR Christian
Danielle Bruce, East Kentwood
Grace Davis, East Kentwood
David DeStigter, GR Christian
Allison Endres, Forest Hills Eastern
Grace B. Feenstra, GR Christian
R.J. Ferrell-Tillman, Catholic Central
Kyrstan Forseman, Grandville
Kierstdea Furey, City High
Matt Gammans, Northview
Tabitha Haight, City High
Elizabeth Herman, East Kentwood
Brandon J. Hughes, East Grand Rapids
Tom Kennedy, Catholic Central
Rebecca Mohny, City High
Kathryn Nowicki, West Catholic
Jasmine J. Parks, East Kentwood
Laine Putans, City High
Jasmine Riley, Creston
Jenna Rood, West Catholic
Khayriyyah Muhammad Smith,
East Kentwood
Sam Wohns, East Grand Rapids
Charlie Wondergem,
East Grand Rapids

The YGC Experience

By Brandon Hughes, YGC Co-Chair

The Grand Rapids Community Foundation Youth Grant Committee consists of various students from the diverse Grand Rapids school systems.

Each year new and veteran committee members are called upon to help their communities by making tough grant making decisions. The group's diversity, along with the personal experiences of the members helps to make the best decisions possible for our peers in the community that they will be serving.



Executive Committee members, from left: Brandon Hughes, Torie Brewton, Jenna Rood, RJ Ferrell-Tillman, Becky Mohny, Grace Feenstra, Jasmine Parks, Kierstdea Furey.

Along with the tough decisions, debates do occur. But through the hard work and debating, there are also many memorable moments. This year the committee has been closer than ever. With the first annual overnight and volunteering at organizations



A typical YGC meeting. Photo: Brian Kelly for Frey Foundation.

such as Gilda's Club we became more of a family than a committee.

The Youth Grant experience is an enriching one for the members and is certainly important for the community's youth that it serves. It has been an honor to serve as the 2009 co-chair with Jasmine Parks, and I know that YGC will continue to change lives the way that it changed mine.

Youth Survey results guide grant-making decisions

By RJ Ferrell-Tillman, YGC Member

Every two years, in the Youth Grant Committee, we run a survey of the youth to attempt to bring programs and fund grants that would impact the youth population, finding and satisfying their needs. By running this survey we see the issues that the youth of Grand Rapids

face day to day. We took a survey this year and found that the top issue this year was pressure to succeed while the more dangerous, commonly associated, issues for teens like sexual harassment and abuse of prescription drugs had fallen to the bottom of the list, an improvement in the community for some.

The list continued with low self-esteem, peer pressure, depression, and not “fitting in”(cliques). Looking at this list of the top five issues in Grand Rapids, one must think where the problem is coming from. We took another survey to see how students deal with these issues. The programs that were most helpful with the coping of these issues were competitive sports. As the list continues we see arts programs, outdoor experience camps, jobs and career options and opportunities, and specific skills or hobbies.

By using these statistics we are able to properly grant programs that would have the greatest impact on the youth population. This year we see that the pressures have shifted from drug abuse and sex to low self-esteem and pressure to succeed. With this information I feel we have granted the right programs that will not only help the youth in these areas but also the community in the near future.

From Trainee to Trustee

By Torie Brewton, Youth Trustee and YGC Member



Throughout high school, I have participated in many different extracurricular activities that have enhanced my learning experience, but none have been as rewarding as having the unique opportunity to serve on the Community Foundation Board of Trustees as the Youth Trustee.

I held the “trustee-in-training” position last year, where I attended monthly meetings and observed Margaret Kennedy fulfill her duties as Youth Trustee. This year, I took on the role as a full-voting member on the Board of Trustees. Although the other members of the board are much more experienced than me, they always listen to my opinions and are truly interested in what I, as a youth, have to say. Not only did I have the chance to converse with business professionals and Grand Rapids community leaders at these meetings, I also learned a great deal about the Community Foundation.

I am very thankful for the experience of being a Youth Trustee. Next year, Tom Kennedy will go from “trustee-in-training” to Youth Trustee and will be able to share this amazing opportunity.

New ideas at the Youth Grantmaker Conference

By Becky Mohny, YGC Member

My experience at the summer leadership conference opened my eyes to the many high school students who are trying to make a difference in their communities. I had no idea that outside of our Youth Grant Committee other people in other cities were doing much the same. I actually saw a friend there who is part of Young Women for Change in Grand Rapids, and she was so impressed with YGC that she joined this year’s committee.

On our first full day everyone was divided into groups and instructed to build a city out of cardboard boxes. At first I was skeptical about the practical applications of this to grant-making. However, as the day progressed I began to realize that we were experiencing on a smaller scale all the trials and difficulties that come with planning a city. This gave me a very good idea about projects or programs that are necessarily underfunded because of budget restrictions, giving them a greater need for funding from organizations like the Community Foundation.

There were also several workshops spaced throughout the day. I attended one in particular with another girl from our committee about community service projects. She and I are the Co-Volunteer Coordinators and we both found it very helpful to be able to discuss with other youth and youth leaders the kinds of volunteering they had participated in.

This conference was a great way to network with other foundations and to learn how to better serve our community. I am still in contact with a few people I met at the conference and some of the ideas we discussed at the conference were incorporated into this year’s volunteering and grant-making. It was a valuable way to spend part of my summer and I am very glad I was given the opportunity to participate.



Becky Mohny (left) and RJ Ferrell-Tillman review a grant request. Photo: Mary Taber

YGC promotes youth volunteerism

By Grace Feenstra, YGC Member

At the beginning of the year, as I considered how to fulfill my duties as a volunteer coordinator, I thought about how many times I had wanted to volunteer but didn't know where to begin. I realized that a lot of teenagers probably felt the same way – they wanted to volunteer but didn't know where to begin looking for volunteer opportunities. I decided that in addition to helping to organize volunteer efforts for the YGC, I would try to make it easier for all teens around West Michigan to find volunteer opportunities.

After contacting several agencies, the West Michigan chapter of the United Way enthusiastically responded and wanted to help out. After meeting with staff from the United Way, we decided to make posters using a theme from posters already in production, but with youth-themed phrases and with the Community Foundation's



*Grace Feenstra (center) shares sample posters with the YGC.
Photo: Brian Kelly for Frey Foundation.*

logo included. The people on the posters would be members of the YGC from a photo shoot in December. We decided to promote the Volunteer Solutions website which tailors volunteer opportunities to specific people, including youth. The posters were produced and put up in schools throughout the area. They are also being distributed elsewhere throughout West Michigan. In time, I hope to expand the scope of the campaign and to help youth throughout the area find more ways to volunteer.

Visit <http://www.volunteersolutions.org/hwmuw/volunteer/> to find out more about this volunteer website.

New Member's Perspective

By Gabe Audu, YGC Member

If I had to describe my Youth Grant Committee experiences thus far in one word, I would describe it as phenomenal. Throughout my tenure, I have had the opportunity to not only delve into the realm of private charity, but I have also made many lasting, valuable friendships. To be honest, I did not expect the kids to be that friendly or cordial; but from the moment I walked into the first meeting, all those misconceptions were cleared away. Furthermore, the other members in the YGC have accepted me with arms wide open and taught me the skills needed to become a competent committee.

As a high school student and community volunteer, I am proud to say that I am a member of the Grand Rapids Community Foundation Youth Grant Committee.

Committee members join the Live United campaign, Clockwise from top left: Khayriyyah Muhammad Smith, Kathryn Nowicki, Gabe Audu, Kierstdea Furey, Grace Feenstra, and Allison Endres.



Fast Facts about the YGC:

- ◆ Since 1994, the YGC has awarded 184 grants for programs that benefit youth. Those grants total \$850,179.
- ◆ Over 150 young people have participated in the Youth Grant Committee since its inception.
- ◆ The Youth Fund was established with an initial \$1 million gift from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Current value of the endowed Youth Fund is over \$1.3 million.
- ◆ The 2008-09 YGC has 25 members who attend 10 high schools.
- ◆ In 2009, the YGC reviewed 63 grant proposals totaling over \$250,000 in requests.

Donors Help the Youth Fund Grow!

Gifts to the Youth Fund are permanently endowed, allowing future youth grantmakers to meet the needs of future generations.

Thanks to Mike and Rachel Goorhouse for supporting the Youth Fund this year!

2009 Youth Grants

Each year, the Youth Grant Committee engages in an intensive grant review process. In 2008-09, the YGC reviewed 63 grant requests totaling nearly \$250,000. After many meetings, lots of discussion, and a bit of compromise, 17 grants were recommended to the Board of Trustees for funding. Those grants, totaling \$58,380, were presented at the 2009 Youth Grant Committee Celebration Dinner and Grant Presentation Ceremony on May 20, 2009 at The B.O.B.

St. John's Home: Success in School.

To help teenagers who were abused or neglected by their parents become more competent and confident students. **\$5,000**

Living In Fulfillment Everyday, Inc. :

Life Connect. To provide positive parenting skills, emotional support and to help build self esteem for young women ages 12-17; to help equip them with the necessary life skills to lead productive lives in the community. **\$5,000**

United Methodist Community House:

The Youth Connection Pilot Project. To motivate low-income inner-city youths to explore the possibilities of higher education, by providing them with the skills and resources to plan for their future. **\$5,000**

Planned Parenthood of West and Northern Michigan: Something to Say.

To select, train, and mentor teen advocates who will be informed and articulate voices for comprehensive sexuality education at the local and state levels. **\$4,800**

Arbor Circle Corporation: Day

Programming. To provide services to youth who are not regularly attending school due to issues of homelessness, running away, suspension and/or expulsion with the goal of reconnecting these youth to high school or GED completion. **\$4,000**

Grandville Avenue Arts & Humanities: Art in the

Neighborhood To sponsor art and pottery programs at the Cook Arts Center for

children in the Grandville Avenue neighborhood. **\$4,000**

New City Neighbors: Breaktime

Bakery. To purchase needed resources that will aid in the function of the bakery and the instruction of job-skills. **\$4,000**

Comprehensive Therapy Center: Community Teens Collaborate at

Therapy and Fun. To support a teen mentoring program at Therapy and Fun, where teen volunteers work alongside professional therapists helping at-risk children with disabilities to walk, talk, learn and play. **\$3,660**

Specialized Language Development

Center: Language Links. To target 1st -3rd grade free or reduced lunch students who are significantly below grade level in reading, writing, and spelling but do not qualify for special education services. **\$3,500**

Oakdale Neighbors: Read-it Book

Club. To improve recreational reading for youth 3rd grade through 12th grade. **\$3,100**

Association for the Blind & Visually Impaired: Summer in the City/

STEPS. To offer an eight day urban day camp program designed to teach independence, transition and life skills to youth with visual impairment ages 14 – 18 years old through practical experience, mentoring and peer support. **\$3,000**

Child and Family Resource

Council: Resources Against Violent Encounters (RAVE). To support the RAVE program in its effort to provide relationship violence prevention programming to youth ages 12-18 in Kent County, Michigan. **\$3,000**

Grand Rapids Children's

Museum: Connor's Friends: An Evening for Children with Autism. To provide a night of fun activities for children with autism and their families. **\$2,800**

Camp Tall Turf: The Roosevelt

Wave. To fund teens from three organizations to take part in a 4 week leadership and community development program in the Roosevelt Park Community on the southwest side of Grand Rapids. **\$2,750**

Strategic Outreach Services: SOS

Kids. To steer at-risk youth ages ten to fifteen away from gang involvement and criminal activity by using the art and discipline of dance, including ballet, hip-hop and jazz. **\$2,000**

City of Kentwood: Scholarship

Enhancement Fund. To enhance the Kentwood Parks and Recreation Department scholarship program that assists youth who can't afford to participate in programs, activities or events. **\$1,500**

Camp Fire USA West Michigan: Peer

Proof. To deliver peer proof curriculum to 4th-8th grade youth in our summer program. **\$1,270**

So you want to join the YGC...

Any high school student interested in serving the community may apply for membership! The YGC meets monthly during the school year, usually the second Tuesday of each month at 6:30 p.m. at the Grand Rapids Community Foundation offices in downtown Grand Rapids. The application process is simple and painless. Application forms are available in mid-April, and new members are selected in June. For more information, or to receive an application, please contact any current Youth Grant Committee member, or call Cris Kooyer at 454-1751, ext. 118, or email ckooyer@grfoundation.org.

Thanks to the Frey Foundation /photographer Brian Kelly for meeting photos on pages 1 and 3.