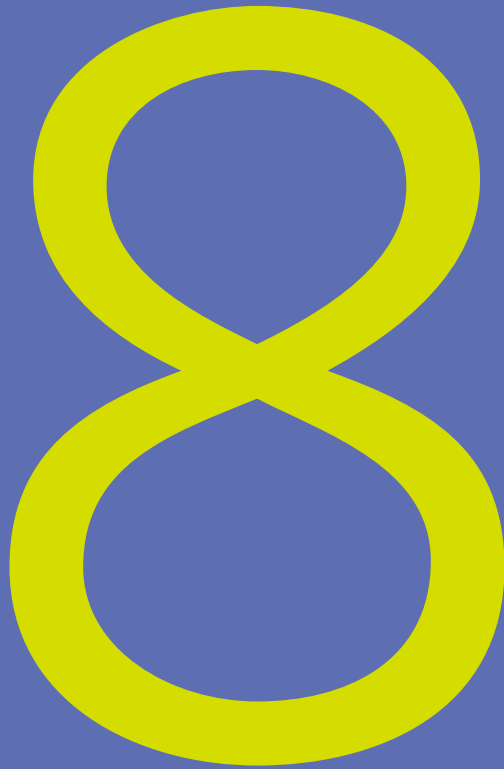


Promotion and Recognition



Promotion of YAC activities adds valued visibility to the community foundation's role in the community and attracts donors - especially those with an interest in youth.

Foundation staff - executive director or program officer - responsible for oversight of the YAC should take the lead in initiating contacts with local media. The basic inexpensive information flyer or brochure, which explains the YAC, can be used by YAC members in recruiting new members as well as to convey the action, enthusiasm and energy of the YAC to media representatives. Some YACs have had students in computer classes design a brochure. Other foundations have used as a stand alone promotion piece a page from their annual report featuring the YAC. Before any information is given to the media, always have a [media release form](#) for each youth. A customizable sample may be found on [youthgrantmakers.org](#).

There are four activities during the year that especially merit promotion. They are:

- Recruiting new members. Three promotion strategies for recruitment include: flyer and poster campaigns for school and community bulletin boards, spots on student-operated radio stations, and alerts in the newsletters of youth-serving organizations. While newspaper stories have been attempted, press releases have not been found to be effective for promoting recruitment. A [recruitment brochure](#) and [flyer](#) may be found on [youthgrantmakers.org](#). These documents may be customized to meet the needs of your YAC.
- Announcing RFPs. YACs have had success with placing articles in student, weekly and daily newspapers to announce grant priorities and the grant application process. In addition, results of the needs assessment can be shared at key meetings of community leaders, such as service clubs and governmental bodies.
- Announcing the grant awards. YACs have found it effective to schedule grant presentations at public meetings, such as city commission and school board meetings. Involving local celebrities and politicians in the grant award announcements can help generate both publicity and a greater understanding on the part of community leaders about the importance of the YAC and community foundation.

In addition, if a local service club has been a supporter of the community foundation and in particular the youth endowment fund, it is helpful to use grant awards as the opportunity to provide an update to club members. The local media—both print and electronic—like to be able to interview YAC members. While it is helpful to provide a prepared news release, give media enough time to interview a YAC member before their deadline.

The news release should include a list of contact persons for each of the grants awarded. Because many of the weeklies do not have the staff to write a story, they will often use the full text of a news release. For this reason, it is important to highlight a grant and add a quote from the contact person. If the weekly newspaper has a geographic target area, it is helpful to have the highlighted project based in that area.

In addition, many dailies have a student page each week coordinated by a local high school journalism teacher. Offer to have a student write an article about the YAC and its grants for that page.

If the YAC is supporting a project that involves a communications tool, such as a newsletter, make sure that the YAC is mentioned in it. Many YACs have realized that youth need information on services and resources for youth. As a result, a number have produced pocket-size, youth yellow pages and found them to be in great demand by both youth and their parents.

- Involving the YAC in a service learning event. If the target for the event is one of the top priorities identified by the needs assessment, the event may merit a human interest story on the YAC. Many newspapers regularly run such stories on specific topics.

Although the media's response to promotion and news stories may not always result in a story, keeping the media informed about the activities of the YAC is an important educational effort. Several YAC members have written letters to the editor in response to stories that discredit youth for not being involved in their communities — letters which are signed by them as a member of the local YAC. Do not get discouraged about a lack of media attention. Consider the media a valuable ally that needs to be courted.

Other strategies have been tried in efforts to promote the YAC. A number of YACs are now exploring the use of local radio interview shows to tell their stories. Developing a working relationship with the producers of these shows can result in young people from the youth advisory committee being contacted when they need a youth representative about a particular issue affecting young people. In addition, YACs are exploring the opportunity of producing their own shows for local cable access stations. Many of these stations are operated by local community colleges with staff that will help train YAC members in the technology. Such programs can be produced at little cost, but the YAC members must realize they each need to commit their time to making it work.

Many community foundations have developed their own websites and include the YAC with a page of its own. Encourage YAC members to prepare the text and allow them to add their names. Showing a school friend the Home Page during a high school computer class or a family friend the Home Page on the home computer can both be important recruitment opportunities.

Finally, involve YAC members in a video or slide show that may be produced about the community foundation. Including a brief comment by an articulate youth can reinforce the message to prospective donors that the foundation is the right tool to help plan for the future of the community.

Recognition

Showcasing the work of the YAC in the community foundation's ongoing publications is one of the most powerful forms of recognition. A recommended best practice is that the YAC be mentioned in the annual report. An example of this may be found on the Youth Grantmakers website. Many community foundations include stories about their YAC in regular newsletters and on their websites as mentioned above. YAC members should be on the mailing lists for these publications.

In addition, it is helpful to provide each YAC member with a letter thanking them for their service at the end of a grantmaking year and encouraging them to continue when the new school year starts in the fall. Such a letter can be copied to the school principal and to their parents as well.

A number of community foundations include a simple certificate of completion with the letter. A sample certificate of completion may be found on youthgrantmakers.org. The certificate may be customized to meet the needs of your YAC. While recognizing individuals is one activity, it is also necessary to recognize the YAC as a whole. Some community foundations provide a group picture of the YAC to each member at the conclusion of the year.

As demonstrated in the sample, a common form of formal recognition is a certificate of completion for graduating seniors from the YAC. Local newspapers will often offer special coverage of student news at graduation time. A news release announcing the graduation of several YAC members should also include pictures of each. Many community foundations hold an annual event to mark both completion of another grantmaking year for the YAC as well as single out graduates for their contributions. Such an event can be tied to a foundation board meeting, and a number of foundation invite parents to attend.