

## Helping You – Helping Me Why Youth Volunteering Matters

**Youth who volunteer have better outcomes than those who don't. Yet many low-income and low-achieving youth never have the opportunity to volunteer.** Research shows that youth who volunteer are likely to live in higher income families with high educational attainment and where at least one parent regularly volunteers.<sup>1</sup> These youth are likely to attend religious services routinely and often are already on a path towards college attendance. They also are more likely to live in communities with low poverty rates, a robust nonprofit infrastructure, and high home ownership rates.<sup>2,3</sup>

In addition to having parental and community supports for volunteering, college-bound students and those with a higher socio-economic status also have a greater number of school-based civic learning opportunities.<sup>4,5</sup> Schools in low income areas are 26% less likely to engage students in volunteering through service-learning programs,<sup>6</sup> yet students who are disengaged in school and non-college-bound students benefit greatly from such opportunities when they are offered.<sup>7</sup> When disengaged youth are connected with high quality volunteer opportunities, they are less likely to engage in risky behaviors.<sup>8</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Theokas, C., Bloch, M. (2006). Teens as Volunteers. Available at [http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child\\_Trends-2006\\_12\\_06\\_FS\\_Teen\\_Volun.pdf](http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2006_12_06_FS_Teen_Volun.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) (2010). Volunteering in America 2010 Fact Sheet. Available at <http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/assets/resources/FactSheetFinal.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> CNCS. (2005). Youth Helping America. Building Active Citizens: The Role of Social Institutions in Teen Volunteering, Pg 2. Available at [http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child\\_Trends-2006\\_12\\_06\\_FS\\_Teen\\_Volun.pdf](http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2006_12_06_FS_Teen_Volun.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> Kahne, J., Middaugh, E. (2008). Democracy for Some: The Civic Opportunity Gap in High School. Circle Working Paper 59. Available at <http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/WorkingPapers/WP59Kahne.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> Kahne, J. E., Sporte, S. E., (2008). Developing Citizens: The Impact of Civic Learning Opportunities on Student's Commitment to Civic Participation. American Educational Research Journal September 2008, Vol. 45, No. 3, pp. 738-766

<sup>6</sup> Kahne, J., Middaugh, E. (2008). Democracy for Some.

<sup>7</sup> CNCS. (2005). Youth Helping America.

<sup>8</sup> ibid

## Volunteering Matters

Youth who volunteer not only help others, they also help themselves. They are less likely to feel alienated, and are more likely to experience self-acceptance, undergo moral development, and assume responsibility for their actions.<sup>9</sup>

In fact, those who volunteer just one hour a week are 50% less likely to abuse drugs, alcohol, or cigarettes than those who do not volunteer.<sup>10</sup> When coupled with school based support, volunteering relates to a reduction in teen pregnancy, course failure, suspension from school, and school dropout, as well as an improvement in reading, grades, and self concept.<sup>11,12</sup>

Civically-engaged teenagers also make greater scholastic progress during high school and subsequently acquire higher levels of education than their otherwise similar peers.<sup>13</sup> Even as adults they are more likely to vote, have a positive work ethic, be philanthropic, and have socially responsible attitudes.<sup>14, 15,16</sup>

## Volunteering as Dropout Prevention

By 12th grade, nearly one out of three high school students in Indiana say their courses are dull,<sup>17</sup> and most students who drop out say that boring classes were a major reason for their decision to quit school. However, four out of five dropouts say that real-world or experiential learning opportunities would have helped them complete school.<sup>18</sup>

In fact, both students involved in volunteering through service-learning programs and at-risk students who were not involved in such programs agree that service-learning classes are more interesting than other classes.<sup>19</sup> When asked directly about service-learning courses, 80% of at-risk students say attending high school would be more positive as a result of service-learning, and two thirds say that those courses would significantly improve their motivation to work hard in school.<sup>20</sup>

## Promising Practices<sup>21</sup>

1. Programs lasting 12 weeks or longer are more successful than shorter programs, and an opportunity to reflect on the volunteer experience is related to positive changes in students.
2. Factors that contribute most to students' developmental gains are the opportunity for autonomy and having a collegial relationship with adults.
3. Older students were more likely to show positive change as a result of their involvement in volunteer service.

<sup>9</sup> Calabrese, R. L., & Schumer, H. (1986). The effects of service activities on adolescent alienation. *Adolescence*, Vol 21(83), Fal 1986, 675-687; Conrad, D., & Hedin, D. (1982). The Impact of Experimental Education on Adolescent Development. *Child and Youth Services*, 4, 57-76; ; Newmann, F., & Rutter, R. (1983). The Effects of High School Community Service Programs on Students' Social Development.

<sup>10</sup> Moore, C.W., & Allen, J.P. (1996). The effects of volunteering on the young volunteer. *The Journal of Primary Prevention*, 17(2), 231-258.

<sup>11</sup> Allen, J. P., Philliber, S., & Hoggson, N. (1990). School-based prevention of teenage pregnancy and school dropout: Process evaluation of the national replication of the Teen Outreach Program. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 8, 505-524.

<sup>12</sup> Moore, C.W. & Allen, J.P. (1996). The Effects of Volunteering on the Young Volunteer.

<sup>13</sup> Davila, A., & Mora, M. T. (2007). An Assessment of Civic Engagement and Educational Attainment. Available at [http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/FactSheets/FS\\_Mora.Davila.pdf](http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/FactSheets/FS_Mora.Davila.pdf)

<sup>14</sup> Child Trends, Incorporated & James L. Knight Foundation; Bridgman, A., Michelsen, E., Zaff, J. F., & John S. (2002). Encouraging civic engagement: How teens are (or are not) becoming responsible citizens. Available at [http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child\\_Trends-2002\\_10\\_01\\_RB\\_CivicEngagement.pdf](http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2002_10_01_RB_CivicEngagement.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA. (1999). The American Freshman. National Norms Fall 2009. Available at <http://www.heri.ucla.edu/PDFs/pubs/briefs/brief-pr012110-09FreshmanNorms.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Child Trends. Zaff, J., & Michelsen, E. (2002). Encouraging Civic Engagement.

<sup>17</sup> Indiana Prevention Resource Center (2010). Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Use by Indiana Children and Adolescents. Available at: <http://www.drugs.indiana.edu/>

<sup>18</sup> The Silent Epidemic. Bridgeland, J. M., DiIulio, J. J., & Morison, K. B. (2006). Available at <http://www.civicenterprises.net/pdfs/thesilentepidemic3-06.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> Bridgeland, J. M., DiIulio, J. J., & Wulsin, S. C. (2008). Engaged for Success. Available at <http://www.civicenterprises.net/pdfs/service-learning.pdf>

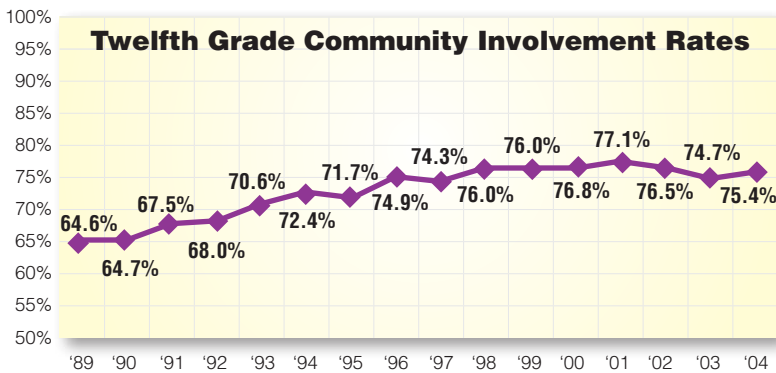
<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Moore, C.W. & Allen, J.P. (1996). The Effects of Volunteering on the Young Volunteer. *The Journal on Primary Prevention*, 17(2), 231-258.

## How many adolescents volunteer?

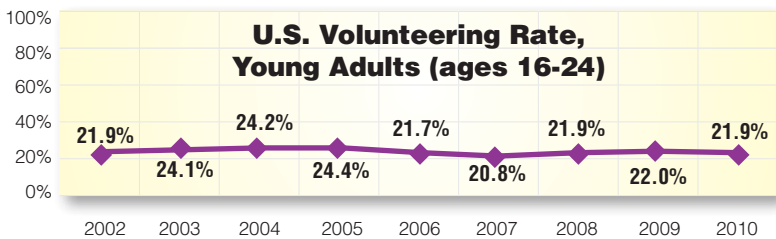
Not only are low-income, at-risk youth not receiving the opportunity to volunteer at the same rates as their peers, but over the past decade, the rate of volunteering has remained stagnant. In addition, the number of school programs encouraging youth to become civically engaged has declined.

Recognizing the benefits of service-learning programs in the early 1990's, many schools began offering volunteer activities, or requiring volunteer service for graduation.<sup>22</sup> In fact, the rates of volunteering and community involvement increased significantly, and by the end of the decade, reports showed that a strong majority of adolescents were involved in their communities.<sup>23,24</sup>



One survey found that the rate of 12th graders who were involved in their communities increased from 64.6% in 1989 to 75.4% in 2004. Another survey reported similar results; the percentage of teenagers who volunteer more than doubled between 1989 and 2005 (from 13.4% to 28.4%).<sup>25</sup>

However, the growth in youth volunteering and community involvement has not continued. Over the past decade, research has shown a steady rate of youth volunteering (ages 16-24) at slightly more than 20%. The percentage of schools with service-learning programs also declined from 32% in 1999 to 24% in 2008.<sup>26</sup>



Today, one out of five Hoosier young adults' ages 16-24 volunteer each year (20.7%), compared to the national rate of 21.9%. Another survey shows that less than one quarter of Indiana's high school students frequently engage in community activities, and an additional 13.5% engage only occasionally.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>22</sup> CNCS (2005). Youth Helping America. Building Active Citizens.

<sup>23</sup> Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA. (1999). The American Freshman.

<sup>24</sup> Princeton Survey Research Associates, Inc. (1998). Young people's community involvement survey: Report on the findings. Washington, DC: Do Something, Inc.

<sup>25</sup> CNCS, Grimm, R., Dietz, N., Foster-Bey, J., Reingold, D., & Nesbit, R. (2006). Volunteer Growth in America: A review of trends since 1974. Available at [http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/06\\_1203\\_volunteer\\_growth.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/06_1203_volunteer_growth.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> CNCS, Spring, K., Grimm, R., Dietz, N. (2008). Community Service and Service-Learning in America's schools. Available at [http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/08\\_1112\\_lsa\\_prevalence.pdf](http://www.nationalservice.gov/pdf/08_1112_lsa_prevalence.pdf)

<sup>27</sup> Indiana Prevention Resource Center (2010). Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Use by Indiana Children and Adolescents.

## WAYS TO GET TEENS TO VOLUNTEER

(Independent Sector/Gallup, 1996)

- ✓ Ask them to volunteer;
- ✓ Encourage youth to get involved in volunteering at an early age;
- ✓ Encourage children and young adults to participate in community groups, faith-based organizations, student government, and school projects;
- ✓ Encourage a positive self-image so that young people believe they can help others and contribute to their communities;
- ✓ Provide young people with opportunities to take courses that include and even require community service.

### Why Do Adolescents Volunteer?

While 38% of youth engaged in community service as part of a school-required activity in 2004, young people say that these requirements are not a major factor in their decision to volunteer (only 5% of youth reported that they volunteered because of a school requirement).<sup>28</sup>

Regardless of their economic circumstances, youth are most likely to volunteer because they are asked, and a teacher is the most likely person to make the request.<sup>29</sup>

The Higher Education Research Institute found that a young person's interest in volunteering coincides with his/her belief that it is important to help other people in need. In 2008, 69.7% of students held this belief, the highest rate since 1970.<sup>30</sup> When asked why they volunteer, American youth reported feeling compassion for people in need; believing they can do something for a good cause; or believing that if they help others, others will help them.<sup>31</sup>

Nearly three quarters (72%) of America's young people believe they can make a difference in their communities, yet only 22% of youth perceive that adults in their communities value young people.<sup>32</sup> They may be right; seven out of ten adults say that older adults are superior to younger generations when it comes to their moral values, work ethic and respect for others.<sup>33</sup> Only 37% of American adults believe today's children will make the world a better place after they become adults.<sup>34</sup> If you believe that youth can help make the world a better place, the next page provides resources to help engage youth in volunteering and community service.



<sup>28</sup> CNCS. (2005). Youth Helping America. Building Active Citizens.

<sup>29</sup> Princeton Survey Research Associates, Inc. (1998). Young people's community involvement survey.

<sup>30</sup> Higher Education Research Institute at UCLA. (1999). The American Freshman.

<sup>31</sup> Independent sector/Gallup. (1996). The Independent Sector Survey on Giving and Volunteering.

<sup>32</sup> Search Institute Survey of Youth 6th to 12th Graders (2003) Accessible at: <http://www.search-institute.org/research/assets/assetfreq>

<sup>33</sup> Pew Research Center (2009) Forty Years After Woodstock, A Gentler Generation Gap. Available at <http://pewsocialtrends.org/files/2010/10/after-woodstock-gentler-generation-gap.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> Farkas, S.; Johnson, J. (1997) Kids These Days: What Americans really Think about the Next Generation. Public Agenda. Available at: [http://www.publicagenda.org/files/pdf/kids\\_these\\_days\\_97\\_0.pdf](http://www.publicagenda.org/files/pdf/kids_these_days_97_0.pdf)

# Volunteering & Community Service Resources

**Fact sheets** on service-learning impact, best-practices, general information, involving disadvantaged populations, and many others <http://www.servicelearning.org/fact-sheets>

Three **free tool-kits** for planning, implementing, and sustaining service-learning projects - <http://www.servicelearning.org/what-you-do/educate-work-with-k-12-youth>

**Effective Practices for Engaging at-risk Youth in Service** Guide providing overview of the underlying theory and effective practices of at-risk youth in service. <http://www.ysa.org/resource/effective-practices-engaging-risk-youth-service>

## Indiana Service-Learning Organizations

**Third Millennium Philanthropy and Leadership Youth Report** Database of youth philanthropy and leadership organizations in the country. <http://www.philanthropy.iupui.edu/Millennium/TabularYouthReport.pdf>

**Young Philanthropy Initiative of Indiana** Organization whose mission is to grow lifelong philanthropists who give their time, talent, and treasure for the common good. List of recommended youth philanthropy resources available at <http://ypin.org.temp.realssl.com/Resources.aspx>, and youth resource guide available at [http://www.ypin.org/Portals/0/PDFs/YP\\_Resources.pdf](http://www.ypin.org/Portals/0/PDFs/YP_Resources.pdf)

**Youth Resources of Southwestern Indiana** Engages youth in leadership and volunteer service activities. <http://www.youth-resources.org>

**Scott County Youth Grantmaking Council** Provides opportunities for leadership development, positive peer support, learning about philanthropy and serving the community. <http://www.scottcountyfoundation.org/youthcouncil.htm>

## National Organizations

**National Service-Learning Partnership** National network of members dedicated to advancing service-learning as a core part of every young person's education. [http://www.service-learningpartnership.org/site/PageServer?pagename=ABT\\_index](http://www.service-learningpartnership.org/site/PageServer?pagename=ABT_index)

**National Youth Leadership Council** Organization committed to creating a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world with young people, their schools, and their communities through service-learning. <http://www.nylc.org/>

**National Service-Learning Clearing House** Comprehensive online service-learning resource. <http://www.servicelearning.org/>

**DoSomething.org** Organization focused on mobilizing young people to be engaged in communities and helping to create a culture of volunteerism. <http://www.dosomething.org>

**National Society for Experiential Education** The National Society for Experiential Education (NSEE) is a nonprofit membership association of educators, businesses, and community leaders. Founded in 1971, NSEE also serves as a national resource center for the development and improvement of experiential education programs nationwide. <http://www.nsee.org/>

**Youth Service America** YSA is a resource center that partners with thousands of organizations committed to increasing the quality and quantity of volunteer opportunities for young people in America, ages 5-25, to serve locally, nationally, and globally. <http://www.ysa.org/>



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## IYI Resources

**The latest data is at your fingertips with IYI's Data Center. Search statistics and gather data to improve your program planning and grant writing. Or, request customized data.**

**Get the most comprehensive overview of children's well-being in Indiana.** Download the 2010 Kids Count in Indiana Data Book.

**Want in-depth information on youth?** Check out the free resources at IYI's Virginia Beall Ball Library. We will mail you the library materials and include a postage paid return envelope.

**Have a quick question or want to bounce an idea around?** Contact IYI's free Youth Service Help Line, and get the answers you need: 1-877-IYI-TIPS.

**Looking for training on youth issues?** IYI provides regional trainings and free webinars on youth development and nonprofit management.

**Need one-on-one assistance with planning, evaluating, or expanding your organization?** Benefit from IYI's Consulting Services and receive professional help at affordable hourly rates – discounted far below market value.



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