

## Youth Volunteerism

### Developing our next generation of leaders

#### Scope and Dimension

Research indicates that volunteerism among young people has been growing in recent years and particularly in Dane County. According to data from the Dane County Youth Assessment in 2005, 59 percent of youth reported volunteering, compared to 37 percent in 2000 and 10 percent in 1990. In comparison, according to the Corporation for National Community Service, in 2007 Wisconsin's volunteering rate for youth ages 16-24 was 32.5 percent in comparison to the national rate of 23.4 percent. There has also been an increase in youth leadership. In 2005, 20 percent of youth were active in leadership activities in their schools and communities, compared to 17 percent in 2000 (Dane County Youth Assessment).

Research also shows that people who begin volunteering at a younger age are more likely to be engaged in their community, volunteer and give to charities as they grow older (UCLA/Higher Education Research Institute).

Overall, youth see many benefits to volunteering. According to surveys from Independent Sector, youth reported they benefit from volunteering because they learn respect for others, have the opportunity understand people who are different from themselves, and feel a compassion for people in need.

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The U.S. Census reported that in 1990 one in seven people living in Dane County was a youth. In 2000, it was one in five. And in 2005 we now have over 75,000 youth ages 6 – 18. Guided by this data, United Way of Dane County (UWDC) is working with youth to create the next generation of leaders in our community.

When our community identified youth leadership and development as a key element to the Agenda for Change, United Way created a plan to build a strong, engaged youth volunteer group. Today, youth volunteerism is a particularly strong focus of the Agenda: Non-profit agencies and volunteers are strong partners in achieving measurable results. Through multiple youth led programs and youth volunteer opportunities, UWDC is energizing the growing number of youth by providing volunteer and leadership opportunities that connect youth to their community and build skills to succeed in school and life.



*I volunteer because it's fun and you get to meet new friends. I also really enjoy helping others because it makes me a better person.*

- Angie Yang, 8<sup>th</sup> Grade, Prairie View Middle School

## Developing Youth Volunteers Since 1990

In the early 1990's United Way of Dane County (UWDC) recognized the importance of engaging youth in creating community impact. The Youth Volunteer Initiative (YVI) was created in 1991 through the United Way Volunteer Center. The Center provides coordination and technical assistance around developing and increasing meaningful volunteer opportunities for youth. Additionally, YVI created a survey to assess the needs of youth and their involvement in the community. Because of this survey UWDC was able to advance the concept of matching youth interests with community needs.

In 1997, UWDC was a lead agency for the President's Summit on Youth. As a result of attending the Summit and being a partner of the America's Promise Alliance, UWDC committed its efforts to increasing viable volunteer opportunities for youth in the community *and* having youth more involved within UWDC.

## Providing Resources for Youth to Access Meaningful Volunteer Opportunities

Today, we offer a variety of resources for youth to find their voice and engage in community service.

### *Youth Volunteer Opportunities Book*

Annually, the Volunteer Center publishes a Youth Volunteer Opportunities book that features over 80 opportunities for youth, ages 7-17, from 30 non-profit agencies. Organized by the Agenda for Change, it features a variety of creative volunteer projects, including assisting visitors in HospiceCare's Doc Rock Café, building homes for Habitat for Humanity and becoming a friendly visitor to an older adult with Catholic Charities. The book gives youth access to volunteer opportunities throughout the county. It is published with financial support from CUNA Mutual Group. Each year, 3,000

copies are distributed to area youth through schools, libraries, and youth centers. It is also available online:

[www.unitedwaydanecounty.org](http://www.unitedwaydanecounty.org).

### *Global Youth Service Day*

For the past 11 years, the United Way Volunteer Center has been one of just 75 organizations throughout the country chosen by Youth Service America to organize activities for Global Youth Service Day. The purpose is to cultivate the spirit of volunteerism among young people and encourage them to serve their community year-round Together, with partner organizations, UWDC mobilizes over 2,500 youth to volunteer during this three day event every spring. Over the last three years, approximately 17,000 Dane County youth have volunteered during Global Youth Service Day.

### Youth Service Day Participation

Year	Youth Volunteers	Agencies Coord. Projects	Youth Planning Committee Members
2003	2,508	n/a	n/a
2004	2,518	n/a	n/a
2005	2,500	n/a	n/a
2006	3,000	35	9
2007	2,500	30	15
2008	2,590	33	17



*Global Youth Service Day at Warner Park, 2007*

My Girl Scout Troop really enjoyed being of service. They truly felt that they made a difference! - Donna Canaie, Youth Service Day Team Leader

Online with [www.VolunteerYourTime.org](http://www.VolunteerYourTime.org)

It is no secret that youth spend much of their free time online. According to a recent survey of youth aged 13-17, 38 percent reported they use the internet 1-5 hours per day and 16 percent said they use it 5-10 hours per day (Hanway/Gallup Poll Briefing, 2003). According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project three in five children under the age of 18 – and more than 78% of children between the ages of 12 and 17- go online. Given this impressive data, having an online portal for youth to access volunteer opportunities is crucial. In 2002, the Volunteer Center recognized the need to move to an online database and by engaging partners from UW Morgridge Center for Public Service, Madison Area Technical College, Edgewood College and RSVP, [www.VolunteerYourTime.org](http://www.VolunteerYourTime.org) was born.

Since its inception, the number of nonprofit agencies on the site has grown to 300 and over 800 meaningful volunteer opportunities posted. Youth and families can search for ongoing or one-time volunteer opportunities via the

Calendar tool. This feature is particularly popular during summer and winter breaks when youth and families have extra time to volunteer and want to get engaged and serve their community.

[www.VolunteerYourTime.org](http://www.VolunteerYourTime.org) Quick Facts:

- Of the 833 opportunities, 40% are available/appropriate for youth (330)
- Half of the registered users on the site are affiliated with a local college/university.
- In 2007 there were 45,854 *unique visitors* to the site

I continue to learn from our youth volunteers. These students continue to go above and beyond their volunteer duties to touch the lives of the families, staff, and volunteers at Salvation Army.

- Deb Crye, Volunteer Coordinator, Salvation Army

#### *In Person, In the Community*

In addition, United Way staff conducts outreach to area elementary, middle and high schools throughout the school year through classroom presentations. Volunteer Center staff present at volunteer fairs at local companies, universities and colleges, providing resources for youth and families who are interested in volunteering.

UWDC also recognizes the importance of community engagement. Throughout the year, we have engaged youth in discussions of volunteerism through youth groups, youth resource centers, faith groups and the community-at-large.

## Developing and Recognizing Future Leaders

*By Youth For Youth (BYFY)*

In 1992 we created By Youth For Youth (BYFY), a one-of-a-kind volunteer opportunity to encourage youth leadership and philanthropy. BYFY is a youth-driven committee consisting of a diverse group of students from high schools throughout Dane County. This unique leadership group meets weekly over a period of six months with the ultimate goal of making investments in programs implemented by and for the benefit of other youth.

With the start of each school year, returning students use their leadership skills to welcome and engage the entire committee. Relationships are continuously built and encouraged with youth-led icebreakers, team building activities, facilitation trainings, and leadership building. Also, new students are highly encouraged to co-facilitate meetings with returning students until they have the confidence to lead with anyone.

They meet their ultimate goal by creating a request for proposal (RFP), advertisements for the RFP and committing many hours outside of meetings to read the proposals. Every year, BYFY is faced with the challenge of receiving requests that exceed the available investment funds. Nonetheless, every year they accept the challenge and use consensus decision-making skills to guide them through the process.

After making investment decisions, BYFY volunteers present the recommendations to the Board of Directors of the partners. Presentations help to further enhance their communication, public speaking, interpersonal, leadership, and volunteerism skills.

### *Global Youth Service Day Planning Committee*

The Youth Planning Committee, an energetic, twenty-member group of Middle and High School students is the guiding force behind the

creative planning process and execution of service projects, the commercial production, t-shirt design and outreach materials for Global Youth Service Day. Over the past 11 years, 120 distinct youth have served in a leadership role, performing over 2,040 hours of volunteer service on the Planning Committee

The committee is in charge of all aspects of Global Youth Service Day and has the unique opportunity of developing a public service announcement with Charter Communications. The public service announcement promotes Global Youth Service Day and highlights the positive contributions youth make in our community. Also, committee members have engaged elected officials. Madison Mayor Dave Cieslewicz appears at the kick-off each year and in 2008, Governor Doyle issued a proclamation declaring April 25-27, Youth Service Day in Wisconsin.



*Members of the Global Youth Service Day Planning Committee join area youth at Bayview Community Center for a neighborhood clean-up*

### *10,000 Hours Show (10K)*

The 10,000 Hours Show recognizes and recruits young volunteers through a community concert. Here is how it works: individuals who volunteer 10 hours or more for local non-profits and register their hours on [www.VolunteerYourTime.org](http://www.VolunteerYourTime.org) can earn a free ticket to a rock concert in April. The effort is

spearheaded by a group of energetic and dedicated college students from UW-Madison and Edgewood College. United Way Volunteer Center is a partner and advisor, guiding the student staff and enabling them to become community leaders.

The 10,000 Hours Show started in at Central Iowa University and branched out to Madison in 2007. Locally, six student leaders from UW-Madison and Edgewood College have been directing the effort. They are in charge of leading over 75 college students that have been involved in the outreach, fundraising and production efforts. By working with United Way, these students are gaining valuable leadership skills and developing connections in the community.

10,000 Hours Show (10K):

Year	Volunteers Registered (through VYT.org)	Hours Completed	Concert Attendance
2008	2,416	14,895	212
2007	1,276	12,355	292

*United Way Youth Board Representative*

UWDC recognizes the important value of having young people involved in all areas of our organization. We value the perspectives they have to share, their experiences and enthusiasm. One important way youth are placed in an important leadership role in our organization is that we have a designated seat for a youth member on the Board of Directors. Four different youth from BYFY, committing to at least two years each, have represented youth in this position.

*Community Volunteer Awards - Youth Award*

Since 1990, United Way Volunteer Center has recognized over fifty outstanding youth volunteers at the annual Community Volunteer Awards. At each awards banquet, one youth award winner is awarded an educational scholarship as well as a check to donate to the

non-profit organization at which they volunteer. This event highlights the dedication and service all volunteers contribute to our community and it's a great forum to recognize youth volunteers.

## Partnering With Local Organizations to Achieve Success

A key element to UWDC's success in youth programs has been to engage community partners. At the onset of both By Youth For Youth and Global Youth Service Day, the Volunteer Center has worked with City, County, and youth-service providers to reach our common goal of providing service and leadership opportunities for youth. These partnerships provide an opportunity to share resources and knowledge to develop ways of reaching out to youth in our community and helping them achieve their full potential through volunteerism.

Our partners for youth programs include: City of Madison - Office of Community Services, Dane County Youth Commission, University of Wisconsin-Madison Union Directorate-Community Services Committee, UW Morgridge Center for Public Services, Madison Area Technical College, Edgewood College, and Urban League of Greater Madison.

Through the Youth Resource Network (YRN), a coalition of Dane County youth service providers, we participate in the listserv and also serves as the Treasure/Fiscal Agent to the Steering Committee. Through this network, UWDC recruits members for our youth programs, reaching youth throughout Dane County schools, and youth who may not be in a traditional school setting (e.g. alternative school, home school).

Sponsorship from area organizations helps UWDC ensure success in our youth programs. Sponsors include: Oscar Mayer/Kraft, MG&E, CUNA Mutual Group, State Farm Insurance, and Charter Communications. Additional support for the 10,000 Hour Show Dane County came from United Way via the Agency and

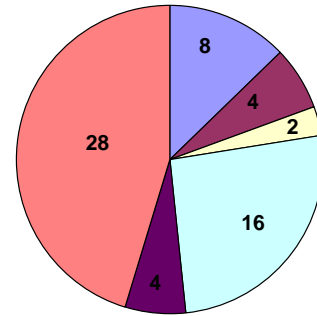
Volunteer Development Community Solution Team.

**2007-2008 By Youth For Youth & Global Youth Service Day Participants by Ethnicity**

**Promising Practices**

UWDC has learned that the most effective youth programs are youth-led; facilitated by youth with decisions spearheaded by youth. This allows youth to step up and make decisions when needed, to mediate the goals of the group and create a great leadership learning environment for our future leaders. UWDC plans to continue this movement of youth-led programs.

UWDC staff has successfully recruited youth from diverse social, cultural and economic backgrounds. However, staff hopes to improve their efforts to recruit more young men and youth from outside of Madison.



■ African American   
 ■ Asian   
 ■ Biracial  
■ Caucasian   
 ■ Latino/Hispanic   
 ■ Southeast Asian

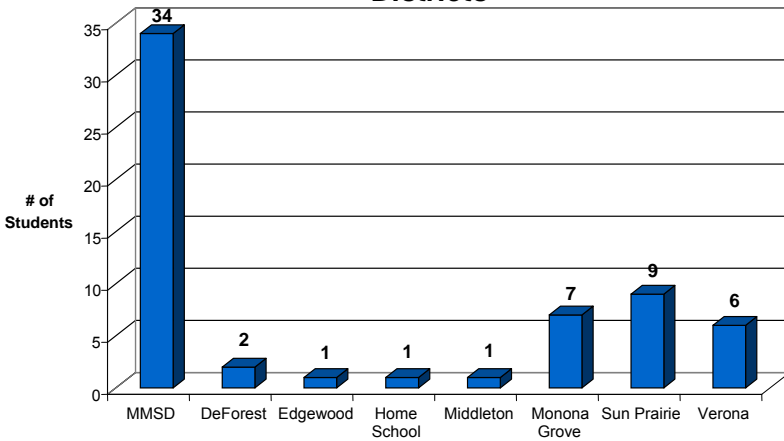
**Where We Go From Here**

The Dane County Youth Assessment (partially funded by UWDC) will now be conducted every three years, instead of every five. UWDC uses data from this survey to inform the direction of youth programs and track the progress of youth volunteerism in Dane County.

Lastly, UWDC needs to educate more non-profit agencies and the community on the importance of youth volunteers. Although there are over 300 opportunities available to youth listed on [www.VolunteerYourTime.org](http://www.VolunteerYourTime.org), UWDC would ultimately like that number to increase over time through education and outreach to agencies listed on the site.

UWDC encourages the continued support and development of youth in our community. All around us youth are having a positive impact, and UWDC continues to offer unique programming to develop our future leaders and build strong volunteers.

**2007-2008 By Youth For Youth & Global Youth Service Day Participants by School Districts**



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