



2011 Annual Report
Rapid City's youth and adults:
Building a thriving community together

By supporting youth and providing them with leadership opportunities, the Rapid City Authentic Youth Civic Engagement is making long-term, meaningful change for Rapid City, South Dakota



AYCE was first formed under the Mayor’s Strengthening Families Task Force driven by a broad base of leadership from the city, community and school district sectors including representation from city government, the Rapid City Area Schools, law enforcement, local nonprofit organizations, community youth service agencies, the Chamber of Commerce, the John T. Vucurevich Foundation and youth. The development of AYCE has been guided by nationally recommended consultant Richard Goll, Onsite Insights in Hampton, Virginia.

Three teams were formed, (city, community and school) made up of youth and adults, who were assigned the responsibility of designing an AYCE framework that would allow young people to contribute to the operation of and decision-making within city government, community and school. These recommendations became part of the AYCE Strategic Plan document that serves as a tool for identifying the most powerful and sustainable strategies for helping all youth thrive and to guide the youth engagement efforts within the city, schools, and the overall community through the foreseeable future.

The AYCE Strategic Plan is based on the Developmental Assets—40 common sense, positive experiences and qualities that help influence choices young people make and help them become caring, responsible adults. The Developmental Assets framework has become one of the most widely used approaches to positive youth development in the United States. Developmental Assets include support, empowerment, constructive use of time, positive values, commitment to learning and social competencies among others. While there is no “magic number” of assets young people should have, our data indicate that 31 is a worthy, though challenging, benchmark for experiencing their positive effects most strongly.

The Rapid City Developmental Assets Student 2010 Survey of 930 young people in grades 6 – 12 helped determine how youth developmental assets tie to behavior.

Here’s what we learned:

- Youth with more developmental assets were much less likely to have used alcohol in the past month than youth with fewer assets.
- Almost half of Rapid City’s youth (46%) report having 0 – 20 developmental assets.
- Only 29% of youth believe that Rapid City’s adults value them and only 33% are given roles within the community.



Benefits that should be fully realized in the future:

- Increase in the number of youth who make a choice to avoid high-risk behaviors and have a positive view of themselves and their future.
- Increase the number of thriving indicators reported by youth in Rapid City.
- Improved decision-making that engage young people that save resources and enhance services
- Increased social capital where students gain skills and passion for affecting community change
- Increase the city’s most creative and committed young adults to return to the community within ten years

AYCE Accomplishments

2011 was a development, growing and learning year for AYCE. It began with AYCE Rev It Up presentation by the youth to community and new AYCE recruits. Over 100 youth and adults attended including the Mayor and Superintendent of Rapid City Area Schools.

In May, AYCE Strategic Plan was completed by each of the three teams, and the operational framework was finalized during the last AYCE training with consultant, Richard Goll.



With the expansion of opportunities for engaging youth and participating youth, Pam Teaney Thomas, was hired as the AYCE Coordinator to coordinate efforts from all youth, community members, organizations, city and school towards their initial goals—

- Educate the community on the value of our youth
- Build better opportunities for youth voices to be heard
- Develop outreach efforts to connect youth with the different levels of engagement.

A fall recruitment event “Check AYCE Out,” was held with leadership training. AYCE members attended Chiesman Center Statewide Civic Engagement Round Table in Chamberlain and attendance at the National League of Cities Conference on Youth Engagement was beneficial in connecting with other cities focusing on youth engagement.

The City Team—"Youth and adult voices joined for a better Rapid City"

Youth have the greatest potential to save the city money and resources; have the greatest impact on developing future leaders; and have the greatest likelihood of positively shifting how the city's adult leaders view and value the youth in the community.



The City Team focused on the development of a working partnership with the Rapid City Police, branded "Project Partnership," P². This was the first goal chosen by the youth to begin working within city government. Meetings with students, Chief of Police, Steven Allender along with liaison officers began monthly. First goal was to identify issues currently on the minds of youth. Co-op sessions were designed by the youth to engage a broad spectrum of youth in discussing issues affecting the relationship between teens and police. Sessions began in early 2012. Findings will be used in the future discussions of P². Zach Burkhard, a senior at Stevens High School, received the Noon Optimist Youth Appreciation Award for his work with AYCE.

City Team youth members got involved in the past city election by attending the North Rapid Civic Association town hall meeting and posing questions to candidates. Rapid City Public Library's TAB (Teen Advisory Board) is working within AYCE to recruit youth who can provide input on library programs, policies and procedures that affect services and space for teens. Library staff has also been an asset to AYCE with their guidance of social media networking for AYCE.

The Schools Team—"Empowering students to use their voice to impact their learning experience"

This Team worked with school administration to incorporate the youth voice throughout the district and create a framework. In the spring, an AYCE video produced by the students was used to promote AYCE throughout the high schools, with clips from the superintendent and principals from both Central and Stevens and Rapid City Chief of Police.

Students presented the AYCE school plan to the school board, which was in turn broadcast via school cable channel to the community. AYCE students were invited by the Superintendent to participate in the school district's strategic planning session where there were over 100 community people participating. Having both youth and adults working together was an important component to the discussion. A group of students have been working directly with Superintendent, Dr. Timothy Mitchell, monthly as a part of a newly formed Student Key Communicators group, which provides an opportunity for youth and administration to discuss issues in the schools. Students met with their principals in much the same way in a Principal's Advisory Group.



Introduction to AYCE presentation and leadership skills training was held at Central High Library in the fall, which included dialogue with two new advisors of Central and Stevens Student Councils about the vision of AYCE and the structure of student councils. Lesley Stone, AYCE student, was selected to speak at the 2011 Voices for Children - Kids Speak Forum in Sioux Falls.

The Community Team—"Committed to strengthening a positive community, empowering youth and adults of all ages."

United Way of the Black Hills developed a United Way Youth Board and added two youth to the United Way Board as of February 2012. The goal is to bring awareness to youth about United Way, the programs it supports, fundraising, fund allocation and volunteering.

The Student United Way Committee meets twice a month; Student/adult team participated in the 2011 United Way Day of Caring; students volunteered with Big Brothers/Big Sisters unmatched youth; service project for Cornerstone Rescue Mission; focused on hunger/homelessness and raised awareness and raised funds for the backpack program - Feeding SD. Ali Stradinger, one of the founding youth members, won the "We Believe in Kids" Award from Wellspring for her involvement in the AYCE Community Team- United Way Youth Board. Michelle Jaeger was a finalist on the KEVN Rising Star scholarship contest.

Lifeways Inc., which provides school-based prevention programs for area schools added the first two AYCE students to the board as voting members. "Lifeways believes we need young people involved with us as we address the issues we face surrounding the prevention and intervention of alcohol and other drug abuse. Lifeways Board made a decision to include youth authentically on our board. Lifeways by-laws were changed to include two positions on the board for youth board members. Lifeways is excited to be a part of the growing movement across the nation and now in Rapid City of incorporating youth into the planning and decision making." – Paula Wilkinson Smith, Lifeways Executive Director.



Other nonprofit organizations expressing interest in students serving on their boards, advisory committees – Character Counts, ASAP INC, Rapid City Public School Foundation, Downtown Association.

Future Efforts for 2012

AYCE youth and adults hope to build the initiative stronger and better so more opportunities that authentically engage youth are available and more efforts to find youth who understand and want to participate.

Goals

- Further development of FACEBOOK and other social media including a web page.
- Develop structure of student recruitment materials with application forms for students, as well as for organizations interested in providing opportunities for AYCE youth to become engaged in their organization.
- Development of an AYCE presentation designed for the three teams, to both educate and recruit students about opportunities.
- Survey instruments using technology allowing instant results to gather youth's opinion on a variety of issues, will be used in directing the projects and educating adults on the need for the youth voice in many areas.
- Target Rapid City Area Schools—high school's social studies department staff and classrooms; Beyond the Bookss, along with presentations to Counselors Council; Cobbler to Cobbler Mentoring Program, and other classroom settings to expand awareness of AYCE opportunities.
- Identify and present to events and activities throughout the year including Central High Sophomore Career Day; Youth to Youth Conference (TOT), Youth Service Organization Association (YSOA), ASAP Coalition and other community and city groups.
- Several AYCE students will be presenting at the Kids Speak Forum of the SD Voices for Children, the first held in Rapid City because of AYCE efforts. 2012 topic is "How can improved policies help South Dakotans increase teen driving safety?"
- Develop steps to connect youth with opportunities identified.

AYCE Youth

How did you grow personally or how was your experience being in AYCE?

AYCE has helped me grow tremendously in a number of ways. I was always a shy person, and I didn't feel like I could be taken seriously when it came to big decisions made by adults. AYCE gave me the voice I didn't know I had. I then felt comfortable giving my opinions on things affecting my school to my principal, and also to the superintendent. I also gained the confidence to be a leader, which before was something I had always wanted to be but could never build myself up to do it. I can stand my ground in intimidating situations, stand by my opinions, bring valuable points to others that may have been missed, and most importantly it was proven that I had a voice that really was being heard and taken seriously by everyone. The adults were awesome to the youth; they listened to our opinions and asked what we thought many times. They really did take our opinions to heart which was great because that meant we really were a part of a big decision. - **Trista Kirchesler**

I learned a lot about how to interact with adults, and how to communicate with a group. It helped me to join our Student Alumni Association, which networks with alumni from Drake. - **Dan Pfeifle**

I can't believe adults are asking my opinion! – **Caite Sorenson**

I became a better leader and now confident when talking to people with authority – **Lesley Stone**

I have learned how difficult it can be to change people's perception of youth. – **Amanda Kinniburgh**



Has it impacted any decisions experiences thoughts since being in college?

Since going to UND after being a part of AYCE, I have taken any chance to be a leader, big and small. I also have no problem talking to my professors about various things, from having trouble with an assignment, to telling them what I think could help the students better as far as how we are interpreting their teaching. -**Trista Kirchesler**

What do you hope will happen in Rapid City for youth in the future?

I hope that the committees that are currently in place will still be there, but with many more youth. I hope that more adults will see how valuable the youth in our city are, and that they have excellent opinions and thoughts about the things that are affecting them. I hope more youth join AYCE and gain the confidence to be a leader and find that hidden voice that many adults who make important decisions would love to hear. - **Trista Kirchesler**

I hope that the schools will become more active with some of their student organizations – **Lesley Stone**

I hope that students in the future will be able to be more involved in their learning experience other than just experiencing it. - **Amanda Kinniburgh**



AYCE has helped me interact with adults in a more efficient way. It's given me the opportunity to make a difference in Rapid City. I feel like my voice is not only heard, but also considered. - **Michaela Whitaker**

My experiences in AYCE have done for me exactly what I hoped for, to become knowledgeable in the area of city government, and to make me a more educated citizen.— **Zach Burckhard**



AYCE Adults

“Youth need the opportunity to be involved in the decisions that directly impact them on a daily basis. The opportunity for me to discuss key school issues with students has been an enlightening and rewarding experience. Adults need to be reminded that youth input is valuable in our community. They bring information from their unique perspective on issues that may be much different than adults. Taking the time to involve and listen to the youth of our community will help us to make better decisions and will also help to empower youth to be the leaders of tomorrow that we need them to be.” - **Dr. Timothy Mitchell, Rapid City Area Public Schools, Superintendent**

“Youth involvement is essential in planning for present and future issues and challenges. AYCE is the foundation from which we will build relationships with youth, a youth advisory board and a permanent bridge between generations. As a public official, I need the advice and counsel of our young citizens to properly perform my duties.” -**Steve Allender, Chief of Police**

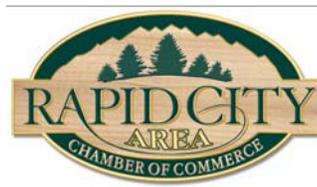
“The AYCE program provides a unique avenue for our Beyond the Books (formerly Learn and Serve) internship students. Opportunities through AYCE can help our students expand their service learning and career exploration experiences into impactful leadership opportunities within our community.” - **Liz Hamburg, Partnership Rapid City**

“Lifeways believes we need young people involved with us as we address the issues we face surrounding the prevention and intervention of alcohol and other drug abuse. Lifeways Board made a decision to include youth authentically on our board in the fall of 2011. Lifeways by-laws were changed to include two positions on the board for youth board members. Lifeways is excited to be a part of the growing movement across the nation and now in Rapid City of incorporating youth into the planning and decision making.” – **Paula Wilkinson Smith, Lifeways Executive Director.**

We should view youth not as recipients of services but as citizens becoming more actively engaged and involved in the processes that affect them. Young people have unique perspectives, a new energy and individual strengths to make Rapid City a better city.



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