

Feedback from Youth Action Teams Provide Keys to Successful Youth/Adult Partnerships

Recreation is about supporting the creation of healthy, dynamic communities. This is why youth/adult partnerships, which feature mutual learning, teaching and action, are so important to recreation planning and practice. These partnerships reveal that our communities need the participation of youth to be vibrant, inclusive and creative places. Through partnerships young people become assets, not deficits; problem-solvers not problems; people who can both serve their communities and be served by them.

HeartWood Institute supports a number of developing youth/adult partnerships across the province in the form of "Youth Action Teams" (YAT). Although each YAT is unique, they share common characteristics such as: supportive adult volunteers, team-structured meetings and activities, community association sponsors and participants. The YAT approach promotes positive youth development in tandem with community change by way of youth service and leadership. Through this

work, we have heard many adults, youths, and community associations ask - how do we build the quality relationships that are the foundation for youth/adult partnerships? What roles should we each take? How do we make the process fun, rewarding and sustainable? The following are some of the keys to success revealed through qualitative research with members of the Youth Action Teams:

"This is our community. WE want to change it. We're not going to depend on somebody else to change it. We are going to do it! "

~ Male youth, Middle Musquodoboit Youth

Keys to Success:

Youth Elements

- Youth choose to participate
- Youth participate as teams
- Youth choose the issues based on their passions, values and interests
- Youth make decisions together and share leadership

- Team actions are meaningful, real work that benefit the community

Adult Support Elements

- Adults are facilitators and guides, not leaders or directors
- Adults help youth connect to community resources, transportation and people
- Adults facilitate team dynamics and help youth deal with conflict
- Adults are clear that their role in providing organizational support shifts over time as youth take on more responsibility

Project Elements

- Projects benefit both the community and youths on the team
- Projects are fun, challenging and encourage a feeling of making a difference
- Examples of successful Youth Action Team projects include: those that educate, influence/affect change, create or provide a service.

For a copy of *The Dream Team for Community Youth Development: Elements of Success from Youth Action Teams* report, e-mail camilledumond@hotmail.com.

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