



What About Teens? Community Meetings

October 4, 2005

Bennington, Vermont

What did you see in the play or clips that made you sit up and take notice?

No father figures – for both male and female
Lose interest as they get older
Limited expectations – different from how they think it is here
No connection in teens, no vision of what life can be
Drinking and drugs are issues
Diverse situations for kids in play (The Voices Project)

What do you think of when you hear the word “teen”?

Turmoil
Enthusiasm
Emotions
Don't like to be labeled, or called “teens”
Brutal honesty
View themselves as teens – like to be active
Teen is positive term – people here tonight are from teen community
Negative community reaction – troublemakers
“Mob” mentality
Bad language – bad behavior
Can't trust a teen, always into no good
Teens don't trust adults
Individuality: earrings, hair color, tattoos, loud music
Under-judged, pre-judged
Under-valued
Teens are under stress – how do they handle it?

What confuses the adults about teens or teen culture?

Why does music contradict the social struggles (racism, sexism)
Expression of individuality
Why they express themselves emotionally the way they do
Why the fierce or blind loyalty they have to each other
Why no fear of authority
Friends are expendable, friends change entire world but also make world secure
Seem apathetic (boys); different way of reacting, defense mechanism
Need to prove selves
How are teens feeling the pressure – success, etc.

Why attraction to large age difference, young girls ⇔ older boys
Why girls have need to show skin or be so seductive, why guys dress as they do
Why are teens and teen culture evolving so quickly

What confuses teens about teens & teen culture?

Why do teens place so much peer pressure on themselves
Where is the line between teen and adult culture
What are the different cultures and needs of various age groups
Why are we setting “bad” role models for ourselves and younger friends / siblings
Are we asking kids to fill all of our expectations – society, community
Are parents living vicariously through their kids – completing own lives
How do you expect teens to handle the amount of stress they are under
Why place so much pressure on teens / youth

What confuses teens about adults and adult culture?

Why hypocrites
Why adults are inconsistent or confused on issues
Why do adults say one thing while they do another
Inconsistent on punishment
Double standards (adults have)
Why should I trust / respect adults if they don't do the same
How do we trust when there are so many adults who break the trust
Why so judgmental
Why trust when you take advantage of authority
Do we expect them to know more than they do

What opportunities are available in your community for teens?

Youth center
Open door Friday nights
Recreation center – but kids losing access
@ schools – after school, sports, other
Untapped resources
 Guidance counselors – Career Development Center
 Teachers
 Work – force task force
Things that take \$ and transport
 Movies
 Bowling
Teen advisory board
Upward bound
Members felt that there were a lot of resources but many are under-tapped or targeted to specific groups
Untapped because lack of connection

Stigma associated with many programs
Maybe need more directions to those events
Need more direct benefits – movie tickets

What opportunities are lacking?

Employment opportunities
 No opportunities
 No good paying jobs
 Competing with adults
Place to “hang out”
 Place to be with friends
 Play hacky-sack
 Smoke
 Not have to worry about cops
 Pool, basketball, football
Place to be “themselves”
Multi-generational opportunities
 Community suppers
 Downtown festivals
Transportation
Community support
Access to the available opportunities
No one place to go
\$ for people to participate in opportunities
No safe place at night on Main St.

What are you personally willing to do to assist teens in your community?

Broad Bennington Community Youth Advisory Board
Communication mechanism through student senate

RECOMMENDATIONS

What two policy recommendations would you like to take before the VT legislature?

\$ specifically directed to teen activities – allows community to use to solve own problems
\$ to education system to teach / offer classes in life skills – parenting, banking, civics
Create inter-generational community events
Predictable program – regular event
Vermont mixed-up intergenerational day – regular / monthly event
Program for educating parents

Parking Lot (Issues that were brought up, but not resolved)

We (adults) think kids / youth know more than they actually do – they have so much access to information

Different language between youth & adults – not speaking same language

Where are the role models

Causes:

Break down of family values

No time spent with kids



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