



What About Teens? Community Meeting

October 5, 2005

Middlebury, Vermont

*The Middlebury group's discussion focused primarily around the following issue:
How do we more effectively engage youth and get them to the table as participants in
shaping community efforts on behalf of youth?*

The following list of ideas was generated from this central question:

Invite youth personally – start with those you know and rely on personal connections to bring youth to the table.

Persevere in the effort – it will probably take more than one ask and more than a few meetings with less youth than desired. Youth need to see that there is a serious commitment from adults before committing themselves.

Get the schools to support the effort. This should include middle, high and alternative schools. It's important to realize that you may only need one caring, invested staffer and that staffer could be a janitor, a principle, a teacher, a guidance counselor or practically anyone working in the school.

Tap into established youth groups, including faith-based groups – they already have a process whereby they get together regularly, channel that.

Ask youth how they want to be involved.

Host a youth friendly or youth planned intergenerational event. Use the event to find ways to positively engage in their culture and provide the opportunity for youth to positively engage in adult culture.

The Coffee Shop was identified as a business that is attractive to local youth. Adults should be encouraged to patronize this and other youth-friendly local businesses to support these businesses with community dollars.

Use schools and schoolyards after hours.

Remember that there is no one youth culture; in order to engage youth you must be willing to embrace the diversity of youth interests and perspectives.

Teach adults – classes in youth culture, i.e., How do you instant message? How do you understand or appreciate the music that youth like?

Promote existing resources (including existent transportation resources) so that youth know they exist.

RECOMMENDATIONS

What could be done to address some of the issues for teens in your community?

Support engaging youth on town councils and school boards.

Address the legal barriers to youth as voting members.

Create a grant program to support youth initiated initiatives for community development.

Create a grant program to create support for youth/adult teams for community improvement

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

How do you create a sustainable teen center?

How do you build youth up to succeed in leadership roles?

How do we get adults to engage youth positively rather than simply expect youth to engage adults?

How do we foster creating opportunities for youth and adults to interact socially?

What is the appropriate drinking age?



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