The Power of Youth: Engaging Youth Ambassadors

Each year, approximately 3,000 young people (age 14+) select the U.S. foster care system. Many are only 10 years old and still need support and resources. Across the country, in shelters that lack a linking connection to a caring adult, these older youth are often vulnerable to a host of adversities. — Child Welfare League of America

24,619 children were in foster care in NYS on December 31, 2009, and about 44% were 14 or older. — www.casaforchildren.org

Three out of five of the nation’s vulnerable adult reports a foster care history. — NYS Office of Children and Family Services

New York State continues to be a leading state in permanent safe and nurturing homes for children. The number of children in foster care in NYS has decreased from 53,902 children in 1995 to 25,878 in 2008, a significant reversal of trends in the 1980s and early 1990s. — NYS Office of Children and Family Services

A national online Harris Poll commissioned by the National Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) Association found that most adults know little about foster care or the experience of children in care.

1% thought that children were in foster care because of something the children did, although the majority strongly disagreed and tended to blame the biological parents.

87% agreed that improving the foster care system should be a national priority.

“My experience at the World Conference was remarkable. I was able to network and socialize with people all the way from Canada to the outskirts of Africa. The event was thought provoking for the overall youth empowerment. We were there to help youth in child welfare, targeting education and more. I was able to build my confidence and communication skills while presenting with Diwa and Brinita. Diwa moderated the workshop making it easier for me to communicate with the audience. If we were to choose something we would like to describe our experience as engaging. It was educational and motivating. I was honored to be chosen to be one of the Youth Ambassadors presenting at this event.”

Eugene J. Monaco engaging Youth Ambassadors Sabrina Hawkins and Carrie Holmes in discussions regarding the latest child welfare trends.

PDP’s Youth Ambassadors, Brinita Profit and Raven Profit, with Erika Leveillee at World Forum 2010.
Network of Resources: An Essential Component to Promoting Self-sufficiency Among Foster Care Youth

Working side by side with youth, by nature, is a rewarding experience. The youth gain a deeper understanding of their needs and the support they need to achieve success, while adults become more aware of how to help youth needs. At the same time, youth have made connections to adults that share their vision for success and provide guidance and support for their transition to adulthood. Sharing, a corner in business administration at the University at Buffalo, states: “As a former foster care youth and now known how important it is to have a positive adult mentor to encourage young adults to move in the right direction.”

Gaining insight from youth about what their needs are and how to meet them is essential in promoting positive outcomes and successful transitions. PDP has been a leader in partnering with youth and young people to develop the skills and competencies needed to become successful adults. The Youth Advisory Board (YAB) includes youth members who are leaders in their communities and who have a passion for helping other youth. The program has been successful in meeting the needs of young people as they transition from foster care to independence. Additional training support is provided in areas crucial to youth such as employment, housing, and mental management.

Annual Forum Provides Opportunity for NYS Foster Care Youth and Caregivers to be Heard

Have you ever felt growing up, that no one listened, no one heard you, or even understood you? Youth in foster care often feel the same way. To address this issue, an annual event of the NYS Foster Care Youth and Young Adult (NYSCFYA) sponsored by PDP has been offered for the last five years. They have worked with youth and organizations who are dedicated to assisting youth in foster care. The forum allows youth to share their stories and experiences with a wide range of adults who can help them navigate the challenges of transitioning out of foster care. Youth panelists Carrie Holmes, Carmen Duncan, Isaiah Williams, Hope Albanese, and Sabrina Hawkins at a recent higher education forum. CHRIS POULOPOULOS

Creating Youth Partnerships to Enhance the Futures of Foster Care Youth

In New York State many foster care youth have made it their mission to enhance and advance the lives of today’s and tomorrow’s youth by supporting a sense of self and responsibility. One such youth is Kevin, who is a member of the Youth In Progress (YIP) program. YIP is a youth advisory board that works to improve the lives of youth in foster care by providing support and services that are tailored to their needs. YIP has been successful in helping to create solutions to make it a better system for other youth in care and helping to create solutions to make it a better system for other youth in care who might have similar experiences.

Youth in Progress Leaders Darius Holman, Zhai-Yeng White, and Liz Johnson

Future links in foster care. The Youth In Progress support the vision of these foster care youth by offering programs to raise public awareness of the importance of youth in foster care and the need for youth to have a voice in the future of care. The program provides opportunities for youth in foster care to share their experiences and to be a part of the solution in making changes to improve the foster care system. The youth in the program are leaders in their communities and are advocates for change. They are working to create a better future for themselves and for others who may be in similar situations.

Youth In Progress (YIP), www.youthinprogress.org, provides leadership opportunities for youth in foster care to work on issues that are important to them. The program is designed to provide a platform for youth in foster care to share their experiences and to be a part of the solution in making changes to improve the foster care system. The youth in the program are leaders in their communities and are advocates for change. They are working to create a better future for themselves and for others who may be in similar situations.

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Network of Resources: An Essential Component to Promoting Self-sufficiency Among Foster Care Youth

Working side by side with youth, by nature, is a rewarding experience. The youth gain a deeper understanding of their needs and the support they need to achieve success, while adults become more effective in helping them succeed. Like in the process, youth have made connections to adults that share their vision for success and can serve as mentors or role models for those that follow in their footsteps. Diane, a case specialist in business administration at the University at Buffalo, states: “I am a former foster care youth and I know how important it is to have a positive adult mentor to encourage young adults to move in the right direction.”

Gaining insight from youth about what their needs are and how to meet them is essential in promoting positive outcomes and successful transitions. PDP has been a leader in partnering with youth to develop the skills of community and voluntary child care agencies to help foster care youth prepare for life outside of the system. The Youth Adolescent Services Resource Network (YASRN) has been a staple of PDP and it is a broad-based consortium serving all of NY. This consortium was established in 1987 and is funded by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services to promote self-sufficiency among foster care youth. It is funded by PDP, Title IV-E, and consultation to foster care youth in the areas of environmental, communication skills, problem-solving, and decision-making. Additional training support is provided in areas crucial to youth employment, housing, and mental management.

Creating Youth Partnerships to Enhance the Futures of Foster Care Youth

In New York State many foster care youth have made it their mission to enhance and advance the lives of today’s and tomorrow’s youth by supporting a sense of self and responsibility. One of the key components to “Youth in Progress” supports the mission of these foster care youth by offering programs to raise public awareness of the importance of youth in care, increasing youth involvement in systems that touch their lives, empowering youth through the development of leadership, and decision-making skills, improving policies and practices to assist youth transition out of foster care, and increasing resources, availability, and participation in services provided to youth transitioning out of care. NY sees the value of partnering with youth in creating solutions, empowering youth to voice their strengths and concerns regarding their journey through the foster care system. In particular, a youth-adult partnership team was created to provide support to foster care youth. This partnership allows the youth’s voices to be heard and extracts valuable lessons based on foster care experiences. This team put PDP on the map as a national leader for promoting promising practices and utilizing their powerful, insightful ideas for change.

Youth In Progress Leaders Darius Holman, Zhai-Yeng White, and Liz Johnson

“Youth In Progress” are committed to the belief that every child deserves a future free of fear and neglect. Youth In Progress believes that every young person should have the opportunity to be a part of a strong and healthy family. Youth In Progress is dedicated to creating opportunities that lead to life-long success.

Youth In Progress offers a variety of programs and services to support foster care youth in their transition to adulthood. Programs include: “Transition into College,” “Youth In Progress College Challenge Program,” and “Youth In Progress Leadership Academy.”

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The NYS Higher Education Services Corporation and the NYS Office of Children and Family Services have partnered with PDP to help motivate at-risk youth to successfully prepare for and graduate from college. The cornerstone of the program is bringing youth, previously in foster care or in juvenile justice, share their experiences in applying for and going to college with youth in care, in the ages of 14 and 18, in an opportunity to graduate from a higher education institution. To accomplish this, Youth In Progress are serving as Youth Ambassadors throughout NYS. As ambassadors, they conduct focus groups at local social service districts, voluntary agencies, and OCFY facilities to educate at-risk youth on how to best make college a reality for them.

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Did You Know?

Each year, an estimated 20,000 young people “age out” of the U.S. foster care system. Many are only 18 years old and feel they are not ready to be on their own. These older youth are often left vulnerable to a host of adverse situations. According to the Child Welfare League of America, “I found that the best way to get advice to your children is not to tell what they should do, but tell them how to do it.” Youth certainly are our future, and their vitality can be used as an asset for our society. Young people have a great deal to teach us.

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Although including youth in decisions that affect them has always been recognized as a best practice by educators and others who work with youth, this practice has not been commonly embraced by得 those who shape the outcomes for them. Youth have shown repeatedly that they understand the issues and obstacles; sharing cutting edge research, innovative solutions, and best practices; and planning for future action.

Parents Training Program Coordinator, Erika Leveillee, co-facilitated a presentation on “Youth Voice: Engaging, Empowering, and Listening to Achieve Partnership and Positive Outcomes” with two of PDP’s Youth Ambassadors, Raven Profit and Brentin Brown. After the presentation, Raven commented: “It was educational and motivating. I was honored to be chosen to be one of the Youth Ambassadors presenting at this event.”

Executive Director and Public Service Professor Eugene J. Monaco engaging Youth Ambassadors Sabrina Hawkins and Carrie Holmes in discussions regarding the latest child welfare trends.

The Power of Youth

Eugene J. Monaco, Executive Director and Public Service Professor, Professional Development Program

Recognizing and addressing the needs of youth has gained considerable attention over the past decade both globally and in the United States. This has been for very good reason. The disproportionate growth of at-risk youth populations and the associated social and economic challenges have led to increased recognition of the need to address and prevent the needs and wants of youth; they illustrate the grave negative consequences that can and do result from such frustrations.

Although including youth in decision-making processes that affect them has long been recognized as a best practice by educators and others who work with youth, this practice has been commonly embraced by those who shape the outcomes for them. Youth have shown repeatedly that they understand the issues and obstacles; sharing cutting edge research, innovative solutions, and best practices; and planning for future action are necessary.

A World Fit for Children: Advancing the Global Movement

Engaging and listening to youth is something that needs to be embraced worldwide. As a result of the cutting edge of cultivating youth voice and improving youth partnerships, PDP’s Youth Ambassadors was co-facilitated a presentation on “Youth Voice: Engaging, Empowering, and Listening to Achieve Partnership and Positive Outcomes” with two of PDP’s Youth Ambassadors, Raven Profit and Brentin Brown. After the presentation, Raven commented: “It was educational and motivating. I was honored to be chosen to be one of the Youth Ambassadors presenting at this event.”

Youth Voice:

Engaging, Empowering, and Listening to Achieve Partnership and Positive Outcomes

PDP’s Youth Ambassadors, Raven Profit and Brentin Brown, with Erika Leveillee at World Forum 2010.
A World Fit for Children: Advancing the Global Movement

Engaging and listening to youth is something that needs to be embraced and modeled. As highlighted in this issue, the cutting edge of cultivating youth voice and improving youth partnership...