



## Youth: valued, challenged & engaged

### What's working

#### **The Blueprint for Action: Preventing Youth Violence initiative is making a difference.**

- The Blueprint for Action has raised awareness about what everyone is doing and mobilized people to move in the same direction. It has tapped into people's aspirations and vision. It feels like a movement; people have an emotional connection.
- Although it's not a funded initiative, the blueprint is a magnet for funds.
- The blueprint is holding organizations accountable, so we'll know whether we're having an impact.

#### **Programs are helping prepare kids for the future.**

- Achieve Minneapolis is helping kids get paid employment.
- The Cookie Cart helps north Minneapolis youths develop life, leadership and employment skills.
- Full Cycle connects homeless and at-risk youths with needed social services while enabling them to learn job skills and earn a bike.

- Schools are requiring kids to prepare life plans to get them thinking about job readiness and college.
- Businesses are mentoring youths.

#### **We're using new ways to help kids.**

- Street outreach and technology (text messaging, MySpace, etc.) are helping us reach homeless kids.
- The Youth Congress empowers kids and gives them the chance to do something about problems they see.
- Youth-specific food shelves are helping kids who are hindered by barriers set up by food shelf rules.

#### **We're changing attitudes.**

- Violence prevention programs in schools are changing attitudes and getting positive reactions from kids.
- The conversation in cultural and geographic communities is changing from what are *you* going to do for my kids to what are *we* doing to do to raise our kids.

### What isn't working

#### **Violence remains a threat.**

- Adults want to intervene when they see kids doing wrong, but they're scared of getting shot or angering parents.
- The murder of an outreach worker has us afraid; fear is hindering our efforts to reach out to Somali youths. The community feels the police are not doing enough.

#### **The needs are greater than our resources. We're overwhelmed.**

- The more outreach we do, the more needs we encounter. The phone doesn't stop ringing. There are so many homeless kids.
- There are so many languages.
- We know texting and MySpace works, but we can't keep up with the demand and the technical logistics.
- There aren't enough guidance counselors in schools.
- The foster care system is broken.
- If you've been on the street for years, you don't know how to work.

#### **There's a feeling of hopelessness.**

- We're failing the Hispanic community. Undocumented Hispanic teens feel hopeless. They can't get work, so gangs become their only option.
- Parents are overwhelmed.
- Parents don't know what to do with their teens. Some of them are abdicating their responsibility

to their kids. Sadly, some kids are being raised by programs — not parents.

#### **Lack of skills or knowledge hampers our efforts.**

- Kids aren't getting sex education. Abstinence does not work. Kids don't think about HIV/AIDS anymore.
- Kids aren't capable of seeing themselves five to 10 years out, and immature or unskilled parents don't know how to help their kids think about and prepare for future jobs or college.
- Young parents don't know how to parent — especially preteens and teens.
- People don't understand who does what. They think the City is responsible for things the State or schools do.
- Our programs aren't accessible to dysfunctional families. The people who organize programs are "day planner people" so they're connecting with people who know how to sign up and show up. But we aren't reaching the "day-to-day people" who don't or can't think that way.
- There are a lot of resources, but they're not coordinated.

#### **The economy is making things worse.**

- Parents who once paid for after-school care or recreation programs can no longer afford to keep paying for these services.
- There are more kids who want jobs than available jobs.
- Food shelves are running out of supplies.

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### What should be done next

#### Do a better job of outreach and providing services.

- Provide help to the Hispanic community — especially undocumented Hispanic youths.
- Make parents feel less intimidated and more welcome in their children's schools.
- Reach out to parents who aren't connected to a particular school or neighborhood because they're too mobile due to poverty.
- Train corporate volunteers to understand the culture and norms of the youths they're trying to mentor.
- Provide help for traumatized youths.
- Continue to increase diversity within the police force — especially Somali and Hispanic officers.

#### Offer more youth activities in neighborhoods to provide an alternative to downtown.

- Activities shouldn't just be sports programs. There should be activities aimed at arts and other interests.

- Create programs that involve youth-operated cafés, bike shops and businesses to give kids personal connections while gaining job skills.
- Create activities for 12- and 13-year-olds who are too young for jobs but too old for "kids" programs.

#### Help families.

- Offer programs to help families learn how to parent preteens and teens. We can't stop raising kids when they reach age 10.
- Ensure kids are ready to read by kindergarten.
- Teach parents how to prepare their kids for college or jobs.
- Offer additional help or new approaches to reach families that live day-to-day and don't have the skills to plan ahead and register for programs.

#### Do a better job of coordinating existing youth programs.

- Figure out the gaps among our existing resources.

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*"There's a buzz  
in the community  
about kids and  
the role we play  
in kids' lives."*

*- Health and Family  
Support employee*

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