

Community Youth Development: An Important Approach for Family Resource Centers

Paul L. Watson, Jr., MSHS



Young people are not just the leaders of tomorrow. They are the leaders of today.

- San Diego Youth Congress

Imagine you were just hired as a youth development worker in a small community. During your first week on the job, your boss takes you on a local tour. As you drive into a residential area, you see a large group of teenagers standing in the middle of the road. You stop your van; park it and walk ahead to see what's going on while trying not to be conspicuous. As you get closer, you realize there are two groups facing each other. Most of the youth have chains, pipes, or knives in their hands. You have stumbled upon a gang fight.

Just then, the two groups start to walk towards each other. Suddenly, one youth pulls out a gun and points it at the leader of the other group. Quickly, the group without the gun scatters, all except the leader. Instead of running, he continues to walk towards the youth with the gun. The youth with the gun runs up to the leader, puts the gun to his head, and pulls the trigger. The gun misfires. The leader grabs the gun and the two youth start fighting. At this point, all the others come back and a large fight ensues until the police arrive.

Your boss turns to you and says: “The leader who didn’t run – he’s the first youth I want you to work with.” What would you say? What would you do? Would you reconsider this line of work? If you decided to meet this challenge, how would you approach this young man? What method would you choose to develop this youth?

The approach used in this real-life situation was Community Youth Development (CYD). While CYD has many definitions, essentially it is an approach which embodies the best principles of youth development and community development. [See Figure 1.] Community development demands that citizens initiate and control activities to positively influence conditions affecting their lives. It calls for citizen participation, cooperation, and collaboration.

CYD takes this principle one step further. It requires that young people be actively engaged in the process by developing their own identity, self-worth, independence, sense of belonging, and connections to family, community, the Earth, and the sacred. It also develops their capacity to engage in life-long learning in order to contribute to family, community, and society, as well as to demonstrate competence in vocational choices.



Figure 1. Community Youth Development

Youth development can be simply defined as a process that assists youth in making a positive transition into adulthood, with the desired outcome being a healthy, happy, productive adult who is capable of making contributions to their own development, their family’s development, and their community’s development. The primary responsibility for a youth’s development lies with the parents. However, there are far too many youth who have parents who are not capable of providing positive assistance, parents who are distracted by working and/or trying to survive, or the youth do not have any parents. In these cases there is a need for youth development professionals and programs to fill this gap.

The conventional wisdom in this country is 1) that we want to prevent young people from engaging in destructive lifestyles – drug use, delinquency, violence, school failure, early pregnancy (these are called Prevention Outcomes) and 2) that we want young people to achieve – to graduate high school, to get a job or go to college (these are called Achievement Outcomes). While these are desirable, when Problem Prevention and Achievement Outcomes become the principle goals that we establish for our young people, we are essentially selling them short. We need to additionally promote Developmental Outcomes – the knowledge, skills, behavior and personal attributes young people need to be healthy and succeed. Resiliency research conducted

by the Search Institute identified forty (40) developmental assets that are necessary to overcome the parental shortcomings and negative community impacts and produce a happy, healthy, contributing adult. Those 40 assets can be incorporated within the following categories of Developmental Outcomes:

Aspects of Identity: Young people demonstrate a positive identity when they have a sense of personal well-being and a sense of connection and commitment to others.

- **Safety and Structure:** A perception that one is safe in the world and that daily events are somewhat predictable.
- **Self-Worth:** A perception that one is a “good person” who contributes to self and others.
- **Mastery and Future:** A perception that one is “making it” and will succeed in the future.
- **Belonging and Membership:** A perception that one values, and is valued by, others in the family and in the community.
- **Responsibility and Autonomy:** A perception that one has some control over daily events and is accountable for one’s own actions and for the consequences on others.
- **Self-Awareness and Spirituality:** A perception that one is unique and is intimately attached to extended families, cultural groups, communities, higher deities, and/or principles.

Areas of Ability: Young people demonstrate ability when they gain knowledge, skills and attitudes that prepare them for adulthood.

- **Physical Health:** The ability and motivation to act in ways that best ensure current and future physical health for self and for others.
- **Mental Health:** The ability and motivation to respond affirmatively to and cope with positive and adverse situations, to reflect on one’s emotions and surroundings, and to engage in leisure and fun.
- **Intellectual Ability:** The ability and motivation to learn in school and other settings, to gain the basic knowledge needed to graduate high school, to use critical thinking, to be creative, to use problem solving and expressive skills, and to conduct independent study.
- **Employability:** The ability to gain the functional and organizational skills necessary for employment, including an understanding of careers and options, and the steps necessary to reach goals.

- **Civic and Social Ability:** The ability and motivation to work collaboratively with others for the larger good and to sustain caring friendships and relationships with others.
- **Cultural Ability:** The ability and motivation to respect and affirmatively respond to differences among groups and individuals of diverse backgrounds, interests and traditions.

How can we be sure that the youth are gaining the necessary skills, knowledge and abilities mentioned above? We must create the opportunities for the youth to acquire these things and provide the supports that will facilitate the youth taking full advantage of the opportunities. The opportunities that I am referring to are the chances for young people to learn how to act in the world around them – the chance to explore, express, earn, belong, and influence. Opportunities are things *done by* the young person. Supports are the intrapersonal relationships and accessible resources – people and information – that allow a young person to take full advantage of existing services and opportunities. Supports are things *done with* the young person. When we provide opportunities for young people to work in partnership with adults to change negative factors within our communities, this becomes a perfect set of circumstances for the youth to gain their developmental skills, knowledge, and abilities.

Youth development research documents that two factors can negatively or positively impact a young person's development - their family and their community. By creating opportunities for youth to work in partnership with adults to minimize or eliminate negative impacts within their communities, we improve the young person's chances of having a positive transition into and being fully prepared for adulthood.

The community development processes enable people to work together around common issues and aspirations. This includes people coming together to pursue an activity for its own sake, developing organizations which provide services, participation in partnerships including management responsibilities, and involvement in broader movements to achieve social change.

Community development is about active sustainable communities based on social justice and mutual respect. It is about changing power structures to remove the barriers that prevent people from participating in the issues that affect their lives. Education and mutual learning are important aspects of community development. As a result of their involvement in community groups and activities, people acquire and re-discover talents, skills, knowledge, and understanding which enable them to take on new roles and responsibilities. This contributes to life-long learning by creating opportunities for reflection and evaluation of experience allowing knowledge to be shared through critical dialogue and building confidence amongst people who have neglected or abandoned their formal education at an early age. Community development encourages people to overcome those fears, prejudices and attitudes which restrict their participation and limit their self-esteem.

This approach was endorsed by the Center for Youth Development and Policy Research in Washington, DC. In answer to the question, "Why youth development and community development should be connected?" former director Karen Pittman replied:

Young people should be involved in community development because they live in and belong to their community. If young people are not connected and respected, they have the power to destroy the community. Involving young people in the development of their communities encourages them to become stakeholders in their communities and to care about them.¹

Some people think CYD can only be a prevention strategy for youth coming from a stable family with a solid economic background. For many, it is inconceivable this approach could be effective with violent, rebellious street youth. However, CYD was used in the aforementioned situation and in many others like it, and it worked. In fact, the outcome produced a benefit far greater than any other commonly used intervention could have provided, as this article will reveal.

However, CYD is more than just an effective prevention and intervention strategy; it is an invaluable tool for building civil society.

CYD Impact Upon Family Resource Centers

Why should California's Family Resource Centers (FRCs) be concerned about Community Youth Development (CYD)? Many of the community issues that the FRCs are addressing are difficult and complicated. In order to be successful in their efforts they must make effective strategic use of all of the resources that they have at their disposal. Youth are a tremendous resource that are often overlooked or under utilized. CYD affords the opportunity for FRCs to improve their communities in areas such as housing, jobs, safety, commerce, infrastructure, human services, education, arts and media, faith ethics, civic participation, social; interaction, and individual growth of residents.

Youth development principles are congruent with the principles of Family Support. For example, the youth development and community development principles outline above align with the following Family Support principles:

- Support the growth and development of **all** family members
- **Mobilize** resources
- Enhance ability to function in a **multicultural society**
- Relationships based upon **equality** and **respect**
- Programs advocate **with** families
- **Flexible** and **responsive** to family and community needs
- Families are **resources**
- Contribute to the **community building process**
- **Modeled** in **all** program activities

Youth/adult partnerships can become a vital resource for FRCs within their community building efforts. However, it does require moving youth-related activities from a service delivery approach to a developmental approach. The desired outcome from a service approach is to prevent negative behavior. However, the desired outcome from a developmental approach is to

produce a healthy, happy adult who is making positive contributions to their families and communities.

The major difference between working with youth as clients versus working with youth as partners is that we do things *for* youth when we view them as clients. When we view youth as partners we do things *with* them. The research shows that youth retain a significantly increased percentage of knowledge gained from things they experience, as opposed to things learned from reading and/or things heard. Many organizations have successfully partnered with youth within its service delivery, organizational governance, advocacy, and in organizing. In doing so they have moved from viewing youth as being “broken” and needing a service approach to “fix” them, to valuing youth as a vital community resource. Valuing youth means establishing a supportive environment within our organization that creates opportunities for the voices of youth to be heard and for their leadership to emerge. In this environment, young people are fully valued and participate in decisions that affect their lives. [See Figure 2.]

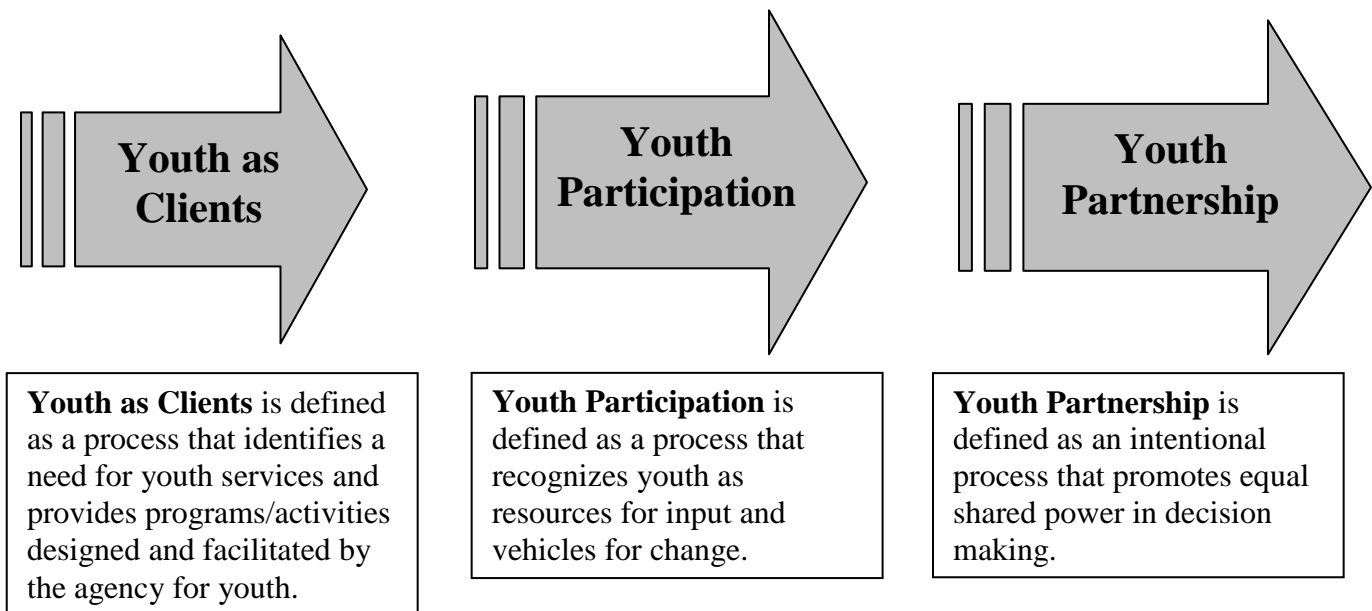


Figure 2. Moving from Service Delivery to Partnership.

Creating this environment does not mean that we have to have a separate place within our FRC for youth to hang out. Rather we should make sure that the youth (and adults) have fun as they work on the projects that they are partnering with us to complete. They are willing to work hard, however having refreshments, a friendly smile and a joke or two will go a long way to making the work environment fun. If we are creating a youth program, then we would need to think about a separate place for youth to hang out. However, CYD is concerned with addressing community issues and this needs to be done in partnership with adults. Many organizations have had wonderful success with Peer Programs. In Peer Programs youth are hired to outreach to, organize, or facilitate groups of other youth. In Butte County, California, youth are creating community education messages that will reach other youth around the issue of underage

drinking. In the Williamsburg section of Brooklyn, New York, an organization – El Puente – has engaged youth to work with community residents to fight environmental racism in their neighborhoods. In Boston, Massachusetts, the Dudley Street Neighborhood Improvement Association has engaged youth to partner with them in planning and implementing an affordable housing project.

Establishing a supportive environment not only calls for creating partnerships with youth, it also requires our organizations to create partnerships with other organizations. This is something that most FRCs currently do very effectively. It is rare that any one organization can provide all the supports a youth may need to take full advantage of the opportunities that we are able to create for them to gain the knowledge, skills and abilities they need for adulthood. So we must partner with other organizations to ensure that all the supports that are necessary are available. We can work with other organizations in many different ways; however the three primary ways are cooperation, collaboration, and partnership. Cooperation is defined as – *to associate, act or work with another for mutual benefit (helping each party achieve its own goals)*. Collaboration is defined as – *parties working together to achieve a shared vision and joint strategies*. Partnerships are defined as – *a close relationship, sharing rights and responsibilities to achieve one purpose*.

The Spirit of Ubuntu

Why get young people involved in community processes? The fact is they already are involved. They grow up in communities and are affected by what surrounds them. When a young person comes to a social service agency for assistance, one of the first things done is an assessment of family history, dynamics, and systems, because the way a family operates has a direct effect on its members. The same is true of communities. The conditions in a community have a major impact on every family within it, which in turn impacts each individual in that family.

In 1970, when I was working with the Black Panther Party, I used to walk through a Harlem neighborhood and talk to the people living there. One cold winter day, I left an apartment building with tears in my eyes because of what I had seen. The front door of the building was wide open because it was broken. It had snowed earlier in the week and there was more frozen snow on the stairway inside the building than outside on the sidewalk. The first apartment I entered had a family of six living in two bedrooms. There was no running water because the pipes were frozen. The family was heating the entire apartment with an electric hot plate in the kitchen. I asked myself: What kind of person would I be if I were living in these conditions? Would I be concerned about getting my homework done? Would I be compassionate towards others? Would I think anyone else cared about me, besides my family? What would I be willing to do to get heat and food for myself and my family?

My experience that day in Harlem convinced me that the conditions in our communities had to change if people were to have the opportunity to reach their full potential. It also made me think about the young gang leader I mentioned at the beginning of this article. That young man was not in a gang when he moved into that small community. He was not a violent person. He had grown up in a strict, church-going family, but when he left home he moved into a community in which

violence was a way of life. As a homeless street youth, he adapted to his environment in order to survive. Eventually, he began to excel in displays of violent rage, and thus became a gang leader.

The youth worker assigned to that gang leader realized that if the young man was not connected to the community and was not respected, he had the power to destroy the community. He saw the young man doing it every day. He realized the gang leader had the power to build that community if only he could be set on a positive course. The youth worker also knew that if this youth and other young people in that community were to join in partnership with him and other adults, together they could become a powerful force that could transform their community. The youth were the key to building civil society in this neighborhood, just as they are in thousands of communities like it around the country and throughout the world. Too often though, youth are overlooked, ignored, or relegated to play only minor roles in community life.

Among the native peoples of northern Natal province in South Africa, there is an approach to working and living with other people that recognizes the critical importance of being engaged with, and acknowledged by, others in the community. Referred to as “the Spirit of Ubuntu,” this approach emerges from a Zulu folk saying: “A person is a person because of other people.” One’s identity and sense of worth and power is based on being seen and acknowledged by others.

The youth worker understood this and developed a strategy to engage the young man. He began to talk with him about conditions in the community and how the young man had the power to change these conditions. The worker said he would be willing to help. They soon established a partnership and went to work. They formed a youth council of gang members. They involved the entire community in obtaining adequate recreation facilities for the youth. They were successful in having Black History taught in elementary, junior high, and high schools. They organized rent strikes against slum landlords and developed a community newsletter. Within two years, there was a marked change in the conditions in their community.

I thank that youth worker every day. Because of his use of CYD principles, he saved my life. You see, I was that gang leader. Through CYD I finally came to know my own identity and sense of worth and these were acknowledged by my adult partners.

That youth worker was doing more than diverting a single youth from a life of crime and violence, saving tax dollars, and even saving a life. He was developing an ally to help him change the conditions in that community. He was helping me to find and live my own calling. He was facilitating my creation of a dream of a just and compassionate society because he understood that it is our dreams that call us forth. He knew I would share that dream with everyone who would listen until it was realized.

Today, more than any other time in history, we need to do what that youth worker did with me. You don’t have to look far to find the reasons why. The following statistics from the United States are reminders enough.²

- In his book *Powernomics: Economics and Strategy After the Cold War*, former United States Trade Negotiator Clyde Prestowitz stated: “On a national basis, about 25% of our students drop out of high school, consigned to a social and economic scrap heap before they even begin their adult lives. The United States is the only major nation of the world that tolerates such human waste.”
- Each year through the 1980s, 5,000 youth between the ages of 15 and 25 killed themselves.
- Surveys show that 10 percent of adolescent boys and 18 percent of adolescent girls admit they have attempted suicide. What can one say about a generation, one million of whom have tried, or will try to kill themselves before the age of 30, and 100,000 of whom have succeeded, or will succeed, in their final effort?
- The United States spends nearly \$1 trillion annually on health care, yet nearly 75 million Americans are either underinsured or completely uninsured. Both Canada and Germany spend 30 percent to 40 percent less on health care per capita and both provide universal health care.
- Every day, the typical 14-year old American watches three hours of television and does one hour of homework; over 2,200 students drop out of school; 3,600 teenagers are assaulted, 630 are robbed, and 80 are raped; 500 adolescents begin using illegal drugs; 1,000 begin drinking alcohol; and 1,000 unwed teenage girls become mothers.
- African-Americans are three times more likely to be killed as teenagers by gun violence than by natural causes.
- Fifteen percent of all infants born in 1994 were exposed to illegal drugs while in the womb, and over 100,000 babies were born with cocaine addiction.
- Every day, over 2,600 American children witness the divorce or separation of their parents, 90 are taken from their parents’ custody and committed to foster homes, 13 aged 15-24 commit suicide, and another 16 are murdered.
- In the last ten years, the number of functionally illiterate 17-year olds in America has more than doubled. Today, seven million teenagers are functionally illiterate.
- In 1991, the United States trailed most industrialized countries in spending on social programs and led in defense spending.
- The number of guns in the United States increased from 54 million in 1950 to 201 million in 1990.
- There are three million homeless people in America, the same number as in all Europe.

Key Ingredients of CYD

Clearly, we need to change the conditions in our communities. Traditional approaches to youth development have not done this. As Rebecca Lane, former CYD Project Director for the National Network for Youth in Washington, DC, points out, these approaches were based on the deductive reasoning that healthy individuals create stable families which build communities. They were focused on individuals, particularly at-risk youth, who were treated as clients of the service providers and consumers of products of the youth services system.³

A corollary of this system, as Lane indicates, is that service providers compete against one another for funding and clients. Efficiency is the prime value - doing the most with the least financial and human resources. Success under this system is determined by the number of clients worked with, the number of services dispensed, and the number of service days provided. This approach focuses on changing the behavior of the client, and if this happens, it is assumed she or he is better off. While it has some value, such an approach is no longer adequate. In the words of youth and community service professionals, "It fails to provide the hope and vision for the future that people - young and old, in families, organizations, and communities - are seeking."⁴ CYD grew out of this situation and in some ways, is deceptively similar to it. [See Figure 3.] Many of the components are similar but how they fit together and the contexts in which they operate are radically different. CYD is a holistic approach to working with young people in which the focus is on community building. It is based on the following premises or "best practices":

- Create a culture in which youth and adults respect each other and share responsibility.
- Create a just and compassionate society in which the focus is on the individual in community, and in which peace, justice and equality are valued and supported.
- Create a space where young people feel and are safe.
- Create a culture of appreciation, in which youth can learn about relationships in a caring context, can celebrate successes, be supported in failures, and can learn about their own and other cultures.
- Transfer practical, usable skills to youth and families to use among themselves and with others.
- Be conscious stewards of relationships, who value mentoring, modeling, and openness to learning.
- Use what happens naturally in relationships as a source of learning for both the youth and the youth worker.
- Create opportunities for youth to find their own path and identity.

A key element in CYD centers around the role of the professional. Youth workers in CYD share the expert role with those with whom they are working. They work in partnership with youth and other community members to create services and systems that honor and support communities. Such partnerships necessitate changes in the behavior of our service institutions, community organizations, families, adults, and youth.

THE CHANGING PARADIGM OF YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Traditional Approach

Contract
Economic approaches
to human values
Debate (win/lose)
Ideology
Either/or
Professional
Prescriptive
Appropriative

Community Youth Development

Covenant
Community and participation

Dialogue (win/win)
Meaning and purpose
Both/and
Partnership
Developmental
Evocative/calling forth

Figure 3. The Changing Paradigm of Youth Development ⁵

Partnership is one cornerstone of CYD. Another is participation. Authentic participation in community life is a defining characteristic of civil society.⁶ In addition to enhancing their own self-esteem and acquiring new skills, participation gives young people an opportunity to work for social justice, to learn about their community and local government, and obtain access to valuable resources. When young people are involved, the whole community benefits from their energy, responsiveness, and accomplishments. In the long run, training youth as community-minded citizens is an investment in the community's future.

Participation and partnership don't just happen; they demand methodologies and a commitment of time and energy. In particular, they require:

- Clarity regarding the description of community conditions, resources, and processes.
- A common vision of a preferred future.
- Valuing every individual as a unique resource, which leads to valuing the whole community.
- An appreciation of our connection to one another and to the larger human, physical, and social environment.
- Equal opportunity to participate in community decision-making by all members of the community.
- A social technology which promotes inclusive participation and community learning. The *Technology of Participation TM* developed by the Institute of Cultural Affairs (ICA) is a good example.⁷

Launching a CYD Movement

In 1996, I had the privilege of assisting a group of youth and adults working in partnership to prevent the spread of substance abuse in their communities throughout the southeast United States. The conference and training was held in Atlanta, Georgia and this partnership group learned a process called “Condition A - Condition B.” Condition A indicates the conditions in their communities as they exist today. Condition B represents the outcomes they are working towards in their communities. It was invigorating to see their plan and to see the enthusiasm with which they developed their strategies. In typical youthful style, they did not wait until the conference was over to implement their plan. They started right away by networking within the group to get the support and resources they needed. The following year the group of young people who attended the training from Florida applied for and received a \$200,000 grant to provide substance abuse prevention strategies for adolescents within their county.

The National Network for Youth launched its National Learning Resource Team (LRT) in 1994. For three years I was a member of the LRT’s design team and core faculty. We developed a Train the Trainer curriculum and provided training to a network of professionals across the country.

Shortly after, in California, the Western States Youth Service Network developed a CYD LRT that provided training to youth work professionals throughout California and other western states.

In San Diego, California, a strong effort to build a CYD capacity began with the formation of a youth-led organization called the San Diego Youth Congress. The Youth Congress was established in 1995 and was designed to facilitate and support the placement of a youth voice within the various commissions, study groups, and other decision makers that had a direct impact on the youth of San Diego. Each youth that was placed on a commission was also assigned an adult mentor. The mentors were community leaders who were very familiar with the types of commissions and study groups that the youth may sit on. The mentors included the Director of the County’s Health and Human Services Agency, the President of Children’s Hospital, the Chief Probation Officer, and many other leaders. The Youth Congress partnered with the County’s Health and Human Services Agency to produce the most successful Substance Abuse Prevention Summit that the County had ever convened until that time. In addition to the San Diego community’s benefit from the work of the Youth Congress, the youth leadership also benefited. The experiences that were provided for these youth also assisted in their personal and professional development. One of the youth leaders now serves as a consultant to the California Endowment’s Building Healthy Communities Initiative. Another leader accepted a position with the Annie E. Casey Foundation, in Baltimore, Maryland. After working there for two years he returned to California and currently works as a television producer in Los Angeles. As a result of his Youth Congress experience, he has included the production of documentaries on youth related issues within his repertoire of projects. Another Youth Congress leader is currently working on his PhD in Sports Psychology.

In 1999 the San Diego campus of Springfield College, School of Human Services developed a Bachelor’s Degree concentration in CYD. The curriculum was developed in consultation with

the National Network for Youth in Washington, DC, as well as a literature review regarding best practices provided by the National Training Institute for Community Youth Work, also located in Washington, DC. This began the local capacity building efforts in San Diego.

Springfield College was asked to join a partnership that was led by San Diego City College in 2004. The additional partners were the National Training Institute for Community Youth Work, and the local Workforce Partnership. This collaboration established San Diego BEST – Building Exemplary Systems of Training. San Diego BEST has since trained over 600 local youth workers in best practices within youth development and CYD.

San Diego City College went on to establish a certificate program in youth development in 2007. Approximately 200 students have enrolled in the certificate courses. That same year City College established the Institute for Human Development. The Institute brought together all of the certificate programs the college offered that were related to Human Services. The Institute also became the home for the San Diego BEST program. Through these partnerships a local continuum of training, education, and practical experience was established in the field of youth development. People who have an interest in working with youth and gaining skills in applying CYD strategies now have the opportunity to gain training experience, acquire a certificate in youth development, acquire an Associate's Degree, a Bachelor's Degree in Community Youth Development, as well as a Master's Degree in Organizational Management and Leadership.

Very recently I had the privilege of working with a group of young people in Butte County, California. The Butte County Department of Behavioral Health, Prevention Unit administers a program called Youth Development Summit Community Leader World Café. I was invited to participate in the 2009 World Café by Danelle Campbell, the Prevention Unit Program Manager. I was immediately impressed upon meeting the young people involved, as well as the adults who were working in partnership with them. The purpose of the program is preventing and/or reducing underage drinking. The program facilitates the development of youth/adult partnerships at local schools to create and implement prevention strategies. Each year all of the student leaders from the various schools come together for a summit. One of the significant activities at the annual summit is the World Café. Community leaders from the various participating school districts are invited to attend the World Café. During the Café, the youth present the strategies that they have developed to the community leaders from their geographic area. The youth ask the leaders to help to refine the strategies and commit to assisting them with the implementation when they return home.

I was struck by the sophistication and creativity of the strategies, as well as the level of enthusiasm that the young people exhibited as they went about their work. I was equally struck by video taped testimonials presented by the youth. However, I was most impressed by the level of partnership that existed between the youth and adults who were working together. You could easily see the demonstration of mutual respect between the youth and adults. The adults saw their role as guiding and supporting the development and implementation of the most effective prevention strategies. They did not try to control the youth or their outcomes. Ms. Campbell shared with me the following successes of the program: ⁸

- **Community Leader Committed Television Commercials** – Several of the community leaders who participated in the Youth Development Summit Community Leader World Café came together to film television commercials reinforcing their commitment to reducing underage drinking. The 30 second commercials will air on all of the major networks, providing underage drinking facts and community leader support in solutions to the issue. Each community leader made a statement, “I’m Committed – Are You?” encouraging community members to join the cause and be a part of the solution.
- **School Campus World Café** – As a follow-up to the Youth Development Summit Community Leader World Café, 18 school campuses in Butte County implemented School Campus World Cafés, bringing together 60 young people who are considered “leaders” among diverse peer groups on campus. The students build relationships, analyze underage drinking data and school climate data, develop school climate change projects and determine next steps for implementation of the school climate projects.
- **Los Plumas High School “Committed” Chapter Hosts a Lunch of Champions** – Las Plumas Committed is making huge strides in their chapter. On December 1st Las Plumas Committed began their school climate project, Lunch of Champions. The Lunch of Champions was comprised of school leaders including 20 students, teachers, and administrative support. All attendees were nominated by the Las Plumas Committed chapter members, as people who make a difference on their campus. The Lunch of Champions was a project launched after input from the students at the campus World Café. Students at the World Café wanted to increase faculty and students relationships as a way to improve student connection to/with their campus and to support and increase a positive school environment. During the Lunch of Champions Committed officers and members had the opportunity to thank their school champions and share their involvement in Committed. Together the students and faculty discussed their roles as leaders, issues on their campus, enjoyed each other’s company, and ate a delicious meal. The Lunch of Champions will be an ongoing project hosted by the Committed Chapter throughout the school year.
- **Prospect High School “Committed” Chapter Hosts a “Wall of Fame”** – One of the biggest highlights for Prospect Committed was the School Campus World Café. Nearly 30 students came to Prospect’s World Café and discussed underage drinking, youth issues and how to improve school climate. The attendance at the World Café is amazing considering Prospect is a very small school. Chapter members took the lead by facilitating the activities in the World Café agenda. It was an amazing event and members embraced the opportunity to spend time together and discuss important topics. As a result of the World Café, the members of Committed at Prospect are working on their school climate project, which is going to be a “Wall of Fame” for students who have shown “excessive improvements” or “out-of-the-ordinary talents”. They are currently working on getting students nominated for the next semester at their school. A picture, small biography and quote will be put up in the main room of their school. The students who are recognized will have the opportunity to eat lunch

with some of their campus teachers and administrators.

Prospect High School Committed members are also diligently working on an Environmental Prevention Project. The chapter is hosting a family night for parents to view the “Wasted” documentary and discuss how to decrease youth access to alcohol – as a Parent Committed – by signing a family pledge, creating networks with other parents and committing to not serve alcohol or allow underage drinking in their home. This will ultimately contribute to reducing underage drinking through social sources.

In August 2009, I began working with the staff of 6th Street Drop-in Center and Coleen’s House Youth Shelter in Chico, California. Together we have been exploring ways in which we can increase the youth/adult partnerships within the programming of the organizations. The staff and supervisors have worked enthusiastically on creating opportunities within their programs for young people to participate in decision making and taking more responsibility for their own future. The staff has commented on the positive change that they have been able to implement in a relatively short amount of time.

I have also been meeting with a group of Chico community leaders (County employees, university personnel, community college personnel, and youth serving organizations) who are interested in establishing a continuum of training and education that will increase the local capacity of youth workers in Butte County.

CYD is not the only approach to working with young people but it has proven highly effective and it excites me deeply. I have a vision of living in a just and compassionate society that nurtures and develops people, and which supports and values human development rather than simply valuing property and monetary gain. I have a vision of a society that appreciates the richness and beauty of diversity - diversity of race, age, gender, sexual orientation, and more. The pathway I see towards realizing this vision is one of young people and adults quietly working in partnership in every neighborhood and community across the United States and throughout the world.

My vision is shared by other individuals and organizations. In the United States, the National Network for Youth has worked on CYD with the Institute for Cultural Affairs (ICA), the National 4-H organization, and Girls, Inc. Foundations are supporting these efforts and universities are turning their attention to CYD as well. In every region of the country, teams of people are spreading the vision and providing the skills necessary to bring about changes needed in our communities.

But CYD is not just an American phenomenon. At the international conference on the “Rise of Civil Society in the 21st Century” held in Cairo, Egypt in 1996⁹ a global community youth development movement was launched. Conference participants from 34 countries represented a wide array of human development activities in communities and organizations. However, few of these development activities involve youth in any significant roles and fewer still involve youth as equal partners in the assessment, design, implementation, development, and evaluation of the work undertaken. To address this deficiency, a core group representing the national leadership of the CYD movement in the United States went to the Cairo conference to challenge participants

to consider young people as necessary and valuable resources in the design and implementation of civil society strategies.

During a day-and-a-half CYD workshop, we introduced participants to the principles and theory of CYD. Together we developed a list of implications resulting from implementing the CYD model, created a shared vision of a global CYD movement, and outlined the strengths, weaknesses, benefits, and dangers of this vision. The group then decided what its members could collectively and collaboratively commit to, starting with the formation of the International Institute for Community Youth Development (IICYD). Representatives from eight countries - Brazil, Egypt, Jordan, Kenya, Nigeria, Poland, Sudan, and the United States - were ready to begin work immediately. Another three countries were working toward making a commitment. In addition, two individuals committed to support the development of the international CYD movement. One is a consultant with experience in curriculum development, residential treatment for adolescents, and youth employment; the other is a professional with extensive school-based programs dealing with multicultural issues and gang-affiliated youth, as well as police-community relations.

The CYD workshop was one of the most productive of the conference. The group affirmed a mission statement, designed organizational operations, projected long-term outcomes of the collaboration, identified key activities, and created a launch scenario. The mission of the newly-formed IICYD is “to promote and strengthen the field of CYD globally as the key to building civil society for the next millennium.” The final work of the group was to develop a year-long work plan which was to culminate in all interested parties meeting together in San Diego, California in August 1997 to further design the operations of the Institute.

A Global Future

The Cairo conference illuminated the common issues in youth development and community development throughout the world, and the global pathway to the future of CYD. Now is the time to clarify and identify this movement worldwide, and to link the fragmented aspects of the movement. Moreover, it is the time to identify the processes by which we can transform our neighborhoods, communities, nations, and global society. This movement transcends local and national politics, gender, generational, and racial differences, and all other natural or human boundaries. It is concerned with establishing peace, justice, dignity, and respect for all people as core values of civil society. It is also concerned with improving the quality of life for all people now and for future generations. Finally, it requires us to shift our priorities and resources so they support these ideals and principles.

At the conclusion of the conference, when the CYD workshop group presented its work to the entire gathering, they received a thunderous applause. One elderly man commented, “After many years working to improve conditions of people’s lives around the world, I am convinced that youth and adults working together in partnership is the only way to truly build civil society.” One leader from Nigeria, who had a long history of working on development projects, decided he would quit his job to devote all his time to launching the CYD movement in his country.

Civil society is both a global and a local phenomenon. It is within the urban neighborhoods and rural villages of this world that communities grow and flourish, or die and are destroyed. Which of these two paths is followed depends on many factors; one of the most critical is the degree and quality of participation of all people in shaping the direction of their communities, particularly young people. Too often, young people have been regarded as an accessory to community development. It is time they took their rightful place as full members of civil society. As John Oyler, former Executive Director of the ICA office in Phoenix, Arizona, said:

Every community is being changed by its young people. Unfortunately, most change is destructive and the few adult partners young people have do not, for the most part, guide the creativity and energy of youth towards the good of the community. No serious community development effort can possibly succeed, much less be sustained, without the creativity and energy of its young people.¹⁰

Notes

1. From a personal communication with Karen Pittman. For further elaboration of this position, see Karen J. Pittman. "Community, Youth, Development: Three Goals in Search of Connection." *New Designs for Youth Development*. Volume 12, Number 1, Winter 1996. pp. 4-8.
2. Rob Nelson and Jon Cowan. *Revolution X: A Survival Guide for Our Generation*. New York: Penguin Books, 1994. pp. 210-215.
3. Rebecca Lane. "On the Journey to Community Youth Development." *New Designs for Youth Development*. Volume 12, Number 3, Summer 1996. p. 15.
4. Sara V. Jarvis, Liz Shear and Della M. Hughes. "Community Youth Development: Learning the New Story" To be published. Washington DC: Child Welfare League of America.
5. Excerpted and adapted from the article by Rebecca Lane. p. 17. *New Designs for Youth Development*, the National Network for Youth, Washington, DC.
6. The Institute of Cultural Affairs, edited by John Burbidge. *Beyond Prince and Merchant: Citizen Participation and the Rise of Civil Society*. (a) Mirja Hanson. "Facilitating Civil Society." pp. 235-247. (b) Marlene Kanawati. *op. cit.* (c) Monte Roulier. "Local Community: Seedbed of Civil Society." pp. 183-196.
7. The Institute of Cultural Affairs, edited by John Burbidge. *Beyond Prince and Merchant: Citizen Participation and the Rise of Civil Society*. See Appendix for a description of the *Technology of Participation*. p. 295.
8. From a personal communication with Danelle Campbell, Prevention Unit Program Manager, Butte County Department of Behavioral Health, Prevention Unit

9. The Institute of Cultural Affairs, edited by John Burbidge. *Beyond Prince and Merchant: Citizen Participation and the Rise of Civil Society*. See page 11 for a description of the Cairo conference.
10. Cited in Paul Watson. "Transforming Communities: The Spirit of Ubuntu." *Initiatives*. Volume 12, Number 1, Winter 1996. p. 7.