

Executive Summary

“Investing in our Youth – Looking to the Future”

Case for Support – An Executive Summary

The Heart of our Youth: “We’ve come to recognize our self-worth. We understand that when you really care about what is right and meaningful and follow your beliefs, don’t just accept things the way they are you can make a difference, we can all make a difference and dare to have big dreams and then act as if they are possible.”

- JYIA Steering Committee

A milestone: Last fall we reached a milestone. We developed the **Joyzone Youth in Action Network**. 6 local teens have become leaders on the **Joyzone Youth in Action Steering Committee**. They are committed to working hard on interesting and challenging projects demonstrating an awesome commitment to their community.

Our future: The Network has made a significant investment into the lives of the youth through the education of service, service learning, community awareness, self-awareness, health, nutrition and fitness. We are now planning to support and mentor a **Joyzone Youth in Action Steering Committee** of likeminded youth in the community to increase the quantity and quality of opportunities for youth to serve as decision makers in all sectors of society and to accommodate the substantial increase in activity that serves our emerging generation.

Joyzone Youth in Action is a network of committed youth and adults that wish to partner with numerous organizations in Oakville committed to increasing the quality and quantity of volunteer opportunities for young people ages 14 to 20, to serve locally.

Mission: To strengthen and expand the impact of the youth service movement with community, service agencies, schools, corporations and governments.

Vision: To nurture a community culture of engaged youth who are committed to a lifetime of service, learning, fitness, awareness, leadership and achievement. A powerful network of organizations committed to making service and service-learning the common expectation and common experience of all young people.

Joyzone Youth in Action works toward that mission through five (5) core strategies:

1. Organizing a Public Policy and Awareness Campaign to establish long lasting and equitable community partners.
2. Convening the field.
3. Developing, organizing and implementing community service projects
4. Providing information and educational resources on health, fitness, nutrition, awareness – both curricular and extra - curricular
5. Developing, organizing and implementing a youth mentorship and life skills program

A strong youth service movement will create healthy community and foster citizenship, knowledge, and the personal development of Oakville’s young people.

Core Value: That all people have the inherent capacity to effect change in their lives, their organizations and in their community.

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In isolation youth cannot engage fully and productively in their communities. Adult allies, youth serving organizations, schools, community service organizations, corporations and faith based and governmental institutions play a critical role in supporting and empowering young people to engage in all aspects of civic life. It demands openness to new opportunities and fresh attitudes.

“The normative expectation for partnership between youth and adults has been rerouted from an assumption that adults are responsible for “fixing” youth’s problems to that of lending a helping hand – or even stepping aside – so that youth themselves take responsibility for personal, peer, and community life. Traditional efforts permitting youth involvement in activities that improve themselves and their communities have morphed into initiatives that encourage youth to think boldly and make significant changes in the world they live.”

Search Institute. The Power of Youth and Adult Partnerships and Change Pathways for Youth Work – Executive Summary, Prepared by the Search Institute for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation

“Increasing numbers of young people from marginalized and disenfranchised communities are becoming involved as leadership models begin to reflect both realities and strengths of these young people.

Organizing and activism initiatives appear to be a meaningful and significant approach for connecting with youth that are typically not reached by more conventional youth development efforts. These ‘challenged’ youth embrace the activism and the entities that do it because they provide youth with opportunities to concentrate on their own cultures and backgrounds, they create a means for youth to examine and deal with the difficult challenges they and their fellow community members confront.” (*Youth Organizing Synopsis Paper*, p.10)

Search Institute. The Power of Youth and Adult Partnerships and Change Pathways for Youth Work – Executive Summary, Prepared by the Search Institute for the W.K. Kellogg Foundation

The Joyzone Youth in Action Network will attempt to bridge the gaps, catalyze new dialogue, capture lessons, and create tools to inspire and equip local communities to increase youth engagement. It will serve to sharpen the focus on this issue, drawing attention of organizers, funders and community leaders at all levels.

Few opportunities exist today for intergenerational dialogue. A key element of successful forms of youth engagement has always been partnerships with adults that recognize the inherent value that everyone brings to the table. Models and understanding of youth engagement and youth adult collaboration have evolved and continue to develop. Youth Engagement will foster some of the “best practices” models now being utilized with proven success.

Adults in the Oakville community have a primary role in creating opportunities for young people and supporting them in building their competencies as they simultaneously work for change. A great deal of work needs to be done to change adults’ perceptions of youth and to create awareness of the positive changes youths are capable of making. As youth and adults share lessons learned, and create visions for new engagements and growth, they will refine strategies for youth engagement. It will then become an essential and effective part of the fabric of young lives and social change.

The Joyzone Youth in Action Network wishes to foster youth engagement and ensure that youth-adult collaboration becomes a cultural norm and everyday civic activity. This is especially true for community projects, which because of changing age demographics in Oakville, have the opportunity to rely more on the involvement of youth and elders as agents of change. It is clearly the time to connect and leverage the existing, yet isolated experience, talent and passion of youth and elder social activists.

Youth-adult partnerships in collective learning and action promote leadership that is:

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Effective, responding to diverse community needs and building the capacity of individuals and organizations to ensure long-term sustainability.

Inspiring, as people realize they need one another and collectively make positive change.

Mutually interdependent, as an understanding of the importance of cross boundaries and contributing to the common good are realized.

Key Challenges

- Raising core and project funding annually.
- Continuing ability to respond to issues of self-worth, self-awareness, health, nutrition, and fitness for youth
- Continuing ability to identify and respond to new program and community needs
- Effectively managing funding challenges
- Meeting the needs of a more cultural and diverse community
- Changing demographics

Social Vision – Expected Outcomes

Goals:

- To mentor community youth and community members so that youth are compelled to give back. One positive leads to another.
- For youth to experience helping their neighbors can positively impact their schools, neighborhoods and community
- Have youth experience how fitness, proper nutrition and awareness can help them be productive
- To partner with other community organizations to maximize their resources and talents.
- To build a more compassionate youth who are appreciative of the life they live.
- To reach across generations, break down age barriers and work with new friends in identifying and fixing problem conditions right where you live.
- Adult groups invite youth organizations, and youth invite adult organizations to become project partners for a day.
- To increase the quantity and quality of opportunities for youth to serve as decision makers in all sectors of society.
- To increase the quality of opportunities of youth volunteer hours mandated by the Boards of Education. That those hours may be meaningful and purposeful.

The **Youth in Action Network** aims to provide a holistic and focused approach. We wish to provide the tools, education and opportunities to the youth of Oakville so that they may become healthy holistic individuals, physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually. Youth and adult community leaders are poised to be age, socioeconomic and culture boundary crossers, working together to foster innovative, collaborative approaches to community action.

“We are born into community and with unity we accomplish more together than any one of us could alone. The Joyzone Youth in Action Network is about building relationships, and connecting the dots.”

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