

Wilder Center for Communities Youth Leadership Initiative 2007-2009 evaluation Year-end evaluation results from 2007-09 report summary

Youth Leadership Initiative overview

The goal of the Youth Leadership Initiative, a program of the Amherst H. Wilder Foundation, is to build the skills, and foster the desire of young people to contribute to their community.

YLI offers St. Paul area youth age 14-18 the opportunity to build leadership skills through weekly action team meetings, monthly cultural sessions, and quarterly retreats. Youth Leadership Initiative experiences are designed to help participants:

- Increase their understanding of themselves and their cultures;
- Build leadership knowledge, skills and qualities
- Increase their appreciation of other cultures; and
- Increase their engagement with their communities.

Evaluation overview

Wilder Research prepared this evaluation using data from end-of-year surveys conducted with youth participants, mentors and coaches in 2007, 2008, and 2009. The survey was developed by YLI staff with input from Wilder Research.

This evaluation describes to what extent Youth Leadership Initiative participants report increased knowledge, awareness and attitudes of themselves and their culture, leadership, other cultures, and community engagement. It also provides information on YLI participants' satisfaction with the program.

The data are limited for two main reasons: 1) some participants become mentors in subsequent years and thus respondents could have completed multiple surveys over the three years, and 2) the surveys were administered at retreats, which not everyone attended.

Summary of findings

A total of 73 surveys were received. Overall, responses indicated the program had positive impacts on participants in all four goal areas. Almost all (98%) reported learning more about the experiences and culture of people from their ethnic background since beginning YLI. They also learned they had strengths, including commitment, open-mindedness, and creativity.

All reported having a greater appreciation of the importance of respectful relationships with others, and a better understanding of their own strengths. They also learned to appreciate and work with people from other cultures. They learned to “not judge people,” “respect every single thing about others,” and “that we share common hopes and values.”

Participants also increased their engagement and awareness of community issues and the role of youth. Almost all (93-95%) agreed that they are more likely to help their community in the future and more interested in community issues. Many noted specific activities they were planning to do to get involved in their community, such as volunteer at the Rice Street festival, plan and hold a block party, or start a group that would help the elderly.

Overall, participants were satisfied with the program. Almost all (96%) said they would recommend it to their friends. They were most satisfied with their relationships with the adults and interactions with the staff. They rated the mentors slightly less high than the staff; and mentioned a few areas the mentors could improve. They most enjoyed the retreats and action team activities, as well as the opportunities to meet new people. Finally, to improve the program, some respondents said people who attend should want to be there, and discipline could be improved. Others said the program should “last longer.

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For more information

This summary presents highlights of the *Wilder Center for Communities Youth Leadership Initiative 2007-2009 evaluation*. For more information about this report, contact Jennifer Valorose at Wilder Research, 651-280-2654.

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