



### Floyd County Youth Services Coalition (Floyd County)

When it's raining, grab an umbrella. But when there's a flood, find a row boat.

In 1987, seven youth advocates and youth workers in Floyd County met to discuss how they could better coordinate their efforts on behalf of children and youth. They hoped their collaboration would make local residents more aware of youth issues while increasing the services and programs available to children and their families.

Seventeen years later, and now 50 organizations strong, the Floyd County Youth Services Coalition is a life raft for county-wide efforts on behalf of kids. The coalition has raised nearly \$1 million in private and government funding to create and support afterschool programs, youth services, technology enhancements for social services agencies, and youth advocacy.

The coalition helped form a Youth Services Bureau and a new "one-stop" neighborhood center for the provision of social services. Community summits on healthy youth development and a formal needs assessment are leading to the implementation of Search Institute's "Attitudes and Behaviors" survey in local schools. The coalition coordinates the local Step Ahead Council, while a youth council is bringing the youth voice to local government leaders.

Remarkably, the coalition has accomplished all of this without consistent staffing or funding of its own. Which might be a big reason for its success. "We've been able to hold this together and be successful because people in the county know we're not pursuing dollars for ourselves or our individual agencies," said one of the coalition's founders, Vince Klein, whose full-time job involves community outreach for a local public school system.

"People know that youth development is at the heart of what is going on here," Klein continued. "A lot of people of goodwill are in this for the right reasons. Their first question is not, 'What's in it for me?'"



### Youth Fishing and Conservation Program (Ft. Wayne)

When it comes to working with kids, fisherman Ephraim Smiley hopes he'll never have to tell a story about one that got away.

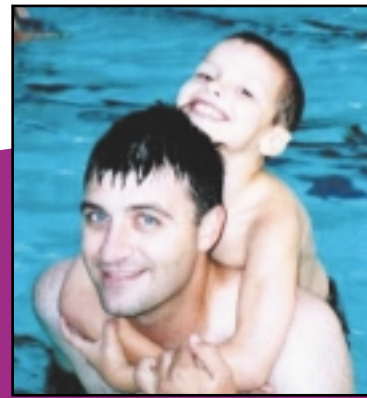
Smiley has transformed his personal love for fishing into the Youth Fishing and Conservation Program. Starting with just \$100 worth of donated bait, this grassiest of grassroots programs now sponsors fishing events and trips for low-income children and youth in Ft. Wayne.

A dilapidated former gas station converted into a bait shop serves as the headquarters for two fishing derbies at inner-city Reservoir Park. The derbies attract over 300 kids who learn how to bait a hook, properly cast and (hopefully) reel in their catch, all while enjoying positive time with parents and adult volunteers. The activity is free, and children are provided with a fishing pole, bait, lunch and snacks.

Smiley says that fishing teaches young people about patience and discipline. Problem-solving skills are needed to set a line, determine the right bait, get untangled from weeds, and work out a swallowed hook. And care for the environment is instilled by the program's requirement to pick up any trash in sight.

Encouraging the kids to give back, Smiley - who is known to the youth as "Doc Catfish" - encouraged them to raise money to fix up the old park. The kids raised \$5,000, which Smiley then matched with a grant from local government.

The kids are hooked, and so is Smiley, whose motivation comes from an experience in his own life. As a 12-year-old, Smiley was not selected for a local baseball team. "I then was recruited by this guy from the humane society who put together a team with the kids who got cut," Smiley remembers. "We thought we were rejects. But he took us around in his humane society van and organized pick up games for us. I'll never forget that, and that's what I want to do for today's kids."



### Optimist Volunteer Mentors & Big Brothers Big Sisters (Terre Haute)

Thinking outside the box inspired new thinking about "Bigs" in Terre Haute.

When the local Optimist Club decided to focus on youth mentoring, the service club decided not to start its own program and instead collaborate with Big Brothers Big Sisters. Several club members expressed an interest, but also said that the three hour commitment with a "Little" each week might be difficult to fulfill.

That's when a new model was created. The Optimists recruited five community centers - the Hye Community Center, the Boys and Girls Club, Gibault, Ryves Hall and the 14th & Chestnut Community Center - and then asked club members to mentor a child at one of those centers for one hour a week on their way home from work. "Site-based mentoring offers much more flexibility, especially for the volunteer," said Big Brothers Big Sisters director Deanna Smiley Gulliford. By receiving support from Big Brothers Big Sisters, the Optimist Club and the community center, the volunteers are more likely to serve long-term.

About 50 mentors have stepped forward, and approximately 75 percent of those new volunteers have evolved into the regular Big Brothers Big Sisters mentoring program. The new approach especially has been successful at recruiting men - a challenge in the past - and the number of children being mentored has increased by 20 percent.

An evaluation of the program found that 80 percent of parents noticed increased confidence displayed by their mentored child, and 82 percent of participating children expressed interest in learning new things.

But Gulliford has witnessed a development that the statistics do not capture. "I have seen kids waiting at the door, or with their faces pressed up against the window, just waiting for their Big to arrive," she said, adding that the program makes mentoring available to children whose unstable home life prevents them from participating in the traditional Big Brothers Big Sisters program.



### Paths to Quality (Whitley, DeKalb, LaGrange, Noble and Steuben Counties)

A useful tool has been developed to help parents who work outside of their homes find quality child care for their children.

"Paths to Quality," based on national research and designed by the Early Childhood Alliance (ECA), establishes four levels of distinction for child care centers to pursue. The first level involves basic health and safety. Next is the development of a caring, child-oriented environment. The third level is reached by teaching a challenging and meaningful curriculum. And the final level involves earning national accreditation.

ECA provides training and other technical assistance to help professional day care centers, licensed day care ministries and home day care providers attain these stages of quality care. In the last three years, 69 day care providers in Whitley, DeKalb, LaGrange, Noble and Steuben counties have produced 72 improvements in quality, based on these standards.

ECA has a list of questions based on the four levels of quality for parents to use when interviewing potential child care providers. This resource is promoted through billboards and radio commercials, as well as in hospitals and through public services like Healthy Families and WIC.

"With Paths to Quality, parents and child care providers can help children prepare for kindergarten and be off to a great start in school with the learning tools they need throughout their school career," said Sarah Reincke of the Early Childhood Alliance. "In addition to academics, Paths to Quality is designed to provide activities that build each child's social and emotional development."



# 2004 Indiana Youth Investment Awards

The Indiana Youth Institute is proud to recognize 11 organizations and individuals with Indiana Youth Investment Awards. Winners each receive a \$5,000 prize to be used for professional development and to enhance youth programs. They are also publicly acknowledged at an Indiana Pacers game and will receive free admission to the Indiana Youth Institute's annual Kids Count in Indiana Conference.

The Indiana Youth Investment Awards are intended to highlight extraordinary - but often unrecognized - efforts on behalf of children and youth. IYI is proud to play a role in honoring these individuals and organizations for their exemplary youth work, and hope this recognition will encourage and inspire others to make a difference in a child's life.

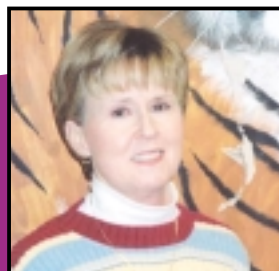
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**Diane Woodsides  
(Alexandria)**

You don't have to be in Diane Woodsides' windowless office for long to realize how local residents view her as essential to the well-being of children and their families in the small Madison County community of Alexandria.

A meeting is interrupted by the ringing phone. Woodsides answers, and hears the frantic plea of a Mom who is worried that the heat to her home will be cut off due to her inability to pay a utility bill. "Now don't you worry," Woodsides reassures her. "We have until next week, and we will get this settled." Woodsides then recommends help from a food pantry at a local church, and assures the caller she will contact the township trustee for utility assistance.

Residents of Alexandria have turned to Woodsides for the last 13 years she has directed the Alexandria Community Center. Woodsides is a one-person staff, running afterschool and summer youth programs that serve hundreds of children and youth with sports, arts and crafts, computers, foreign language instruction and even quilting.

Woodsides visits schools frequently to encourage participation in the center's many activities, and she recruits high school volunteers to run many of the programs. "The younger kids so much look up to the high school kids," Woodsides explains, "and the older kids realize how they can be positive role models."

With the field of youth work plagued by high rates of turnover, Woodsides excels as a one-woman band with a small budget. "You can start feeling overwhelmed," Woodsides admits. "But then you drive up to the center and see the kids waiting to get in and you know why you're doing this. Rewards come in so many ways, from watching the kids learn and have fun, seeing them benefit from positive role models and growing up with healthy youth development."

Just then a Mom walks in to enroll her son in the center's sports program. "But I don't have the money for the registration fee just yet," she awkwardly explains. "That's O.K.," Woodsides replies. "You just send it in with your son when you have it. You know where to find me." As do all the children and families in Alexandria.

**Paul Neufelder  
(Columbus)**



What do you say to a man in a wheelchair? While that can be difficult for some adults, many young people have no hesitation whatsoever.

"Some of the very youngest children might back off a bit at first," explained Paul Neufelder, who became a quadriplegic in a diving accident when he was 14. "But the older kids want to sit on my lap and drive the motorized wheelchair. And they're willing to ask me the most interesting questions about my lifestyle. More adults should be forthright like that."

Exploring differences and finding common ground is the goal of "Exploring Diversity," which Neufelder runs for the local community organization ART Columbus. Neufelder conducts art workshops for kids in a local middle school, an alternative school and at the art center, and he uses the art activities to teach young people about diversity. "And not just about people with disabilities," Neufelder noted. "We talk about race, gender, socioeconomic condition - all sorts of diversity. Even what foods are eaten in different cultures."

The students especially enjoy learning how to emulate their instructor by painting with the brush in their mouth and then seeing their finished work displayed in the ART Columbus gallery. But Neufelder sees something much deeper occurring. "Art is a beautiful thing," he said. "Art work taps into so many of the ways people learn, and as the kids learn about diversity, art helps all of the lines of difference just melt."

Neufelder remembers a local girl who tried to commit suicide five times. She now uses art to discourage other young people from doing the same. "You hope to spark an interest in art," Neufelder said, "and that spark can change the child's life forever."

**Big Brothers /  
Big Sisters of  
Decatur County  
(Decatur County)**



Some kids are so desperate for attention, they actually want to do their homework. That's the lesson learned by Big Brothers Big Sisters of Decatur County, which developed an innovative way to reach underserved children and youth.

By working in local schools, BBBS staff and volunteers noticed that low-income children were not participating in afterschool programs. Their families cited a lack of adequate transportation. "But we knew there was something more to it than that," said executive director Bev Karaszia. "Many low-income families, especially those who are poorly educated, can be intimidated by schools. So we decided to take the program to them."

About 90 percent of the nation's motor homes are built in Indiana, and it is difficult to imagine one better utilized than the RV driven by BBBS to take their afterschool program to low-income children living in area trailer parks. Homework help is the primary activity, while the kids also play learning games, use laptop computers and enjoy snacks.

The mobile mentoring unit also helps BBBS staff and volunteers establish trusting relationships with parents, and those families are then connected to social services, health clinics and other forms of assistance.

"Parents want to see their kids achieve and get the services they need," Karaszia said. "But they need help navigating the system. We're glad to bring that assistance directly to them with this motor home."



**Runnin' Rebels  
Junior Cadet Program (Gary)**

The best time to plan for tomorrow is today. That's the motivation behind the Runnin' Rebels Junior Cadet program in Gary, where nearly 4,000 students in grades 6 through 12 are receiving a wide range of opportunities to inspire academic achievement.

Middle school students attend afterschool activities that encourage self-esteem, gang awareness and time management. Freshmen and sophomores in high school then continue on with presentations from professionals in the fields of business, public safety, health and criminal justice. Both age groups receive ongoing tutoring from local college students as well as involvement in community service projects.

As high school upper classmen, the students then take college-level courses on campus at I.U.-Northwest, Calumet College of St. Joseph and Ivy Tech, and the credits earned can be applied toward a college degree. Students also can apply for college scholarships designed exclusively for alums of the Runnin' Rebels program. In a recent year, 88 percent of participating students went on to college.

"From 6th grade on these kids are constantly hearing about going to college," said the Rev. Maurice White, who started the program seven years ago as an unpaid volunteer. The program now receives significant financial support from local government to pay for college instructors and course materials.

White continued, "The kids know there are college scholarships available. So when the dope man comes, or somebody wants them to skip school or join a gang, the kids have goals and they know there are positive alternatives."



**Center for  
Leadership Development  
(Indianapolis)**

Experience is a great teacher. Just ask Dennis Bland who earned a bachelor's degree and a law degree after participating as a teenager at the Center for Leadership Development.

Following a successful career in the for profit sector, Bland returned to CLD as Executive Director. His personal experience with the program inspired the creation of the "College Prep Institute," a seven-session course that helps African American high school students and their parents prepare for college. The families learn how to select a college, fill out application and financial aid forms, how to study at the college level, and how to manage time and other priorities.

Combined with CLD's mentoring and tutoring programs, the goal of the "College Prep Institute" is college graduation, not just college access. "African Americans are under-represented at colleges and universities," Bland explains. "With this program, we're transforming the lives of young people and helping them prepare for the rich world of higher education. We're countering the narrative that tells these kids that they can't achieve in college or that college is not for them."

Bland mentions Roger, who came to CLD as a high school sophomore with a GPA of 0.66. After participating at CLD, Roger earned As and Bs in his junior and senior years. His 3.3 college GPA will help him apply for medical school.

In addition to this anecdotal evidence, an independent evaluation found that, "College Prep" is a high quality positive youth development initiative" addressing 34 of the 40 Search Institute Developmental Assets and all eight youth development recommendations of the National Research Council. "College Prep" is similar to programs across the country that have been identified as exemplary and as such may be characterized as superior to excellent in design and implementation."

**Curtain Call Children's  
Theatre (Kokomo)**



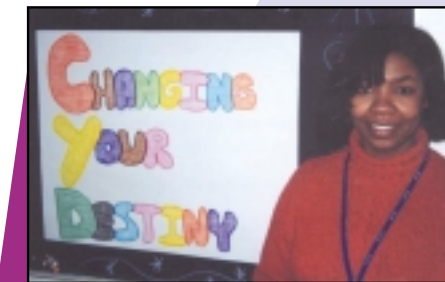
"Places, everyone." The familiar command before the start of a theatrical production is a message that also applies to healthy youth development.

That's the plot for the positive youth activities occurring at the Curtain Call Children's Theatre in Kokomo. The theatre produces three plays each school year, with children and teens playing most of the parts and doing most of the stage crew work on props and costumes. Young people even market each show, appearing in costume at the local mall and other public places to sell tickets.

"We didn't want this to be adults doing children's theatre for children," explained Pat Brandon, a middle school teacher who volunteers as the theatre's executive director. "We want children to be heavily involved and give them a positive activity and a creative outlet."

The theatre's activities have included a traveling group that performs readings at nursing homes and schools. A program for kindergarten through second grade students helps young children learn about drama and the stage before they are able to read. And the theatre has even conducted workshops for children on proper audience skills and etiquette.

Beyond producing successful shows, Brandon says theatre prepares kids for their leading roles in life. "The kids learn discipline from the work required to do a show. They learn how to work with other kids, including across lines of income and race. They learn that you don't have to be the star. Everyone has a role to play."



**Changing Your Destiny  
(South Bend)**

It wasn't enough for Jacqueline Davis to see the girls at school every day. She believed strongly that they needed something more - more role models, more tutoring, more attention - if they were really going to change their destiny.

Through her employment in the Community Enhancement department of South Bend's Memorial Hospital, Davis speaks in two middle schools and a high school about making healthy choices related to abstaining from sex, tobacco, drugs and alcohol. "But I saw that these kids needed even more," Davis explained. "Too many of them have no adult role models or proper guidance in their lives."

So Davis built on the relationships she established in the classroom by launching "Changing Your Destiny." Located in the basement of Believers Church of God in Christ, the afterschool program provides a wide range of positive activities and relationships for middle school girls. Tutoring from high school students, presentations on jobs and careers by adult professionals, and service activities at a local homeless shelter and food pantry teach the girls about constructive alternatives to life on the street.

"And we have to be creative to get their attention," Davis said. "For example, so many of these girls want to date guys who are thugs. So we started a campaign, 'Hug a thug. Catch a bug.' The girls laughed, but this got them talking about guys, about choosing their friends wisely and about being with boys who respect them."

Lessons about goal-setting and self-respect are combined with real world experiences serving homeless people and former drug addicts. "All of this is geared toward getting the girls aware of their choices," Davis said, "and making them fully aware about the consequences of those choices."