

YOUTH VENTURES. Arlington, VA.

OVERVIEW

It is commonly known that the majority of youth violence, gang initiation and various other at-risk behaviors occur during after-school hours. Thus, there is a great need for programs that engage the creativity of youth and empower them to use their unique gifts during these times. There are a few organizations emerging to address this need and find ways to utilize the talents and energy of youth to promote social change through entrepreneurial endeavors.

PROGRAM GOALS

Youth Venture is a national non-profit organization that empowers young people ages 12-20 by providing them the tools to create civic-minded organizations, clubs or businesses. Motivated by the belief that “youth inherently have the creativity and determination to create genuine change within their communities,” Youth Venture offers various resources including: a national network of like-minded young people, media opportunities and up to \$1,000 in seed capital needed to launch their organizations.

Based in Arlington, Virginia, Youth Venture is building a mass movement of young people who have the vision and the energy to make a difference in their communities. Along with their Partners and Allies, they support a growing network of teens who can share their experiences with one another. To facilitate this sharing, Youth Venture features Venturers and their ventures on their web site. Venturers also receive training geared to innovation and leadership, and have access to ongoing technical assistance.

PROGRAM METHODS

Youth Venture strives to reach and support any young person nationwide who has a dream about how to make a difference, and the commitment to make it happen.

They do this in various ways. First, they work directly with interested young people through their Virtual Venturer program, which enables youth to submit a Youth Venture application directly to through the World Wide Web.

They also build partnerships with local, regional, and national youth-serving organizations to help them support youth in their creative projects. Youth Venture and our Partners challenge teams of youth to define their goals, to create plans for achieving them, and to demonstrate how their efforts will strengthen themselves, their peers, and their communities. We ensure that young people have the support network they need, the ability to make their own decisions and contributions, and the opportunity to tell others about those contributions.

PROGRAM OPERATION

YV comprises a staff of 20 with offices based in Washington, DC, Arlington, VA, New York City,

Fitchburg, MA, Concord, NH, Oakland and LA, CA and Minneapolis, Minnesota. As a non-profit they raise funds to support their programs, but also disburse seed funding to promising youth venturers.

To achieve the goals mentioned above, YV and their Partners provide:

- * Materials. Youth Venture has an array of materials aimed at helping youth launch and sustain their ventures.

- * Advice/Access to a Digital Network of Collaboration. Venturers can tap the experience of other Youth Venturers through Youth Venture's online "Venturers Only" chat room and email listserve. They also provide a directory of Venturer contact information.

- * Technical Allies. Venturers might occasionally face a challenge that requires the advice or temporary assistance of an expert in a specific field. Our directory of "Technical Allies," volunteer experts available to assist in nearly every field, is provided to all Youth Venturers and can also be found on the "Venturers Only" section of our web site.

- * Media Opportunities. Youth Venture ensures young people receive the recognition they deserve. We work with local and national newspapers, magazines, radio, and television to secure interviews and publicity for Venturers' work. We also provide interviewing pointers and tips for gaining additional publicity.

- * National Recognition/Special Opportunities. Youth Venture looks for awards, scholarships, publicity, conferences, and other kinds of ongoing educational and recognition opportunities for which we can nominate Venturers.

- * Workshops and Training. Youth Venture and its Partners provide the sorts of training and workshops especially useful for innovative leaders.

- * Start-up Seed Money. Often Youth Venturers starting new organizations need modest capital to help them get started. To the extent Youth Venture and its Partners can, we try to help.

PROGRAM TESTIMONIES

Following are examples of two Youth Venture Teams:

Located in Memphis, Tennessee Yo! Business Mall members Ebony (17), Gregory (18), and Adrian (17) give youth a chance to give back to their community while learning important entrepreneurial and marketing skills. Their work began in March 2004 as part of a Youth Venture partnership with Youth Service America. Yo! Business Mall addresses community needs by providing local services at fair prices. A full meal at Yo! Café costs only \$2 and new books at Yo! Bookstore are always sold at discounted prices. This is all made possible by Yo! Business Mall's collaboration with local companies that provide mentoring and financial support along with the help of the Tennessee Department of Labor. Yo! Business Mall members are all acting managers of their individual stores and work hard to make Yo! Business Mall an important part of their community and an example of a youth run community success.

Kew Promotions is a promotional entertainment company specifically designed by teenagers for teenagers. Its goal is to stretch beyond the current offerings of what is presently available for the teenage entertainment market in Philadelphia. To engage young adults in high quality entertainment that is tailored, specifically to them. Kew Promotions believes that young adults should be entitled to the same high level of stylish entertainment that is available to the 18 and over age group. Kew

Promotions is currently working on two big summer projects; Street Best which is a basketball tournament and Kew Block Party which is a series of large outdoors events that will be used to promote unity amongst various Philadelphia communities through the city.

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