

# How to Get a **Juvenile Perspective** on Juvenile Justice

And Other Suggestions for Creating Mechanisms for Youth Input

By Toby Hill-Meyer

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# Executive summary

Being a youth is a unique experience; You're in the public school system, subjected to curfew laws, dependant on almost every adult that you work with, part of a youth sub-culture. Youth share these experiences and can make a unique contribution by advising adults who work with their age group. Even someone five years beyond being a teenager has had many experiences that cloud their perception of that period.

Many organizations are now interested in incorporating youth input. However, policy makers may have limited access to youth. Youth do not know the processes of most organizations, let alone that their help is being sought. How, then, does an agency create a mechanism for youth input?

Other youth activists and I have a sense of what works and what doesn't work in promoting youth participation and youth input. Here we share the types of barriers that prevent youth involvement and specific strategies for enabling youth input. We also take you through the process of planning and implementing a system of youth participation and dealing with the difficulties of recruitment and retention.

## Introduction

### **The need**

Three years ago I attended a youth summit where one policy maker described a scenario to us. Someone needed to decide whether to fund after school activities, day care, or juvenile detention center beds. Another needed to write a pamphlet designed for youth. Someone else had just finished a document that had a disgustingly inaccurate use of youth slang. The policy maker explained that many people making these decisions and doing this work had not been teenagers for decades and needed youth input to make effective decisions.

The difficulty is in finding ways to bring teenagers and adults together for all of the important decisions that could benefit from a youth perspective. The lack of connection goes in both directions. Often community leaders only have access to their own children and to the children of their friends. Youth do not know the processes of most local government offices and non-profit agencies, let alone that their help is being sought.

How does an agency create a method of youth input? Recognizing that many agencies were proclaiming the need for youth input but few had systems in place--and even fewer had effective systems--I realized that this was a question that no one had the answer to. I sought to create an answer.

### **YAC**

My first attempt was to create Youth Advisory Council of Lane County (YAC). I worked with the Lane Education Service District to recruit about 15 youth from Youth in Action. YAC met twice a month and was available to any organization in Lane County that needed youth input. Assuming that

this was a commodity in demand, I figured that there would be no problem finding organizations to advise.

However, I soon found out that while people like the idea of youth input, they reserve it for “youth” issues, and that didn’t seem to include funding or other common decisions. And most “youth” issues were the type that needed immediate action and could not wait to bring to YAC.

We had money for our first year and had planned to go to the organizations we had advised to ask for continued funding. But the few organizations that we worked with were not enough for continued funding as a separate organization. YAC still exists, but had to be folded into Youth in Action.

## CCF

Before I began college and left YAC, I became a youth commissioner of the Lane County Commission on Children and Families (CCF). It is there that I learned about the effectiveness of direct youth participation in an organization. I attended every meeting. I was there with my advice for every decision, regardless of how fast we had to make that decision. I also learned of the difficulty the CCF had had in finding and keeping youth representatives. Yet I knew that I wouldn’t be there forever. After making sure there were two new, capable youth commissioners, I resigned at the beginning of September 2002.

But I wanted to make sure that the commission, and all the organizations that I had worked with over the years, could create and maintain their own mechanism for effective youth participation. It is my hope that this document can be a guide for creating, or refining, systems for youth input.

# Barriers to participation

Understanding the barriers that prevent effective communication and cooperation between youth and adults is the most important step to creating youth input in an organization. These barriers fall into three categories.

The first category is the inherent barriers, things that no one person or organization can change. These barriers must be adapted to.

The second category is structural barriers, those aspects of the organization that work for adults but that are unfamiliar to youth or that conflict with aspects of the daily life of youth. These barriers are often firmly rooted and difficult to change. While some can be adapted to, others need to be changed to have youth participate.

The third category is social barriers, which includes cultural misunderstandings and conflicts and issues of ageism. The most effective way to deal with this category is to confront the barriers head-on, with education to change them. However, the difficulty is that there is no one change that is the solution, no one motion that can be made or policy that can be changed. Instead, there need to be many different individual changes.

These barriers affect others in addition to youth. They affect adults who are not integrated into a social institution, those who have access to fewer resources, and those who have some additional responsibilities. This paper focuses on barriers that specifically affect youth as a group. Yet, by addressing these barriers, organizations also lessen barriers to many other populations.

## Inherent barriers

Most inherent barriers involve issues about school. There are youth who are not in school and recruiting from that group of youth can add another perspective. However, the reality is that most youth are students and much of their life revolves around school.

The most obvious school-related problem is also the most difficult for many organizations to address. Chances are, if a youth is volunteering their time with your organization, that it isn't their only extra-curricular activity. An average high school student has seven hours of school a day plus one or two hours of homework. If they are a part of a club or a team, that could take up two to five of their afternoons. That's not to mention social life and family life. Part of the difficulty is not how much time a task takes, but that *it is another task on top of many*.

The difficulty is often not in doing something, but remembering it, getting motivated to do it, preparing for it, and getting to and from it.

For most people, working in an office provides opportunity to take a break and use office resources to get an important task done. High schools can be less accommodating. For example, often high schools have no public phone access, which makes it nearly impossible to make reminder phone calls for a meeting. Even when youth get access to a phone, it is either in the middle of a loud, crowded hall, or the phone is unreliable. Emma shared that she had stayed after school to take a math test and her teacher still would not let her use the phone to ask her mother for a ride home.

Email is another problem. If you work in an office, you can be notified every time there is a new message so that you can respond quickly. School does not provide that opportunity. For example, I often spent my break between classes sending out a reminder email for a meeting the next day. One time I didn't find out until the meeting that one of the adults had replied with a question and was upset that I had never answered. That conflict could've been avoided if she had known my situation so that she could have talked to someone who was available.

Having restricted access to technology at home limits youth. For instance, Sam tried to turn in a form. It had to be faxed, but she had no fax machine. For many adults, if they need Internet access, a fax machine, a pocket organizer, or some other form of technology, they can buy it, get to a rental shop, use a friend's--get it one way or another, even if it is costly. Yet youth cannot always get it just because they need it--often they need to adapt to working without the technology.

Youth simply do not have access to some things. Few have both a driver's license and a car. Transport can be a huge problem in getting youth to meetings. If a meeting is far away or late at night (which they often need to be), then a youth may have no choice except to find a ride from another participant. Youth may not be able to attend a meeting unless they are sure they can get home afterwards.

### **Solutions**

As previously noted, most of these barriers simply need to be adapted to. For example, plan a meeting so that youth who need to come late or leave early can still make a contribution.

People working with youth need to be aware of their limited access to technological resources, transportation, and time. It is possible to reduce the impact these problems through a support structure. Having staff carpool some youth home after a meeting takes away the risk of not being able to find a ride home. Many of the organizations I have worked with were very good with giving rides.

If it's important to make reminder calls to youth, remember that answering machines aren't always checked, and siblings don't always give messages. Direct contact with the youth is the only guarantee that they received the message. Having staff do reminder calls and emails reduces a great deal of the pressure on youth. Sam commented that youth are often given the demeaning or difficult jobs "Because we're young and the only ones that are going to be convinced to do it." While adults are certainly busy as well, it is important to keep youth's time focused on effective activities rather than maintenance.

### **Structural barriers**

Structural barriers cover those conflicts between how adult groups tend to be organized and how youth's lives tend to be organized. It was noted earlier that school takes up a great amount of a student's life. And school takes up a large part of the working day. If a student is in school from 8:00 AM until 3:00 PM, then they obviously can't make a meeting at noon. Most organizations aren't used to changing a meeting time for one or two people, especially if by doing so they lose other key members. But as long as meetings are during school hours, they will be highly unlikely to include youth. We can see that business hours are one of the worst times for youth to meet. Yet, there are few adults willing to go that extra mile and meet at seven in the evening.

When I was a part of the CCF, there was a subcommittee where it was especially important to have a youth perspective, but I did not have the time or energy. Unfortunately, the other two youth commissioners, Quinn and Emma, couldn't make it because the meetings were always at 1:30 PM. Because this was a joint subcommittee and this was the time worked out by those who had to be there, it was extremely difficult to change the time. The result was that the subcommittee lost the chance to gain youth input.

This type of situation is really difficult and a real test of the extent that an organization desires youth input. In this case, it would be very inconvenient to change the meeting time to the evening. But, unless youth can be excused from school for a monthly meeting--and many dedicated students would not leave an important class--then there is no other way to include youth.

Not just the timing, but also the length of meetings, can be a structural barrier to the inclusion of youth. While a 3-4 hour meeting once a month is probably more efficient than a one hour meeting once a week, 3-4 hours is a very long time to keep youth focused on one thing. It's also useful to split up long meetings with breaks and chances to move around and talk about other things.

Even within the meeting, the structure is very different than what most youth are used to. Anyone who is new to parliamentary procedure is going to have difficulties adapting to it. Youth are very unlikely to have been exposed to parliamentary procedure before and many times those who are familiar with it don't realize how foreign it can feel and forget to explain it.

Something as simple as an unfamiliar setting up for a meeting can also be a big barrier. Sam was asked to meet at the testing center at the University of Oregon, which happens to be on the second floor of the student health center. She followed directions and found the address, but all she could find was the student health center. Confused and annoyed, she assumed that someone gave her the wrong address and missed the meeting.

There are many common meeting places that are surprisingly hard to find. Emma told me that she didn't even try to go to a meeting because she had no idea where the Lane County Council of Governments was. It can be time consuming and difficult to try to find the Public Works building, even if you were given directions. The key is to give very complete directions, or to actually take someone there with you.

### **Solutions**

As was said, structural barriers are difficulties that youth have in adapting to adult organizations. The only solutions are to remove the barrier, or for the youth to adapt. It is not effective to rely solely upon youth adapting.

So, this section is about modifying the behavior of the adult organization. Some of it, such as evening meeting times, may not be doable. Other barriers, such as finding a better meeting location, only take awareness and intention to remove them.

To summarize:

- Have breaks and snacks, particularly if it's a long meeting.
- Be careful to give good directions.
- Include information on parliamentary procedure for those who will use it.
- Have at least one person available to meet with youth *whenever* they need to meet.

Another potential solution is to create a separate meeting time for youth. A youth advisory board can meet in the evening with only minimal adult presence. While this is no substitute for youth input directly into important committees, it presents a solution for organizations that are having difficulty getting youth to attend their meetings.

## **Social barriers**

One of the largest parts of social barriers is the cultural conflict between youth and adults. These differences are not just in style and appearance, but also in interaction and behavior. Sam said that, while she was working with the Bev Stein gubernatorial campaign, she bleached her hair. The adults in the campaign became very concerned about having her represent Bev.

Youth cultural icons, such as hairstyle, piercing, tattoos, and so on, are often looked down upon by adults. In this case, the adults campaign workers thought that a display might cause a negative affect on (adult) voters, but didn't see that it might have a *positive* effect on youth voters.

There can also be a strong difference in group identity. Many youth are significantly more comfortable dealing with their peers. All the youth I spoke with agreed that they were much less worried about saying something stupid in front of other youth. Sam had the chance to work in a subsection of the campaign that was an almost all college youth, interacting with the main campaign mostly through a go-between. She jokingly stated that she was glad she didn't have to deal with "the scary professionals in Portland."

## **Societal ageism**

By far the most challenging social barrier is societal ageism. Societal ageism consists of all the messages, from places like movies and TV, friends and examples in the news, that send the message that youth are inadequate. The impact of societal ageism is much greater than simple annoyance or inconvenience. Ageism is the message that there is a place for all youth and that the *only* path through adolescents is going to school, doing homework, hanging out with friends, and nothing more. A majority of youth has internalized the messages that they are inherently less than the average (adult) human. One of the biggest steps toward success is believing that you can succeed. Ageism takes that away from youth.

Sam commented that youth often ponder why a situation is the way it is, but few ever feel that they have the power to change it. Even youth who are doing volunteer work often have a feeling that they are incapable of leadership. While it may be true that a specific youth is unqualified for a leadership role, ageism tells the lie that it is not experience, skills, or knowledge that hold us back, but our age. According to this, training, practice, and education are not enough without also becoming an adult.

If adults have internalized the messages that youth are incapable of leadership roles, they may resent it when a youth shares a significant decision-making role with them. This view can make it difficult to look at someone who may be one-third of one's age and see them as an equal.

And youth probably aren't equals in the number of years they've been working, education, or in life circumstance. The problem comes when an adult does not treat a youth *as deserving equal respect*. When someone makes the assumption of superiority, it is difficult to work with, or even be around him or her. Most of the youth that I interviewed agreed that the adults they worked with were usually better at this than adults in general. However, we all had at least one incident of being looked down upon. Quinn put it this way, "[It's when] you're comments are listened to, except not as adult opinion but like 'Ohhh, that's cute!'"

Probably the majority of the time it is not quite so obvious. It might not be an outright feeling of superiority, but rather a subtle indifference to youth, as an adult simply not recognizing a youth in front of them as immediately as they would another adult. Quinn and I both have stories to share about this. Quinn told me about a meeting where someone asked a question where he was the only one to know the answer. Many of the adults were arguing over what the answer was, yet Quinn was unable to get the group's attention in order to tell them.

I had a similar experience. I was at a meeting where everyone began to talk about how to contact the Rights Respect Responsibility campaign. I couldn't get a word in edgewise to let them know that I am a member of the standing committee and am a major part of that campaign.

Quinn and I aren't shy. But when trying to interrupt adults, we were less assertive than we usually are. Quinn said, "If I were in front of my friends I would have said 'Hey!' or something." Youth are used to risking punishment for assertively breaking into adult conversation, and this habit of being less assertive around adults is a hard to give up.

Respect can be a very delicate issue with youth. Youth can be very sensitive to being "talked down to." The youth that I interviewed lose respect for and the ability to work with people they perceived as having "talked down" to them. I must admit that I feel the same way. But at the same time, being new to an organization and having things explained to you go hand in hand.

Emma and Sam described this as having to walk the line between talking down to someone and going over their head. It is more, however, than simply how much information you include. "Talking down" to someone is not just giving them lots of information that they happen to know, but also includes an implication that the person you are talking to requires an lot of help, and this is a judgment of their intellect.

## Solutions

Social barriers are probably the most difficult to confront, mostly due to the fact that they are so personal and individual. The best way to deal with them is to become an alternative example of empowerment. You can never change everyone that a youth meets, and you can't undo the impact that ageism had. You can, however, influence many of the people you work with. You can examine your own behavior to see how ageism affects you. You can provide a different message to youth. Let them know that they can make a difference and that they can take a leadership role. Understanding that no one person can cause a mindset change in an entire organization, it is still important to be an ally to youth. When Sam bleached her hair and was being given a hard time about it, Bev Stein backed her up by saying she thought it was cool. That kind of attitude goes a long way in making youth feel accepted and comfortable, even in a hostile environment.

When it comes to interacting with youth, it is not difficult to avoid "talking down" or talking over them. Remember the importance of treating youth *as equals*. If you feel unsure of yourself, then look to the advice of Emma, Sam, and Quinn:

- Gives lots of examples, they often work better than explanations.
- Ask if your explanation was clear. A youth might feel that the problem is due to a lack of intelligence and not ask for clarification.
- You can tell them that sometimes you forget about all the special terms that you use and to please interrupt and ask about any terms that they don't understand.

# Strategies for participation

OK, your group wants to solicit youth participation. How do you involve youth? There are many different strategies of representation, each having their own benefits and drawbacks. Different strategies can be used in different situations and with different types of organizations. Here is a sketch of the strategies I have seen, along with their advantages and disadvantages.

## **Youth volunteers**

Some organizations have a very tightly knit group of youth volunteers or clients. They draw upon this reliable group of youth for ideas or criticisms. Sometimes this group evolves informally, without the encouragement of the organization. Other organizations directly solicit responses from the youth that they work with.

While this strategy is the least direct and least effective method for gaining youth perspective, it is a good first step for groups where there isn't much support for youth participation. When it is unlikely that there will be the chance to create a larger, more systemic method for youth involvement in decision-making, this strategy is a very realistic alternative. It also is a very effective stepping stone for other strategies to youth participation. By recruiting youth volunteers or incorporating youth clients into the decision-making process, there is a group of youth who are familiar with your organization. You can draw upon them when your organization decides to move to more direct involvement.

## **Youth representatives**

Another strategy is to dedicate positions for youth representatives on an important group in the organization. By recruiting a few youth to join, you can put youth perspective into whatever part of the decision-making process is in most need of it. This has a very positive impact on the youth involved. The experience of being a board member, teen educator, and so on, is rare among youth. Such an experience is a great opportunity to learn skills through acting in the adult world. This strategy gives the most amount of impact for the effort. It is a fairly simple change and provides excellent access for youth input. The only difficulty might be in recruiting youth for these positions if there is no group of youth to draw upon.

There is also the difficulty of retaining youth board representatives. Being thrown into a board meeting or brought along to a presentation might be too much for some youth. That is why creating a strong support structure is vital to successfully gaining youth input in a board setting. Such a support structure can be official--through staff support, training, and morale reinforcement--or it can be social, through the relationships that the youth creates with other adults that they work with. Having a second or third youth representative can go a long way in creating supportive social relationships.

Either way, the goal is to create ways to check in with youth participants, gauge their reaction to the responsibilities of their new position, and act as a sounding board where youth can voice their opinions without fear of being wrong or silly. While, hopefully, the group allows asking "silly"

questions, youth in this situation are often withdrawn. They fear that the wrong actions will contribute to the stereotype of youth as ignorant.

Probably the most important drawback to the representative strategy is of it being token representation: The practice of finding a token minority representative is often associated with groups that are unable to, or do not wish to, create more substantial change. The problem with tokenism is that no one or two youth can say what all youth think of an issue. Usually simple awareness prevents a youth representative from being a token position, yet the benefits of having more than one solitary youth representative should not be underestimated. Even with precautions, support, and company, it can be difficult to represent a “youth’s perspective” without attempting find a general “perspective of all youth” that most likely does not exist.

The solution is to remember that a youth representative is there to do a job, just like anyone else. Like any public representative, a youth representative must exercise his or her opinion and perspective. The job of a youth representative is not to poll all of their classmates and friends and act upon what the majority says. The job is to act upon their own judgment, which, by virtue of being a part of the youth population, will include a unique awareness of how policies and activities affect youth.

## **Youth advisory board**

Another effective strategy is to create a youth advisory group. It requires a larger group of youth who meet independently and discuss the the organization’s direction and questions facing it. It can review materials or presentations made for youth. It can look at activities where youth might help with the planning and execution.

There must be sufficient support to make this work. Staff could help with the following: record minutes, coordinate meeting times, arrange transportation and meeting room, research questions, and provide reports on current organization activities.

The one thing that adults should *not* do is facilitate the meetings. While adult facilitation may be necessary in the beginning, it is important to know that as long as an adult is setting the agenda and facilitating the discussion, the group’s product is not wholly that of youth. The benefit of having a youth advisory group is that the youth can bounce ideas off of each other. There is a much higher chance of active participation with a group of peers than in an unfamiliar setting. Youth are more likely to voice their own opinions because they do not have the pressure of representing youth as a whole. In this setting, you are most likely to get sincere criticism and valuable views.

The difficulty is in pulling this off. Not all youth have facilitation skills. While an adult may be able to teach these, it is better for a youth to pass on such knowledge. The most effective groups teach all members facilitation skills and take turns running the meetings. This way, if one member leaves for college, there is no problem in continuing the group.

Recruitment is especially difficult for this strategy because it needs a larger number of youth. (Refer to the section on recruitment and retention for strategies, and remember that the most effective method for recruitment is to have youth members recruit their replacements.)

## **Hybrid model**

Another drawback to the advisory board strategy is that while this can create the most authentic youth perspective, there is no clear method for getting that perspective into the decision making process. There are different ways to get around this drawback. Simply try to mix the youth representative strategy with the youth advisory board strategy so that there is a youth advisory board and some a go-between to the main group. It might be an adult or a few staff, but one of the most effective systems of youth participation is to have two or three members of the youth advisory group serve as youth representative to the main group. This is probably too much of a commitment to ask of most youth and is a large commitment for any organization, but it would be very effective. Quinn and Emma both agreed that they would feel more effective in this setting than any other strategy. This is also very similar to the system that Sam enjoyed working in.

# Setting up youth input

## Planning

First, decide upon your goals. These vary greatly from organization to organization. Some policy-setting groups need youth input for making policy decisions, while others need youth to advise them in their interactions with youth in the community. Youth can review pamphlets, presentations, and other materials intended for this audience. Youth can review process where the organization interacts with their peers.

Your goal shapes your strategy for youth input. For example, if your main goal is to incorporate youth criticism into your outreach and education, then you would not put a youth representative on your board of directors. You might find a youth representative for your educators, or adapt the youth advisory board to create a group of youth educators.

Next, you need to choose the strategy that is going to work best for you. Some things to think about are:

- Which format will put youth closest to achieving your goals?
- What support is there for youth input?
- What experience does your organization have in working directly with youth?
- What resources are available for creating youth input?

Second, recruit youth participants. But before recruiting, find the other organizations in your area that have mechanisms for youth input. Discuss with them how it has been working. Information gathering and network building can give you the answers you need before problems even come up.

## Recruitment

Once you are ready to begin recruitment, it might be difficult to know where to start. Some organizations work with schools, but many other organizations have little if any real experience working with them. The best advice is to dive right in. Call up a principal of a local high school and set up a 15-minute meeting. Explain in the meeting what your organization does and what your goals are. Ask the principal if there are any classes that you might be able to present in or staff that might be interested in helping you.

Once you are in contact with the teachers, set up a time to do a presentation to the class. In the presentation, emphasize the potential for system change that youth volunteers would have. Always leave a few flyers with the teacher (and potentially post some in the halls or on bulletin boards). Hopefully, you can gain a few volunteers who can help with future presentations and recruitment if you are looking for a larger group.

While the schools are a great resource and one of the easiest places for those new to recruiting to begin, it is important not to overlook the youth populations that are missing. Depending on what your goal is for youth input, having youth who are not in school (or often not in school) can be very important. You can try to recruit at various existing youth groups or social service agencies serving youth.

When thinking about recruitment, think carefully about the barriers that youth are dealing with. Try to meet at a centrally located place, perhaps one that youth are familiar with. Give a number that they can call to arrange rides. And don't forget food. Snacks can often be a deciding factor for youth considering attending an informational meeting. Like Sam said, "a little pizza goes a long way." If you are still having trouble, the youth I interviewed suggest:

- Create internships so that students can get school credit for working with you.
- Hire a youth with experience in your field to recruit others and/or create the mechanism for youth participation.
- If you are having trouble recruiting a larger number of youth, remember Emma's words, "[Much of] a youth's role is getting other youth involved."

## **Retention**

Many organizations have a "hit or miss" strategy for retention. Effective recruitment can make retention easier. However, there are also a few key strategies for retention.

In order for youth to stay with an organization, there must be some support structure. The better the support structure, the better the chances for retention. (For a description of a support structure, see the Youth representative section of Strategies for participation.) There are many ways to create a support structure. It may be a part of staff support, or through the moral support of adult participants. It is very helpful to have at least one other youth involved so that they can support each other. Larger groups (6-15, much larger is difficult to hold together) can create a strong support structure for themselves. A support structure can also look at what strains are being put on the youth involved (time constraints, overwork, at risk of burnout, and other barriers) and try to relieve them.

Making sure that youth have a sense of accomplishment is an important factor in retention. It might be fun to go to meetings with their friends, but unless the youth have a sense that they are having an impact or doing something, many may choose to spend their time elsewhere.

I learned about this difficulty from my work with YAC. After many months without reviewing decisions or materials, our attendance dropped off. Our priority became getting attendance up so that we could advise organizations. It didn't help that when we lost a large chunk of our staff support. It became difficult just to get all the reminder phone calls and transport coordinated. It is this sense of accomplishment paired with a strong support structure that makes participation in adult organizations fun for youth, which is the number one reason they stay involved.

One thing to keep in mind, even after you have strong youth input, is turnover. Youth go off to college, and depending on what age they join you, that could be next year. It should be clear to all youth participants that they are expected to be involved in recruiting and training their replacements. Recruitment is ideally run by youth with little adult assistance. Each youth knows many other youth through school and other activities, but more importantly, they know who is interested.

## Conclusion

After looking through this document, I can understand if you are thinking that your organization has nowhere near the time, energy, and resources to implement something like this. But that doesn't mean that you can't find a way to integrate youth input into your organization. Try to find existing youth groups in your area and ask their leadership if you can solicit their opinion on a few important issues. Keep an updated list of all the high school clubs in your area. You never know when you will have an issue that could use the input of the renewable energy club or the debate club!

Remember that being a youth *today* is an experience that only youth have. That provides them with an ability to give adults at least a glimpse, of what it is to be a youth and what youth need from adults, from the government, from social service agencies--and what youth need from you.

# Participant Bios

## **Toby Hill-Meyer**

I am entering my Junior year at the University of Oregon. In addition to my work with the Youth Advisory Council of Lane County, I worked with the PeaceMakers 2000 and 2001 Conferences for the Lane County site. The steering committee for that site was an integrated body of youth and adults. I have spent two years as a youth Commissioner for the [Lane County Commission on Children and Families](#). I am currently a student representative to the executive committee of the University of Oregon [Center on Diversity and Community](#). I also volunteer for the [Womenspace](#) Youth Outreach Program doing presentations on domestic violence. I am a part of the [Rights, Respect, Responsibility](#) steering committee, focused on bringing European perspectives on adolescent sexuality and sex education to Oregon. I also actively prepare and present workshops at various conferences. I have been studying the effects of ageism institutionally and individually for about three years. I am 19 years old.

## **Quinn Wilhelmi**

Quinn Wilhelmi is entering his senior year at South Eugene High School. He will, however, be attending classes at Cleveland High School in Portland so that he can work more closely with [The Oregon Bus Project](#). He holds one of the youth slots on the [Lane County Commission on Children and Families](#). He is also a member of both the Prevention and Wellness Fund Committee and the Youth on Track Steering Committee, a part of United Way. He has been a Camp Counselor and Group Mediator for Courageous Kids for three years. He credits much of his success to his participation in High School speech and debate. Quinn is 18 years old.

## **Samantha Bouton**

Samantha Bouton is a Junior at the [University of Oregon](#). She worked as the Lane County Office Manager for the Bev Stein for Governor Committee. She is an active member of the [University of Oregon College Democrats](#), Students for Choice, and frequently attends [Democratic Party of Lane County](#) meetings. Samantha is 19 years old.

## **Emma Gietzen**

Emma Gietzen is entering her Freshman year at the [University of Oregon](#). She currently holds the other youth slot on the [Lane County Commission on Children and Families](#). She has worked with the [Institute for Community Leadership](#), a non-violence organization based in Seattle where youth and adults provide workshops to teach youth to express their opinions using poetry. She recently graduated from South Eugene High School where she was the founder of the Fashion Club and played varsity soccer for four years. Emma is 18 years old.

## Web Site List

Lane County Commission on Children and Families  
<http://www.co.lane.or.us/CCF>

Womenspace  
<http://www.enddomesticviolence.org>

Center On Diversity And Community  
<http://www.uoregon.edu/~CODAC>

Rights, Respect, Responsibility  
<http://www.wecandobetter.org>

The Oregon Bus Project  
<http://www.secretplan.org>

University of Oregon College Democrats  
<http://gladstone.uoregon.edu/~colleged/>

Democratic Party of Lane County  
<http://www.dpdc.org/>

Institute for Community Leadership  
<http://www.icleadership.org/>