Youth and Development: At-Risk Youth in the Holland Community

Jennifer Fuller
Robert Lampen
Hayley Schultz
Anikka Van Eyl

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/curcp_14

Recommended Citation
http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/curcp_14/12
INTRODUCTION

- Childhood and adolescence are viewed as important stages of development and growth in a person’s life.
- Unfortunately many youth end up walking down paths that lead to negative life-altering consequences.
- At-Risk Youth: Adolescents that are statistically more likely to have negative life outcomes due to their environment.
  - Issues including but not limited to: child abuse, crime and delinquency, homelessness, teenage pregnancy, and truancy.
- We researched and interviewed organizations that work with prevention and remediation of these issues.

OBJECTIVE:

- We examined the context in which each organization was founded and why each organization chose its specific approach to combat issues facing at-risk youth in the Holland community.
- We aimed to find out whether these organizations adequately served the issues facing at-risk youth, and if not, find where these gaps exist.

ORGANIZATIONS INTERVIEWED

- Child Advocacy Center
  - Services youth who have experienced sexual abuse.
  - Wrap-Around: Mentoring and legal help to keep children out of restrictive environments.
  - Darkness to Light: Encourages adults to take preventative measures towards sexual abuse.

- Escape Ministries
  - Provides services to remediate truancy, street violence, and homeless youth.
  - Alternative Suspension Accountability Program: Helps young students maintain coursework in a safe environment while being suspended.
  - Free Fitness and Boxing Club: Teaches youth discipline and accountability through physical activities.
  - Holland Youth Connection: Helps youth become positively involved in the community and develop vital skills for future career building.

- Good Samaritan Ministries
  - Faith in Youth Partnership: Provides AmeriCorps members to empower local organizations that service at-risk youth through alternative suspension programs as well as in school and after-school mentoring programs.

- The Rock Urban Youth Ministries
  - Services homeless youth whose parents live at the Holland Rescue Mission.
  - After School Program: Includes free activity time, homework time, and bible study time.
  - Stepping Stones: Day care for children whose parents work daytime jobs and also live at the Holland Rescue Mission.
  - Camp Rock: Affordable full-time summer program that engages children from the Mission.

- Young Life
  - Young Lives: Services pregnant and parenting teens in the Greater Holland Area.
  - Provides mentoring, teaches life skills, and holds monthly group meetings focusing on relationship-building and growing in faith.

METHODOLOGY

- Defined our research question.
- Defined five key issues relating to at-risk youth.
  - Child Abuse, Crime and Delinquency.
  - Homelessness.
  - Teenage Pregnancy and Truancy.
- Conducted research, acquiring background knowledge and statistics about these issues.
- Conducted interviews with each of the five chosen organizations.
- Transcribed five interviews.
- Integrated transcriptions into a digital narrative format.

DISCUSSION

- Organizations seemed to service at-risk youth through a comprehensive, holistic approach as opposed to focusing in on one specific issue.
- Many small non-profits struggle with having enough resources or staff/volunteers to service youth and as a result may have to cut programs that are positively affecting the community.
- The Michigan League for Public Policy’s 2015 Kids Count, a demographic study of child and family well-being, shows that Ottawa County ranks first in Michigan in child and family well-being, implying that these organizations are making a large-scale positive impact.
- Contrary to our initial hypotheses, the organizations we studied seemed to service at-risk youth through a comprehensive holistic approach, as opposed to focusing on a specific issue. For instance, Escape Ministries provides services for not only truant youth but also homeless youth.

FUTURE RESEARCH

- Study other at-risk youth factors ex. Alcohol and Substance Abuse.
- Include more organization on the site ex. Barnabas Ministries, Women in Transition, etc.
- Compare how parochial organizations deal with at-risk youth factors versus secular organizations.
- Place website emphasis on volunteer outreach, which would greatly benefit local organizations.
- Compare Holland to a similar sized city.
- Research the main factors contributing to Ottawa County’s ranking for child-well being and how much the organizations contribute to that status.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Alex Galarza
- Dr. Heath
- Dr. Werner

- Scott Baungartner, Good Samaritan Ministries
- Darcy Comian, Children’s Advocacy Center
- Jay Lindell, Greater Holland Area Young Life
- Anguli Smeller, The ROCK Urban Youth Ministries
- Willie Watt, Escape Ministries

Andrew W. Mellon Foundations Scholars