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

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

*Jennifer Fuller, Robert Lampen, Hayley Schultz, and Anikka Van Eyl
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INTRODUCTION

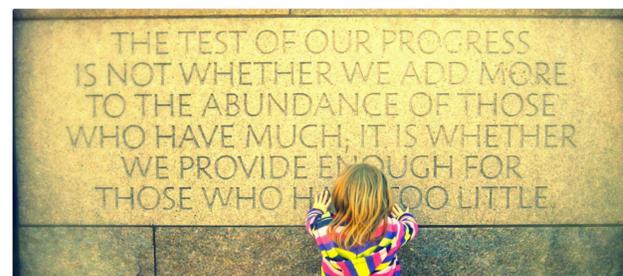
- Childhood and adolescence are viewed as important stages of development and growth in a person's life
- Unfortunately many youth end up walking down paths that lead to negative life-altering consequences
- *At-Risk Youth*: Adolescents that are statistically more likely to have negative life outcomes 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

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Hope College Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Scholars

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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 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



Escape Ministries

Introduction Addressing a Need Services Challenges **Future Growth** Willie's Testimony

Future Growth:

Escape is seeing continued success and support with no intent on slowing down.

"We have made our biggest impact this year of helping over 500 young men and women in the community, and it can only grow."

Holland Youth Connection's success in the Holland community has gained the attention of several other communities around the Midwest.

"Kalamazoo gave me a call in October. There [were] three murders that happened in October, and one of them was a young kid, five-years-old. [He] got shot in the face for gang related stuff that was going on. They called me and asked me to see if I could get a gang truce and to see if I could help them in the way I helped Holland. [I] told them yeah, went there, and said I need the churches in this community to come to a meeting. Three churches came, and I told them about a job program... They came; we sat down; and I told them about a job program that they could start there that will work. It just so happens that one of the guys who called me worked at a dealership where the owner had 7 car lots. We put forty-four people to work — 22 from each gang — working in detailing shops all through Grand Rapids. To this day, there hasn't been a gang related

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