Growing a generation of givers:
Teens connect with their community

Today’s high school students have seemingly endless ways to get involved in activities and causes. There are school clubs, religious groups, extracurricular sports. But has the teen in your life ever wondered about a youth group for philanthropy?

The Capital Region Community Foundation’s Youth Action Committee (YAC) is made up of teens from schools throughout Ingham, Eaton and Clinton counties. Each year, the YAC kids act as an advisory committee and grant money through the Community Foundation to fund and promote programs that support youth in the tri-county area. The YAC kids, ages 13 to 18, represent more than a dozen schools in our region.

The main purpose of YAC is to decide, as grantmakers, where the Youth Fund dollars will be put to best use. In 2009, the YAC granted $51,201 to nonprofit organizations in Ingham, Eaton and Clinton counties for programs ranging from teen pregnancy prevention and college prep to the science of game design and leadership programs.

The YAC also awarded more than $4,400 in mini grants to two dozen elementary school classrooms for environmental projects such as rain gardens, recycling programs, animal sanctuaries and water resource studies.

Inside, you’ll learn about the many ways YAC teens are giving back to our region.

The Youth Action Committee is an advisory committee of the Capital Region Community Foundation, made up of high school students from Ingham, Eaton and Clinton counties. The YAC supports youth programs through grantmaking and community service in the region.
Every other month, the YAC participates in community service projects such as working at food distribution centers, serving meals at a soup kitchen and assisting with landscaping projects.

“Helping with the Special Olympics and the Christmas party with the foster kids were my favorites,” said Georgia Marshall, a Williamston High School senior who participated in YAC for four years.

Georgia said she really enjoyed the community service aspect of the group, and it helped prepare her for her next adventure: entering the U.S. Air Force Academy.

“YAC taught me how to work with a group of diverse people I’ve never met,” she said. “It showed me how people with differing opinions can come together to decide on community service projects and work together as a team to do good things for other people.”

‘Making Strides’ walk

This year the YAC volunteered at the American Cancer Society’s “Making Strides Against Breast Cancer” walk. This event was not only fun, but it was also very inspirational. Seeing so many cancer survivors surrounded by friends and family must have sent a huge message of hope to those battling the disease. It was so exciting to be a part of such a wonderful event! Our job was to help set up the food and water tent. We laid out boxes full of granola bars, fruit and water. We kept the food and water stocked while cheering on the participants. Although it was a chilly morning, everybody was in good spirits, making the event very enjoyable. We were so thankful to be able to contribute to such a worthy event!

— Connie Root, Haslett High School

Bringing Christmas cheer to foster children

About 20 YAC members volunteered to help Child & Family Services host a Christmas party for about 100 foster children and their families at the Boys & Girls Club of Lansing. We helped with the set-up and were in charge of the games and activities.

After about an hour or so of preparing before the kids and their families got there, we were able to get everything ready just in time. The children came from the tri-county area and each and every one of them came through the door smiling.

We had fun preparing this event for the kids. Just knowing how happy each child was for those couple of hours made me feel very good and I’m glad we all got the chance to provide some Christmas cheer for the children and their foster families.

— Josh Fata, Eaton Rapids High School
Seeing Lansing’s needs up close at the Salvation Army

As soon as we walked into the Salvation Army building, we knew we were in a place where hard work gets done. The Salvation Army takes the business of helping people very seriously. One important player in the process of helping people in need is Molly Chambers, director of social services at the Capital Area Salvation Army. She introduced us to all the other social workers who strive to help people in need throughout the Lansing area, and she gave us a tour of the entire building.

We began the tour with the mobile response truck which is used to react to disasters around the Lansing area. For example, when the Williamston tornado hit, this response truck was there to pass out water and provide food for people who lost power and heat. The truck also traveled to Louisiana when Hurricane Katrina hit to pass out bottled water.

Next on the tour we visited a room filled with non-perishable food items which had already been sorted and counted to be given out to families in need. The tour continued to a large gymnasium which the Salvation Army uses to host dinners for the needy, and then into the main food storage room which held tons of cans and other non-perishables. Molly explained to us they are always looking for donations because any money, food or toiletries help them in helping the less fortunate.

Our tour concluded when Molly showed us the chapel which holds a service each Sunday.

Our visit to the Salvation Army building was an eye-opener and reminded me how well some of us have it, while others struggle finding basics every day. I’m glad to know there are people like Molly Chambers and everyone else we met at the Salvation Army, because they work hard each day to give to others. They are some of the most unselfish people you will meet, and I’m glad we could see how hard they work for the benefit of others.

— Max Nyquist, Okemos High School
Philanthropy & Service Camp
This year's Youth Philanthropy & Service Camp had the theme “Live2Give.” We started with service projects helping out all sorts of local businesses, from gardens and farmers markets to zoos and wilderness trails. The hard work paid off, leaving the city looking better than it had before.

We listened to speakers from all over the U.S., inspiring youth to better their communities. We could sign up for sessions to find out about service learning, how to run an effective meeting, diversity and personality types, hunger and homelessness, youth leadership and more. Camp was a great experience I'd recommend to others.

— Raquel Harris, Sexton High School

Heart of a Spartan
On May 2, hundreds gathered at Spartan Stadium to participate in the Heart of a Spartan walk/run in support of the Spartan Scholarship Challenge Endowment Fund. The races ended with a run through the tunnel out to the 50-yard line of Spartan Stadium.

The YAC volunteers were each given a T-shirt and stationed at the end of the course where the snacks were going to be served. We were in charge of unloading boxes of muffins and keeping the table stocked. This fun-filled day at Spartan Stadium had a great turnout and plenty of muffins to go around. I am really looking forward to volunteering next year, or even running in the race.

— Anna Fuller, East Lansing High School

Community Foundation Annual Breakfast
Each year the Community Foundation hosts a breakfast to recognize outstanding work and leadership in mid-Michigan. YACers volunteered to help direct guests through registration.

The breakfast honored longtime community volunteer Carol Horowitz and Jackson National Life, a national insurance company based in Okemos that allows each of its employees to take a paid day off from work each year to volunteer in our community. Sam Singh shared interesting stories about his 16-month trip around the world, volunteering in 25 countries on seven continents.

After these speeches, I aspire to one day help people in a third-world country, then come back to my community to share what I learned.

— Wendy Litwiller, St. Johns High School

Mid-Michigan Food Bank
The Mid-Michigan Food Bank is like something I have never seen before. When you first walk in, all you see are rows and rows of just about everything — peanut butter, cereal, soup, dish soap and even an electric wheelchair. There was also a gigantic freezer where donated meat is stored. On the day we were there, a CATA fundraiser was going on, and it was our job to unload the buses. During the time we spent volunteering, it was clear everyone was very grateful for the donations. I’m glad I got a chance to help out the community.

— Tara Mahon, Haslett High School
2009-10 Youth Action Committee Grants

Information Technology Empowerment Center (ITEC)
Science of Game Design
$2,000

Boys and Girls Club of Lansing
Going Broke Before We Start: College Prep
$2,500

Dispute Resolution Center of Central Michigan
Restorative Justice Art and Drama Initiative
$450

Eastside Community Action Center
Teen Life and Mentoring Program
$1,000

Eaton County
Michigan State University Extension
Summer Adventure Series
$600

Eaton Intermediate School District
Tri-County's Got Talent Show
$1,000

Eaton Rapids High School
ERHS Interact
$2,500

Give-a-Kid-Projects
Give-a-Kid Projects
$1,000

Junior Achievement of Mid Michigan, Inc.
2010 Youth Activity Grant
$2,000

Lansing Community College H.S. Diploma Completion Initiative
HSDCI Youth Leadership
$2,500

Lansing Symphony Association, Inc.
The Lansing Symphony “Side-by-Side” concert as part of the Halloween Spooktacular Family Concert
$2,500

Michigan Capital Celiac/DH Group
Michigan Capital Celiac Camp
$1,500

Mid-Michigan Youth Symphony
Purchase of music stands, percussion equipment and music folders.
$1,550

NorthWest Initiative
NWI Summer Youth Enrichment Program
$2,500

Peckham, Inc.
Ready to Achieve Mentoring Program (RAMP)
$1,500

Northwest Initiative
NWI Summer Youth Enrichment Program
$2,500

Pregnancy Services of Greater Lansing
Sexually Mature Aware Responsible Teens (SMART)
$2,500

Reach Studio Art Center
Teen Studio: “Art and Soles of Lansing”
$2,500

Sparrow Foundation
Fit Kids Initiative
$2,000

St. Stephen's Community Church, Community Learning Center
St. Stephen's CLC Youth Enhancement Project
$1,500

Sunny Crest Youth Ranch Inc.
Launching a Sustainable Agriculture Program
$1,300

TEEN PARENTS
Greater Lansing Area Youth for Christ
Teen Parents
$1,850

Tri-County Regional Planning Commission
Children's Water Festival
$500

VFW National Home for Children
Life Skills Program a.k.a Cool Beans
$1,200

Wharton Center for Performing Arts/MSU
Young Playwrights Festival
$1,600

Women's Center of Greater Lansing, Inc.
Girls to Women Discourse
$1,500

Yes Center Inc.
Personal Growth and Development Workshop
$600

Council of Michigan Foundations
Transportation costs for community service projects at summer conference
$2,000
2009-10 Mini Grants for the Environment

YAC members are helping the generation coming after them through the Mini Grants for the Environment Program. This program allows elementary classes to write their own grant requests for environmental projects of up to $250 per classroom. In 2009-10, the YAC selected the following projects for funding:

- Cornell Elementary School
- Nature’s Garden
- Eureka Elementary School
- Michigan Native Plant Garden
- Heartwood School
- Creating a Sensory Garden
- Henry North Elementary School
- School Orchard
- The North Garden
- Leonard Elementary School
- Animals In Danger
- Save The Bluebirds
- Murphy Elementary School
- Bird Watching
- Rain Garden
- North Aurelius Elementary School
- Potter Park Zoo Monarch Butterfly Waystation
- Oakview South Elementary School
- MSU & Oakview Plant Project
- Pinecrest Elementary School
- Michigan River Stepping Stones
- Pleasant View Elementary School
- Save the Earth Mural
- Post Oak Elementary School
- Court Yard Bat Houses
- Feed & Learn About Birds
- KEC (Keep Earth Clean)
- Planting Flowers
- Red Cedar Elementary School
- Red Cedar Shady Inn
- Reo Elementary School
- Recycle, Recycle, Recycle
- Resurrection Elementary School
- Annis Water Resources Study
- Woodcreek Magnet School
- Coral Reef Project
- Recycle Bin Project
- Woodcreek Animal Sanctuary
Best wishes to our graduating seniors!
Youth Action Committee

2009-2010 STUDENT MEMBERS

Drew Archer, Grand Ledge High School
Chelsea Bollman, Williamston High School
Clare Brennan, Lansing Catholic High School
Maddie Brogan, Lansing Catholic High School
Josh Fata, Eaton Rapids High School
Brianna Forrest, Holt High School
Valerie Forrest, Lansing Eastern High School
Anna Fuller, East Lansing High School
Katelin Griffin, Olivet High School
Patrina Glover, Everett High School
Raquel Harris, Sexton High School
Jacob Harvey, Lansing Catholic High School
Elizabeth Hillman, Lansing Catholic High School
Alexandra Hopping, Okemos High School
Zachary Hopping, Okemos High School
Paul Jorgensen, DeWitt High School
Adrian King, Everett High School
Victoria King, Everett High School
Kaitlin Lapka, East Lansing High School

Chelsea Lancaster, DeWitt High School
Wendy Litwiller, St. Johns High School
Brian Lucian, DeWitt High School
Erin Lucian, DeWitt High School
Tara Mahon, Haslett High School
Georgia Marshall, Williamston High School
Jessica McKay, Williamston High School
Joe Murray, Grand Ledge High School
Max Nyquist, Okemos High School
Emily Potter, Mason High School
Autumn Root, Haslett High School
Connie Root, Haslett High School
Alex Sowle, Williamston High School
Arianne Umfleet, Lansing Christian High School
Pa Vang, Lansing Eastern High School

ADVISORS

Pauline Pasch
Scott Dane
Brandon Seng