


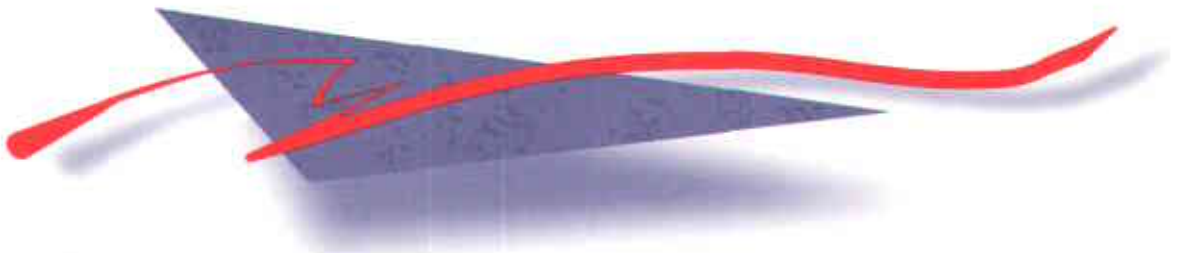


**Young  
People  
Creating  
Community  
Change**



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# **Young People Creating Community Change**



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# Introduction

This workbook is for young people who want to create community change. It is based on the belief that you have a right to participate, a responsibility to serve, and resources to offer the community.

We have tried to provide practical tools for achieving change. Inside, for example, you'll find helpful step-by-step ways to bring people together, set goals and priorities, develop action plans, strengthen diversity, and build support. You can take these steps in sequence from cover to cover, or you can go directly to the ones most relevant to your present situation. If you start this workbook with ideas in mind, and finish with plans in hand, our purpose will be served.

4 Because each person learns in a different way, this workbook features a variety of learning activities, with information on successful programs, individual instructions, and small group exercises, as well as hands-on materials for problem solving and program planning. You can use these activities as an individual, with a small group of people, or with several groups in a training workshop. This workbook is meant to be used.

Young people can create community change. We hope that the following pages will be helpful, but we also know that change does not come from books. It comes from people like you!

# How To Use This Book



This symbol means there is something to think about



This symbol means there is something to distribute



This symbol means there is something to discuss in a group



This symbol means there is something to make copies of before writing

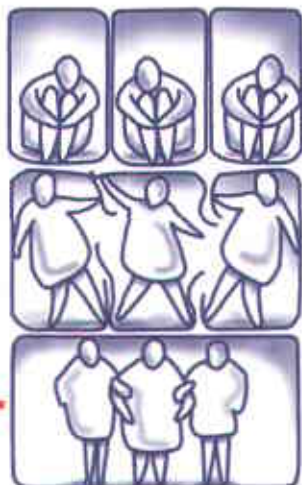
# What Is Community Change?

Community change is when people join together and take action at the community level. It can refer to any of the following:

- Solving a community problem;
- Organizing an action group;
- Planning a local program;
- Involving people in decisions that affect their lives.

Efforts to create change are different from one area to another. But, together, they show that (1) community is a unit of solution, (2) change is possible, and (3) people can participate actively in the process.

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What do you see happening in the picture?  
What are the people doing?  
How does this picture relate to community change?



# Young People Can Create Change!

Young people are solving problems and creating change, with a growing record of accomplishments. Here are some examples:

- Indianapolis youth are assessing needs and planning community improvement;
- Minneapolis youth are reaching out to gangs and challenging the forces of poverty;
- Detroit youth are serving meals in soup kitchens;
- New York youth are rehabilitating housing for homeless families;
- Selma youth are organizing against racial discrimination in the schools;
- Albuquerque youth are protesting against toxic wastes and environmental hazards;
- South Dakota youth are turning school classes into economic development; and
- Los Angeles youth are publishing their own citywide newspaper.

What is the name of a youth program that makes a difference in your community? What kinds of things do they do? What makes it stand out?



# Characteristics of Successful Programs

Research shows that successful community youth programs have some of the following characteristics:

## **Strengthening Community**

Young people are solving problems and planning programs at the community level.

## **Joining Together**

Young people who join together in unity can accomplish more than individuals who act alone.

## **Getting Organized**

Young people plan and organize to get things done.

## **Youth Participation**

Young people actively participate in the decisions that affect their lives.

## **Developing Leadership**

Young people develop new knowledge and practical skills through their involvement.

## **Believing in Change**

Young people believe that change is possible and that they can make a difference.

## **Multicultural Collaboration**

Young people recognize their differences while increasing their collaboration.

## **Adults as Allies**

Young people work with adults who help them to create real change.

# Obstacles to Change

There are obstacles to increasing the involvement of youth in the community. You should expect them as a normal part of the process, and work to overcome them. These are some of the obstacles:

- Adults view youth as “problems” rather than as “resources.”
- Adults plan programs without involving youth in the process.
- Adults do not share their power with young people.
- Young people do not view themselves as a group that can create change.
- Young people may have good ideas, but are unsure how to implement them.
- Young people are not organized enough for real influence.

What are the obstacles to youth participation in your community?  
How can they be overcome?



# Dealing With Change

A major obstacle to young people creating community change can be *adultism* – the notion that adults are better than young people, and that they can control them without their agreement. The result is that adults may resist or oppose youth initiatives; and young people may question themselves, doubt their own abilities, and withdraw from participation.

You should (1) understand that adultism is an obstacle that pervades society, (2) recognize it when it arises, (3) challenge adults to deal with themselves, and (4) know that despite obstacles, young people can create change!

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## Adults as Allies

Despite adultism, some adults work closely with young people and become powerful allies in creating community change.

Adults as allies recognize youth as valuable resources with a right to participate and responsibility to serve the community. They help bring people together, provide resources for activities, deal with bureaucracies, and overcome the obstacles. They respect your ideas, give group encouragement, and build mutual support.

Who is an adult in your community that young people accept as their ally? What kinds of things does he or she do? Who are some other potential adult allies, and how could you enlist their support?