WHAT IS “MEANINGFUL” YOUTH PARTICIPATION

Understanding and nurturing young people’s

Strengths
Interests
Abilities

Providing real opportunities for youth...

to be involved in making decisions that affect them
...at both individual and systemic levels
LADDER OF YOUTH INVOLVEMENT

1. YOUTH INITIATED AND DIRECTED
2. YOUTH INITIATED; SHARED DECISIONS WITH ADULTS
3. YOUTH AND ADULT INITIATED AND DIRECTED
4. ADULT INITIATED; SHARED DECISIONS WITH YOUTH
5. CONSULTED AND INFORMED
6. ASSIGNED AND INFORMED
7. TOKENISM
8. DECORATION
9. MANIPULATION
“IN THE BEGINNING…”

INVITATION TO COMMUNITIES

• Start with an existing group and add to it

• Identify a logical foundation

• As much as possible, let youth guide the planning process
FROM NON-PARTICIPATION…

• We had to figure it out first

• “Adult Wisdom”/Adultism

• Success Stories

• Just fulfilling the requirements
...TO PARTICIPATION

• They have a voice

• Preparation for participation

• Let youth speak first

• Compensate for time, effort and expertise

• Early and authentic involvement

• Trust their abilities and commitments
START “DOING” AND PEOPLE WILL NOTICE

- Stage high profile events
- “Activities are Free”
- Promote service to others
- Emphasize service to the community

The youth do volunteer work in the community to break down the negative view the community has the young adults in the community which is all young adults are the same. But through doing the volunteer work around Bennington the youth have changed the views people have on young adults.
CREATE A LEADERSHIP GROUP

• Engage youth quickly

• Meet and Greets

• Give concrete individual leadership assignments

• Say "yes" as often as possible

• What’s our purpose
Our mission is to support the development of a positive youth culture in Bennington County by building meaningful relationships, courage, and confidence.
SUSTAIN A LEADERSHIP GROUP

• Provide leadership training
• Let youth leaders lead
  ➢ Planning
  ➢ Execution
  ➢ Evaluation
• Promote the leadership and the group
• Provide leaders with mentoring opportunities
• Encourage leaders to network with other group
FIND/CREATE YOUR ALLIES

• Community partners
  ➢ Agencies
    ➢ Business leaders

• Your own agency
  ➢ Executives and staff
    ➢ Board members
    ➢ Human Resources Department
BE AN ALLY

- Prepare youth (and adults) for their roles
- Give youth room to make mistakes
- Meet youth where they are and take them places
- Know that there is a risk
- Help youth say “no”
- Get out of their way
Promoting youth leadership cannot be done in a haphazard way.

It is something that is done with intention.