

Hope Street Youth Development

Overview

Hope Street Youth Development (HSYD) is a youth organizing organization in Wichita, Kansas, that seeks to engage young people in opportunities where they gain leadership skills and build power in order to reach their full potential and contribute to positive social change. Initiated with a small startup grant, HSYD has successfully garnered financial support from private donations and various national and local foundations and corporations to sustain its work.

Getting Started

A group of volunteer Quakers founded HSYD in 1990 to create a place where middle school youth could find sanctuary from the street and receive academic support. During its early years, the organization provided one-on-one mentoring and tutoring to local students. As the program continued to grow, young people began to express an interest in getting involved in the community. In 1998, HSYD's work began to shift to focus more on youth organizing as a strategy to effect systemic change at the neighborhood and community levels. Specifically, young people worked to influence how safety and crime issues in their community were addressed. For example, youth fought and won \$100,000 in improvements to rental properties in their neighborhoods and successfully negotiated with the city of Wichita to install new street-lights in dimly lit, high-crime areas.

HSYD works to empower at-risk, middle school-age and high school-age youth in urban areas to take an active role in the improvement of their

own lives and in the community. It provides academic help as well as assistance and guidance on youth-led projects, ranging from neighborhood clean-ups to youth-led city events and youth-initiated change in their neighborhoods and individual schools.

In 2003, HSYD started the Students United (SU) chapter at a local high school, reflecting young people's interest in effecting change within the school system. SU empowers students to *think* for themselves, *speak* for themselves, and act to create positive social change. The project currently has six chapters in six of the eight local schools—West, North, Southeast, East, Northwest, and Heights. Previous school campaigns and accomplishments include these.

- The North SU chapter won an agreement from the Northeast Magnet High School principal to implement student-led evaluations of classes.
- SU leaders held a rally to oppose a proposed school board policy change that would have removed vending machines and cost Wichita public schools hundreds of thousands of dollars. They also obtained the superintendent's commitment to oppose the proposed change.
- SU partnered with United Teachers of Wichita to host a candidate's forum on public education. Seven candidates were present to discuss funding, testing, and the federal *No Child Left Behind Act*. All agreed to meet with HSYD to ensure youth voices are heard in the state capital.

In their most recent school campaign, leaders from SU have made 10 policy reform recommendations to the Wichita school district on the use of tasers. Their goal is to have a more defined policy about the use of these weapons in schools and classrooms.

Operation/Organizational Structure

HSYD's founder and executive director leads the organization's work. Other staff members include a full-time director of academics and three full-time organizers. These staff members are available to provide support, including training on organizing, negotiation, public speaking, and other leadership skills, to enable young people to successfully implement their campaigns and achieve their goals.

Financing

Prior to 1998, the organization's work was financed with approximately \$12,000 to \$14,000 in initial funding from the Friends of Jesus Community and individual business donations. In 1998, Hope Street Youth Development became its own 501(c)(3) and received a grant of \$15,000 from the Edward W. Hazen Foundation. Its second source of foundation funding is a six-year grant totaling \$115,000 from the Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD). HSYD's current budget totals \$295,000, and approximately 36 percent of these funds support its youth organizing work (see the list of expenses related to youth organizing on page 63).

Although most of HSYD's income comes from national foundation and corporate grants, the organization also receives some support from local foundations and corporations as well as individual donations. Supporters besides the Edward W. Hazen Foundation and CCHD include the:

- Ben & Jerry's Foundation;
- Presbyterian Committee on the Self-Development of People;
- Funders Collaborative on Youth Organizing;
- Youth Justice Funding Collaborative;
- John S. and James L. Knight Foundation; and
- Kansas Health Foundation.

HSYD also receives in-kind support from various sources, including the National Training and Information Center in Chicago, which provides technical assistance on organizing, local media, and individual business donations. Typical business donations include materials as well as services and volunteer support.

Financing and Sustainability: Keys to Success

HSYD recognizes that foundation and corporate grants are limited and often support particular services or programs for specific populations. During the past year, program leaders have tried hard to diversify the organization's funding portfolio. They want to build the organization's private donor base.

Through a local contact, HSYD staff gained access to a list of 300 individual donors in Wichita. Using this list, staff implemented several strategies to cultivate these donors. First, the organization conducted a direct-mail campaign; potential donors received a quarterly newsletter with updates on the organization's progress. The newsletter also included a self-addressed stamped envelope that prospective donors could use to send their individual donations.

Following the direct-mail campaign were two “welcoming events” attended by 20 prospective donors. During the events, HSYD staff members spoke about the organization and youth had the opportunity to “tell their stories.” They have continued to cultivate relationships with the 20 attendees to generate additional support for the organization. As a result of these efforts, 100 percent of those guests have become program donors.

In addition to its financing orientation, HSYD leaders understand the importance of board development to an organization’s long-term sustainability. In 2006, HSYD wrote and successfully received a small grant from Compassion Kansas to do board development. HSYD leaders used the funds to hire an outside consultant to train board members on member roles and responsibilities in order to increase members’ buy-in and commitment to the organization. Because of the training, board members established three committees to focus on fund development, finance, and public relations and marketing. In addition, they developed specific outcomes to measure their progress in program development, board development, fundraising, and internal and external communications. Finally, understanding that a change in executive leadership is inevitable, HSYD leaders will begin to develop a succession plan in the next year to ensure the organization’s stability and accountability.

**Hope Street Youth Development
Fiscal 2007 Youth Organizing
Expenses**

Staff	\$77,702.90
<i>(Payroll, benefits, and taxes)</i>	
Legal and Professional	\$856.48
<i>(Workers’ compensation and membership dues)</i>	
Services	\$2,375.00
<i>(Consultants, technical assistance, and annual audit)</i>	
Office Expenses	\$2,600.00
<i>(Advertising, equipment, Internet, telephone, printing, etc.)</i>	
Occupancy Expenses.....	\$2,500.00
<i>(Building maintenance, utilities, insurance, etc.)</i>	
Program Expenses	\$6,050.00
<i>(Curricula and supplies and transportation and insurance)</i>	
Training.....	\$6,000.00
<i>(Staff and youth)</i>	
Travel	\$7,250.00
<i>(Staff and youth)</i>	
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$105,334.38

Next Steps and Future Challenges

Since its inception, HSYD has provided opportunities for students to empower themselves through academic and leadership opportunities that contribute to meaningful and positive change in themselves, their schools, and their communities. As the organization's work continues to expand, its leaders have expressed the need to formally document and evaluate the success of the youth organizing work. Although HSYD staff members collect data to assess the effective-

ness of meetings and campaigns, the organization has not been able to invest in an external evaluation that will measure the impact of its work on young people, the community, and the systems HSYD youth participants seek to affect.

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