



The Growing Youth Project (GYP) began in the fall of 2005 as a youth-led community food assessment, aimed at providing youth in the community with valuable employment, promoting an understanding and dialogue around issues residents face with respect to food, health, and nutrition, and developing a vision and action strategy for addressing food justice issues in the community. This assessment set the stage for the integration of a wide range of food, health, and farming activities at the Alameda Point Collaborative. To learn more about our program visit <http://www.apcollaborative.org>.

For more information you can contact Kate Casale on 510.898.7828 or kcasale@apcollaborative.org

A Youth Advocacy Network Event was hosted at The Alameda Point Collaborative, **Thursday March 27, 08.**

The event showcased ten bay area non profit organizations: Community Change, Alameda Slow Food, Bay Area Legal Aid, West Oakland Youth Standing Empower (WYSE), Food First, Oakland Children's Hospital, California Food Policy Advocates, Alameda County Community Food Bank and UC Cooperative Extension and California Partnership.

These organizations offered valuable advocacy resources and enabled the Growing Youth Project (GYP) participants to learn more about key issues affecting non profit services and healthy choices.



In preparation for the Youth Advocacy Network Event, GYP attended an advocacy training session.



The Youth Advocacy Network Event

At the Youth Advocacy Network Event, GYP participants conducted in depth interviews with the non profit groups. Working in pairs, primed with a series of challenging questions, the youth spent a number of hours engaged in an open dialogue with the representatives. The youth received high praise from the organizations.

Lylie Fisher, Community Engagement Specialist, created a month long training program for GYP participants. The series included: large and small group discussions; art making; oral and written storytelling and coaching.

This program supported youth ages 15–20 to better understand their personal relationship with advocacy and open new pathways for communication.



Farrell and Lashaelia welcomed the non profit groups.

Of the ten organizations who attended, The GYP participants selected four as outstanding examples of community change advocates.

Slow Food Alameda

Represented by Mark Hardwick

<http://slowfoodalameda.blogspot.com/>

Q: How can I be an advocate with my peers? How can I influence my family?

A: To be a good role model don't just talk about it or just think of making a change, take action! Also don't be negative.

Q: What is the history of your organization?

A: It started as a response to fast food in Italy, with two guys who saw McDonalds and decided to create a slow food movement. Now 60,000 people in the Italy and 100,000 of people in the US are Slow Food advocates.



Slow Food Alameda

Q: What does advocacy mean to you and why do you like doing it?

A: I enjoy doing good for the world, for the earth, and for people. Advocacy is a good thing.

Q: What issue or campaign has been the most challenging to work on and what was the biggest challenge?

A: The biggest issue is how to include people who own businesses and don't know the importance slow food choices. It is challenging as the community has eating habits that are hard to break.

Oakland Children's Hospital (Community Outreach)

Represented by Lisa Peterson

<http://www.childrenshospitaloakland.org/>

Q: How does your organization decide to work on a particular issue?

A: The Oakland Children's Hospital bases its decisions on community needs and specific research.

Q: How do you get the community involved?

A: Our important partner is the community. We train community members to be healthy and go out and offer outreach to other community members.



Oakland Children's Hospital

Q: How does the work you do affect your life/community.

A: I believe I am doing something bigger than myself. I learn from my job everyday, this influences who I am.

Food First

Represented by Joey and Annie

<http://www.foodfirst.org/>

Q: What do you see as the greatest challenge when communicating healthy choice issues?

A: Trying to make it sound important to people - not like they're some hippies wanting to change people, but wanting to communicate the seriousness of health issues without sounding self-righteous. You can only give people the information, they make the choices.

Q: How can I make healthy choices when they all seem so different, hard to find, bad tasting, or expensive?

A: Healthy choices should be monumental without a monumental effort that seems too hard or big. Start small by planting some seeds in the ground or buying some vegetables. Then bigger changes will come.



Food First

Q: Why are so many people working on improving health and nutrition, does it seem like things are getting worse?

A: We are up against a lot of people with money who promote bad food. So many people work on it because they have loved ones that didn't eat good and got diseases like diabetes and cancer. It is working against the system and that is hard, but I think we are making slow changes.

WYSE (West Oakland Youth Standing Empowered)
Represented by Maria and Monica
<http://www.standupwestoakland.org/standup/>

Q: What is the biggest accomplishment of your organization?

A: We organized a large community park clean up and got one corner store to begin selling fresh produce in our community.

Q: What should every young person know about what your organization does?

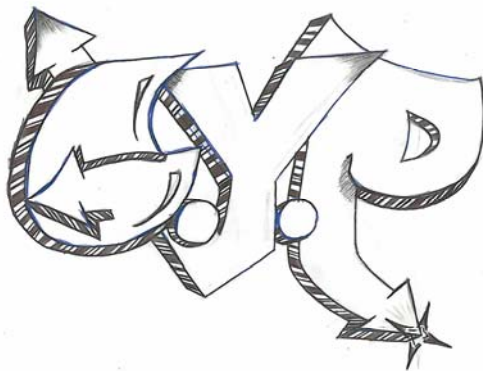
A: They need to know that they are the ones with the power - we have to let them know that they can have a voice to speak about change in their community. We welcome any youth who want to speak out about good eating, clean food, health choices.



WYSE (West Oakland Youth Standing Empowered)

Q: How can my healthy choices impact the larger community?

A: You can set the example by buying fruits and vegetables and talking to store owners to ask them to sell those products - it's a good thing and other people will notice and start doing it too.



GYP participants are learning more about advocacy and how they too are changing the world. During the workshop series the youth identified well known writers, religious leaders, political activists, musicians and athletes who as role models inspire them to believe in their dreams.

The personal stories of these role models support the youth to understand the passion and commitment that fuels personal achievements and community advocacy.

Over summer 2008 the GYP plans an Alameda community outreach advocacy project.

The following stories and art works represent the Growing Youth Project participants and their dreams to change the world.



Ladonna



Hi my name is Ladonna, I am 17 years old, I attend Encinal High School and I am in the 11th grade. I live in Alameda and have been living here for 7 years and I have seen my community make a lot of changes. I started working the Growing Youth Project in 2007. I have learned a lot about how to eat healthier and that fast foods can cause heart problems. It's good to know about your health while young so we can grow up to be looking good and healthy.

In my community I would like to improve a lot. Many people in our community want to come to our cooking classes or to the community garden to help make our community a better place to live and enjoy where we live while eating healthier. I want to improve the community by having people come out and help out, as well as attend our dinners and our family health nights. But what I really want is everybody to stop thinking that eating healthy is a bad thing and start realizing that this is life and not a game, before time is up...

I would change my community by passing out flyers and inviting them to the community dinners and signing them up to help out in the community garden when ever they have time, by stopping and talking to them about what's going on in this month. By having more people coming to cooking classes that we have on Mondays, I want at least everybody in our community to start eating healthier and by telling them there are many ways to get in shape and to how to eating healthy.

Farrell



Roller Coaster

My life is like a roller coaster,
it twists and turns,
it can do loops and dives,
and then it suddenly stops.
Then starts back up again.
My life is difficult but my passion gets me through.
My inspiration is cooking, my passion is food.
I hate the wasteful and the arrogant
and those who are rude.
My history is sad and joyful all in one,
even though I have just begun.
I strive for the best and even if I fall,
I must pick myself up and stand tall,
to show I am proud of who I am and my life so far.
My life is like a roller coaster,
can't you see even though I keep telling you.
You'll never truly see, because you're not me.

A.B.

I grew up in a household of 10 people to a 2 bedroom apartment. I don't know how we did it but we made it happen, as I got older people moved out. I grew up in Richmond and Sacramento most of my life. My mom was going the wrong way and my dad couldn't have his kids around that type of behavior so I grew up with him and my step mom who took care of me until I thought I was ready to get out and take care of myself.

I basically did everything a teenager from the hood would do; hanging out with people I called family and friends when all they were doing was dragging me into more trouble. I was smart enough to know but not quick enough to react in a positive way, because I was seeing improvement in the things that I wanted as accessories.

My dad was hard on me but I was a rebellious teenager struggling to learn for myself. So he gave me enough rope to hang myself, and I slipped up and went to juvenile hall at the age of 15 for about a month, after that I decided to stay out of trouble. I did the whole probation thing and got it over faster than I expected and returned to my hometown. I give my mom some credit because she stepped into my life ready to take care of business. My dad and I were still having a close relationship over the phone and I think I saw him one time in a year in a half. He had my back even if I was in the wrong.

Now I'm doing better and everything was going ok. The hardest memory is the phone call from Mom and she told me to come home and I didn't have to go to school. She gave me a big hug and told me my dad had passed away from a heart attack....I was devastated but I held my ground and kept under control because I came too far to end back up in jail.

All my dad wanted for all his children was to be the best we can be at whatever we do. So I am now going in the right direction even after all my difficult past experiences. I feel motivated to make positive changes in my community here at Alameda Point Collaborative by working with other teens that have similar goals and aspirations as I do; I believe we all can make an IMPACT!!!!

Lashaelia



My name is Lashaelia and I am a 17 years old girl. I am a person with two split personalities. I often focus on everyone else, seeing somebody making wrong decisions makes me want to cry.

I love my community even though they don't trust themselves. Most people see me as an angry young lady, that's just because I don't know how to express my self. Inside I am dying this painful death. My body can't take any more stress, the reason I stress is because I think nobody else sees what I see. Drugs were the main focus of my child hood life. But I never did figure out why that had to happen to me.

My life had changed since way back when. My mama always told me life wasn't fair. But now I finally see why. My mama was a single parent all the way through. I hate when people try to tell my mama what she should do right they haven't been through the things she went through.

Motto: If you don't like the way something is going, go and fix it your self.

Andrea



That is when I found the important parts of my life. I was introduced to basketball properly, learned the basics of the game. From then on I made a lot of new friends who helped me widen my experience. I wasn't into technology besides video games until about age 11 when I got my first phone. My big brother got me into it because he had so much stuff in his room that I was interested in. Today, I would be nothing without technology! I have a lot of technology of my own.

I want to change the attitude of my community, meaning to get them liking and trying out things that the GYP does, like gardening. Maybe the GYP can host a once a month "Help Out Day" (working title) for the community to come out to the farm and/or garden and help out. I am motivated to make this change because I know a couple of people that will come out and help the GYP, so I want the rest to come and help their own community.

Judging someone you don't know is like saying you hate something you have never tried. When you look at me you'd probably think "Oh, she's just another spoiled white girl with no morals."

But if you took the time to get to know me you would realize that I'm not spoiled and I have very strong morals. I also feel very passionate about a lot of things, such as, nutrition and being a constructive part of your community and not a destructive one.

People always complain about things and don't do anything about it. If you have a diet related health problem, or know someone with one, don't just obsess about everything that's happened, change the future. If kids are acting up in your community start an after school program that will help them. You can't just go through life hoping and wishing for things to change, change them yourself.

Jerrard



My passion is cars and hands-on work. I love to fix cars; I started when I was 11 years old not knowing what I was doing but wanting to do it because I got to get my hands dirty and learn a lot of new things. When I was 13 I started helping people fix random things around their houses or yards but mostly my passion is to learn how to fix cars and other things.

I would love to improve the bad things around my community, like violence and vandalism. I want to make it a safe place for people to come and be happy.

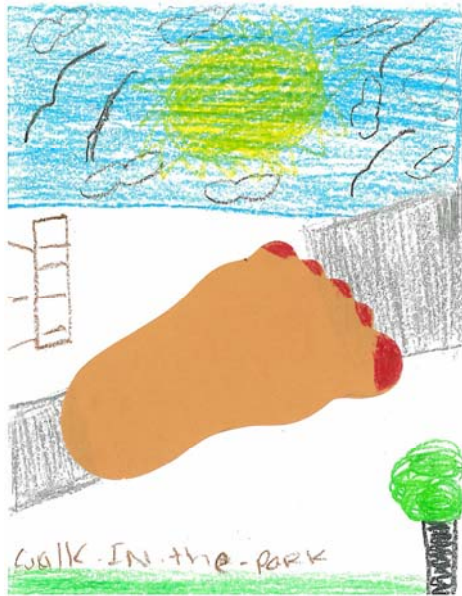
I would make changes by getting out there and putting my words on the table. If we all put in a hand, we can make this a better place.

Anonymous



My name is ?! I grew up on the streets of Oakland until I was about the age of eight, then I moved to Alameda.

Cassie



My passion is my family and friends. Without them my life would end they are everything to me. They are the key to my heart and the new beginning to my life. They are the other half to my life. No one can replace them, they bring out the best in me. They are my soul, the right to my wrong, they're my family. I'm the moon and they're my stars. We're one and nobody can ever break us apart – they're the reason for me still being here. They help me get through obstacles that I face and headaches and problems that I get everyday. When I'm not happy or feeling down they pick me back up and make me proud. They're everything I don't want to change that, I love them and that's how I want it to stay.

In my community many people I know are surrounded by hate crimes, drugs, and violence. That's what I want to change - I'm here to help people change their ways by thinking new things. Many people think that hate crimes are the way to solve their problems, but it's not, it's stupid. If you change your attitude and think brand new, then this world will be a better place - no violence or arguing or hate crimes, just peace and quiet like the world should be.

I plan to do this by having people look at new things and experience them. Also like I'm doing now helping people obtain better eating habits. If more people show that they care about this world then many people would change their ways and show that they do care and maybe this world will be safer for everybody.

Chanelle

As this world goes on I want to be noticed and remembered for what a great person I tried to be. Helping people is what I love to do. I am not rich nor have magical powers but I do have the fire and drive to make a difference. I love to learn new things because I try to use them in my everyday life.

My passion creates my drive to do well, which keeps me motivated. I was taught if one is struggling and you can help the person then they help themselves. Seeing someone happy and healthy is something intangible and won't go away like money. I hate people complaining about an issue and they do nothing about it, even if it can help them.

Life inspires me as long as I'm breathing, that's enough to make me get out there and make a change. My goal in life is to succeed, meaning not to be a failure. I want to become a lawyer that way I can help people while helping myself, I'm helping myself by helping people everyday.

If I'm a lawyer I can help someone in the court room who maybe innocent and needs to get off and I'm helping others because I'll have enough money to donate to the people that need it the most. I'm helping myself by seeing other people happy which makes me feel good and healthy.

Latasha



At my new community in Alameda I feel it is a lot safer and quieter. I occupy myself with two jobs and one of them is where I reside in Alameda.

It is a very encouraging at GYP and we work as a team to make residents of Alameda Point become healthier. The only thing in the future that I would change is just letting more individuals know about how much of a terrific project we participate in as youth in Alameda. I will start by showing residents GYP's website and explaining what we do to more people.

New Beginnings

Take a look at your self is what I say.
Make changes for yourself, will you start today?
There's so much pain in some of us.
Sometimes I ask who can I trust?

Now why should I make change today,
because there is trust in all of us.
I now am free from pain.
That is my main focus I have gained.

Free yourself from all the pain that's in your life.
There are new beginnings, to come.
Trust me you will see a big change.

Kalei

What inspires me are my goals for the future. Where I have been and where I would like to go and become gives me inspiration for my life from day to day.

One of the most important things about my history is realizing how many of my loved ones aren't here anymore and are not coming back. Death is memorable for me because one minute you're with some one and the next minute you can never hug, kiss, smell or feel them ever again.

I want my community to achieve a lower murder rate and less violence than currently appears on the Oakland streets. My peers and I are tired of attending funerals on a month to month basis.

My loved ones have been killed in my neighborhood everyday. What encourages me is to do right and occupy myself with good behavior and non-violent individuals. I believe I can make these changes as an individual and not be around negative activities.

Anonymous



My passion is video games because I have played them ever since I was little and I was always good at them. That's why I want to be a game designer because when I play a game I know what people like and know how to make it better and I get to be one of the first people to play it.

I hate liars because I hate not getting told the truth and if they lie I can't trust them anymore. I hate love sometimes because you can get really hurt or it could just mess you up.

The whole reason I want to become a game designer is because my cousin Steve, he taught me everything I know about games. So why not use what he taught me and make money. I am inspired to be a game designer not only for myself but for Steve because he is no longer here.