

## YOUTH WORK COALITION

February 2006

**THE GOAL** of the Next Generation Youth Work Coalition is to help achieve its vision of a strong, valued youth work profession through documentation, education and communications activities and by serving as a locus for joint action and collaboration within the field. We believe this entails progress in five key areas:

- Standards and competencies
- Professional development and training resources
- Learning delivery systems
- Career ladders and compensation guidelines
- Research and evaluation systems

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Welcome to the first edition of the Next Generation Youth Work Coalition's Bulletin. The Coalition's vision is of a strong, valued youth work profession whose workforce is stable, prepared, supported and valued.

The Coalition evolved out of a November 2004 Wingspread convening of youth development professionals representing diverse sectors of the field who came together to develop design ideas for a youth development workforce system. Through a series of discussions, the group developed a vision for the core components of a system and committed itself to continuing the work. This Coalition has emerged as one important vehicle for continuing the conversation that began at Wingspread. For more information on the 2004 meeting, go to: <http://www.nydic.org/nydic/documents/WingReportcomplete.pdf>.

In this issue of the Bulletin you'll find an interview with Vanessa Varko, a youth worker from the Bay Area; promising practices for attracting, developing and retaining youth workers from local organizations; highlights of relevant projects and events in the field; insights from the education field about salary incentives and certification; and an opportunity for you to weigh in about shaping the future of this Coalition and the future of the youth work profession.

# VOICES FROM THE FIELD - The Frontline Youth Worker

Each quarterly bulletin will have an interview with a youth worker. This first one is with Vanessa Varko, a facilitator who provides comprehensive sexuality education and coordinates workshops for parents.

*“Youth  
work  
is the real  
place for  
me to put  
all my  
passions.”*

**Y**outh work has become the perfect match for **Vanessa Varko, Talking Circles Facilitator**, who works directly with youth ages 11–18 at Community Bridges Beacon. Youth work combines Vanessa’s passion for theater, activism, her need for an interactive environment and her strong belief in ongoing education. Though through public policy she could also work on anti-oppression issues, it is through youth work that she gets to work daily with youth and impact their lives. All of these things drew Vanessa into youth work and the opportunity to learn something new everyday.

While launching a health educator program led by youth, Vanessa was able to personally impact the lives of many young people. In one particular case, she was able to encourage a young woman to think differently and realize that being a Latina did not mean a certain end or outcome based on the description of the demographic. By providing concrete skills in facilitation, public speaking and ongoing encouragement, this one young woman is on her way to Columbia for college.

Unlike Vanessa’s retail jobs (that were all about numbers) youth work provides a team atmosphere. The openness of individual’s and organization’s to preparing and developing her made the difference for Vanessa continuing to work her way up the youth work career ladder, and was even instrumental in her finishing her own schooling. Without the collaboration and sharing she is sure there would be a different outcome and it would not be the right work for her.

One example is the Youth Development Peer Network, a network of youth workers designed for professional development in the Bay Area. Instead of continuing to compete with each other, individuals from different organizations come together to share practices, challenges and collaborate so they will not have to reinvent the wheel. Vanessa has been involved for about a year and a half and finds that it helps her and others with sharing techniques, strategies, standards and competencies for their performance, and improves practice through concrete ideas and meaningful relationships.

Vanessa sees youth work as something that can help society as a whole to make a cultural shift in how they see young people and feels it needs to be the main way educators run their classrooms. Her role in this vision will be to continue to do direct service and when it is time for her to age out, to turn the practice of youth development over to younger people. She will go on in the leadership of organizations, institutions or the government.

# PROMISING PRACTICES From the Field

## PREPARE YOUTH TO BE PAID STAFF

**Girls Incorporated of the Central Coast** believes that having high school young women participate in their youth leadership program is their best recruitment strategy. The ten month long leadership program teaches the young women leadership and public speaking skills. It is led by the previous year's program graduates with adult volunteers as partners. All young women who become paid staff for Girls Incorporated of Central Coast go through the youth leadership program. Generally 15 to 25 girls are hired each year as program facilitators. They are given both opportunities and the responsibility to make decisions and provide input into the planning and implementation of the elementary, middle and high school programs.

*Girls Incorporated of the Central Coast employs 23 part-time direct care staff; 95% Latina and 5% Pacific Islander. Salaries are comparable to other "first job" wages available to high school students in the area. Youth workers are evaluated and eligible for a raise after 6 months. Many of their alumni go on to college at one of the University of California or California State University campuses, and major in a youth development related field.*

*Patty Fernandez*

*Girls Incorporated of the Central Coast – Program Director*

*patty@actioncouncil.org*

## ALLOCATE FUNDS FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

At the **Community Agencies Corporation of New Jersey/Clinton Hill Weed and Seed Partnership**, staff are required to attend thirty hours of training per year. In-house training, outside training, and college classes count toward this requirement. Since the organization places such a high value on professional development, 5–10% of the budget is allocated to assist with the costs of training and capacity building. Through this budget item, the organization pays 20% of the cost of outside training as an education incentive. They also offer a graduated pay incentive each year for staff who have completed the training, which represents 3–5% of the budget and is contingent on years of service and performance evaluations. As staff see the increase in their paychecks for the training they have completed, they become more enthusiastic about their participation in the programs and more committed to staying with the organization.

*This organization employs 20 full-time and 10 part-time staff. 80% are African-American and 20% are Hispanic/Latino.*

*Judy Bennett*

*Community Agencies Corporation of New Jersey/Clinton Hill Weed and Seed Partnership – Deputy Executive Director*

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## VIEW STAFF AS PARTNERS IN DECISION-MAKING

At **Methodist Children's Home** successful recruitment and retention of high quality direct care staff is the result of emphasizing individual strengths and promoting a participatory work environment. They believe that most of the staff they hire want to feel that they are not only part of, but, also have an opportunity to actively participate in, an organization that fosters the positive development of youth. As a result, turnover among direct care staff is minimal. The strengths-based assets model emphasizes the strengths of both staff and youth. This model views staff and youth as active participants and "partners" in planning, making

decisions, and evaluating programs. As a result, the general mind-set within the facility is one of joint involvement and responsibility rather than an “everyone for themselves” attitude. While it took some time to change the old established views of youth as “clients” to one of youth and staff as “partners”, over the past four years there have been marked changes among staff in terms of increased retention and commitment to the organization and its programs.

*175 full-time and 11 part-time direct care staff implement the programs. 48% are African-American, 47% are white; and 5% are Hispanic/Latino*

*Don Scott*

*Methodist Children’s Home – Administrator*

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## CREATE ACCESS TO BENEFITS

Access to benefits is often cited as a barrier to recruiting and retaining afterschool staff. Part-time positions combined with costly health insurance premiums and tight program budgets can keep this and other benefits on a permanent “wish list”.

The **Massachusetts School-Age Coalition**, working together with Blaisdell Insurance is able to offer a choice of health plans and a dental plan to its members. **The Massachusetts Insurance Partnership**, a quasi-public agency, is also able to make insurance more affordable both for employers and employees.

*Jude Goldman*

*Massachusetts School-Age Coalition – Executive Director*

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## NOTABLE PROJECTS, STUDIES AND EVENTS

### TAKING THE BOLD STEPS: Building Professional Development Systems

Join youth workers for two and a half days of stimulating sessions on the Professional Development of Youth Workers at the **National Afterschool Association Annual Conference** in Louisville, KY Feb. 23–25th. Each day provides presentations and interactive workshops on such topics as: Capturing Promising Practices in Recruitment and Retention; Building City and State-wide Professional Development Systems; and Exploring a National System of Credentialing. For more information go to: <http://www.naaconference.org/index.htm>.

### A Youth Worker by Any Other Name

**The Out-of-School Time Resource Center** (OSTRC) is collecting information about OST job titles and responsibilities. Through their research they have concluded that, due to the diverse types of organizations that are considered “out-of-school time”, there is no common method to accurately describe positions across them all. For example, two individuals with identical job responsibilities may have the title of “Program Director” at one OST organization but “Program Coordinator” at another.

Garnering accurate information on job titles is critical to our research, since we know that this affects how participants view professional development experiences. Please click on the following link to respond to this survey, which will take approximately 5–7 minutes to complete: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=901481535737>.

If you have any questions, please contact Jennifer Buher-Kane, OSTRC Senior Research Coordinator, at (215) 898-2505 or [jbuher@sp2.upenn.edu](mailto:jbuher@sp2.upenn.edu).

**Cornerstones for Kids** is providing funding for a number of different studies and initiatives. The mission of Cornerstone for Kids (C4K) is to improve the lives and circumstances of vulnerable children. C4K is a not for profit organization formed in 2004, and led by the Cornerstone Consulting Group, to house and manage the Human Services Workforce Initiative (HSWI). The premise of HSWI is that human services can positively impact the lives of vulnerable children and families, but that we cannot produce better outcomes for these individuals without addressing the workforce charged with helping them. HSWI is funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. For more information about Cornerstones for Kids and HSWI, please visit: [www.cornerstones4kids.org](http://www.cornerstones4kids.org).

### ***Cornerstones for Kids grants include:***

#### **DATA ON THE FRONT-LINE YOUTH WORKER**

**The ABCs of Youth Work** project aims to learn more about who works in youth-serving organizations, how they are supported on the job and what it would take to reduce turnover. The Forum for Youth Investment is looking for program or organization-level information about youth worker demographics, compensation, entry into the field, retention/turnover rates, etc., in the form of raw data or reports. Send materials or questions to [nicole@forumforyouthinvestment.org](mailto:nicole@forumforyouthinvestment.org).

#### **CREDENTIALING FOR OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME**

**The National Institute on Out-of-School Time** is collecting information on existing credentials in youth development or out-of-school time with ties to higher education. Gleaning lessons, candid opinions and implications from those who have administered and earned a credential will contribute to what has been largely absent or fragmented data about the impact of credentialing on the workforce. Please send materials or inquiries to [egannett@wellesley.edu](mailto:egannett@wellesley.edu).

#### **LINKING PROFESSIONAL WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AND CHILD OUTCOMES**

**Harvard Family Research Project** is examining the research evidence about links among training and other individual and organizational supports for the workforce, worker performance, service quality, and child and youth outcomes in four human service areas: child welfare; juvenile justice and probation; child care and youth development and out-of-school time. For more information contact: Heather Weiss– [heather\\_weiss@harvard.edu](mailto:heather_weiss@harvard.edu).

#### **CAPTURING PROMISING PRACTICES IN THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION**

**The National Collaboration for Youth** is gathering and sharing the promising practices in the Recruitment and Retention of Frontline Youth Workers (those earlier in this bulletin are examples). If you have a promising practice, please send your materials or questions to [pam@nassembly.org](mailto:pam@nassembly.org).

## NONPROFIT HUMAN SERVICE WORKERS

**American Humanics** has commissioned the creation of an annotated bibliography of nonprofit sector workforce issues. The bibliography will focus on workforce issues confronting the nonprofit sector including: general workforce issues, workforce diversity, pipelines of talent into and within the sector, leadership development, volunteer recruitment and management, sub-sector trends and needs, careers in the sector and general trends in the U. S. workforce. Contact Patrick Halpern, Research Associate, American Humanics, halpern@vt.edu or Shelly Cryer, Director, Initiative for Nonprofit Sector Careers, American Humanics, scryer@erols.com.

## Atlantic Philanthropies Awards \$1.9 Million

Watch for the important work to strengthen professional development from a newly awarded \$1.9 million grant from The Atlantic Philanthropies Awards Foundations' Center to improve the quality of afterschool education through professional development to **CACE, the Center for Afterschool and Community Education at Foundations, Inc.**

The Atlantic Philanthropies grant to CACE represents a two year award to:

- create and offer professional training programs and materials specifically designed for afterschool practice and staff development;
- establish models of effective professional development for afterschool educators;
- contribute to the field of professional development;
- advance professionalization of the field of afterschool education.

## LEARNING FROM OTHER FIELDS -Focus on Education

### Does Certification Make a Difference?

“Over the last 15 years, research has consistently identified the inextricable links between the quality of teachers and the achievement of students.<sup>i</sup> However, scholars have struggled to come to a consensus on how to identify accomplished teachers—until recently.

In 2004, three separate research studies showed that teachers who earn certification from the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS), known as board-certified teachers, actually do produce greater student achievement gains than other teachers and are especially effective with lower-achieving students.<sup>ii</sup> These studies support what most teachers who seek board certification have claimed—the process offers the most rigorous professional development experiences they have ever had. Board-certified teachers have to pass both a portfolio assessment, which requires them to diagnose student learning difficulties, and a rigorous daylong, timed standardized test that measures their knowledge of content and of how to teach it. Less than half of those who sit for NBPTS certification for the first time ultimately achieve that goal. This is good news.”<sup>iii</sup>

## What About Salary Incentives?

Richard Ingersoll found in his analysis of national survey data on teacher turnover that “teachers who leave because of job dissatisfaction do so not only because of low salaries but also as a result of poor support from school administrators, lack of student motivation, lack of teacher influence over decision making, and student discipline problems.”<sup>iv</sup>

## FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE

We would like to make this Bulletin and the work being done reflect your needs and interests. Please take a couple of minutes to answer two questions on the newsletter and factors you think would help the profession of youth work. Go to <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=633051669675> to answer two quick questions and provide us with your valuable input.

### THE COALITION'S INITIAL STRATEGIES INCLUDE:

- **Documenting activity and promising practices underway across the country related to building a strong, valued youth work profession;**
- **Raising awareness of such activity through regular communications;**
- **Creating opportunities for frontline youth workers and others committed to workforce issues to connect and communicate;**
- **Serving as a locus for joint action or advocacy efforts related to building the youth work profession as they arise.**

## Footnotes

- i Ronald F. Ferguson, “Paying for Public Education: new Evidence on How and Why Money Matters,” *Harvard Journal on Legislation*, Summer 1991, pp. 465-98; William L. Sanders and June C. Rivers, *Cumulative and Residual Effects of Teachers on Future Student Academic Achievement* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Value-Added Research and Assessment Center, 1996); and Rob Greenwald, Larry Hedges, and Richard D. Laine, “The Effect of School Resources on Student Achievement,” *Review of Educational Research*, vol. 66, 1996, pp. 361-96.
- ii Laura Cavalluzzo, *Is National Board Certification an Effective Signal of Teacher Quality?* (Alexandria, Va.: CNA Corporation, 2004); Dan Goldhaber and Emily Anthony, “Can Teacher Quality Be Effectively Assess?,” Working Paper, Center on Reinventing Public Education, University of Washington, Seattle, March 2004; Leslie G. Vandevoort, Audrey Amrein-Beardsley, and David Berliner, “National Board Certified Teachers and Their Students’ Achievement,” *Educational Policy Analysis Archives*, 8 September 2004.
- iii Barnett Berry, *Recruiting and Retaining Board Certified Teachers for Hard-to-Staff Schools*, Phi Delta Kappan, December 2005, pp. 290-297.
- iv Richard M. Ingersoll, “A Different Approach to Solving the Teacher Shortage Problem,” Center for the Study of Teaching and Policy, University of Washington, Teaching Quality Policy Brief No. 3, 2001; Barnett Berry, *Recruiting and Retaining Board Certified Teachers for Hard-to-Staff Schools*, Phi Delta Kappan, December 2005, pp. 290-297.