



November 5, 2009



Thank You, Youth Workers!

Indiana Youth Workers are doing an important job:

- More than 55% of adolescents and 40% of younger children do not have caring adults in all 3 areas of their lives: homes, schools, and communities.(1)
- Results from a 4-H study indicate that one of the most important factors for predicting positive youth development is how an adolescent spends his/her out-of-school time (such as participating in organized extracurricular activities, watching television, or doing homework).(2)
- Healthy relationships with youth workers are a critical factor in the positive impact of youth programs.(3)

Indiana's Youth Workers are in it to help kids:

Respondents to the Indiana Youth Institute's Youth Worker Survey reported three primary reasons for engaging in youth work: (7)

- 1) A sense of commitment, enjoyment and "love" of working with youth;
- 2) The desire and enjoyment of seeing the impact they're making in young people's lives; and
- 3) The satisfaction of doing important work and building the skills needed for youth to be success

But Youth Workers face some challenges:

- Today's youth workers are facing a cohort of children who are more likely to live in poverty, reside in a single parent households, and have to learn English as a second language than those who were born even a decade earlier.(4)
- While more than half (65%) of direct service youth workers have a college degree, their median salary is only \$28,000 a year (\$30,828 for those with a college degree or higher).(5)

The salary of a direct service youth worker is much lower than the state median of \$43,686 a year for individuals with a bachelor's degree.(6)

So, Thank You:

Despite the challenges, Indiana's Youth Workers are finding new and improved ways to impact the state's youth.

To see some examples of how Indiana Youth Workers are making a difference, check out the winners of the Indiana Youth Investment Award.

A few of 2008's winners are highlighted below:

[Youth Encouragement Services](#), located in Aurora, serves adolescents in the juvenile justice and child welfare systems. Along with traditional services and counseling, the residential facility provides opportunities for teens to shop for groceries, cool, clean, do laundry, learn budgeting, and experience other skills essential to a stable, productive life. "We're willing to look at the positives in their lives."

What do jazz great Wynton Marsalis, country music star Ricky Skaggs, and the lead violinist from the Broadway smash, "River Dance," have in common with low-income kids in northern Indiana? They have all performed at the world class [Goshen College Music Center](#). Their Acorn Scholarship program offers "The lessons, the recitals, the concerts. It's just fun to teach music to children and watch them learn."

Grab a book and find a buddy. That's the strategy for [Book Buddies](#), a successful tutoring and mentoring program that dramatically is improving academic skills in Bartholomew County. "When the student has caring adults helping them, they gain confidence to keep trying."

When working with homeless teenagers, progress is not measured in months, but by smaller moments. That's why the measurable success of the G.O.A.L. program, run by [Outreach, Inc.](#), is so remarkable. "We are not just providing a band-aid; we're providing the opportunity for transformation."

- 1) America's Promise
- 2) http://www.childtrends.org/Files/Child_Trends-2008_02_27_PositiveYouthDev.pdf
- 3) Committee on Community-Level Programs for Youth. (2002). Community Programs to promote Youth Development. National Research Council - Institute of Medicine. National Academy Press. Washington, D.C. p.94.
- 4) IYI Youth Worker Survey
- 5) The Annie E. Casey Foundation, KIDS COUNT Data Center, datacenter.kidscount.org.
- 6) IYI Youth Worker Survey
- 7) U.S. Census Bureau

Indiana Youth Institute | 1-800-343-7060 | www.iyi.org
603 E. Washington St. Suite 800, Indianapolis, IN 46204