

## Annual Report For the Young Women's Project (10.1.12-12.30.13)

### Overview

**Mission:** The Young Women's Project is a multicultural organization that builds the leadership and power of young women so that they can shape DC policies and institutions to expand rights and opportunities for DC youth. YWP programs guide youth through a process of personal transformation so they can become leaders in their peer groups, schools, families, and communities who are able to analyze problems, identify solutions, and advocate for change.

**Goals:** YWP is working to create a community where young people have the power to thrive as individuals and to shape the institutions that impact their lives. We aim to develop youth leaders who:

1. Have a strong self concept, a powerful sense of their own worth and potential;
2. Are dealing with and solving problems in their own lives;
3. Value their opinions and speak assertively;
4. Have information, knowledge, and understanding of larger issues;
5. Are setting and achieving goals: and improving their own lives;
6. Are able to build cooperative, supportive relationships;
7. Understand they can contribute to their communities and have impact;
8. Understand how to navigate institutions to secure rights-services and how to impact policy;
9. Create and carry out projects and campaigns that challenge DC institutions;
10. Win policy and institutional changes that improve the lives of youth.

Based in Washington, DC, YWP programs engage under-resourced youth with a focus on teen women and youth in the foster care system--- two groups on the bottom of the ladder of economic and educational opportunity and who struggle with many challenges. YWP engages youth through two campaigns. **The Foster Care Campaign (FCC)** builds the power of foster youth – training them as leaders and advocates who educate their peers and improve institutions. **The Peer Health and Sexuality Education Project (PHASE)** works to improve DC teens' reproductive health by expanding comprehensive sexuality education, ensuring access to community based services, and engaging youth as peer educators and decision makers on reproductive health issues.

**Report Summary:** The Young Women's Project had a remarkable year. After years of advocacy, we were able to secure laws and policies and implement others which helped to secure and move a number of our long term goals. This success was the result of a strong foundation of relationships, research, and policy crafted over many years –but also the effectiveness and dedication of our 2013 youth staff were able to be very effective advocates, sharing stories of personal struggles in these issues, educating and mobilizing their peers, conducting research and meeting with agency officials, school board members, and council staff and members – in order to move these policies into the final stage.

### 2012-13 Accomplishments:

- Hired, retained, and trained 57 youth staff each of who received 100+ hours of training in campaign development, research, advocacy, training of trainers, presenting testimony, assessment, and other issues.
- Delivered 65 testimonies to DC Council in hearings to the Committees on Health, Committee on Human Services, and Committee on Education, and to the DC Board of Education;
- Trained 70 youth in reproductive health and 60 foster youth in rights and self advocacy;
- Developed and secured the passage of the Foster Youth Transit Subsidy which will extend the \$30

- DCPS monthly student transportation card to 400 foster youth ages 19 and 20 starting October 1, 2012;
- Successfully advocated for a Foster Youth Employment program including training, internships, and job placement. (CM Graham designated \$1 million with \$800,000 for youth stipends in the FY2013 budget.)
  - Successfully advocated for the development of a Youth Bill of Rights for foster youth (called the Foster Youth Rights and Responsibilities Amendment Act of 2012), which was signed into law on 1.22.13. The Foster Youth Rights Amendment Act includes 47 new and existing rights;
  - Successfully advocated to establish a \$1,464 a year clothing voucher system, a \$100 monthly allowance, and an increase in the Independent Living program stipends for youth in the DC Foster care;
  - Successfully advocated to increase the graduation to health education from .5 credit to 1 full credit, expanding the available time to cover additional comprehensive sexual health education;
  - Successfully advocated for an expansion of the DCPS condom availability policy to include youth condom distributors and the expansion of WRAP-MC to include youth leaders and trainers;
  - Successfully implemented a youth sexual health education and condom distribution program in seven DCPS high schools in partnership with the Department of Health, distributing more than 500 male and female condoms and reaching more than 500 youth with education and training;
  - Successfully advocated with HAHSTA for the creation of a city-wide Peer Educator Network to conduct after-school and classroom based trainings, one-on-one education, social networking outreach, and other peer education strategies that reach thousands of teen women and men with sexual health information and training. HAHSTA allocated \$200,000 to this work in an August 2012 RFP which was awarded to Metro Teen AIDS, The Women's Collective, and the Sexual Minority Youth Assistance League.
  - Since last October, YWP hired and developed 31 youth Wrap MCs that received 30 hours of training, experienced significant professional growth, and educated their peers in STI and pregnancy prevention.
  - From 10.12-4.13 PHASE peer educators have distributed: 4770 external condoms; 921 internal condoms; 309 lubrication packets; and 167 dental dams.

### **Foster Care Campaign (FCC) Progress by Objective**

**Summary of Progress:** FCC's work is focused on the unmet needs of older youth – who make up about half of the youth in care population. As of January 31, 2013, according to CFSA data, there were 755 youth ages 13-20 (153 less than last year at this time). The majority of those youth (479 out of 755) are ages 17-20. FCC is guided by five long-term goals:

1. *Increase the percentage of youth who are prepared for and enroll in college*
2. *Improve living conditions in group homes and ILPs*
3. *Expand, codify, and enforce a bill of rights for DC foster youth*
4. *Increase financial resources and access to food, clothing, transportation for older youth*
5. *Increase the percentage of youth who complete vocational programs and find living wage jobs*

This year, after years of advocacy, we were able to secure laws and policies on three of our long term goals (rights, financial resources, and employment) which will forever change the rights and opportunities that DC foster can access. This success was the result of a strong foundation of relationships, research, and policy crafted over many years –but also the effectiveness and dedication of our 2013 FCC youth staff who – in using their personal experience and hardships to surface and personalize these issues -- were able to be very effective advocates, sharing stories, conducting research with their peers, and holding several meetings with the CFSA director and her senior staff – as well as Council members Jim Graham, Tommy Wells, and Marian Barry – in order to move these policies into the final stage. As we move into the implementation phase with these policies over the next year, our youth staff will be working as educators, outreach workers, and social marketers in order to share essential information about how to access these new rights and opportunities with hundreds of youth are caregivers. **Progress on specific objectives is as follows:**

**Objective 1: Build the leadership capacity and holistic development of 22 youth leaders.** We recruited and engaged a productive foster youth team of 18 youth staff onto our team in January and brought on an additional four in the spring; 15 worked through the school year and will be continuing with us in September; 10 worked during the summer. The youth staff on our FCC team experienced many challenges since January but the group remained consistent and productive, making enormous strides as individuals, formed strong relationships with each other, and were extremely effective as community advocates. This youth staff retention was a welcomed accomplishment in light of a high youth staff turnover rate in 2012 (and a credit to our new manager Marcia Huff). *In addition to our standard core training (problem solving, communication, reproductive and physical health, conflict, relationship building) youth staff received the following training and program support:*

- ✓ 12 youth were able to resolve their transportation-funding problems;
- ✓ Three youth were able to enroll in a job training programs;
- ✓ Three youth were able to obtain positive placement changes;
- ✓ One teen mother-to-be was transferred out of a negative foster home situation and into an ideal independent living program tailored for teen mothers;
- ✓ Two young women who were previously truant resolved their educational issues one returning to school to complete high school;
- ✓ One young woman was able to secure tuition from CFSA to continue attending her high school of three years through graduation (and not be transferred to a new, unfamiliar high school and risk not graduating on time) in spite of being transferred to a new placement;
- ✓ Multiple youth (outside of our staff) in desperate need of transportation assistance have received consistent financial assistance from the Office of Youth Empowerment allowing them to travel to and from school and work without issue or worry;

**Change:** *We spent considerable time revamping our orientation process, staff work standards, and youth staff assessment in order to meet some of the youth staff challenges of the past year – including a low staff retention rate and sluggish work performance. There was a conscious effort to include substantive information and essential skills building training into the first FCC staff training sessions including communications, individual advocacy and problem solving. These skills were immediately put to use through self advocacy work.*

**Youth Advocacy Teams (YATs):** To respond to the immediate problems of our youth, we put together two advocacy teams of youth experiencing common problems. One team is focused on the food situation in a group home (there is none). The other is focused on the implementation of the transportation subsidy. Working together, these youth go through a process of documenting the problem, working through staff and social workers to resolve it and when that does not work, requesting a meeting with CFSA director level staff in order to do a system-level intervention. YATs held meetings with CFSA staff and the director on youth allowance, clothing vouchers, ILP stipends, transportation subsidy implementation, truancy, and educational transfers. All of these meetings resulted in significant progress for individual youth and changes to CFSA internal policies.

**Policy and Issue Advocacy:** In February and March, YWP staff delivered 16 foster care testimonies at two CFSA oversight hearings held by the Committee on Human Services. The testimonies covered issues including transportation, clothing, foster care placements, poor group home conditions, youth employment, clothing voucher, mandatory allowance, and increasing ILP stipends, education, transition, and parenting. These testimonies produced results for the individual youth – as Graham and CFSA staff vowed to address problems (poor placements, unresponsive social workers, transportation, etc) that were brought before them (and many have been addressed one week later. Committee Chair Jim Graham called the testimony “brilliant” and YWP a “driving force for change.” *The testimony of our youth staff can be viewed at:*

Committee on Human Services, Performance Oversight Hearing for Child and Family Services on 4.24.13  
[http://dc.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=11&clip\\_id=1717](http://dc.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=11&clip_id=1717)

YWP youth testimony begins at 2:31:37. YWP's work is discussed from 8:28 on.

Committee on Human Services, Budget Oversight Hearing for Child and Family Services on 4.24.13  
2.26.13 [http://dc.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view\\_id=11&clip\\_id=1614](http://dc.granicus.com/MediaPlayer.php?view_id=11&clip_id=1614)

YWP youth testimony begins at 2:21:34

**Objective 2: Build the life skills, resource networks, and system navigation capacity of foster youth in group homes, independent living programs, and foster homes through training, information sharing, and website development.**

- **Life Skills and System Navigation (LSN) training and Advocacy Meetings: Progress:** FCC youth staff launched a series of educational trainings and outreach in August with youth in group homes and ILPs intended to combat the dismal lack of CFSA initiate outreach and education with older youth. CFSA's Office of Youth Empowerment does not actually do direct outreach with youth and instead only communicates to social workers and contractor staff. As a result, the vast majority of information on opportunities and rights is never actually communicated to youth. The first educational session series focused on How to Access the Foster Youth Transportation Subsidy (passed into law in May 2013). So far, we trained 25 youth (directly) and six staff members from three organizations (reaching another 100 youth indirectly)
- **Website development: Progress:** YWP has completed the first draft of a youth communications curricula including details LPS for blogging, face book, twitter, and integral. Youth staff have been developing and posting blogs since March. We have updated our website and social media work and are developing new youth-written materials this summer. The next step is to hire a designer to work with us on revamping our website but we need to raise additional funds first.

**Objective 3: Create institutional change through policy development and program implementation through four policy initiatives:** In the past six months, YWP has been able to move four major policy initiatives as described below:

- 1) **Youth Bill of Rights: Developed, wrote, and advocated for the passage of the Foster Youth Rights and Responsibilities Act of 2012, which passed the full Council on 12.19.12.** The legislation will "require the Mayor to issue rules to consolidate existing foster youth rights, incorporate one new right, to require the Child and Family Services Agency to inform youth of their rights upon entrance to the agency, provide copies of the bill of rights and relevant Statements of Rights and Responsibilities to youth currently in foster care, incorporate the bill of rights and Statements of Rights and Responsibilities into scheduled trainings to social workers and other affected staff, and develop an implementation plan on the dissemination of the bill of rights for youth in foster care and a mechanism for receiving and resolving complaints; and outline annual reporting and data sharing requirements to the Council and public on complaints and outcomes. The legislation was introduced on June 5<sup>th</sup> by CM Yvette Alexander and then further developed through a Working Group of youth and adults chaired by CM Graham and Alexander and including several local organizations and one national child welfare leader. YWP provided helped to organize and facilitate the progress of the Working Group which completed its recommendations in November. YWP youth and adult staff worked from December through May to provide feedback on the actual rights which are currently being reviewed by Council. [A copy of the rights document is attached.](#)

- 2) **Employment:** Successfully advocated with DC Council for a Foster Youth Employment program including subsidized training, internships, job placement. Council Member Jim Graham, chair of the Committee on Human Services, designated \$1 million with \$800,000 going directly to youth stipends in the 2013 DC budget for this program. The vast majority of youth ages 18-20 remain unemployed. Prompted by this legislation, CFSA has taken meaningful steps to build employment programming and opportunities. They created a new employment internship-training-work program, hired a project Manager, and have established partnerships with several organizations. There are 44 youth currently engaged in vocational training and receiving \$8.25 an hour for their training and more once they are placed in internships. Since December 2012, we've been working closely with the program manager to get youth enrolled in the employment programs. Unfortunately, it's a mess. There is no program design or learning objectives, no quality control or screening of internship sites. The youth are not even getting their checks on time. At this point, we have two strategies for improving the situation: First, we are doing research this summer – interviewing youth, providers, contractors – to figure out who is doing what, how much it costs, and what if any the results are. Next, we are advocating with Director Donald to establish a public-private transition center to run the employment programming (along with educational and youth development programming).
- 3) **Transportation:** Developed and secured the passage of the Foster Youth Transit Subsidy which will provide subsidized transportation card to 300 foster youth ages 19 and 20 starting October 1, 2012. In the October 2012, Budget Support Act, \$85,307 was transferred from the agency to WMATA to fund a new Foster Care Youth Transit Subsidy Program. A new program was created by attaching the following language to the allow 19 and 20 year old foster youth to participate in the student transit subsidy program: Section 2(c)(4) of the School Transit Subsidy Act of 1978, effective March 3, 1979 (D.C. Law 2-152; D.C. Official Code § 44-217(c)(4)), was amended by striking the semicolon and inserting the phrase “and for youth in the District’s foster care system until they reach 21 years of age;” in its place. DDOT and CFSA staff started working on an implementation plan in August. In early February, DDOT’s attorney determined that the BSA language was not consistent with the original law that that they could only approve transit subsidies for foster youth who were 19, living in the District, and attending a elementary or secondary public, parochial or private school in the District. These youth were already covered by the student transit subsidy program.
- In mid February, CFSA launched an interim transportation subsidy program to provide metro cards to older youth. In May 2013, three new laws were passed by Council Member Bowser including “Foster Youth Transit Subsidy Emergency Declaration Resolution 2013, Emergency Amendment Act of 2013, and Temporary Amendment Act of 2013. These laws fulfils the original intent of the BSA language changes – to allow DC foster youth between the ages of 18-20 living in DC, Maryland and Virginia – to use subsidized fare media for trips related to education, getting to work, and looking for work. YWP youth and adult staff worked with Council Member Bowser’s office from December to May to ensure the development and passage of this legislation. Since then, we have been working aggressively to get a program up and running. We’ve run into the usual problems of inadequate plans, poor budgeting, ignoring youth needs and input. We have a series of meetings planned to work on the problems and are working closely with the CFSA staff and the director to design a program and an implementation plan that can meet the legal requirements.
- 4) **Decrease youth poverty by increasing Independent Living Program stipends, establishing a consistent clothing voucher, and requiring a mandatory allowance for all youth 15 and older.** Since last summer, YWP youth and adult staff have been working closely with Director Donald and her staff to develop five policy initiatives and programs that work together to significantly increase the financial resources available to youth. These programs include:

1. **Increase the monthly ILP stipend allocation from \$538 (which covers everything including**

**transportation, phone, and savings) to \$638 with phones, transportation, and savings covered through other programs (and not directly by youth).** YWP youth staff also developed recommended guidelines for youth in ILPs including mandatory work and saving requirements, budgeting, and other responsibilities. [This has been approved.](#)

2. **Provide a \$100 per month base allowance to 491 youth in foster homes and group homes** who meet the requirements of adequate school attendance and staying out of the juvenile justice system. This base allowance will allow youth to purchase phones, additional clothes, haircuts, transportation, and other essentials not provided by placements. [This has been approved.](#)
3. **Provide an additional incentivized, tiered allowance of \$102.50 per month to 491 youth** if they are able to demonstrate academic progress, participate in weekly enrichment programs, meet placement responsibilities, and demonstrate positive caregiver interaction. This allowance would provide an incentive to engage youth in critical education and life skills programming, starting at age 15. [This has been partially approved.](#)
4. **Provide consistent, seasonal clothing voucher of \$122 per month to 491 youth in foster and group homes.** The clothing allowance would establish a consistent policy and voucher process for older youth, many of whom go without needed clothing and footwear. [This has been approved.](#)
5. Provide a savings match for foster youth of up to \$1,000 a year in matching funds. Require budgeting and financial management training for youth. [This has been approved.](#)

### **Peer Health and Sexuality Education (PHASE) Progress by Objective**

**Objective 1: Build the leadership capacity and individual development of 24 teen women staff.** During the past year, PHASE recruited and trained 24 youth staff representing schools including Cardozo, Dunbar, Bell, Banneker, Coolidge, Roosevelt, and Wilson High Schools. Youth staff worked six hours during the school year and 25 hours during the summer months and worked in three main areas:

- Conducting recruitment and training for the Youth Health Action Councils (YHACs) at four schools;
- Completing school based sexual health education including 35 classroom presentations, 25 lunch room table sessions, 300 one on one education sessions and more than 700 condoms distributed.
- Developing and moving policy (through testimony, meetings, and advocacy) officials within DOH, DCPS, and OSSE and with the DC Council Committees on Health and Education to ensure that supportive youth sexual health policies are developed and implemented.

In the course of the year, youth staff work more than 300 hours and receive more than 150 hours of training and coaching in Core and Advanced Skills including the following:

- 24 completed reproductive health training (14 hours)
- 15 youth completed mental-physical health training (12 hrs)
- 14 youth completed training on developing and influencing policy (12 hrs)
- 12 completed training on data collection, analysis, and presentation (10 hrs)
- 12 completed Training of Trainers and were certified as level 1 trainers (10 hrs)
- 20 completed training in needs assessment and project development (12 hrs)

**Wrap MCs—Spring Pilot:** From February through March, YWP trained and hired 22 peer educator-condom distributors from 4 schools who distributed male and female condoms and educated hundreds of youth. Wrap-MCs received 12 hours of comprehensive sexual health education and 8 hours of peer education strategies. Nineteen passed an on-line test and were certified by the Department of Health. They attended weekly coaching-planning sessions at YWP, meet with school officials, collected data, and conducted weekly educational sessions.

**Together as part of the Spring Pilot, PHASE staff and WMCs were able to accomplish the following:**

- ✓ PHASE staff and Wrap-MCs distributed 700 male and female condoms to 150 youth.
- ✓ PHASE staff and Wrap-MCs conducted 22 classroom presentations for 400 students in 4 schools.
- ✓ PHASE staff and Wrap-MCs conducted 19 lunchtime tables reaching for 400 students in 5 schools.
- ✓ Delivered 15 testimonies to DC Council in hearings to the Committees on Health, Committee on Education, and to the DC Board of Education;
- ✓ 10 youth created 10 testimonies providing recommendations on the graduation requirements ( 2 adult staff also contributed for 12 testimonies total)
- ✓ Developed and implemented message campaigns to increase the health education credit on Twitter, Face book, and Instagram. likes, and mentions." Both OSSE and SBOE highlighted YWP's work on their twitter pages, and one member of the SBOE reported on our messages through his twitter account.

**Wrap MCs—Fall Program:** Since last October, YWP hired and developed 31 youth Wrap MCs that received 30 hours of training, experienced significant professional growth, and educated their peers in STI and pregnancy prevention

- 31 completed basic reproductive health training (8 hours) in order to pass the Department of Health online test
- 28 completed advanced reproductive health training (8 hours)
- 21 completed peer education training (10 hours)
- 21 completed peer counselling training (5 hours)
- 21 completed condom distribution
- 14 completed training on advocacy strategies (5 hours)
- 14 completed youth-adult partnerships training
- 31 completed "representing Wrap MC" training (5 hours)

The Wrap MC peer educators became certified to distribute condoms in November 2013, after receiving peer education training, they were ready to distribute condoms in mid-December 2013. From October - end of March, the peer educators have distributed:

- 4770 external condoms
- 921 internal condoms
- 309 lubrication packets
- 167 dental dams

**Objective 2: Build a school-based membership of student leader-advocates who are educated on reproductive health issues, trained in advocacy and project implementation, and able to take action to improve youth health.** The Youth Health Action Councils (YHACs) were held in four schools (Wilson, Cardozo, Bell, and Dunbar) from November 2012 through June 2013. This weekly after school program involved a total of 75 youth (70 women 5 men) in four schools. Training ranged from 20 hours (at Dunbar) to 75 hours (at Wilson). Participants completed training in reproductive health, self advocacy, needs assessment, project development, event planning, and campaign development. Twelve of the 75 were trained and certified as peer educators and condom distributors (Wrap-MCs).

**Challenge:** *DCPS cut the afterschool coordinators at most DCPS high schools last spring. For us, these cuts meant that we did not have the internal support of a school-based coordinator to help with recruitment, scheduling, space issues, and a myriad of other issues that arise with youth programming. Although our work at Wilson, Bell, and Dunbar continued as afterschool sites, we had to adjust the scheduling and duration of our work at Cardozo, Roosevelt, and Maya Angelou Public Charter School in order to facilitate regular attendance. We ended up dropping Banneker because of a lack of support by the administration for the program. The result in our YHAC attendance was that instead of reaching 100 youth through regular weekly after-school programming this year, we reached 70.*

**Objective 4: Implement School-Based Sexual Health Policy:** In 2012, YWP advocated with HAHSTA and DCPS for an expansion of the DCPS condom availability policy to include youth condom distributors in DCPS high school. In 2013 the youth pilot for Wrap-MC was launched by HAHSTA with the approval of the Chancellor. Because HAHSTA does not have the staff to implement the program, YWP volunteered to manage this program in five schools using our YHACs as a base. Since we started the program in March, we trained and certified 19 youth as Wrap-MCs in four schools, distributed more than 700 male and female condoms, educated more than 1000 youth, and established a Wrap-MC educator network. As part of this work, we expanded and documented a youth training curricula, developed a series of distribution-focused projects, developed data collection tools, and conducted a sexual health assessment with adult sexual health staff in DCPS high schools. YWP has an (unpaid) agreement with HAHSTA to provide curricula, training, and tools to implement this unfunded mandate and to train other organizations willing to manage Wrap-MC sites. In early August, we launched this work by organizing a two-day peer-led training to educate and certify new Wrap MCs (WMCs) -- training 20 WMC youth trainers from PHASE and PPMW and 20 new WMCs from ward 7 on CSE. We worked in partnership with the Ophelia Egypt Center to hold this event.

**Objective 5: Create Institutional change through advocacy, policy development, and research:** The PHASE Policy Team completed three data collection projects. Most significantly, as described above, we assessed seven community based organizations and issued report cards. To complete this work, we increased youth staff capacity through training, information, coaching in program assessment, evaluation, developing research tools and questions, conducting interviews, DC Council operations, the budget process, advocacy 101, and assessing budgets and other program information. Youth collected information on model programs, designed tools and site documents – including interview questions, site profiles, and youth interview forms, conducted interviews, coded and sorted data, and generated policy recommendations. In addition, our youth staff collected survey data from 250 youth in 5 DCPS high schools about condom use. Finally, we completed interviews with 25 nurses and adult Wrap-MCs at 18 DCPS high schools about their role in student education, sexual health, and condom distribution. Our policy accomplishments are described above.

### **Organizational Capacity Building:**

**Staff Changes:** In order to better respond to our youth needs and the shift from policy creation to implementation, we made a couple of key changes. Marcia Huff replaced Felicia Ramos as our FCC Manager in December 2012. Marcia is a lawyer and child advocate, who has worked with the United Methodist Church (UMC) -Nebraska Annual Conference Risk-Taking, Mission & Justice (RTMJ) team working on issues of environmental stewardship and poverty, ABA Center for Children and the Law, and the DC Public Defender Service. Marcia made a number of important youth staff support and individual advocacy program changes described in the next section. Policy Director Dwanna Lee left our staff in February. Since Dwanna's expertise is legislation and budget and we are moving into a policy implementation phase, we did not have an adequate volume of work to justify a full time policy director position. During the past year and for the foreseeable future, Nadia will devote about 40 percent of

her time working on advocacy, research, program design, and curricula for FCC. We will be bringing on an FCC Associate in the fall to help with the youth development and our new focus on educational advocacy. *Aurora Munoz, our new PHASE Associate*, previously worked as a health educator and language access coordinator for La Clinica del Pueblo and has done communications work for Population Action International and the American Red Cross. Aurora is fluent in Spanish and has experience working with and for low-income, multicultural, Spanish-speaking, and LGBTQ communities. Former PHASE Manger *Christina Ramos recently left YWP's staff. We are currently hiring her replacement.*

**Board Recruitment and Development:** We spent considerable time in the past year recruiting, cultivating, and orienting a (mostly) new Board of Directors. YWP expanded and reorganized our Board of Directors, sharpening our purpose and procedures, reaching out to new constituencies, and bringing on several new adult and youth members including experts in policy, child welfare, reproductive health, and local business. Our current Board includes nine members (six women, three men, five are African-American, one Asian-American, and three European-American with a diversity of ages and backgrounds including two youth). For the past year and a half, YWP has been guided by a transition board of five members. In January 2013, we brought on six new members and moved to a permanent governance board. One of the responsibilities of the Transition Board was to develop a board governance model that reflected the unique needs of YWP's mission, approach, and youth constituency. YWP is an organization committed to youth leadership and decision making at all levels. Our board governance structure needed to reflect that value. Using John Carver's Policy Governance Board model as a guide, we reframed our board responsibilities so that they are focused on community impact and youth growth and that the primary responsibility of the Board was to represent and speaks for the youth who we engage, empower, and serve. As a policy governing board, the YWP board stays focused on organization's impact on the community and ensuring that we are achieving our mission. Because understanding youth needs is central to the board's purpose, the members include youth (which we broadly define as 25 and younger) and adults who work closely with youth and in youth systems. For example, we have a foster parent (who is also a VP at SunTrust and will be leading our effort to raise corporate funding). We have a foster youth (former YWP staff member), a staff member for DC Council Member David Catania (also a former YWP youth staff), an attorney who is also a guardian ad litem for foster youth, and a staff member in the office of the DC Deputy Mayor for Human and Human Services. Our board is well connected but also closely connected to you.

**Financial Resources:** For the FY2014, YWP continued to rely on a small group of mostly local foundations to support our work. We raised \$348,023 and spent \$401,167. We ended the year with \$162,426 in assets. These funds supported two main campaigns: FCC spent \$149,285; PHASE spent \$193,774. A number of YWP's foundation supporters are undergoing changes in their funding patterns. For example the Hill-Snowdon Foundation is on an every other year cycle, the Summit Fund is spending down their grants as is the Marpat Foundation. We are responding to these changes in two ways. First, we have stepped up our foundation fundraising efforts and, with two of our new board members taking the lead; will begin to raise corporate money this year. Second, we have streamlined our own operations and made cuts in our budget for this year.

### **2013-14 Profiles of Individual Self-Advocacy, Growth, and Leadership Amount FCC Youth staff**

- Trish is an 18 year old who is a senior in high school. She has been in care for more than a decade. The Child and Family Services Agency is in the process of closing her case and since her sister lived in DC they removed her from the high school she had been attending since the 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Trish was not happy about the transfer and felt as though staying at her school, located in Maryland, was in her best educational interest. If she transferred to the new school she would lose credits, have to retake classes and possibly not graduate on time. She has an IEP and had previously struggled academically. At her Maryland school she had a support system vital to her educational success. On numerous occasions she spoke with her educational advocate, social worker and guardian ad litem (GAL). She even advocated for herself while in court to her

judge. During her summer at YWP she learned about educational rights held by youth in foster care. She worked with YWP staff and interns to develop a plan to advocate that staying in her Maryland school was in her best interest and that removing her from the school was a violation of her rights. Trish, YWP staff and Trish's GAL met during the summer. In her final effort to advocate for herself, Trish contacted directly the Director of the Child and Family Services agency and asked for a special meeting to discuss her very dire situation, school was starting in a couple of weeks. The Director immediately sprang into action and now Trish is at her old school and is scheduled to graduate in the spring.

- Dereka and Chanel are two staff living at the Ionia Whipper group home. They were very unhappy about the quality and quantity of food in their group home. The food was old; many items were past the expiration date. The staff of the group home was serving freezer burned meat and was not sufficiently cooked. There was no fresh food at the facility. All of the vegetables were canned and salty. To make things worse at times there was little to no food in the house. They desperately wanted access to fresh and healthy food. They also noticed that despite the group home receiving ample payments through their contract with CFSA that a great deal of the food was donated from local food banks. They young women were very unhappy with the situation. In order to address the situation they spoke with group home staff and facility management. YWP staff helped them write emails and also facilitated discussions about the unacceptable food situation. We enlisted help from the young ladies' Community Support Worker. The staff was not willing to make any changes so YWP staff assisted Dereka and Chanel in contacting the CFSA Youth Ombudsman as well as the monitor for the group home. The Director of CFSA was also contacted. A meeting was set and the young ladies helped to develop an agenda that addressed all of their concerns. Through this process it was also discovered that there were other issues at the group home that were making life nearly unbearable for the two young women. The meeting was successful and an agreement concerning food was decided upon. The young ladies were able to assist with grocery shopping and helping to develop a weekly menu. Their other concerns were also addressed and they were much happier with their living situation at the group home.
- Nataly is a 19 year old who has an infant daughter. She has been in the foster care system since 2008. She moved into an independent living program (ILP) run by Catholic Charities during her pregnancy. The ILP program has rather stringent rules concerning youth always maintaining employment or attending school. Nataly graduated from high school at the end of May and was not scheduled to start college until the fall so she was required to attend mandatory life skills classes. Nataly communicated to the staff at Catholic Charities that she would be unable to attend the classes because she was in the final trimester of her pregnancy. During this time she was past her due date. She received a doctor's note indicating that she was to stay home and not attend the classes. She provided the note to the Catholic Charities staff but they still insisted that she attend the classes. They began to fine her \$75 per missed class despite the note. These fines added up quickly and were depleting her already modest monthly stipend. After trying to resolve the issue on her own, Nataly contacted the YWP staff who reached out to the Catholic Charities staff. They still would not allow her to miss the classes nor would they refund the money fined. She turned to the Youth Ombudsman to help her fight the fines and she was successful. After many emails and phone calls to her program she was ultimately refunded all the money she was fined.
- Dolores is a 17 year old who has been in foster care system since 2008. She attends a special school in Springfield, Virginia called Accotink Academy. She is diagnosed with ADHD and is bipolar. To help her stay focused she is very active in the Young Marines Corp. This is a source of pride for her. She hopes to pursue a military career after graduation. During the summer her division planned a trip to Parris Island for a week of exercises. Dolores was very excited about participating but she was concerned that her foster parents would not pay for her to attend the trip. She also was not getting support from her social worker. She also knew she would need new shoes so that she could fully participate in the runs and other activities. She began

advocating for herself by having a conversation with her foster parents. The YWP staff helped her develop the talking points for her conversation. She also researched shoes that were reasonably priced and forwarded the information to her foster parents. Her foster parents still did not think that they should have to pay for the trip. It was not right that she was being denied the opportunity to participate in this important enrichment activity. Dolores continued to work with YWP staff to develop a plan to convince her foster parents to fund the trip. In the end an agreement was made. The foster parents paid for the trip and Dolores used her money from her employment with YWP to purchase her shoes and the other needed supplies for the trip.

- Mary is a 20 year old youth who participates in an independent living program with the Latin American Youth Council. She is very concerned about being prepared for aging out of foster care and was desperate to find a job outside of her work with YWP. She wanted to be able to save for her transition out of care. Since spring she participated in numerous employment training programs through the CFSA Office of Youth Empowerment (OYE). None worked out or resulted in a paid position. She never received the support she needed. She worked with YWP staff to improve her resume. She engaged in numerous conversations about her career interests and passions. YWP staff assisted her in reaching out to career specialists at OYE in attempts to find a paid position. She wrote numerous emails and attended multiple meetings in this effort but was never able to find a position through the OYE staff. After months of frustration Mary used her work readiness and advocacy skills obtained through her nine months on the YWP youth staff to find a position with Verizon Fios. She was not only able to find and be hired for the position but she attended work consistently and excelled.