



Young Women's Project Annual Report: 2008-09

2009 has been a transformative year for YWP; our most difficult year but one of our most successful.

February 2009 was the first time in 14 years that we thought YWP might close its doors. Things did not look good. We just spent all of our general support on TWA, which we now had to shut down (laying off three devoted staff members). We had enough funding for 7 months and limited prospects. We had no individual donor infrastructure. No rich aunts. After several meetings with the staff – explaining the financial situation and the furloughs and our fundraising prospects, I posed a question. We may have just seven months to live – so what are we doing to do with it? The question helped to refocus the staff on our purpose, the needs of our teens, and the results we wanted to achieve. They rose to the occasion. Generating the support and funding that would allow us to continue into 2010 would require doing extraordinary work under uncertain and difficult conditions. With the support and guidance of the board, we took a step back and defined a bold three-year agenda of advocacy, institutional change, and youth leadership development. We got to work.

We raised the most money ever. We trained more teen staff leaders (48!) who demonstrated their leadership at the highest levels of city decision making. We reached 100 teens through TWA. We made significant progress in moving our agenda for older youth in foster care – developing briefing papers and policy recommendations on education, safety net services, and permanence; building close working relationships with key City Council members, agency directors, and mayoral staff, and building support for a foster youth transition center. PHASE has made strides on a number of fronts – moving condom availability campaigns in five schools, classroom sex education training in four, and completing an assessment of teen friendly clinics which will lay the ground work for improving reproductive health services and access for hundreds. We also built a close working relationship with staff in DC Public Schools and the Office of State Superintendent's of Education (OSSE) that has enabled us to move our comprehensive sexual education agenda forward.

With the Board's thoughtful guidance and the staff's determination, YWP was able to turn this crisis as an opportunity. Faced with many difficult situations – limited resources, downsizing TWA, laying off staff, working to minimize the impact of a TWA budget deficit – were able to make hard decisions, implement them gracefully, strengthen our organization, and emerge as a stronger leader in the DC nonprofit community.

All of this struggle brought us closer to our core purpose as an organization: the transformation of youth as leaders and agents of justice who can apply that justice at all levels – personal and institutional. We work to prepare and place our teens in position to influence policy and decision making at the highest levels. As an organization, we have two commitments. One is to our teens – to do everything we can to cultivate and support their leadership. The other is to work with them to create the conditions that will help them change their lives and those of their peers. Our job is not done until those conditions are created and those lives change. Part of the transformation YWP has been through in the past year is affirming and deepening these commitments – and moving beyond and through all of the obstacles and distractions that were getting in the way of making good on that commitment.

As we did that, our organization shifted. Here are some of the main changes:

1. We shifted our program focus. By shutting down TWA, which was losing effectiveness and consuming an enormous level of organizational resources – we freed up organizational resources to focus on our teen-led campaigns and they took off. Guided by our teen's needs and ambition, we developed a long term vision for institutional change for older youth in the foster care system and for reproductive rights and access for teen women and have made much progress toward making this vision a reality.
2. We shifted the organizational culture from internal staff-focused process to external teen-focused results. We got clear on why we were here. In order to survive, we had to produce results and that became the lens that everything was evaluated against. This helped us to reclaim our core organizational values, set strong program and operational goals, and create clear expectations for our staff.

3. We dramatically increased our presence and leadership in the foster care and reproductive health communities – building several key partnerships, bringing the youth voice to the table, raising the bar on what we expect from our government, and shaping the community agendas for youth in these areas.
4. Compelled by survival and the insistence of the Board, we started building the long-neglected organizational capacity in communication, resource development, staff development, and tracking and evaluation. We made significant progress our communication capacity and thanks to the Board's house party work – established a solid foundation to build our capacity to reach individual donors.
5. We rebuilt our staff. TWA staff members Clynthia Graham (Director), Tdisho Doe (Coordinator), and Aminata Ahmadu (Coordinator) were laid off at the end of May. FCC Coordinator Andrea Matsuoka left for law school in April. PHASE Coordinator Kerriann Peart took a job with City Year in July. FCC Senior Coordinator Tosin Ogunyoku and Fellow Laura Gill – who you've had a chance to know and see in action – weathered the YWP storm and deserve the credit for the incredible accomplishments of that team during the past six months. We have three new staff members. Dr. Anne Eckman (PHASE Sr. Manager) joined our staff in June, Anne is a reproductive health superstar and brings an incredible level of expertise in training, research, curricula development, evaluation and has worked for organizations including Futures Group, CEDPA, Population Council, and others. Malane Cobourne joined YWP in September of 2009 as the Program Associate for PHASE. Malane served 2 years in Peace Corps Guyana, as a health educator and promoter and served as a Program Coordinator for Guyana's Ministry of Health's Youth Friendly Service (YFS) Program, where she led a collaboration to equalize and improve sexual and reproductive healthcare access and service among youth and underserved populations. Samantha Griffin is our new FCC-Communications Fellow, recent graduate from Duke University with a background in youth development, arts, and women's advocacy, is our new FCC research and training fellow.
6. We shifted the role of our Board – who is now much more engaged on all levels of the organization from fiscal oversight to strategic guidance, capacity building, and individual donor fundraising.

We are happy to report that we managed to reach most of the above objectives for FCC and PHASE (and will by November) – we were not able to reach our participant expansion goals with TWA. Details are provided below:

FOSTER CARE CAMPAIGN

The Foster Care Campaign builds the power of foster youth – training them as leaders and advocates and putting them to work educating their peers and pushing for system reform. In the past three years, we've made enormous progress transforming CFSA's older youth programming. FCC is guided by 3 three-year goals that work to create a positive, promising future for youth aging out of the foster care system:

1. **Establish a strong set of youth development and growth outcomes** (in education, employment, health, housing, self advocacy, and stability) that will frame an advocacy agenda for older youth and serve as a foundation for programming and support for this group. Build support and commitment in the child welfare community, with Child and Family Services (CFSA), CFSA contractors, and among the City Council and Mayor's office. Hold organizations who work with older youth accountable for these outcomes.
2. **Create more community-based programming for older youth** that is committed to the above out comes. Move the \$1.29 of federal funding available for programming out of CFSA and into the hands of contractors with a proven record in youth development and engagement and the areas covered in the outcomes.
3. **Create a Youth Transition Center** that would provide core educational and employment services as well as apprentice programs, recreational activities, a fitness center, an internet café, a computer room, a media center, expanded mental health services and youth-led businesses for youth 14-23.

We are happy to report that we made significant progress on all of our 2008-09 objectives, described below.

Objective 1: Build the leadership capacity and holistic development of 30 youth leaders.

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Activities: So far during the past year, YWP worked with 36 young women and men, 85% of them foster youth, on our staff: 14 have been with us for at least a year, 12 stayed with us for 2-10 months and 10 new staff is joining our group for the summer. As of November 2009, we've hired the most dynamic, skilled, motivated teen staff ever – 15 teen men and women, 11 of them foster youth, most between 18-20. This group is very focused on the issues and challenges of aging out – which brings a new momentum and urgency to this work. Our teen staff started their core training in mid-November. Much of our time so far has been spent defining our education and advocacy agenda. Developing our youth staff is central to all of our FCC work and is evidenced by all of the below work. Here are some highlights.

- ✓ 30 teen staff has a strong self-concept, a powerful sense of their own worth;
- ✓ 30 teen staff is able to help each other identify problems, identify solutions, and commit to working through them
- ✓ 30 teen staff is able to communicate assertively to each other and adult staff and in their relationship
- ✓ 30 teen staff is willing to resolve conflicts on staff and in families-group homes
- ✓ 30 teen staff is able to set goals, develop action plans, make commitment
- ✓ 5 teen staff applied and were accepted to college
- ✓ 28 teen staff maintained a 3.0 average
- ✓ 14 teen staff made presentations at community meetings and with council members and the mayor's office staff
- ✓ 10 teen staff conducted workshops reaching 30 youth
- ✓ 14 teens led an email letter writing campaign
- ✓ 10 teens presented testimony to city council

Teen Staff Training: The FCC staff spent a lot of time in October reorganizing, defining, filling in gaps of our curricula. Each FCC staff member will be require to go through 48 hours of core training broken down into seven areas: self advocacy, system rights and resources, health and wellness, educational strengthening, leadership and belonging, financial management, employment and self reliance. After core training is completed, teen staff choose one of two advanced skill areas (advocacy- organizing or training-education) for which they receive another 25 hours of training. All of the FCC training involved interactive skills-knowledge building along with hands on personal and professional project work.

Objective 2: Build the life skills, resource networks, and system navigation capacity of 250 foster youth in group homes, independent living programs, and foster homes.

Activities:

- ✓ FCC teen staff conducted 30 hours of training for 30 foster youth on self advocacy, rights and regulations, navigating the system, and building relationships
- ✓ **We released *It's Time to Take Matters into Your Own Hands: A Handbook for Foster Youth*** is a survival guide for DC youth in care, providing more than 200 pages of essential information on rights, regulations, and how to navigate the system. Written by and for foster youth and caregivers, this handbook has been distributed in paper to more than 200 youth in care and 800 social workers and hundreds more through our website. The Handbook is an important tool to facilitate our trainings, recruit FCC members, advocate for system changes, and increase the quality of care. We will distribute more Handbooks this summer when CFSA distributes the Handbook to its staff and contractors.
- ✓ FCC teen staff conducted workshops of 35 adult volunteers of the Court Appointed Special Advocates on communication, trust building, youth power, and adultism. We also presented two workshops (reaching 40 adults) exploring the difficulty of aging out and youth need for permanence.
- ✓ On August 14th, our youth organized and presented **A Life Untold**, an event that combined a 40 minute theatrical performance (developed in partnership with City of Peace), a screening of our aging out PSAs, and

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a presentation of our research on education, safety net services, and permanence . The event convened 35 youth and adults (including staff from CFSA, social workers, GALs, group home staff, and advocates) to share information and experiences.

- ✓ We released *The Journey of Uncertainty*, a documentary about foster youth transitioning out of care that was created by FCC adult staff member Tosin Ogunyoku.
- ✓ We released three teen directed and created video PSAs on the realities of youth aging out –one focusing on permanence, one on safety net services, and one on education. All capture the harrowing experiences of teens preparing to age out of the foster care system.

Objective 3: Implement the Mandatory Allowance Campaign. In April 2009, FCC received final approval from CFSA to implementing the Mandatory Allowance Campaign (MAC) --- which provides a \$300 monthly allowance to teens in group homes in exchange for solid academic performance positive behaviors; and helps teen save for transition out of the system. CFSA has approved the project and committed to providing \$700,000 in allowance funds. However – moving that commitment into action is a significant, time consuming challenge. This is our plan moving forward. We will continue to work through fall 2009 to get MAC off the ground as a CFSA project. If we cannot make implementation progress, we will end this collaborative effort and pursue a Mandatory Allowance by getting it incorporated into the group home and ILP regulations. We will pursue the academic program piece of MAC through an YWP-run pilot.

Objective 4: Develop and pass legislation and regulations that support accountability and effectiveness of older youth programs and policies.

- ✓ **FCC teen staff successfully advocated (through testimonies, studies, meetings with council members and the mayor) for several changes in CFSA's older youth programming reflected in the first FY 2010 budget.** They include: 1) Ending the low-performing Keys for Life program and transferring the \$1.29 budget to be used to fund comprehensive youth development services, implemented by a private organization; 2) Implementing performance based contracts for group homes; 3) Funding a Foster Youth Transition Center planning process (\$75,000) and study on older youth (\$59,000); and 4) Creating opportunities for youth to be involved in program development and decision making. Our work to build and fund a Foster Youth Transition Center was recognized by several council members (including Tommy Wells, Vince Gray, Michael Brown, and Harry Thomas Jr.) as a top priority for FY2010. YWP has been recognized by the mayor's office and Human Services Committee Chair Tommy Wells as the organization
- ✓ **In November 2009, we were asked by Council Member Tommy Wells to organize and conduct a hearing on older youth in the foster care system** – thus handing over the power of the Human Services Committee to our youth staff for a day. This is an extraordinary opportunity to surface critical issues, collect new data and information, and to set the stage for a powerful policy-action agenda for the transformation of older youth programs and services. The hearing is January 22nd. Further, the FCC advocacy team will be presenting testimony at several hearings, meeting with council members and mayoral staff, and working to ensure that our policy recommendations are reflected in the budget. As part of our policy agenda, we are continuing work to create a DC Child Welfare Ombudsman that would investigate and respond to complaints, collect and disseminate data, evaluate agency contracts and programs, and make policy and practice recommendations. We are working with the American Bar Associations Center for Children and the Law – the leading national expert on child welfare ombudsman to move this legislation forward.

Objective 5: Conduct research on older youth: Activities: The lack of accurate data from CFSA on older youth continues to be a vexing problem in trying to evaluate progress and youth status. To address this gap and establish a strong foundation for our own advocacy work, the FCC adult and youth staff are compiling a broad range of data and information including surveys and interviews with youth, contracts and reports from CFSA and their contractors, self reported data from contractors, and interviews with a diversity of child welfare leaders in the four areas: 1) education; 2) safety net services (housing, health insurance); 3) permanence; and 4) employment. This information will be released to the community – targeting key decision makers (council, mayor's office, CFSA leadership), community providers, and youth. We completed drafts of our first round of briefing papers and plan to release them in February 2010.

Objective 6: Creating and securing budget support for a Foster Youth Transition Center YTC Creating a Foster Youth Transition Center. In August 2008, FCC teen staff decided to focus on creating a transition center as their annual campaign. Providing intensive training and support services for youth ages 15-25 in a nurturing environment, YTC would provide an important safety net for the 150 DC foster youth who turn 21 and age out of the system each year. Many do not have the knowledge, skills, and supports they need to be self-sufficient, successful adults. The most significant impact of this work was the budget additions mentioned above. Here is some of the youth-led work during the past year that helped to win this Campaign. Our youth staff:

- Organized a youth email campaign that generated 100 City Council letters asking for the full funding of YTC.
- Organized and presented at three City Council Meetings (Brown, Thomas, Wells) to secure support for YTC in the FY2010 budget.
- Organized and presented at meetings with the Mayor's office staff to make the case for a comprehensive program, a plan, and to move the YTC site from Merritt to another school.
- Released their "Youth Voices" photo documentary that includes more than 30 interviews with foster youth and their allies about the challenges they face in preparing to age out of the system. The documentary includes photographs on poster board, with key quotes from the interviews. Youth Voices is currently displayed in the City Council Wilson Building.
- Released a report "Foster Youth Speak Up: Aging out and the Transition Center"—a three page report that features data on what happens to youth after they age out, an assessment of current CFSA youth programming, models of transition centers across the country, and most importantly – youth experiences and recommendations.
- Advocated for a Transition Center through meetings with the Mayors staff and CFSA leadership.
- Testified at three youth hearings convened by Chairman Vince Gray (1.15.09, 3.14.09, 4.30.09) about the need for a Transition Center. Chairman Gray said he supported the Transition Center, as did Council Member Yvette Alexandra. He agreed to display the "Youth Voices" photo project in the first floor of the Wilson Building and asked the youth to go to the CFSA budget hearing, April 3.
- Testified at the CFSA budget hearing (4.3.09) and a special hearing on 4.25.09. Our testimony urged the Committee on Human Resources to support a Transition Center by: 1) Ensuring it's included in the budget; 2) Requiring that it be placed in a safe, Metro accessible neighborhood (the designated Merrit School site is neither); and 3) Ensure that the Center feature comprehensive, youth development based programming. Council Member Wells heard their testimony and said that he would go to the Merrit and try to find out more detailed plan.

Challenges and Lessons: A significant challenge this year was -- how to balance youth-adult roles when the political game gets fast and complicated? YTC was launched as a youth-led campaign in August 2008. For most of the year, our advocacy remained steady and manageable by the youth staff. We plotted out an internal strategy – working to put pressure on CFSA and the mayor's office to: 1) Incorporate youth into the planning process for the center; 2) Develop a comprehensive plan to run the center; and 3) Identify a building that was more safe and accessible than Merritt, the building designated by the Mayor to house YTC. And then Committee on Human Services chair Council Member Tommy Wells changed the game in the April 30th budget mark up. He reallocated the \$818,000 in YTC building funds that was in the original budget to cover earmarks but required that a YTC plan be created (and allocated \$75,000), required that youth be involved in the planning process, and created a budget of \$1.29 million for the YTC program. Suddenly, FCC had the plan and the program (and were put in charge of the planning) but now needed a building. We launched an intensive 3 week campaign to educate and influence council members to restore building funding. Although we did not get building funding restored in FY2010 – several council members agreed to make it a priority for FY2011.

The challenge became --- how do we maintain youth led decision making and leadership in a situation full of flip flops and opportunism and complicated political strategy when the strategy was changing every day with each council member meeting. We did our best to surface all decisions, inform the youth, and then make recommendations. The youth stepped up their involvement by working every day after school for three weeks --- even though they were in the middle of finals. Youth continued to take major roles in presenting at council meetings, making decisions about the YTC planning process, and deciding on the major program areas to include in the YTC. Adult staff took a lead role with political strategizing and producing materials that were used in our letter writing campaigns. It was also a challenge keeping the youth energized and not disappointed, and encouraging them to push beyond their comfort zones. One example of this is our email campaign. We needed to mobilize support for the YTC -- which meant influencing City Council. Our youth staff was not excited about any of the "influencing council" choices available to us at the time -- letters, emails, calls. Eventually they chose email but were not well versed in using email as a communication tool and thought struggled with the implementation.

Throughout this process, we were able to maintain good relationships and honest communication with the staff in the Mayor's office and in Tommy Wells office and received much advice from board members and other youth-led organizations. We learned the importance of transparency for decision making and contingency planning. Because of this experience, we've invested more time into going through various levels of decision making coming up in the campaign and defining youth and adult roles more clearly.

PEER HEALTH AND SEXUALITY EDUCATION (PHASE)

The Peer Health and Sexuality Education Project (PHASE) is a teen-adult partnership that provides comprehensive sexuality education through DCPS health classes, improves access to services through teen-led campaigns, and facilitates city-wide comprehensive sex education through curricula development and advocacy. Working to reduce unplanned pregnancies and STI-HIV infection rates while developing teen women and men as reproductive health advocates, our long term success vision includes three main goals:

- Full implementation of Comprehensive Sexual Education curricula in DCPS and Charter Senior High Schools. YWP defines CSE to include the full range of issues (and related skills and attitudes) cited in our current law.
- Fully functioning and accessible community clinics that are affordable, respect teen privacy and confidentiality rights, and provide services that teens need to make responsible sexual health decisions; and
- An active network of peer educators, advocates, and project developers operating in 75% of DCPS and Charter High Schools who can help to implement policy, raise awareness, and educate peers

Overall Progress: Although we got off to a late start (we didn't have a staff in place until June) -- PHASE had it's most productive and effective year ever -- meeting all of our objectives for the year (and more!).

Objective 1: Build the capacity and leadership of 15 teen women leaders. *PHASE's Youth Educator-Advocate Program (YEAP)* is an intensive work-development program that involves about 25 youth staff each year who develop an ambitious youth-led agenda and develop and implement a range of projects. Right now we have 13 fully-committed, awesome young women peer educator-advocates who completed 200+ hours of summer work-train and are working 6 hours per week.

Activities:

- ✓ **Provided 90 hours of in-depth training on the core PHASE comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) topics** (body image, gender and power, healthy relationships, pregnancy prevention and options, STIs, HIV, etc).
- ✓ **Provided 50 hours of training-education skills**, split between 25 hours of skills-building activities in facilitation/training skills and 25 hours of teach back practicum including teach backs and community workshops for DC Parks and Recreation and MetroTeen AIDS.

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- ✓ **Provided 60 hours of skills building on clinic assessment and research** split between 20 hours of skills-building training and 40 hours of hands-on work to develop, implement and carry out an assessment of DC clinics that provide RH services to teens.
- ✓ **Provided 40 hours of training and strategic work to develop the condom availability** campaign through project development (setting goals, objectives, and building collaborations), survey design, understanding the DCPS power structure, facilitating meetings, and building teen membership. They also deepened their expertise on HIV prevention, condom distribution, and barrier methods.

Objective 2: Implement 35-72 hours of sex education training for 200 teen women and men -- increasing knowledge and skills in reproductive health issues. Youth-Adult Training on Comprehensive Sexuality Education (CSE) provides interactive, teen-and-adult led classroom instruction to teen women and men in DC Public and Charter High Schools. This strategy has two main purposes: 1) To develop and test 30 hours of CSE curricula; and 2) to deliver much needed CSE directly to teen women. We are pursuing this strategy through two tracks. At 2-3 high schools, PHASE teen and adult staff will provide 12-30 hours of comprehensive sexual health education through classroom-based and after school training. At 2-3 DC Charter Schools, we will provide training of training to teachers, curricula, and evaluation support to schools interested in implementing our CSE curricula. Here is what we've accomplished in the past year.

Activities:

- ✓ Provided 12 hours of CSE training on anatomy, menstruation, communication, conflict resolution, and pregnancy prevention to 48 teen women and men (40 teen women, 8 men) at School Without Walls.
- ✓ Provided 50 hours of training to 15 teen women at Chavez High School on the full PHASE reproductive health curricula.
- ✓ Provided 6 hours of training to 24 students at Meridian on anatomy, body image, and communication.
- ✓ Developed a training of trainer's curricula and resources for 25 9th and 10th teachers at Caesar Chavez Public Charter School. These teachers will deliver 16 hours of PHASE training through Advisory Sessions during the next three months. We are training teachers, providing curricula and resources, and collecting and analyzing evaluation data. This pilot will reach 250 9th and 10th grade students. Three of our Chavez teen staff are working with teachers to co-lead sessions each week.

Objective 3: Increasing Condom Use and Distribution for 100s of students through the Condom Access Campaign (CAC). Through teen-led project development, training, and advocacy, the Condom Access Campaign (CAC) aims to improve the sexual health and decision making of DCPS students through full implementation of the Condom Availability Policy (DC-CAP). Current DC-CAP allows students to access up to 10 condoms, female condom, or dental dams per visit to their school nurse. But the policy is not being implemented or followed in most schools due to inaccessible nurses, inadequate supplies, lack of student education and policy promotion. Led by 13 PHASE teen women staff members, CAC aims to increase condom distribution and use and improve student sexual health for 1,800 out of a total of 2,800 students at four schools

Activities:

- ✓ Completed surveys with 400 teen men and women from three schools about condom access and reproductive service use.
- ✓ Completed HIV-STI safer sex educational interventions with 250 youth from 4 schools
- ✓ Trained 25 teachers from Cesar Chavez Public Charter School on HIV prevention, services, and statistics (who trained 250 9th and 10th graders on the same issues.)

- ✓ Meetings with nurses and administrators from 4 schools to make recommendations about the Condom Availability Policy (CAP)
- ✓ Through meetings with principals at 3 schools (Wilson, Chavez, Coolidge), increase administrator commitment to full implementation of the CAC at their school.
- ✓ In October 2009 As a result of the findings presented at the DC City Council Committee on Health roundtable report on Youth Sexual Health, including testimony from two PHASE teen staff about barriers to accessing condoms from school nurses, the OSSE has initiated a 1-day training for DC school nurses to increase their youth friendliness and 'give school nurses new tool and skills for dealing with sensitive subjects such as HIV/AIDS, LGBTQ students and human sexuality.' The training for nurses will be held February 12, 2010, and will include youth in planning and delivering the training. Four PHASE teen women will participate in planning and delivering the nurse's training.

Objective 4: Increase access to reproductive health care for teen women by improving accessibility and service delivery of community clinics: During Summer of 2009, 14 PHASE teen staff identified lack of access to affordable and confidential contraception, including Plan B, as a major barrier to DC teen women's ability to fulfill their reproductive rights. Teen staff, with guidance from adults: developed a set of teen-woman friendly criteria for RH care at clinics; drafted an observation checklist and secret shopper phone survey; and carried out data collection.

The teen-led assessment of 34 clinics in the District (15 through clinic observation and 34 through secret shopper phone interviews) reveals a number of problems: About 55% of frontline workers do not know the teen confidentiality policies. Contraception and other services are not affordable to teens. Most clinics charge for services based on parent insurance (which may breach teen confidentiality, if parents receive claims from insurance companies) or sliding scale (based on parents', not teens', income). Many clinics are inaccessible by phone and do not have hours that accommodate teens.

Teen staff presented preliminary results to staff of DC Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy and National Alliance to Advance Adolescent Health. We will finish our data collection and release a report at the end of the year; at that time the teen staff will come together to decide where and how to proceed with their campaign. At this juncture, it looks like the Clinic Access Campaign will focus on three main areas:

Objective 5: Increase PHASE involvement of adult and teen staff leaders in community coalitions and collaborations.

Activities: PHASE has been invited as 1 of 5 community-based organizations to provide capacity-building for a Youth Advisory Council (YAC) on health convened by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) and DCPS Office of Youth Engagement; one of the PHASE teen staff will also be a member of the YAC. PHASE teen staff members are also increasing their visibility at other events in the community; look for them to appear as part of the audience of a DC Department of Health WebNR that will be filmed on October 22, 2009 to provide a 1-hour education seminar to certify peer educators and adults for condom distribution.

PHASE staff invested a lot of time in the past three months building alliances and joining coalitions. We are members of the DC Healthy Youth Coalition, the STI Community Coalition, and the OYE Youth Advisory Council. We have active working relationship with Metro Teen AIDS, Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, Planned Parenthood, and Teen Alliance for Prepared Parenting, Latin American Youth Center, and Children's Medical Center. To deliver PHASE classroom training, we are actively working with Caesar Chavez (Capitol Hill and Parkview), School without Walls, Meridian Charter School, McKinley High School, and Wilson Senior High School. We also work closely with the Office of Youth Engagement (OSE) and Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) and have relationships with staff in the Mayor's Office and several City Council Members.

Objective 6: Institutionalize Comprehensive Sexual Health Education for DCPS Senior High Schools:

Activities: The need for CSE is a critical issue identified by our PHASE teen staff as a top priority. They want comprehensive curricula, they want the maximum hours of instruction, and they want a mandated role for teen women as peer educators. Although a CSE law was passed in 1979, it has never been implemented. YWP aims to have CSE (that meet the standards and the law) fully implemented in DC public schools within three years.

Over the past three months, PHASE has intensively researched, networked and mapped trends critical to our goal of promoting comprehensive sex-ed (CSE) in the DC public schools (DCPS). Figuring out how to proceed locally meant first identifying resources and curricula on a national level. Through meetings and interviews with Advocates for Youth, SEICUS, and others— we confirmed our suspicion: There is no such thing as science based and comprehensive.¹ current *comprehensive* sexuality education curricula (the most notable examples being the FLASH curricula that Washington State uses and the Our Whole Lives Curricula developed by the Unitarian Universalists) have not been rigorously evaluated (in large part because the evaluation funding over the last eight years focused more narrowly on HIV prevention program outcomes.) Furthermore, many innovative, emerging innovative international model sexual health curricula that explicitly address gender norms and disparities – and support teen women and men to critically examine and transform inequitable norms and power relations – have yet to be integrated into most US sexual health curricula.² Thus, the search for curricula that is comprehensive and holistic and evaluated within the science-based framework is a national challenge as well as a local one. Moreover, in YWP's experiences, the few available comprehensive sexuality education curricula and their lesson plans often do not use innovative, interactive, hands on, approaches that connect with DC teens. So the curricula that DCPS (and the country) needs --- does not exist yet.

On the DC level, we are now in conversation with the DCPS Office of Youth Engagement and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) to better understand their commitments and plans to CSE and to figure out how to support and move this work. So far, DCPS-OYE has agreed to support CSE and has completed delivery plans and curricula for elementary and middle school which they intend to roll out in the New Year. High school CSE is moving more slowly. OYE has identified two curricula: Be a Responsible Teen (BART) with additional lesson plans created by ANSWER (at Rutgers University). We are working through meetings with OYE, youth organizing an advocacy, and our work heading up the curricula development subcommittee for the Healthy Youth Coalition to move CSE in three ways: 1) Secure a commitment to engaging the community of reproductive health organizations in providing curricula and CSE implementation input; and 2) Get a commitment from OYE to sharing plans for roll out and implementation and progress reports. We are also working to increase the visibility of this issue through testimonies and meetings with City Council Members, school administrators, and key mayoral staff – and to mobilize our teen members to write letters, organize direct actions, and testify about their experience to City Council.

Challenges and Lessons Learned: PHASE has confronted several key challenges this year – and had to quickly adapt to new policy and funding landscapes. Related to the policy landscape, we witnessed major shifts in the policy environment for school-based comprehensive sexuality education (CSE) both at the local DC and national levels. DCPS moved forward with engaging a respected national organization to develop CSE curricula for grade and junior high schools – and thus CSE is a priority on the DCPS internal agenda in a way it has not been before. At the same time, even with this tremendous progress, DC teen women and men are still far from achieving CSE: hours for implementation remain limited; involvement of community based organizations and youth (to date) has been limited to prioritize topics, shape evaluation of whether the new curricula meets student needs, or monitor whether in fact teachers and schools are implementing the new curriculum; gender and power – key gateways factors to Sexual and reproductive health outcomes – are not explicitly articulated; and new high school curricula have yet to be developed. Locally, our lessons learned include refining how to build relationships that balance being a watchdog for what yet needs to occur - and yet champion a positive shift in central DCPS. Together, these challenges affirm for us the renewed importance that Young Women's Project and PHASE will continue to play in advocating for curricula that

(the FOSE REPORT by Danen Scorage ¹

² Globally WHO and UNFPA have issued recent technical papers on the critical importance – and emerging evaluated models – of sexual health education that promotes critical analysis and transformation of gender norms and inequalities among teens. The recent Ford Foundation Gender and HIV Roundtable Report (April 2009) identified comprehensive sexuality education that address gender disparities and promote gender equality as one of their priority recommendations for the new U.S. National HIV/AIDS Strategy. For a recent public health article on the gap in US efforts to integrate gender, see *Are HIV/AIDS Prevention Interventions for Heterosexually Active Men in the United States Gender-Specific?* Dworkin, MS, RE Fullilove, EdD and D Peacock .June 2009, Vol 99, No. 6 | American Journal of Public Health 981-984

address gender and power, that involve youth in shaping and evaluating whether they connect to the realities of their lives, and in organizing youth to continue to provide an "outside" voice to help expand and accelerate commitment at individual school level to ensure that new curricula are taught and at a system level to ensure that CSE emerges as a key priority along with reading and writing.

TEEN WOMEN IN ACTION

Teen Women in Action (TWA) is an after-school program that builds DC teen women leaders at several DC Public High Schools through self advocacy, leadership development, and project implementation. Through modules including self-advocacy, reproductive health, mental and physical health and violence prevention, TWA provides the information, skills, and support teens need to make healthy life choices, set and achieve goals, and create projects that improve the lives of young women in their communities. Participants receive community service, stipends (\$3.00 per hour for all session hours attended), as well as opportunities for employment.

After 15 years of operation, TWA underwent significant changes in the past year. The program continued to produce impressive leadership outcomes. But when we tried to expand the reach and infrastructure, bringing on additional staff and leadership, the program doubled its budget in two years and became financially unsustainable. We used general support funds to support TWA throughout the fall program but needed to scale the program back for the spring semester. After a six month break, we developed a plan for a new TWA (now called YWP core leadership training) – which retains all of the old TWA. The new program will:

- ✓ Cultivate new leaders through the same hands-on, popular education based curricula
- ✓ Mobilize to help make tangible community and institutional changes for young people.
- ✓ Reach 50-100 teen women at 3-6 DCPS senior high schools each year
- ✓ Link TWA leaders directly with YWP's ongoing campaigns – which offer tangible opportunities for TWA teens to engage their leadership on a number of levels (peer education, research, outreach, organizing, and eventually as staff members).
- ✓ Join forces across high schools to develop city-wide campaigns
- ✓ Utilize teen-led training, engage our youth staff in program implementation

The biggest change is in how TWA will be administered. Instead of operating as a separate program with two layers of management infrastructure – TWA will be staffed by trainers who are managed through the PHASE and FCC programs and contribute to these programs during summer months. This management change will cut TWA costs by 60% and reduce our cost per participant from cut the cost-per-participant hour rate from \$30 to \$15. In spite a much transition, TWA accomplished a lot in the 2008-09 program years including the following:

Outputs:

- ✓ Completed 45 hours of training with six schools (Anacostia, Wilson, Banneker, Coolidge, Roosevelt, McKinley)
- ✓ Completed 20 hours of training with one school (Cardozo)
- ✓ Expanded TWA to four new schools (Banneker, Coolidge, Roosevelt, McKinley)
- ✓ Completed mini-projects at three schools.
- ✓ Developed a parent involvement component
- ✓ Completed 25 hours handling social service issues and referrals for participants.
- ✓ Released our first issue of TWA Transformer newsletter.

Outcomes: The 85 teens that completed TWA during the grant period were able to demonstrate (through post tests, interviews, and observations) that they met all of the below outcomes:

- ✓ Solving problems in their lives and among their friends and family and have a sense of power regarding solving their problems.
- ✓ Are self-directed and able to set and achieve goals
- ✓ Practicing assertive communication and resolving conflicts nonviolently
- ✓ Creating projects that improve the lives of teen women and strengthen their communities.
- ✓ Are committed to and can practice stress-reduction methods, good nutrition and healthy eating, and exercise
- ✓ Have the skills and commitment to develop healthy relationships

- ✓ Have information, knowledge, and understanding of larger issues that affect them so that they are making better choices and decisions.
- ✓ Practicing safer sex and are committed to preventing pregnancy.

CAPACITY BUILDING

YWP made significant progress in the areas of resource diversification and communications, as follows:

Resource Development: Right now YWP is overly reliant on foundation fundraising. Many of whom have lost significant assets in the recession. Our organizational survival depends on our ability to diversify our funding base to include individual donors, corporate giving, and government grants. During the past year, we've been focusing our efforts on individual donor funding. We developed a case statement and a series of direct mail packages; developed organizational and program brochures, updated and redesigned our website, and expanded our donor data base through events and campaigns to include 150 new donors; and organized a series of board-led house parties that raised about \$7,000 and is generating a constant stream of house party commitments. We just (in December 09) received a grant from the from the Washington Area Women's Foundation to support the development and implementation of a plan to diversify and expand our funding base in 2010. We will be working with a consultant to train our board of directors, help us develop donor and other fundraising infrastructure including a data base, and train and coach our staff.

Communications: For too long, YWP has been the best kept secret in town. This year, thanks to a capacity grant from the Meyer Foundation, YWP is working with consultant Betsy Rosso Rosenblatt to develop messages, put together a strategic communications plan, and revamp our website and other materials. This work is described below:

- ✓ **Message development:** Working with consultant Betsy Rosso-Rosenblatt, staff and board developed a core set of messages to describe YWP's work. These messages are consistent across program, position, and function. Armed with these messages, the Board is now more comfortable and more effective raising money. The staff has a greater sense of connection and purpose.
- ✓ **Collateral materials:** Using our messages and working with Betsy, we developed three brochures: one that describes our full program, one that focuses on the Foster Care Campaign, one that focuses on the Peer Health and Sexuality Education program. We used the messages and brochures to craft donor materials and communications. Finally, we released our first quarterly newsletter this month. Featuring several adult and teen staff written articles, this publication feature staff, board, and youth profiles, updates on programs, results, policy initiatives, and relevant issues for DC teen women.
- ✓ **Website development:** As our main communication tool, YWP's website aims to offer clear, compelling information about whom we are and what we do and provide resources to the youth and families we serve. Many of the institutions we deal with (Child and Family Services for example) do not have any on line information that older youth and families need to navigate the system. Filling this gap will be an important function of our website. The development of the website will happen throughout the next six months and is divided into three phases.
- ✓ **On-Line Social Networks:** Tapping our young and tech-savvy client base, YWP set up profiles on Facebook and Twitter. Starting in January, will do weekly messages. We are using Facebook to help with fundraising, long term evaluation, teen staff recruitment, and other outreach work.

Financial: Between October 2008 and September 2009, YWP raised \$416,650 and spent \$455,127. We had \$130,162 in total assets at the end of September 2009. YWP raised \$12,000 from individual donations. All other funds came from foundation grants from several local foundations including: Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, Commonweal Foundation, Consumer Health Foundation, Freddie Mac Foundation, Hill-Snowdon Foundation, Marpat Foundation, Mental Wellness Foundation, Meyer Foundation, Moriah Fund, Moran Family Foundation, Rockefeller Brothers Fund, and the Summit Fund.