

YAC: A Tradition of Youth Philanthropy

Supporting youth philanthropy is a long-standing tradition in the community foundation field throughout the nation and very strongly in Michigan. Did you know that right here in Iosco County we have our own group of youth philanthropists who are learning the importance of giving back while working for the betterment of our communities?

The Iosco County Youth Advisory Council, or YAC, is a group of young people from across the county who are actively engaged in philanthropy through grantmaking, community service and endowment

building. While the YAC members have the guidance and support of adult advisors, the grant decisions are entirely in the hands of these youth, and they take their responsibility very seriously.

“It is amazing to see students from all the schools in our county come together and make very important decisions,” said Jordan Barclay, the YAC advisor for Hale High School. “This is where I see the most growth from our members as well. Sometimes the ones who are generally quiet will have the strongest opinions and bring up thoughts or questions no one in the group would have



Iosco County YAC Advisors (left to right): Anissa Emery, Jordan Barclay and Julie Decker

otherwise considered. And often their grant decisions involve deep retrospection and being able to put aside personal feelings or biases to work within the YAC to come up with the best possible solutions for their community.”

In 2015, our YAC awarded over \$8,000 in grants to support youth programs in our communities. Funding from these grants comes from the Iosco County Kellogg Youth Endowment Fund, which was originally established in 1997 through a matching grant opportunity from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Since then, the YAC has awarded over \$188,000 in grants for youth programs in Iosco County, and they work to build awareness of the endowment fund to encourage donations that will help build that fund to generate more grant dollars each year. In fact, a quick look at our 2015 donor list shows the Iosco County YAC as a donor. Why? Because our YAC members are learning the importance of charitable giving. To them, their donation is not a gift to the YAC – it is a gift to the youth of their communities.



YAC members also gain leadership and teamwork skills through the program, and being involved in philanthropic initiatives helps to create a sense of ownership and pride in our communities that many youth in our small-town and rural areas don't develop.

"As a part of YAC, we all work toward our basic goal of philanthropy, unity and positive change in all of our communities," said Oscoda YAC member Jessica Cummings.

"Although the four different schools in Iosco County are varied in size and socio-economics, our YAC members have the chance to see that they are not much different from their peers at those other schools," said Jordan. "They see that everyone faces similar challenges in their schools, communities and daily lives. Once that is established, they all work as a team on a level playing field to come up with ways to best meet and eliminate these challenges."

Cummings added that meeting students from other schools helped to connect them through their similarities.

"You learn about your differences, strengths, weaknesses, and our different ideas and viewpoints when you spend time with people from other schools," said Cummings. "It really puts a different light on things."

If you are interested in supporting the Iosco County Youth Advisory Council, please consider a gift to the Iosco County Kellogg Youth Endowment Fund to help these young people give back to the youth in our communities for generations to come.



Oscoda Area Schools YAC members