



Annual Report 2016

Mentoring – Community Service – Teen Court. Three different programs with one common aim: connecting disengaged young people with their community and helping them make responsible choices.

For nearly thirty-five years, Volunteers for Youth has worked to make a difference in the lives of Orange County children. As the county's only nonprofit focusing solely on delinquency prevention, Volunteers for Youth steps in to provide guidance to young people in need of a helping hand.

In 2016, Volunteers for Youth continued to face the challenges of a stagnant economy and shrinking middle class. In spite of those challenges, with the help of dedicated employees, board members, volunteers, and community partners, the three core programs of the organization are thriving, bringing needed services to even more local youth.

MENTORING

Volunteers for Youth operates Orange County's longest running mentoring program. Mentoring is the organization's original, signature program. Research shows that mentoring is one of the most effective means of curbing delinquency. The hundreds of children matched with mentors through Volunteers for Youth are living proof that mentoring works.

In 2009, Volunteers for Youth formed a mentoring partnership with the SMART project, a UNC Buckley Public Service Scholars program. Through this partnership, 133 UNC students have been matched one-on-one as mentors to 133 local children who could benefit from time with a caring mentor. As participants in a fall and spring semester sociology class, the SMART mentors commit to spending the entire academic year with their young "mentees." Volunteers for Youth salutes the SMART students for their leadership role in an exciting and innovative collaborative project.

Every Girl Counts, a group mentoring project for middle school girls, started in 2010. The group meets weekly and is designed to empower its members and set them on a path to future success. Led by Nicole Hunter with assistance from Oluseun Omitoogun, the girls participate in fun activities that help them explore the challenges of growing up and how to make wise choices when faced with those challenges. In addition to their regular weekday meetings, Every Girl Counts sponsors occasional Saturday activities such as service projects and field trips to college campuses.

Volunteers for Youth continues its traditional community mentoring program, matching trained volunteers with children who could benefit from positive adult role models. In 2016, 11 community mentors have been paired one-on-one with 11 local children. Together these matches have explored the community, learned new skills, attended live performances and sporting events, and developed lasting relationships.

Executive director Susan Worley, social work intern Katie Yow, and Every Girl Counts coordinator Nicole Hunter run the mentoring program at Volunteers for Youth.

JUVENILE COMMUNITY SERVICE AND RESTITUTION

Volunteers for Youth oversees the community service work of all young people in Orange County who are assigned community service by the courts after getting in trouble with the law. Volunteers for Youth recruits nonprofits throughout the county to serve as work sites for the program, where volunteer supervisors evaluate and manage the youths' work. By completing community service hours, program participants learn valuable work skills and accountability for their actions. Seventy-three young people participated in the program during the 2015-16 fiscal year.

While it's a constant challenge for Volunteers for Youth to maintain worksites that are easily accessible to all young people wherever they may live, the burgeoning interest in locally grown food has given rise to a number of food-related worksites. We are fortunate to have community gardens throughout the county that welcome community service youth – the Community Farm at Chestnut Ridge in Efland, Anathoth Garden in Cedar Grove, Hope Garden and Herban Garden in Chapel Hill, and Genesis Farm west of Chapel Hill. At both the Hillsborough and Carrboro Farmers Markets, community service participants set up signs, tents, and tables and provide general assistance to the vendors. In addition to regularly scheduled worksite opportunities, young people participated this past year in one-time projects such as neighborhood spruce-ups with the Jackson Center and community clean-ups with the Carrboro Police Department.

Scott Dreyer and Alex Lowrie coordinate the community service program at Volunteers for Youth.

TEEN COURT

Teen Court is an alternative court program for young people who have committed minor offenses and are referred from law enforcement, juvenile services, or the schools. These first time offenders are tried and sentenced by a jury of their peers, with other teens playing the roles of defense attorney, prosecutor, and other court officials. Teen Court is run by young people and provides hands on opportunities for teens – both offenders and volunteers – to gain insight into the legal system while also learning from their mistakes and gaining valuable life skills along the way. Positive peer pressure helps participants learn to accept responsibility for their actions and then pay back their community through community service and other sentencing. Fifty-one young people participated in the teen court program during the 2015-16 fiscal year.

Teen Court meets every other Monday evening in Hillsborough's historic courthouse. Along with the teens who run the program, several adults are in the courtroom to lend advice and to supervise activities. Kate Giduz, the program coordinator, is assisted regularly by adult volunteers, Jeff Nieman and Hathaway Pendergrass, with occasional assistance from Skye MacLeod, Tamar Birckhead, and Beth Posner. UNC law students are in attendance as well to coach and mentor the teen attorneys and the courtroom is monitored by a law enforcement officer from the Orange County Sheriff's Department.

Kate Giduz coordinates the teen court program at Volunteers for Youth.

Making a Difference!



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