

Maryland Youth Advisory Council
St. Mary's County Community Conversation
November 14, 2016
Loffler Center – Chancellors Run Regional Park
5:30 – 7:30 pm

The Hand, the Head, the Heart, the Human Exercise

- This exercise allows the group to recognize its strengths and assets in order to strategize how those assets can be used to address community issues.
- The Hand identified the strong skills of the individuals. The skills include:
 - Piano and Organ
 - Snapping
 - Ukulele
 - Crochet
 - Cooking/baking
 - Eating
 - Gardening
 - Arts and crafts
 - Writing poetry
 - Building tennis
 - Computers & Gadgets
- The Head identifies the special knowledge held by the individuals. The knowledge include:
 - How to change an aircraft tire
 - Russian and French
 - Teaching ukulele
 - Leadership
 - Random knowledge/facts v
 - Tennis – Rules
- The Heart identifies the passions of the individuals. The passions include:
 - Serving/helping at-risk youth
 - Advocacy – standing up for people
 - Bringing awareness of self
 - Children, kids, youth
 - Exercise
 - Giving youth outlets – yoga, tai chi, art poetry, ukulele, etc
 - Writing
- The Human identifies the people, organization, or associations connected to the individuals. The human connections include:
 - Teachers at Piney Point
 - Know the Chik-fil-A owners in Charles County
 - Steny Hoyer
 - County Commissioners
 - Police officers and sheriff
 - Superintendent of schools
 - Kelsey Bush (LMB director)
 - Laura Webb
 - Young Life
 - St. Mary's County Government
 - Warm Program – Church network

Community Conversation

Assets and Strengths in St. Mary's County		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water • 2-5 degrees of separation – everyone knows someone • Environmental sciences • Caring Community • Parks – county and state • Military Base – science, math, economy • Trusting individual networks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools – community college, St. Mary's College – local focus • Higher Education Center • Local Management Board – collaboration with other orgs. • Used to working together • History 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of community • A lot of services in/for the community – based on size compared to others • Campaign to get community center • Invested teachers and supportive adult allies

Problems, Issues, and Concerns in the Community

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of community center ✓• Substance abuse/misuse• Suicide rate/ideation ✓• Lack of residential medical resources readily available (psych and substance)• Transportation ✓• Housing costs• Self-identity and social pressure ✓✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Child care• Non-diverse economy• Lack of cultural and workforce exposure• Homelessness• LGBTQ+ issues• Societal pressure for being violent vs. peaceful ✓• Stigma around mental illness – youth and families ✓	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Adult’s baggage• Lack of youth engagement• Lack of life skills education• Educational stress• Meaningful education• More mentors/supportive adults – nonjudgmental ✓✓✓✓
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Prioritized Issue Areas

1. More mentors/supportive adults
2. Self-identity and social pressure

Causes of Lack of Mentors and Supportive Adults

- Adults lose touch with youth – forget what it was like
- Communicate out of protective fear
- Lecturing youth – closes the door
- Adults stuck in habits/thoughts judgmental
- Adults not seeking to understand youth
- Adults are not sure where to start to gain understanding
- Busy – feel like they don’t have the time – may not be as busy as they feel
- Need for prioritizing
- Need advertising of opportunities to support youth
- Youth need to feel they have a voice that is heard
- Adults need to understand youth need mentors – in and outside of the home
- Youth and adults have different sleep schedules – adult availability when youth need it
- Need for adult network for youth
- Adults have a different frame of reference

Causes of Self Identity and Social Pressure

- Media
- Lack of visible role models for youth outside of traditional gender ideals – LGBTQ+
- Lack of understanding and openness to discuss LGBTQ+ issues
- Lack of safe space
- Popular lyrics are not affirming
- Commercials
- Different language and slang
- Technology
- Differences in culture
- Objectification is normalized
- Material focused culture – expectations
- Unwillingness to accept difference and change
- Being “tough” before peaceful – confident self-expression
- Unhealthy images of masculinity
- Adults stuck in images of the past – gender roles
- Anonymity on phone, social media
- Lack of positive role models and mentors
- Time

Solutions for Lack of Mentors and Supportive Adults

- Youth ask adults what mistake they made when young
- Opportunities for youth and adults to shadow each other – a day in the life
- Adult mentor training – how to build relationships
- Trainings for positive youth development
- Change how we use parenting classes – not just for punishment
- More parent/parenting groups
- Intentionality is key
- Build trust through long-term dependability
- Unconditional care-relationship with youth
- Checking in with youth even if they have pushed away
- Support and coaching for adults
- Adults need to be introspective – how are their issues and past impacting their mentorship