Minnesota Alliance With Youth

Engagement. Voice. Success.

Promise Press

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Inside This Issue

Community Spotlight: Northern Lights Community School	2
Grad Nation Summit	2
Promise Fellow Spotlight: Holly Walters	3
Youth Spotlight: Alec Kinne	3
Alumni Spotlight: Adam Neblock	4
Minnesota Youth Council	4

The Five Promises

Caring Adults

Safe Places

Healthy Start

Effective Education

Opportunities to Help Others

RALLY FOR YOUTH DAY CELEBRATED

Over 400 youth from across the state gathered Thursday, March 3rd at the State Capitol to exercise their voices and rally to promote investment into the services that ensure success in school and life for all youth in Minnesota. Rally for Youth Day, sponsored by the Youth Policy Alliance, a coalition of statewide advocacy and youth-serving organizations, provided a forum for groups of youth such as the Minnesota Youth Council and ten other groups from the Alliance's partner sites to speak directly with legislators about issues confronting youth that they care about personally.

Youth gathered in the Rotunda for the Rally

MYC members from Worthington met with Representative Ron Hamilton

The noon Rally featured powerful stories from youth about the services that helped them become successful. Over 500 youth and youth advocates filled the Rotunda for the rally. The crowd heard statements from political figures, including Governor Mark Dayton, who recognized the impact of the event. "You are the future of our state" said Dayton in his address, "and looking at all of you today, I know that Minnesota has a bright future." Audience members chanted "No decision about us, without us!," a fitting sentiment to sum up an event focused on the voice of Minnesota's youth and the services that benefit them.

The Minnesota Alliance With Youth works to ignite the spark in all young people in Minnesota to become actively engaged, develop strong voices and acquire the skills needed for success in school, work and life.

Community Spotlight:
Northern Lights Community School

-Spencer Neitzel, AmeriCorps Promise Fellow

At Northern Lights Community School, community engagement is far from an after-thought - it's a part of the school's curriculum. Located in the small town of Warba, Northern Lights Charter School emphasizes strong connections with the community and uses community members and organizations as teaching resources for the students. Promise Fellows Ellen Chase and Annie Jimenez have helped Northern Lights in connecting the school with the community by providing volunteer opportunities like playing Yahtzee with the residents of Evergreen Terrace Nursing Home. Ellen and Annie have made sure the students at Northern Lights are a known presence in their community. "I've noticed so much compassion in the relationships the students have formed with members of the nursing home," says Annie Jimenez. "It's great for the students to interact with that side of the community."

Since civic engagement is intertwined into the school's curriculum, the students approach projects in the community with enthusiasm. This enthusiasm is reflected in the number of community members who volunteer their time to teach the students hands-on. "Everyday we have at least three people from the community in the school working with the kids" says Ellen Chase, who is currently planning to start a school/community garden for summer where students and their families can work together. "We've had local farmers come teach our students about organic farming, composting, and why they are important." What a perk of having community volunteers!

Even when they are not volunteering in the community, the students still benefit from the Promise Fellows presence at their school. Annie has shared her musical abilities with the students and coordinates a group of students who play together in a drum circle. If Ellen isn't helping out in a math class, she can be found leading yoga class during the students' recreation hour. They seem to fit in well with Northern Lights mission to "create a safe, small and enthusiastic learning community in which all students are known well and taught as individuals."

Alliance Confronts Dropout Crisis at National Summit

-Melissa Burwell, Director of Strategic Initiatives

In late March, the Alliance participated in the inaugural GradNation Summit hosted by America's Promise Alliance in Washington, DC. Almost one thousand educators, policymakers, funders, and youth workers heard from Vice President Biden, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, White House Domestic Policy Advisor Melody Barnes, Mrs. Alma Powell and other experts including Dr. Robert Balfanz about the work being done across the country to combat our graduation crisis. In workshops and plenary sessions, organizations shared what has worked at both the state and local level to help keep youth on track and involved in school and communities.

As the state affiliate of America's Promise, the Alliance is leading the movement to provide the *right support* to the right student at the right time and engage youth in school and community. This has meant expanding our work in 2011-2012 to increase the number of Fellows serving in communities and schools hardest hit by the dropout crisis. Fellows are at the forefront of providing community-wide wraparound supports for students at risk for dropping out of school and community life.

Vice President Joe Biden was one of many speakers at the Summit

Fellows help implement dropout prevention efforts through providing high quality in and out of school activities; engaging youth in service; and connecting more youth with caring adults. As Patrick Corvington, the President and CEO of the Corporation for National and Community Service shared at the Summit: "National Service fuels education reform." The Alliance is proud to be taking the lead in Minnesota to bring together schools and communities to address the dropout crisis.

Promise Fellow Spotlight: Holly Walters

Northwest Youth and Family Services

Why did you become a Promise Fellow?
Because of the Five Promises: Safe Places, Caring Adults, A Healthy Start, Effective Education, and Opportunities to Help Others. They are everything I stand for. I was raised in a single parent household, where we struggled to stay above the poverty line and didn't have access to after school programs. I coordinate the Service + Tutoring Equals Pride (STEP) Program. At the beginning of our service year, we held a parent orientation to introduce the STEP program. That night I told parents it only takes ONE person to make a difference in someone's life. During my last semester of college, one of my professors helped me begin "A Healthy Start" and I decided I wanted to be that "one person" to make a difference in youth's lives.

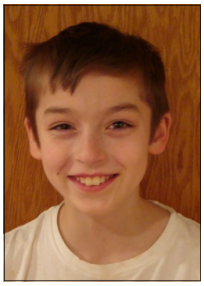
Holly Walters

Best Promise Fellow Experience
My most gratifying experience as a Promise Fellow so far was when I learned, directly from a STEP youth, that Promise Fellows do make a difference. A fifth grader in the STEP program asked me what I wanted to be when I "grew up." I told him I wanted to be a counselor and help people. His exact words back to me were "you are already a counselor. You continue to help me, even though I am a challenge. You haven't given up on me yet."

Tell us a little bit about yourself.
I was born and raised in Roseville, MN. After graduating from Roseville Area High School, I earned a B.A. in Religion and Psychology from Hamline University. During college, I volunteered my time in St. Paul schools, in addition to working at Camp Buckskin, which specializes in helping youth who have special needs. Throughout my college career and my AmeriCorps experience, I have learned to help youth help themselves — you can't change anything without meeting them halfway. After completing my year of service, I would like to obtain my teaching license or Masters Degree in Chemical Dependency.

What is your favorite quote?
"Promise me you'll always remember...you're braver than you believe, stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think." -Christopher Robin

Youth Spotlight: Alec Kinne Emmet D. Williams Elementary School



Alec Kinne

The STEP program provides youth a safe and positive environment that connects them with caring adults, increases academic performance and promotes civic engagement. For fifth grader Alec Kinne, STEP has provided the opportunity of a lifetime. In addition to his participation in STEP, Alec is involved in soccer and swimming. He also enjoys skateboarding and hanging out with his cousins. In December, he participated in a service learning project where youth served Christmas dinner to senior citizens and their families. His mom said he came home that evening concerned that some seniors had no one to eat with. Alec took time from serving Christmas dinner to sit down with these seniors and ask them their favorite Christmas memory.

In January, STEP toured Century College. Alec recently told me he wants to become a Cardiologist when he grows up. As a group, STEP discussed the importance of attending college. I informed the group they can win scholarships that are geared towards middle school students, and it was unanimous that they all wanted to research scholarships.

Alec is working hard towards completing this school year. It is hard to believe this is the same boy who I met in the fall. Since September, Alec has gone from rarely completing his assignments to completing almost all of them. Not only is Alec committed to his homework, but he is working hard at improving his behavior, both at school and at home. Now you know where to go if you ever need to see a Cardiologist...

Alumni Spotlight
Adam Neblock
Promise Fellow Class of 2009

-Dan Seglem, Promise Fellow Alumni 2007-2009

Adam Neblock

Adam will complete his 27 month term as Peace Corps member at the end of May 2011. In 2008, Adam spent three and half months in the nation of Georgia before their conflict with Russia over the breakaway region of South Ossetia. Because the conflict became dangerous, he returned home to spend 6 months teaching until his eventual reassignment to Albania, where he is teaching English. I am sure he is throwing the same zeal into his teaching in Albania as he did into his work as a Promise Fellow.

Currently, he is working with English language teachers in villages helping train them to use the English language in their classrooms. Additionally, he is offering an after-school essay writing class for students who want to practice writing longer texts in English. He says that most of those students want to go on to study English at the University level, which speaks to Adam's dedication and passion for working with youth.

When asked about what he will do after his term expires, he says that he is contemplating another year with the Peace Corps. He is also considering heading to Tirana, the capital of Albania, to teach at an international school—a change from his regular routine of service. "I've realized I've done volunteer work for three and a half of the four years I've been out of college," he says. Even if Adam takes on the job at the international school, he will surely find one way or another to continue to serve the world.

Minnesota Youth Council

(Right): MYC members from Northfield after their meeting with Representative Kelby Woodard

(Below): MYC members from Marshall at Rally for Youth Day

The Minnesota Youth Council has had a productive month! On March 3rd, they joined over 400 youth from across the state of Minnesota on Rally for Youth Day, where they engaged in conversation with the legislators that represent their districts. Members gathered in February to discuss the issues they wanted to focus on and began to prepare the statements for their meetings with legislators. At the capitol, members urged their legislators to ensure funding for integration programs as well as programs that decrease violence in schools, lower teen pregnancy rates across the state, support early childhood education programs and above all, support programs that confront the achievement gap in Minnesota.

The Council met for their Spring Retreat on April 3rd. There, they discussed recruitment efforts for next year, administering a statewide survey of Minnesota youth, MYC's involvement in the Global Youth Service Day and began work on an application for the State Farm Youth Advisory Board Grant that funds youth-led service learning projects.

For more information on the Minnesota Youth Council, contact Promise Fellow Spencer Neitzel at promisefellow@mnyouth.net

Engagement. Voice. Success.

The Minnesota Alliance With Youth is the leading convener, collaborator and capacity-builder for youth development in Minnesota.

The Alliance mission is to ignite the spark in all young people in Minnesota to become actively engaged, develop strong voices and acquire the skills needed for success in school, work and life.

In order to ensure all youth achieve success in school, work, and life, we focus on four strategies:

1) Strengthening youth success in school and learning.
2) Increasing youth contribution through service & leadership opportunities.
3) Developing and magnifying youth voice.
4) Promoting collaboration and innovation.

The vision of the Alliance is that all young people are highly connected to their communities, have hope for a brighter future and are able to fulfill their dreams.

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Join us for a day of celebrating youth service!

The event will feature:

- On-Site Live Performances
- Live Entertainment
- Youth Performances
- Prizes and Much More!

Come help us celebrate!
Sunday April 17th, 2011
Mall of America
Nordstrom and Macy's Rotunda
1:00 p.m.— 5:00 p.m.

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