



Dedicated to crafting the vision and strategies to ensure Minnesota's young people have engaging opportunities to learn and develop in their non-school hours

A community case study prepared for the September 2004 commission meeting

In the summer of 2004, Youth Professionals and Regional Extension Educators in Community Youth Development were asked to write case studies about community efforts to coordinate out-of-school time programs. They examined how the coordination occurred and how it impacted availability of programs for young people. They also captured the lessons from the coordination efforts that could help other Minnesota communities work together to increase programs and opportunities for youth. This is one in a series of ten reports.

About The Community

Rochester is the regional center of southeastern Minnesota. Surrounded by rolling farmland, hardwood forests, and meandering rivers and creeks, Rochester merges a cosmopolitan atmosphere with Midwestern hospitality.

Rochester is home to the largest IBM complex that is under one roof and the world-renowned Mayo Clinic Medical Center. The local economy is supported by a variety of medical services, technology corporations, light manufacturing industries, and a substantial hotel/motel and restaurant trade.

Higher education is important to the city and businesses of Rochester. The city is home to the University Center Rochester; a unique collaboration between Rochester Community & Technical College, Winona State University, and the University of Minnesota. It provides many graduate and post graduate degree programs. The Mayo Clinic College of Medicine offers training and education, including a medical school. Several of these institutions also offer youth outreach and enrichment programs.

The Rochester School District covers a large part of Olmsted County and extends into Wabasha County. The school district has 15 elementary schools, 4 middle schools, and 3 high schools. It also supports several alternative schools and five choice programs. There are 13 private schools and two charter schools in the area. The diversity of Rochester's population is reflected in its schools, where over 50 different languages are spoken by 13% of the student population.

DATA FROM THE CENSUS

Population:

City of Rochester: 93,037
 Rochester School District: 103,001
 School-age population: 22%
 Population ages 65 or over: 11%

School Enrollment:

Public School (K-12)	16,298
13 Private Schools	3,019
2 Charter Schools	236
Total Enrollment	19,553

What's Happening in Out-of-School Opportunities?

Rochester's Community Education program offers year-round youth enrichment programs in a broad range of interest areas. Almost 10,000 registrations for youth enrichment programs were received over the past year. This figure does not

eliminate duplication, but seems to show that there is satisfaction with the programs and that youth and families choose to participate in several offerings. A Summer of Service program has involved 3,000 youth over the past eight years, volunteering 57,000 hours of service at 40 local non-profit agencies. Community Education also provides School-Aged Child Care (SACC) for 1200 registrants, primarily in grades K-5.

Many youth organizations have regional offices in Rochester that serve the city and surrounding area. These include:

- Rochester Family Y: about 4,000 youth registered for programs, summer camps, and events over the past year (duplication not eliminated).
- Girl Scouts: enrollment for Rochester is 1425 (unduplicated).
- Boy Scouts: enrollment for Rochester is 1959 (unduplicated).
- 4-H clubs, after-school programs and site-based programs: enrollment/participation for Rochester is over 300 youth.
- The Boys & Girls Club of Rochester is one of the newest programs to find a home in Rochester: Summer had 110 average daily attendance; 63 youth attended two or more days per week; 80 youth participated in swimming program at Silver Lake; 53 took the bus home each night. End of school year statistics (May): 85 new members; 286 different youth entered the club throughout month; 102 enrolled in Homework Help program; 12 graduated from Job Ready.
- Rochester Community and Technical College provided summer youth enrichment and sports programs to more than 600 youth in grades 3-8.

There is also a host of youth programs provided by local churches and other faith-based organizations, the public library,

Olmsted County Youth Commission, the Park and Recreation Department, youth sports leagues, honors music programs, and more.

About The Coordination Effort

The Youth Service Action Team (YSAT) was organized in 1995. It is a sub-committee (action team) of the Family Action Collaborative in Olmsted County (FACES).

Mission/Goals:

YSAT is an active network of youth-serving organizations focused on reducing duplication of services and providing collaborative support. In 1999 YSAT initiated a major effort to identify needs and coordinate programs. This effort, the Master Action Plan for Youth in Olmsted County (MAP), adopted the following goals to define their work.

Goals:

- To increase communication among community agencies/organizations that serve children (ages 0-21) and families.
- To promote collaborative efforts among community agencies/organizations that serve children and families.
- To assure that children and families have access to these community resources.

Objectives:

1. Identify existing strengths and resources of organizations that serve children and families.
2. Identify the barriers to child/family involvement in existing services and recommend actions to eliminate the barriers.
3. Identify the unmet needs in services to children and families.
4. Assist and encourage development of programs/services, which meet these needs and overcome the barriers to participation.

5. Evaluate the goals, objectives, and any projects of Youth Services Action Team (YSAT) annually.¹

Leadership:

A volunteer leadership team of several youth-organization representatives sets the meeting agenda for the year and sends out notices. This team also tries to keep members informed of programs and issues between monthly meetings so the collaborative effort is on-going.

Membership:

Membership is open to all agencies and organizations that provide youth programming for Rochester and Olmsted County and anyone interested in furthering youth programs.

Structure:

Monthly meetings are scheduled from September through May. Meeting agendas alternate between collaboration and program speakers. Program speakers are selected to address identified areas of need or concern as expressed by the YSAT membership. The YSAT team has also collaborated with groups like the Minnesota Youth Intervention Programs Association (YIPA) to sponsor staff development opportunities for youth-serving agencies.

Cost:

There is no membership fee or budget for the monthly meetings. Grants and special funding have been secured for special projects, such as developing the Master Action Plan for Youth in Olmsted County.

The impetus for coordination:

Results from the Search Institute *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors* survey conducted in the mid-1990s, and the Minnesota Student Survey given every three years raised awareness and focused the community on youth issues. In 1999, YSAT secured grant money from several sources for the purpose of writing a

“Master Action Plan” (MAP) for youth in the four communities in Olmsted County. Almost 1,000 youth from these four communities had the opportunity to take active roles in this community-building effort.

At the time of the progress report in January of 2003, these results were documented:

- Progress was made on 61 goals identified in the master action plan (MAP).
- 22 grants were written and more than \$500,000 obtained to implement goals.
- 40 percent of MAP stakeholders report that new partnerships were formed and existing partnerships strengthened.²

What else has happened to impact availability?

The current economic situation has affected all youth programs, including those in Rochester. Lean budgets have forced programs to take a hard look at staffing and the number of services that they can afford to provide. Money that had been set aside for staff development was either cut or eliminated.

With tightened budgets, the ability to address barriers like transportation, and marketing and outreach, especially to underserved populations, has diminished. On the other hand, many of the youth-serving agencies and organizations mentioned earlier have reacted creatively to coordinate and collaborate to provide opportunities for Rochester’s youth and address the barriers. For example, this past August, Rochester organizations and families celebrated National Kids Day for the first time. More than 250 parents and children participated in an afternoon of games and activities at Silver Lake Park. This event was planned and sponsored by a collaboration of youth-serving agencies with the Boys and Girls Club taking the lead role. Financial support and additional

resources were provided by area businesses.

What could stimulate more local action?

Raising the level of community and stakeholder awareness and building public will in an organized effort could help turn the tide of policy makers' and decision makers' actions when it comes to out-of-school time issues and funding.

Implications for other communities:

Rochester would probably be labeled an opportunity-rich community for youth programming. The largest problem is creating awareness, effective marketing, and accessibility to reach out to more youth and families, especially those that are historically underserved.

The Youth Services Action Team has been an effective approach to increasing collaborative efforts and, in the long run, greater outreach and improved programming opportunities and supports for youth.

Many communities' youth organizations are doing the same; coming together to build

relationships and trust among members. We are in a day and age that looks favorably on getting beyond turf issues and focusing on what is in the best interest of the youth we are working to serve.

The challenge for youth serving agencies is to help funders, policy makers, and decision makers understand the power of collaborative efforts and of pooling resources to provide quality youth programs.

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Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; Minnesota Department of Education 2004 School District and Enrollment Data; Rochester Public School District Enrollment Data; www.rochestercvb.org

¹ **Master Action Plan for Youth in Olmsted County.** Prepared by E. Wickre, YSAT, and FACES. October 2000.

² **Master Action Plan for Youth in Olmsted County: Evaluation of the Process and Progress Towards Meeting Community Goals that Impact Youth.** Prepared by Evaluation Steering Committee. February 2003.