



Teen Writers, Teen Readers
Since 1980

**Youth Communication
Report on Activities**

July 2009 – August 2010

Youth Communication
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Dear Friend: Youth Communication believes in letting young people have their say. So here is what Nicole Garcia had to say about her writing internship at Youth Communication.

Thanks, Keith Hefner, executive director

To improve my writing, I wrote six stories. I wrote from five to eight drafts for each story to ready them for publishing and received a ton of feedback from my editor. She taught me ways to improve my writing because every time I submitted one draft she edited it. I observed the corrections and learned from my mistakes. Also, she discussed things that the story was missing. These editing sessions helped me understand what a story must have to be well written.

As I wrote stories, I gained skills that will help me with the SAT and ELA exams because I did research and gave feedback to other writers on their stories. I was an active reader, which means that I was writing down questions and taking notes and I paid attention to focus, theme, plot and style.

I explored the field of communications and learned how to interview, do research, edit, and most importantly how to write news articles and stories. And I realized that hard work always pays off.

My internship made me more mature and responsible by learning about how the real world is and having responsibilities. I learned how to be part of a team and get along with my co-workers.

I improved my networking skills while participating in staff meetings, interviews and trips. My mentor played a big role in improving my networking skills because her support and lessons made me more confident.

Even though I'll miss my internship, I'll keep in touch with my mentor. The last day of my internship was not the last for me to be part of New Youth Connections because my mentor left the door open for me.

Youth Communication's Writing and Reading Programs 2009-2010

Mission Youth Communication's mission is to help marginalized youth develop their full potential through reading and writing. We publish true stories by teens, developed in a rigorous writing program, that are uniquely compelling to peers who do not see their experiences reflected in mainstream reading materials.

Our stories motivate teens to read, provide them self-help information, encourage them to develop good values, and inspire them to make positive changes in their lives. Our curricula and training provide adults the tools they need to understand and engage hard-to-reach teens while helping them improve their literacy and social/emotional skills.

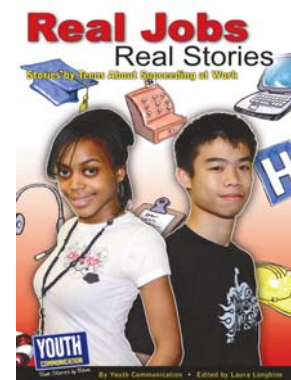
Some highlights from the previous 12 months

Awards In a testament to the high quality of our writing program, Youth Communication's writing interns again excelled in the annual competition sponsored by the Association of Educational Publishers (the "Academy Awards" of educational publishing. Their stories on the city's dropout crisis in *New Youth Connections* (NYC) won in the Best Series (Grades 9-12), beating out *The Wall Street Journal Classroom Edition*. NYC's nutrition issue was also a finalist in the Best One-Theme Issue (Grades 9-12) category along with *Represent's* mental illness issue.

Another Winner Mental Health America, the country's largest community-based mental health group in the country, awarded its 2010 Media Award in the Student Print category to Virgen Nunez for her *Represent* story, "I'm Not Crazy, I Have a Mental Illness."

Recognition & Impact The city's Department of Health and Mental Hygiene is licensing our guide, *I'm Not Crazy: A Teen Guide to Getting Help and Mental Health Terms* for high school distribution. They have also contracted with us to write lessons on common mental health issues facing teens, which will be distributed through schools and after school programs.

More Impact In 2009, 2,385 teens in the City's Summer Employment Program learned work readiness skills while using our new anthology of teen-written stories, *Real Jobs, Real Stories*. Program counselors used our leader's guide to engage teens in reading and writing activities that deepened their knowledge of work place demands. An outside evaluation found that 55% of the teens said they learned skills while reading *Real Jobs* that no one else had taught them. 80% reported that as a result of participating in Real Jobs, "I now know how I should (and should not) act on the job"; 72% said they are more confident about applying to college; and 64% said they had learned how to budget their money.



Alumni Highlights/ Story Reprints We have attached a flyer highlighting the books published by former interns. The other side of the flyer highlights our reprint history.

Program Activities

Program #1: Literacy Skills Training and Youth Development

Over the course of the summer I learned to know my audience, organize my ideas, and become a better writer. One of the most important things for me was the friendly guidance I received from the editors. My editor taught me to speak through my written story, and showed me that I could be a voice for other teens. At the end of the summer, I felt accomplished and it certainly changed me forever.”

--Sheila Wanda Merino, summer internship writer

Four full-time editor/instructors and a part-time art instructor guided 101 teens (78 writers and 23 artists) through internships that trained them to write and draw for two award-winning magazines. The summer internships ran for 7 weeks, 5 hours a day. Writers in the 18-week fall and spring sessions attended after school workshops for 8-12 hours a week. Many received school credit. (Teens pictured here are from the summer workshop.)



The training was based on producing stories for *New Youth Connections (NYC)* and *Represent: The Voice of Youth in Foster Care* magazines. The editors trained the interns in basic grammar and writing mechanics, narrative techniques, interviewing, research methods, and word processing. The groups researched their story topics, interviewed

peers and adult experts, and wrote multiple drafts of their stories. The editors critiqued the drafts to help the teen writers build their skills.

It took most students a month or more of interviewing, research, and rewriting before they published their articles. They wrote personal nonfiction, memoirs, mainstream journalistic articles, social commentary, opinion pieces, and reviews. Our newsroom—with 24 computers, Internet access, and a professional atmosphere—exposed them to workplace demands. They learned the value of promptness, good attendance, adherence to deadlines and procedures, taking responsibility, working with people from diverse backgrounds, and accepting criticism.

Artists participated in our 18-week fall and spring sessions for 6-10 hours a week. We also ran a 2-week intensive program during the summer. The illustration instructor, a graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design, has 20 years' professional experience plus 11 years working with teens.

We published 211 stories in the two magazines. Evaluations of drafts by the editors indicated the interns improved core skills like sentence structure, spelling, and paragraphing. Most also improved their higher-level skills, such as structuring a story and editing their own work. They also learned how to work with others, accept supervision, complete assignments, and take initiative to complete their stories. Another indication of their progress was the high ratings their stories received from an outside

evaluator. Our goal is for 70% of stories to get a “#1” rating; 91% of the stories were rated #1.

A dozen interns visited the Conde Nast building where they attended a workshop with Patricia Clark, an intellectual property lawyer and Youth Communication board member, who presented on libel and privacy issues. A group of interns also visited the New York Times to see the newsroom in action and talk with reporters about college choices and career options.

Many writers and artists forged close relations with the teacher/editors and turned to them for advice on applying to college, handling personal and family issues, negotiating the foster care bureaucracy and other concerns. We continued to refer the more seriously challenged young people to our network of counselors. We also worked with 20 alumni, helping them write resumes, search for jobs, and apply to college. We helped several foster care alumni to get counseling help, find or stay in their apartments, and take advantage of other independent living resources.

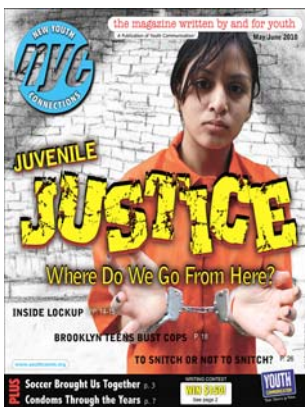
Several foster care agencies and other organizations asked *Represent* writers and alumni to speak at conferences and staff training sessions. One of the highlights was a presentation given by writers at the invitation of John DiLallo, head of the Psychotropic Medications Unit at the Administration for Children’s Services. The writers addressed psychiatric administrators about improving services in the foster care system.

Program #2: Peer education and magazine publishing: *New Youth Connections* and *Represent* magazines

***New Youth Connections* magazine**

“I found your magazine at the library. I’ve read other teen magazines written by teens but I think this is the only one that truly hits hard on today’s problems and the teens facing them. I learned a lot by reading the ways some people dealt with their problems and the feedback that they got.”

--Sarah Utkin



We published six issues of *New Youth Connections* and distributed over 435,000 copies to 1,140 teachers and youth workers who used it to improve teens’ basic skills and inspire them to think about serious personal and social issues. The Department of Education renewed its agreement to distribute 17,000 extra copies of *NYC* to over 100 teachers working in programs for the most at-risk students. *The New York Times* continued to print the magazine for free.

In addition to encouraging teens to read *NYC* on their own, we encouraged their teachers to use it in classroom instruction. We provided them with discussion guides, writing exercises, role plays and other activities with every issue.

***Represent* magazine**

“Thank you for the wonderful articles in Represent. They are so realistic that we use them as material for some of our discussions in our workshops. Over the years we have found this information rewarding for our youth.”

--Sister Marie Hess, Cardinal McCloskey Services

Represent is the only channel through which many youth in care can share their experiences with each other and challenge staff and system administrators to make foster care a more enriching experience. *Represent* writers realistically describe how they’ve tried to adjust to being in care and how they are preparing themselves for the day they leave the system. Recent surveys indicate that the stories give readers a renewed sense of hope in their futures and help them feel less isolated.

We published four issues of *Represent* (right) and distributed over 51,000 copies through 460 counselors and other staff. Staff read it to learn about young people’s views on the system and to help them prepare for life after foster care and confront difficult emotional issues tied to neglect and abuse.



We published discussion guides for each issue to help staff use *Represent* in independent living classes as well as encouraging teens read it on their own.

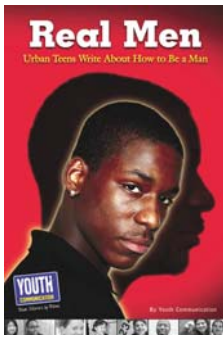
Program #3: Promoting reading by teens in schools, after school programs, and other sites by publishing books

“I spent a lot of time over the summer and fall searching for the right books and resources to infuse into my curriculum, wanting to promote literacy and knowing that students would not want to read ‘boring’ stories. You can see why I feel I hit a gold mine with Youth Communication—all the books for my classes are from here!!”

--Pam Smith, a 20-year teaching veteran

Over the last year we revised 50 of our booklets in order to make them more appealing to schools and other buyers. We added newer stories, commissioned new covers from our illustration interns and changed the previous 8.5 x 11” “booklet” format to the more traditional and teacher-friendly 6” x 9” paperback book size and format.

We sold more than 20,000 copies of our books in the past 12 months and earned more than \$120,000.



We released *Real Men* in the fall. Several schools and programs are using it to help young men reflect on the challenges they face: staying in school, defining their manhood, violence, poverty, the lack of male role models, homophobia, the lure of “gangsta culture,” sexual health, and other issues.

The New York City’s Department of Youth and Community Development, The After School Corporation, and the Department of Education are using our books and curricula with teens. The Success Foundation continued to distribute its self-help book, *Success for Teens*, which is based on 20 of our stories and that shows teens how to set goals and make practical, everyday decisions that lead to higher achievement. So far, they have distributed over 1 million through schools and programs nationwide.



Funders and Financial Report

Recent Funders

Abe & Sunny Rosenberg Foundation
 America's Promise Alliance
 Andrus Foundation
 Atlantic Philanthropies
 Bay & Paul Foundations
 Best Buy Foundation
 BMG Random House
 Carnegie Corporation
 Charles Hayden Foundation
 Clark Foundation
 Cricket Island Foundation
 Edward Moore Foundation
 H. van Ameringen Foundation
 Heckscher Foundation for Children
 Huo Family Foundations
 Ira W. DeCamp Foundation
 Kellogg Foundation
 Kenworthy-Swift Foundation

McCormick Tribune Foundation
 Metzger Price Fund
 New York City Council President
 Christine Quinn
 New York Community Trust
 New York State Senator Tom Duane
 New York Times Company
 New Yorkers for Children
 Open Society Institute
 Pinkerton Foundation
 Robert Bowne Foundation
 W. Clement and Jessie B. Stone
 Foundation
 Surdna Foundation
 Time Warner
 Tin Man Fund
 Tribeca Film Festival
 William T. Grant Foundation



Statement of Income and Expenses

(audited)

Income FY 10

(July 1, 2009-June 30, 2010)

Foundations, corporations
 and other organizations.....
 \$596,525

Government.....
 5,000

Individuals.....
 150,337

Earned income.....
265,726

TOTAL
\$1,017,588

Youth Communication/New York Center Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. A copy of Youth Communication's most recent audited financial statement can be obtained from the New York State Office Department of State Charities Registration, 162 Washington Avenue, Albany, NY 12231, or from Youth Communication.

Expenses FY 09

Program services.....
 \$1,038,933

Management/General.....
 126,796

Fiscal Sponsor.....
 78,356

Fund raising.....
70,562

TOTAL..... \$1,314,647

TOTAL ASSETS 6/30/10 \$1,957,807

Staff

[Keith Hefner](#), Executive Director, founded Youth Communication in 1980. He won a MacArthur Fellowship for his work in youth journalism in 1989. He is a graduate of the Columbia University Graduate School of Business Institute for Not-for-Profit Management, Executive Level Program, and a recipient of the Luther P. Jackson Award for Educational Excellence from the New York Association of Black Journalists.

[Tom Brown](#), Administrative Director, has a BA in Political Science from the City College of New York and an MA in that subject from Yale. Prior to joining Youth Communication he was assistant director of the DOME Project, a community-based youth development program.

[Loretta Chan](#), Marketing Director, was a teen writer at *New Youth Connections* from 1992 to 1995. Prior to returning to Youth Communication, she worked as an editor for Longitude Books, education program associate for The New York Council for the Humanities and paralegal for Cravath, Swaine & Moore and The Port Authority. She has a BA in Art History from NYU.

[Jeff Faerber](#), Assistant Production Manager, is a freelance illustrator whose work has appeared in the *San Jose Mercury News*, *the Progressive* and other publications. He has a BFA in Graphic Design from San Jose State University.

[Marie Glancy](#), Editor of *New Youth Connections* magazine, has a BA in English from Williams College, an MA in literature from Trinity College, Dublin, and a BS in journalism from Columbia University. She worked for several years as a print and radio journalist in Ireland.

[Laura Longhine](#), Editorial Director, has a BA from Tufts and a MS in journalism from Columbia University and has worked as a journalist and freelance writer. She was formerly editor of Youth Communication's *Represent: The Voice of Youth in Care* magazine.

[Joanne Pendola](#), Illustration Instructor, is a freelance illustrator whose work has appeared in *Atlantic Monthly*, the *Wall Street Journal* (classroom edition), *Ms.*, and other publications. She has a BFA in Illustration from the Rhode Island School of Design.

[Efrain Reyes](#), Assistant Director, was a student artist (1982-84) for *New Youth Connections* while at Morris HS in the South Bronx. He graduated from Pratt Institute with a BA in Communication Design.

[Autumn Spanne](#), Editor of *Represent*, has a BA in literature from UC Santa Cruz, an MS in journalism from Columbia University and an MA in education from Western New Mexico University. She taught English and journalism in New Mexico for five years. Autumn covered politics and city government for *The Lompoc Record* (CA) and the environment for *The Standard-Times* in New Bedford.

[Luisa Tucker](#), Associate Editor of *New Youth Connections*, has covered courts, politics, and housing for *The Village Voice*, AlterNet.org and other publications. She has won awards for investigative reporting at the *Santa Fe Reporter*, a newsweekly in New Mexico. She holds a BA in journalism from Texas State University and an MA in American Studies from Columbia University.

[Virginia Vitzthum](#), editor of *Represent* magazine, has written for *The Village Voice*, *washingtonpost.com*, *Alternet*, *Time Out New York*, *Ms.*, *Elle*, and *salon.com*, where she was a columnist. Her book *I Love You, Let's Meet* was published in 2007. She has a BA in English from the University of Maryland.

Youth Communication helps teenagers acquire the literacy skills and information they need to do well in school, make thoughtful choices about their lives and become engaged members of their communities.

- We train teens in journalism and related skills.



- We publish their stories in magazines, books, and websites. Thousands of teachers, health educators, foster care staff and other youth workers use these stories to improve young people's literacy skills, educate them about important issues, and help them make better decisions about the challenges of adolescence.



- We help adults who work with teens use our publications to stimulate reading, writing, discussion, and reflection.



True Stories By Teens
Since 1980

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