

When a baby whale is born, it is fully developed for life in the ocean. In fact, it may already weigh as much as a ton. But, for that baby whale to survive, its mother must teach it to breathe by guiding it gently to the surface.



At the Dekko Foundation we believe that community involvement, problem solving and philanthropy are skills that must be taught if young people, and communities, are to survive and thrive. Just like the whale, adolescents are physically ready for life, but they need adults to gently guide them as they learn to be responsible, caring and independent leaders.



**Whales live together in families called pods.**



That's why, for nearly twenty years, we've invested in a grassroots initiative called Youth Pods. In every community we serve, we look for caring, connected philanthropic leaders who want to guide the next generation. Then we pair them up with groups of young people who've shown an interest in, or affinity for, learning about community leadership and philanthropy.



While each Youth Pod is different, and reflects the culture and values of its community, all Pods focus on the development of young peoples' skills and knowledge as their most important outcome. This means:

- Young people learn about their communities and take the lead in choosing to become volunteers and/or investors in projects that will change their community for the better.
- Adults stay in the background, connecting young people with information and resources, gently offering the benefit of their experience and providing a soft landing when problems occur.



**Because whale calves do not mature as quickly as some other mammals, they need time to grow and develop within a protected environment.**



**The adult whales within a pod work together to teach their young and keep them safe.**



Communities gain an immediate benefit from Youth Pods because Pods capture the fresh ideas and boundless energy that young people naturally possess, and put it to good use. In the long term, Youth Pods benefit us all by helping young people gain skills as volunteers, problem solvers and decision makers.



*Phil Philanthropy is the official mascot of Youth Pods*

**Young people want to be Youth Pod members because:**

- *It's fun!* Pod members make friends across their community, county and the country.
- *It's challenging!* Young people take responsibility for making, and living with, real world decisions.
- *It's rewarding!* Pod members can see their work in action in their community every day.

**Adults come back year after year because:**

- *It's fun!* Connecting with the energy and ideas of young people makes adults feel young too.
- *It's challenging!* It's much harder to guide young people as they learn from their experiences than it is to assume the role of the all-knowing adult.
- *It's rewarding!* What's more important than investing in the growth and development of the next generation of leaders?





#### Who guides Youth Pods?

We wouldn't be very good at our job if we asked others to guide young people's development, and then turned around and made all of the decisions about Youth Pods without including young people. That's why we started **phish**, a small group of Youth Pod members who thrive on their Pod experience and want to swim a little deeper into the fields of community leadership and philanthropy.

**phish** members work in partnership with adult mentors to help plan Youth Pod retreats, serve as role models for other young people and guide Pods' overall direction. Some **phish** members choose to stay involved with Youth Pods after high school in a stronger leadership role. Others pursue internships that allow them to further explore careers in community leadership and philanthropy.



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*Others must be taught.*

**Some things are instinctive.**

