



HERE'S HOW YOUNG PEOPLE (JUST LIKE YOU) ARE LEARNING TO CHANGE THEIR COMMUNITIES FOR THE BETTER.

TRADE ME PLACES I WANT TO DRIVE

What is a Youth Pod, anyway?
Youth Pods are groups of young people, usually between the ages of 13 and 18, that meet to learn and practice philanthropic skills.

OK. But what are philanthropic skills?
The dictionary definition of philanthropy is: to show concern for human beings through donations of money, property or work. Philanthropic skills then, refers to knowing how to give of your time, talent or money to help other people, or to help make your community a better place to live.

You look at what you have and the house you live in... then you see how other people live. Things that were so small made them so happy.
Jenna

What happens at a Youth Pod meeting?
Pod members have a hands-on experience, kind of like drivers' training, where they first learn the rules and the mechanics—then they take the wheel.
With an overall goal of learning and practicing philanthropy, Pod members operate their own organization. Teens choose their organization's purpose, its name and its rules. They make the decision on how a significant amount of charitable money will be used in their county. Teens also select the projects they'll do to benefit their community.
Although there are 12 Youth Pods now in existence, each one looks a little bit different—reflecting the personality of its members and the character of its community.

What would I actually do if I joined one?
Pod members have four basic experiences. They:
1. Receive training in philanthropy and leadership in fun and active ways.
2. Learn to run a nonprofit organization by actually doing it!
3. Build financial responsibility by administering significant grant dollars.
4. Practice being philanthropic by studying their community's needs and using their time and talent to make things change.

Why would anyone want to join a Youth Pod?
Pod members have fun and challenging experiences—unique from other clubs or activities. Youth Pod meetings are active! Their members:
• Meet people their age from across the region.
• Learn a lot about the community.
• Meet influential adult community leaders.
• Practice leadership skills.
• Make decisions about how a significant amount of money will be spent.
• Participate in projects that benefit the community.

Have Youth Pods accomplished anything?
Lots! One Pod helped build a house through Habitat for Humanity. Pod members have built other things too—such as relationships with disadvantaged children at Salvation Army Camp. Some Pods take what they've learned about philanthropy and teach it to third graders through a program called "The Littlest Philanthropist."

It's really cool to go to a basketball game and know kids from all across the county.
Stacy

Who participates in Youth Pods?
The teens involved in Youth Pods come from all over! Currently there are Pods in north central Alabama, northeast Indiana and south central Iowa.
Youth Pods choose their own method of bringing on new members. Some Pods take applications and have an interview process. Others ask their school's administration to choose new members.
Most Pods look for a variety of skills in their members. They know that a group made up of people with one interest area might not have the expertise needed to be a strong Pod. Many Pods have a mixture of big talkers, good listeners, thinkers, doers, jocks, planners and creative sorts. They come from farms, towns and suburbs and from across academic and income levels.
Pods are made up of kids who represent schools from across their entire county.

Will I have to give up sports and other fun activities if I join?
Most teens find that they can successfully blend their academic and extracurricular activities with Pod membership. Pods typically meet once per month during school time. Some Pods meet other times too when their members plan projects to benefit their community.
Usually a young person joins a Youth Pod in the eighth grade and remains a member throughout his/her high school career. This five-year span allows them to learn about philanthropy and experience leading an organization as they build their skills.

Who supports Youth Pods?
Youth Pods get two kinds of support from the community:
1. Adults who support Youth Pod members.
2. Money to operate.

Adult support.
In many areas, the local community foundation is well positioned to provide the information, contacts and support that kids need to run a successful Youth Pod. In other communities, this support comes from schools, universities, youth development organizations and service clubs.
These "hosting organizations" link kids with the adult community. They help Youth Pod members and give them ideas—but they don't take over the organization.

Money to operate.
The Dekko Foundation, is a private family foundation that gives money to projects that help kids grow up to be independent citizens. Youth Pods fit the Dekko Foundation's work because they give kids the chance to learn about philanthropy by actually doing it.
The Dekko Foundation believes that, through Youth Pod participation kids will:
• Discover how to be philanthropic with their time, talent and treasure.
• Learn to effectively manage and govern a nonprofit organization.
• Play a meaningful and respected role in community development.
• Demonstrate their value to their community and work alongside adults to address community issues.
• Be recognized as significant financial contributors to community development.

Why the name "Youth Pods"?
When a baby whale is born, it will die if its mother does not push it toward the surface of the ocean for its first breath of oxygen.
Because philanthropy is a learned activity, Youth Pods are designed as activities where experienced adults give young people a push toward their first breath of "philanthropic oxygen."
Since whales live in communities called pods, the name Youth Pods came to be.

I LOVED BEING INVOLVED WITH HABITAT FOR HUMANITY, BUILDING THAT HOUSE WAS AWESOME.
Amber

I'LL NAVIGATE YOU DRIVE

Youth pods

"Lots of who we are and what we do are from our mission statement. When we're confused and don't know what to do, we always look back to our mission."

I MET MY BEST FRIEND BEING A POD MEMBER. AT FIRST WE COULDN'T STAND EACH OTHER, BUT BY WORKING + COMING TO UNDERSTAND EACH OTHER WE'VE BECOME GREAT FRIENDS.
Joel

Improving Steuben Co. Together
FIST

Improving Steuben Co. Together
FIST

Youth pods

What, exactly, is a Youth Pod?

Have you ever climbed into a vehicle with a teen in possession of a new driver's permit? You might have said: "I'll navigate. You drive."

If so, you're well on the way to understanding Youth Pods.

For driving lessons, adults sit in the navigator's seat with their experience ready, if needed. The young person takes hold of the wheel, gives the engine some gas, steers, and (hopefully) learns to apply the brake.

Youth Pods put young people in the driver's seat of philanthropic decision-making. While adults are always ready to provide support and information, it's the young people who take hold of the responsibility, road test their ideas and gain new experience at saying both "yes" and "no."

Why are Youth Pods important?

Young people need many experiences and support systems to grow up healthy and independent. Research* shows a serious lack of experiences where young people can feel that they are valued by their community and making a positive impact for other people. Through Youth Pods, young people demonstrate their leadership skills and philanthropic natures. Their fresh, youthful perspective is respected and nurtured.

How do Youth Pods work?

Each Youth Pod has 15 to 20 members, who range in age from 13 to 18. Members come from across their county's geographic area.

Through Youth Pods, young people learn about philanthropy and study the needs of their community. They set a mission and vision for their organization. After that preliminary work is done, Pod members receive significant financial support that they can grant to community projects that support their mission. They also work to accomplish their mission by giving their own time, talent and treasure.

Although there are now Youth Pods in 12 counties, each one is different, reflecting the personality of its members and the character of its community.

*40 Developmental Assets, Search Institute.
www.search-institute.org

Why might someone choose to join a Youth Pod?

Young people say that Youth Pod membership broadens their world and prepares them for full participation in community life. As Pod members, teens have four basic experiences. They:

1. Receive training in philanthropy.
2. Learn to run a nonprofit organization.
3. Build financial responsibility by administering significant grant dollars.
4. Practice being philanthropic by studying their community's needs and using their time and talent and treasure to prompt change.

How much of a commitment is Youth Pod participation?

Usually a young person joins Youth Pods during the eighth grade and remains a member throughout his/her high school career. This five-year span allows them to learn about philanthropy and experience leading an organization.

Most teens find that they can successfully blend their academic and extracurricular activities with Pod membership. Youth Pods typically meet once a month during school hours. Some Pods meet other times too, when their members plan projects to benefit the community.

What successes can Youth Pods claim?

Youth Pods can point to large and small victories!

Through Youth Pods, young people gain confidence in their ability to change their community for the better. Pod members learn to make hard decisions as they consider grant requests from community organizations.

They also learn to be generous with their time, talent and treasure. One Pod helped build a house through Habitat for Humanity. Another Pod's members built relationships with disadvantaged children at Salvation Army Camp. Another Pod's members take what they've learned about philanthropy and teach it to third graders through a program called "The Littlest Philanthropist."

In a quiet way, adults see Pod member's talent and humanity blossom. "There was a young man in our Pod with every material, academic and physical gift a person could ask for," says one adult volunteer. "His work with Pods showed him how to listen to other people and help the group benefit from everyone's ideas."

Don't think that the only ones learning through Pods are young people! Adult community leaders turn to Pod members for a fresh, youthful perspective on many subjects. Some young people's skills in philanthropy have grown to the point where they have been asked to educate adults on the topic.

Who supervises Youth Pods?

The adults involved with Youth Pods come from a wide variety of life experiences. Some are community volunteers who choose to practice philanthropy every day. Others are professionals in the field of foundations and philanthropy. Still others got involved with Pods when their teens did—and wound up staying involved long after their kids were through.

Pod leaders are people who see the value in teaching young people the skill of being generous with their time, talent and treasure. And they agree that the best way for young people to learn is by doing.

Who supports Youth Pods?

Youth Pods require two kinds of support from the community:

1. Mentoring and organizational support.
2. Financial support.

Mentoring and organizational support.

The mentoring and organizational support needed to teach young people about philanthropy comes from a variety of sources. In many areas, the local community foundation is well positioned to provide the information, contacts and support that Youth Pods require. In other communities, this support comes from schools, universities, youth development organizations and service clubs.

These "hosting organizations" are young people's link with the adult world. They provide real-world knowledge and serve as role models for Pod members.

Primary financial support.

The Dekko Foundation, a private family foundation with a mission of 'fostering economic freedom through education' provides major financial support for Youth Pods. The Foundation believes that Youth Pods add value to their communities because young people:

- Learn, in hands-on ways, to be philanthropic with their time, talent and treasure.
- Learn to effectively manage and govern a nonprofit organization.
- Play meaningful and respected roles in community development.
- Receive an opportunity to demonstrate their value to their community and work alongside adults to address community issues.
- Become recognized as significant financial contributors to community development.

Why the name 'Youth Pods'?

When a baby whale is born, it must learn to breathe. It will die if its mother does not push it toward the surface of the ocean for its first breath of oxygen.

Philanthropy, too, is a learned activity. Youth Pods are designed so that experienced adults give young people a push toward their first breath of "philanthropic oxygen."

Since whales live in communities called pods, the name Youth Pods came to be.

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