



Milwaukee

Brighter Futures

Meeting Summary, July 20, 2010

Involving youth in making policy

- *Reggie Moore says such efforts pay off in engaging young people*

The need to actively engage youth in decision-making and in public policy was stressed as a key ingredient in youth development by **Reggie Moore**, of Urban Underground and the Center for Youth Engagement Collaborative.

Speaking at the July Brighter Futures meeting, Moore cited two recent incidents that were highlighted in the news: the flap of a youth-created mural on a near South Side building as a temporary art project and the wrongful arrest of a Shorewood High School biracial student for alleged theft of food from the school cafeteria.

In both cases, the issues were resolved with active youth engagement within the system and without violence or other more disruptive activities, he said.



Participants at July meeting discuss basic features of youth involvement with Moore (left).

The art project, developed by TruSkool, had initially been approved by one city alderman and then called into question by another who responded to complaints that it was graffiti and may encourage further graffiti in an area victimized by such activity. It was noted that the project was planned only as temporary and the artwork was painted over by the project youth. In the other case, the

Urban Underground was involved in planning rallies to support the Shorewood High School youth, and many young people participated. The charges were dropped and the student made eligible for return to school.

Youth engagement was critical to both issues and demonstrate that youth can make a difference in public policy, he said.

“We have to move beyond just keeping youth occupied,” Moore said, noting that they could be engaged in many public issues, such as health care, peace, and the environment.

Adults need to provide examples to the youth by becoming active themselves in public policy issues. He said it is natural for workers who are dealing with individual cases to become focused on those. “The work you do can be very isolating,” he said. “It is important that you act nationally.”

He added: “We need a proactive strategy, and we need to train young people around public policy.”

He defined youth development as “the process all young people undergo as they build individual assets or competencies needed to participate in adolescence and adult life.”

Many of the programs Brighter Futures agencies offer include after-school activities, and often “we are called glorified baby-sitters,” Moore said. Yet, those programs are critical in the development of the youth and those times can be used to make them more meaningful to the young people if they include a public policy initiative.

One of the difficulties involves engaging youth with adults on decision-making committees. He quoted one youth as observing: “Everyday, adults sit around to

decide what problems youth have ... without ever consulting us.”

His comments brought responses from the audience:

“We don’t see any money going to mental health, and our schools cut services,” commented a participant, indicating such issues can be important to youth.

“You have a problem with a bunch of adults sitting around and deciding, using such words as ‘evidence-based,’” commented **Julie Bock** of the Milwaukee LGBT Coalition. She speculated on what would happen “if we had youth on boards of key funding agencies in the community.”

Quinton Cotton, of the Planning Council, suggested another obstacle preventing youth from being involved is the timing of meetings, mentioning, as example, the BF meeting being held at “9:30 on a Tuesday morning,” when most teenagers are still in bed or in school.

Moore said it’s important to consider ways to attract more youth to meetings, recognizing that not all youth, particularly younger teens, might be interested in such events.

He offered examples of current opportunities for youth involvement in adult councils, including:

- *Two young people are supposed to be on the Milwaukee School Board, and so only one has ever served on the board.*
- *Both the City and County of Milwaukee have “youth councils.”*

“We definitely want young people to take advantage,” he said. “These are opportunities that exist, and we need to keep them in mind.”

Moore also noted that the community seems to be concentrated on the negative things that youth are involved in. “We need to change the paradigm, and show that young people are doing things,” he said.

The things young people do should inform research and such research should be used to guide youth development strategies, he said.

Moore returned to a past period when there were efforts at building youth programs and involving the youth, citing the Inner City Youth-Serving Agencies consortium. “Why did it die?” he asked.

Bock responded: “Lack of funding as agencies begin to retreat to preserve their funding, at a time when they should be collaborative?”

Moore then asked: “Why stay active in Brighter Futures?”



These four discuss youth development

Joanie Luedtke of the West Allis West Milwaukee Family Resource Center pointed out her involvement adds to her knowledge about available resources in the area. She noted that people in their suburban community often do not understand the services that are available.

Bock added: “While the communications works, the best part is meeting people in person” which helps as you pick up ideas on how to help your programming and to link with others.

Everyone needs to come together as a common goal, Cotton said. “Why not be more proactive? Why isn’t there a foster child on our committee? Why are there not some children involved?”

Moore added: “What is the vision for young people in Milwaukee? We lead the nation in a lot of negative areas. What we need is a common vision.”

He outlined areas of development:

- **Intervention** -- Working on one individual.
- **Development** -- Producing services and supporting access, opportunities for growth, building competence.
- **Collective Engagement** – Building youth leadership, including components of youth development and civic engagement by engaging youth in political education and leadership.
- **Systemic Change** – Building membership base to develop a response to public issues.

The issue of the “brain drain” was discussed in which many young adults, particularly young African-American youth, flee the Milwaukee area for other communities they feel offer more promising futures. Moore indicated that by getting youth to understand they can have an impact in public policies they will gain ownership in the area. “We need to engage and keep people in the community,” he said.

An Exercise: Defining Goals

Members of the audience were given slips of paper containing various words and told to gather under signs that signified youth development strategies that best matched the words. The strategies were: youth development, youth services, youth leadership, civic engagement and youth organizing.

Moore asked some of them to state why they chose the certain strategy; it was interesting that many of them indicated their word likely also could fit in most of the other listed strategies.

Teen Pregnancy Prevention Network (TPPN) report.

Jody Rhodes, of Neu-Life Resource Center, said the Youth Ambassadors are planning a Health Fair at North Division High School. She said any agencies interested in participating should contact her.

The next youth summit is planned to be held at Synergy North High School

Family Unity Night is set for Oct. 14, and **Anthony McHenry** reported there is a need to assure the fullest participation possible. He noted that attendance by families at the recent “Celebrating Milwaukee Families” kick-off rally on June 24th was disappointing. He led a brief discussion on how to involve families.

Racquel Bell invited agencies to remain after the meeting to discuss involvement by families in the “Celebrating Milwaukee Families” event and Family Unity Night.

View a 10-minute video of the June 24th Kick-Off rally for Family Unity Night by going to:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dygr1MxdpLY>

UNCOM Report:

Terrence Maggitt reported that the second quarter of 2010 showed good progress in getting agencies involved in UNCOM data entry processes with most agencies being up-to-date. A second training is scheduled for Discovery World.



Maggitt

To answer a question on how agencies handle data entry, Maggitt said it is advisable, if possible, to assign one person, with a backup, rather than having each department or worker enter information.

Milwaukee Child Abuse Prevention Services (MCAPS) Coalition Report ... by Quinton Cotton:

MCAPS is on recess in August. The group is in the process of developing a Prevention Agenda as a means to mobilize its members. Also the Public Policy Committee is committed to selecting a policy focus.

Khalil Coleman, of the Neu-Life Community Development Center, announced the release of his book, “Time and Place: In the Life of B and K,” to be held at 6 p.m., September 16, at the Neu-Life Community Development Center, 2014 W. North Ave. The book is self-written, self-edited, and self-published.

**July 20, 2010 Meeting
Brighter Futures
List of Persons who signed in**

First Name	Last Name	Agency
Terri	Strodthoff	Alma Center Inc
Joan	Lecus	Aurora Family Service
Karina	Simons	Big Brothers Big Sisters
Christina	Treiber	Big Brothers Big Sisters
Deanna	Delaney	CDBA
Racquel	Bell	Community Advocates
Aricka	Evans	Community Advocates
Kenneth	Germanson	Community Advocates
Joe	Volk	Community Advocates
Stephanie	Saniter	Hope House
Demetrius	Banks	Journey House
Juanita	Valcarcel	Latino Community Center
Brittany	Gresl	Marquette Univ. Behavior Clinic
Carole	Poth	Marquette Univ. Center for Peacemaking
Deborah	Bryant	Milwaukee Adolescent Health
Lenora	Shaw	Milwaukee Adolescent Health Program
Kathi	Boyce	Milwaukee Christian Center
Julie	Bock	Milwaukee LGBT
Tracy	Hrajnoha	Neu-Life Community Resource Ctr
Jody	Rhodes	Neu-Life Community Resource Ctr
Angelo	Goudy	New Concept Self Dev. Ctr.
Anita	Spencer	New Concept Self Development
Michelle	Brock	Pearls for Teen Girls
Kelly	Hennesey	Pearls for Teen Girls
Quinton	Cotton	Planning Council
Thelma	Newby	SET Ministries
Anthony	Mc Henry	Silver Spring Neighborhood Center
Tuwanna	Watson	Sojourner Family Peace Center
Karen	Johnson	St. Amelian Lakeside
Khalil	Coleman	Teen Pregnancy Prevention Network
Jan	Buchler	The Parenting Network
A	Lampley	The Parenting Network
Andrea	Libber	The Parenting Network
Terrence	Maggit	United Neighborhood Centers of Milw
David	Bowen	Urban Underground
Nina	Cunningham	Vincent Family Center
Joanne	Luedke	WAWM Family Resource Center
Sarah	Boardman-Miller	