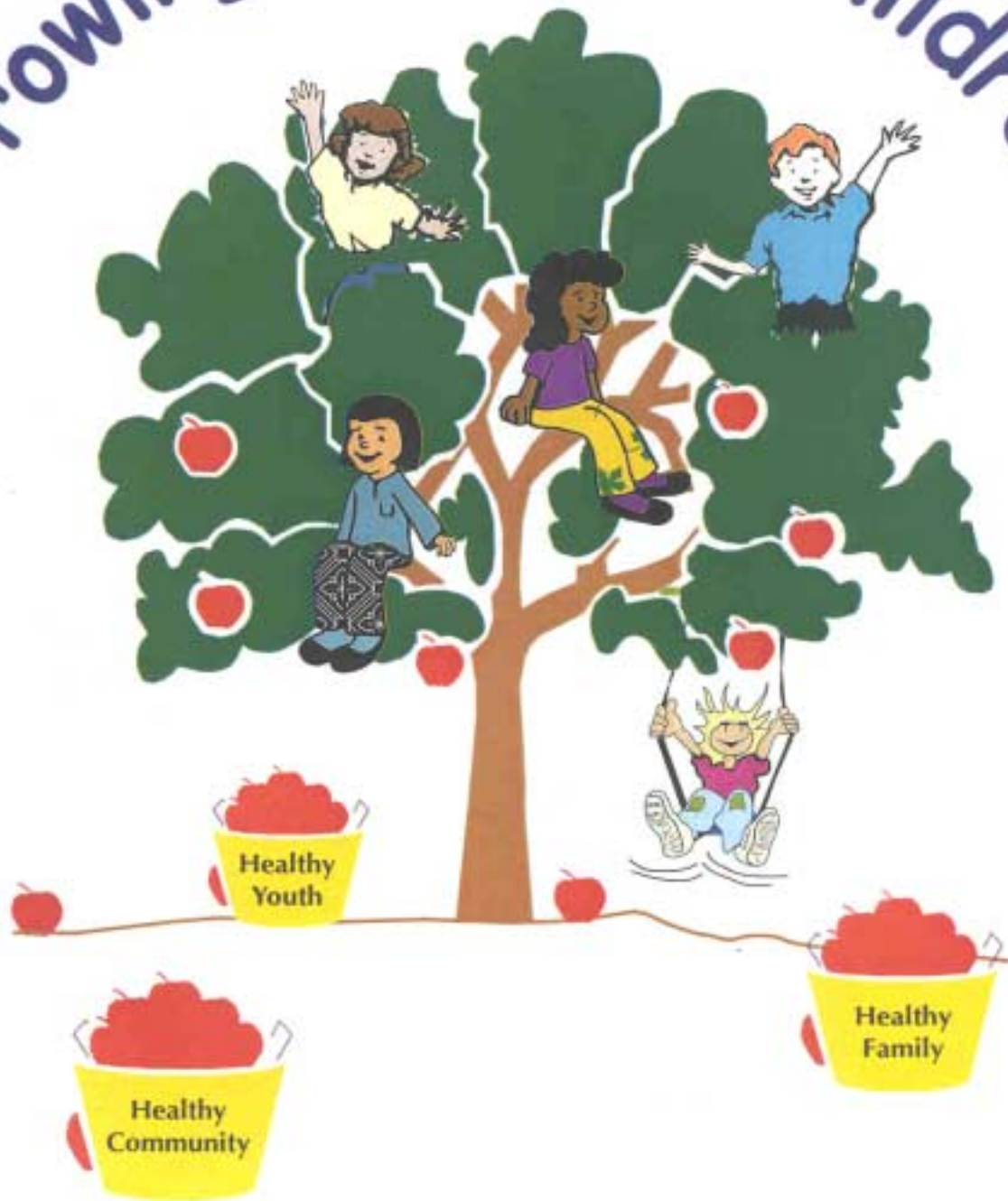


# Growing Healthy Children



## A Youth Master Plan for Vacaville

Vacaville Youth Roundtable – May 2000

*The tree metaphor was developed by the Healthy Vacaville Task Force which took responsibility for the planning of the prenatal to kindergarten age group.*

MEMO TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members

FROM: John P. Thompson, City Manager

**SUBJECT: YOUTH MASTER PLAN**

**DISCUSSION:**

Earlier this year, the Vacaville Youth Roundtable concluded an 18-month process to develop a Youth Master Plan for Vacaville. The Master Plan was based on research by the Non-Profit Research Institute and other studies showing the importance of certain "assets" in healthy youth development. Studies have proven that youth who have experienced more of the assets (parental support, adult role models, creative activities, etc.) are much more likely to grow up as healthy, competent, caring adults. The master planning process was aimed at identifying the extent to which Vacaville youth, from prenatal through high school, are experiencing these assets in their development. After extensive consultation with numerous people and organizations who deal with youth issues, the Master Plan settled on eight strategies for enhancing healthy youth development. Each of the eight strategies has a number of sub- strategies. The Roundtable has divided itself into eight sub-groups to pursue each of these strategies.

The Youth Master Plan was presented to the elected officials from the Vacaville City Council, Travis Unified School District, Vacaville Unified School District, and Solano Community College at a meeting in April, 2000 sponsored by the Select Committee on City and School Relations. While there was obvious concern about the budget limitations faced by the agencies in carrying out some of the sub-strategies, there was overwhelming support for the plan. It was requested at that meeting, and at a subsequent meeting of the Select Committee, that each of the agencies place the final plan on the agenda for discussion and adoption. Staff will give the City Council a review of the plan as well as an update on progress being made in the specific strategies.

**RECOMMENDATION:**

By simple motion, to adopt the Vacaville Youth Roundtable *Youth Master Plan*.

**VACAVILLE YOUTH ROUNDTABLE MEMBERS**

**JOHN THOMPSON, Chairperson**

City of Vacaville

**STAN ARTERBERRY**, Solano Community College

**DIANE BARNEY**, The Reporter

**MARCIA BARNUM**, North Bay Health Care

**ANNA BELL**, Solano County Office of Education

**LINDA BOESSENECKER**, Napa-Solano Girl Scouts

**ROBERT CARTER**, Carter's Auto Tinting

**LINDA CELESTRE**, Community Services Dept, City of Vacaville

**STEVEN CHUN, MD**, Kaiser Permanente

**BILL COMPTON**, Valley Church

**NANCY COOLIDGE**, Sylvan Learning Center

**LUCKY CRUZ**, California Medical Facility

**DONNA FOX**, Community Services Dept., City of Vacaville

**BEV GABLE**, Police Department, City of Vacaville

**BOB HARRISON**, Chief of Police, City of Vacaville

**REGGIE HUBBARD**, Housing & Redevelopment Dept., City of Vacaville

**PATRICK HUGHES**, Director of Operations, Solano Coalition for Better Health

**WALT IRWIN**, Solano County Probation

**RICH JACKSON**, Vacaville Unified School Dist.

**CYNDI JOHNSTON**, Housing & Redevelopment Dept., City of Vacaville

**BYRON LOCKHART**, Solano County Office of Education

**KRIS LOFTHUS**, Community Services Dept., City of Vacaville

**BRIAN LOPEZ**, Fire Department, City of Vacaville

**FRANK LUNA**, Community Services Dept., City of Vacaville

**MARGO McGLONE**, Solano County Office of Education

**DEBBY MCGUIRE**, The Children's Network

**JAN MAKOWSKI**, Police Department, City of Vacaville

**RUTH MICKELSON**, Padan School

**BILLIE MIDDLETON**, Youth & Family Services, Inc.

**ALICIA MILLER**, Solano County Office of Education

**GILLIE MILLER**, Solano County Business & Education Alliance

**FRANK MOORE**, Fire Chief, City of Vacaville

**TED NELSON**, Country High School

**AL NUCCION**, First Northern Bank

**LUIS ROSALES**, Primera Iglesia Bautista Emmanuel

**REBECCA ROZEN**, Kaiser Permanente

**DIANE SCHOBER**, Project Coordinator, Housing & Redevelopment, City of Vacaville

**MEME SHARP**, Solano Co. Business & Education Alliance

**BILLIE SHEPS**, Family Resource Center, City of Vacaville

**GARY TATUM**, Chamber of Commerce

**MIKE VALDEZ**, California State Prison -Solano

**ANGELA VANWRIGHT**, District Director for State Assemblyperson Helen Thomson

**CAPT. WAYNE WETTER**, Salvation Army

**SHEREENE D. WILKERSON**, Vacaville Unified School District

## Youth Master Plan Subcommittees

### **Pre-Natal – Kindergarten**

(Healthy Vacaville Task Force)

Rischa Slade, Chairperson

Marcia Barnum,

Violet Barton-Bermudez

Debbie Davis

Patricia Dawes

Mary Dickey

Marty Doherty

Donna Fox

Patrick Hughes

Cyndi Johnston

Marylynn Kleeman

Stephen Leonetti

Marilyn Myers

Jan O'Callaghan

Kathleen O'Sullivan

Jeanette Panchule

Jeanette Perez

Maha Rashid

Julia Richardson

Craig Rossiter

Carole Saint-Louis

Gayle Schofield

Nancy Schulz

Billie Sheps

Stacey Souza

Christie Speck

Patrick Stasio

Jan Stevens

Barbara Striek

Sandy Tosti

Phil Velez

Sharon Ventura

Roseann Vidane

Peggy Willson

### **Elementary School**

Ruth Mickelson, Chairperson

Mike Benson

Linda Boessenecker

Linda Celestre

Bill Compton

Kris Corey

Paula LeDoux

Byron Lockhart

Toni McCallum

Nanette Mills

Frank Moore

Sylvia Phillippi

Todd Sasano

JoAn Wade

Robert Washington

### **Middle School**

Patrick Hughes, Chairperson

Debbie McGuire

Frank Luna

Jaime Reyes

Reggie Hubbard

Kris Lofthus

Brian Lopez

Rich Jackson

Nancy Coolidge

Walt Irwin

Mike Valdez

Anna Bell

John Thompson

Jim Myers

Marcia Bjerken

Mark Drake

Mike Mansuay

Greg Gmahling

### **High School**

Bob Harrison, Chairperson

Nancy Coolidge

Beverly Gable

Tim Landis

Ted Nelson

Michael Giarritta

Margo McGlone

Al Nuccion

Bill Haden

Alicia Miller

## SUMMARY

What does a child need for his/her healthy development into adulthood? What support in that process does he/she need from family, relatives, friends, government agencies and the entire community? What is the current level of this support in Vacaville, California and what can be done to enhance the opportunities youth have to grow in a healthy manner?

These were the questions on the minds of members of the Vacaville Youth Roundtable (YRT), a nine-year old youth collaborative involving several departments of the City of Vacaville, school districts, businesses, non-profits, churches and others. The questions led to a comprehensive Youth Master Plan that is presented here. The planning began in December 1998 and concluded in March 2000. It was a grassroots effort to understand the normal developmental processes and needs from pre-natal through high school. With support from the Healthy Vacaville Task Force and other volunteers from the community, the YRT divided itself into four subcommittees to fully explore the issues described above in the following age groups:

- Pre-Natal to Kindergarten
- Elementary School
- Middle School
- High School

Each of these groups reviewed literature on the developmental needs of their age group, examined locally generated data about a wide variety of issues ranging from early childhood immunization through career development programs for high school seniors, and interviewed experts who work with this age group and their issues everyday. This research was the basis for the subsequent recommendations on strategies developed by each subcommittee. The entire YRT took the separate reports, identified linkages and common themes and decided on the following eight strategies encompassing 30 sub-strategies:

- STRATEGY 1:** Promote enhanced pre-natal, infant and child development.
- STRATEGY 2:** Ensure all children are ready for school by providing enriched developmental opportunities
- STRATEGY 3:** Support families in the development of healthy children in cognizance of the essential role of parenting.
- STRATEGY 4:** Raise community-wide individual responsibility for healthy youth development.
- STRATEGY 5:** Promote positive connections between youth and their school, community and other youth.
- STRATEGY 6:** Provide timely, professional, and convenient counseling services to youth and their families.
- STRATEGY 7:** Expand opportunities for skill development and social responsibility in youth.
- STRATEGY 8:** Facilitate coordinated information and referral to services in the community.

Each of these strategies and their related sub-strategies are described more fully in this document. Section I explains why the YRT decided to prepare a youth master plan, presents our vision and mission and describes the planning process that was followed. Section II lists the 8 strategies and 30 sub-strategies that resulted from the planning processes. Section III describes the key stages in a healthy youth's development and the types of support they need along the way. This was important background for the strategies and sub-strategies in Section II. Section IV relates the strategies to the developmental needs. Section V concludes the report and discusses the next steps. Tab A lists 40 "developmental assets" which the non-profit youth research group, The Search Institute, concludes as being important in healthy youth development. Tab B provides a brief history of the YRT, its composition and prior projects.

On April 10, a draft of this master plan was presented to representatives of the Boards of Education for the Vacaville Unified School District and the Travis School District, the Board of Trustees for Solano Community College and the Vacaville City Council at a special meeting sponsored by the Select Committee of City and School Relations. The attendees contributed significant comments in their small group discussions. Not surprisingly, there is concern about finding the resources necessary to advance the projects. However, there was an outpouring of support from these elected officials about the master plan strategies as well as the quality of the process used to determine them. The support from the leadership of the community is a first step in the YRT's Strategic Plan committee which is currently studying how best to proceed with implementing the plan.

The Vacaville Youth Roundtable is pleased to present this plan and trusts that it will contribute toward its stated vision:

***The Vacaville Youth Roundtable envisions a diverse community in which all youth are provided the support they need for healthy development.***

## **Section I — THE YOUTH MASTER PLAN**

### **A. Why A Master Plan?**

The City of Vacaville has detailed, long-range plans for preserving open space, and building such critical infrastructure as new streets, fire stations and water and sewer lines. Similarly, the School Districts have long-range plans for siting future schools and other support facilities. While the City and School Districts have consulted on each other's plans and have taken great efforts to involve the broader community, most of the planning has centered on facility needs. There had been no attempt to engage the community in a wholistic examination of current youth issues and needs without regard to organizational responsibilities or capabilities. To members of the Vacaville Youth Roundtable (YRT) who met in December 1998, such a planning process seemed like a timely, logical endeavor. Importantly, based on the YRT's remarkable history (described in Tab B), there was also a prevailing attitude that the YRT could pull off such a challenging project and end up with findings and recommendations that would help not only the YRT but also other organizations with specific interest in youth issues.

There were several factors which influenced the push for a comprehensive youth master plan besides the obvious argument that a child's developmental needs should be given at least as much attention as new sewer lines and schools. First, the Personal Responsibility Campaign described in Tab B, which had dominated the YRT's attention during the prior three years, was then in full stride. The campaign would continue to require time, money and fine-tuning. But there was the capacity in YRT's research and development role to begin looking at other places to make a difference. There were many ideas offered. Where should we go next?

Second, the experience with the PASSS program was eye opening. Vacaville School Districts and City departments had developed a reputation for innovation in youth programming especially directed at delinquency diversion in high school-aged youth. The problems facing children of Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, which came to light with PASSS strongly pointed out the need for earlier intervention. A former Police Chief aptly described the early months of the PASSS program as "turning over a rock." The reports coming from the PASSS Master Social Workers and Family Support Workers gave vivid, real-life testimony to all the research into the early origins of subsequent delinquency. YRT members asked themselves if there were other important youth needs like early childhood family stability, which had not been a particular community focus...but ought to be!

Finally, the City and School Districts which had willingly taken on the responsibility for funding and operating many of the YRT-developed programs were finding it difficult to make room in the budget for more. Similarly, many of the YRT members were reaching a saturation point in their time available to continue with existing projects and add new ones. The consensus was that the master planning process would be useful in identifying and attracting more financial support and volunteers to work towards YRT objectives.

### **B. Desired Outcomes**

The full YRT and a sub-committee spent several months wrestling with exactly what it wanted to accomplish with a master plan. What seemed like a simple question turned out to

elicit a variety of legitimate perspectives which cut to the heart of Vacaville youths' needs, the role of the Vacaville Youth Roundtable and the pros and cons of different planning models. Eventually, a consensus was reached on the following desired outcomes:

- Identify the developmental needs of youth from pre-natal through high school
- Determine what resources should be in place to support healthy youth development
- Assess the effectiveness of spending on selected, current youth programs
- Describe where the greatest gains in healthy youth development might be achieved such as by expanding current programs or filling in important gaps in local services
- Guide the short and long-term activities of the YRT

### **C. The Process**

Taking advice from Stephen Covey's, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People, the YRT decided to "begin with the end in mind." Members wanted a clear picture describing the ideal environment for nurturing healthy, successful youth. YRT's mission became advancing the Vacaville community towards this ideal environment. The master plan was a vehicle for the journey.

Child development experts have done extensive study into the needs of youth at various stages of their development. A committee of social workers, counselors, school psychologists, health care professionals and others was asked to do research in this area and help the YRT translate these developmental needs into a framework for community action. The committee presented its report: Vacaville Youth Roundtable Youth Master Plan—Planning Framework in March 1999. This report prompted a thoughtful discussion of what we wanted for our youth (our "vision") and the YRT's role in promoting the vision (our "mission"). The following new Vision and Mission Statements were later adopted to replace earlier statements:

#### **Vision**

*The Vacaville Youth Roundtable envisions a diverse community in which all youth are provided the support they need for healthy development.*

-----and-----

#### **Mission Statement**

*The Vacaville Youth Roundtable will promote a healthy community by engaging all community members, organizations and leaders to develop, support and nurture positive assets in our youth.*

The framework described the key stages in child/youth development in four age groups: 0-5 years of age, 6-11, 12-14 and 15-18. It went on to list "community assets" which were drawn from research of the Minnesota-based Search Institute, an independent youth research and development organization. Search has pinpointed 40 building blocks, "developmental assets," which are essential for a young person's healthy mental, physical, emotional and spiritual development. Research has also proved a direct correlation between the number of assets a child has received growing up and whether or not he/she develops unhealthy habits or

delinquency in the teen years. The 40 assets are shown at Tab A. To further assist the YRT's work, the committee also described "risk factors" at each of the four age groups (lack of early immunization, poor reading skills, etc.) and initiatives from around the country designed to expand the number and availability of the assets. The Framework proved to be very helpful in guiding the remainder of the master planning process.

YRT members took the Framework report and volunteered extra time to serve on four age groups to study the extent to which the community assets were in place at different age groups and make recommendations for interventions by the YRT or others groups. The four committees were Pre-Natal/Pre-School, Elementary School, Middle School and High School. Another collaborative organization, the Healthy Vacaville Task Force, agreed to serve as the Pre-Natal/Pre-School committee because of its members' interest and expertise on health issues which are most critical at that age. Each of the committees drew extensively from the time and knowledge of other non-YRT community members who served on the committees and/or provided information and advice along the way. To ensure thoroughness and uniformity among all the committees, the YRT adopted guidelines for the committees' processes and format for their final reports along with a schedule for key benchmarks in the review.

From March 1999 through February 2000 each of the sub-committees gathered information on conditions affecting their age groups. They then formed conclusions about the most important community assets for further analysis and, eventually, about the highest priority projects for promoting healthier development of their age groups.

The entire YRT continued to meet monthly during that year to discuss other business and monitor and support the committees' work. It quickly became apparent that there were overlaps and connections among the various age groups. Healthy development among older youth was largely dependent on meeting the more foundational needs at younger ages. Good parenting emerged as the most important, common leverage point for each of the committees. The entire YRT discussed the common themes and linkages and helped to focus the committees' work.

The YRT provided other significant support to the committees during the master planning process. The committees wanted information about the current environment in which Vacaville youth have or are developing in relation to Search Institute's 40 assets. The YRT was successful in obtaining a \$1,500 grant from The Lutheran Brotherhood, which has national connections with Search through its youth ministry. The grant paid for a survey developed by Search which was administered by the Vacaville Unified School District in late May 1999 to 278 9<sup>th</sup> graders. The confidential survey asked students 150 questions designed to determine the extent of developmental assets the youth have had or are now receiving and the incidence of such risk behaviors as smoking, violence, alcohol use or sexual activity. The relatively small sample size and a built-in bias affecting the respondents (only students whose parents signed a "permission slip were allowed to participate in the survey) prevented the results from qualifying as statistically valid. However, the results were compared with data already gathered by the school District and Police Department and seemed to be a reasonable reflection of current conditions. As an additional check, the YRT consulted counselors, teachers, and staff in the Police Youth Services Section and others who work closely with this age group. This group was surprised by a couple of the numbers but generally agreed with the overall picture the survey provided. Finally, the Vacaville survey results were compared to national averages published by Search. The comparison showed ample reason to

feel good about the community's level of youth assets but also cause for concern about the extent of some of the risk behavior. The survey results were shared with local elected officials and the media. It helped to raise community consciousness about youth problems, many of which go unseen by most of the public and to announce the YRT's master planning process.

Later in the process, each of the committees noted the large number of youth service organizations. All agreed that it would be useful to prepare a comprehensive guide of these services both to facilitate the committees' research and for subsequent use by service providers. The YRT requested and received a \$1,000 grant from Kaiser Permanente, which paid for the summary that was developed by the City's Department of Housing and Redevelopment, Family Resource Center in cooperation with the Police Department. The guide lists 27 pages of organizations currently providing services to Vacaville youth along with brief descriptions of the nature of the service, eligibility, costs and contact information.

Another group of YRT members, assisted by volunteer facilitator Suzanne Bailey, took the four sub-committee reports and packaged the recommendations into 8 distinct strategies with a total of 34 proposed projects. (Note: these were later repackaged into 8 strategies with 30 sub-strategies). On March 17, 2000 the entire YRT met in a special half-day session to study the findings and vote on the strategies and sub-strategies that would constitute the work of the YRT in the next few years. This session also marked the end of the four age group committees. From that point on, the collective attention of the entire YRT membership would be on "the big picture"; looking at the total needs of youth throughout the developmental process from pre-natal through high school.

The March 17 meeting was fun, full of energy, exhausting and extremely productive. The voting process was designed to narrow down the scope of strategies and sub-strategies for the YRT to pursue. But it did not go exactly as planned! The 8 strategies covered different issues (counseling, parenting, health care, etc.) and targeted different age groups. In the end, the votes were well dispersed among all the strategies and most of the 34 projects. The group appeared to be saying with its votes that all of the strategies and sub-strategies for each age group should be considered. Healthy youth development is a complicated system with builds upon itself. Nothing can be left out. Every stage could be enhanced.

The balance of this report summarizes the committees' findings on what constitutes healthy development and the prerequisite assets. It then describes the recommended strategies that emerged from the voting process for initial attention by the YRT. As of this writing, a Strategic Planning Committee has begun to put more structure to these recommendations in terms of priorities, procedure, costs, responsibilities and schedules.

## **Section II — DESCRIBING A HEALTHY CHILD**

### **A. Pre-Natal To Kindergarten: Ages 0-5**

The period from birth to five years of age encompasses the most dramatic physical and social change that occurs in human development. The healthy child emerges from this period with:

- Nutritional, physical, and medical needs having been met
- A sense of self
- A sense of innocence
- Feeling of safety in their environment
- General level of happiness/contentment
- Healthy and loving attachments
- Alertness to the surrounding world; curiosity and wonder
- Readiness to learn.
- Formation of cultural identity
- Clear boundaries and realistic expectations

There are many ways factors that support this healthy development. An absolute necessity is pre and post-natal nutrition and health care for developing brain cells, optimal mental capacity and physical well being. Another critical need is a loving relationship with a parent(s) or other caregivers who will provide the child a healthy environment.

Nearly all developmental issues for the pre-natal to three years of age group revolve around basic needs (shelter, food, medical care, clothing, childcare, transportation, and emotional). While many programs focus on the parent, the approach needs to be child centered. A well informed, well supported, nurturing and loving caregiver is in the best position to meet the child's basic needs. The child also needs other positive non-parent adult relationships. Family, neighbors, faith community, education, medical care, government, friends, the private sector, and others enrich the child's environment.

From ages 3-5, the well informed/supported and nurturing/loving environment continues to be essential. However, the emphasis shifts to social, intellectual, and cultural development. Key to this is access to appropriate relationships, resources, and programs that nurture these experiences.

### **B. Elementary School: Ages 6-11**

Healthy children ages six through eleven are curious, enthusiastic, optimistic, and energetic. They feel safe at home and in the community. They depend upon the family unit and other caring adults for basic necessities such as affection, guidance, and support. However, the family unit remains the strongest and most stable influence.

Healthy children have learned to differentiate fantasy from reality and truth from untruth. They realize that success and learning require effort and practice. They begin to define the

specific interests and talents they wish to develop at this age, as well as learn to adjust and cope with a myriad of physical changes, expectations, and responsibilities.

The child of this age group begins to understand that one's behavior, habits and attitudes have consequences. When children, who receive appropriate adult support experience setbacks and failure to achieve expectations, they learn from the experiences, recover, and proceed without feeling a loss of self-worth.

The key developmental issues for this age group are:

- **Family support:** The child is dependent upon the family for basic needs, for guidance, and emotional, social, and academic support.
- **Self-image:** Children begin to compare and contrast their abilities, successes, and experiences with those of others. Competition develops. There is the risk of developing poor self-esteem based on inexperience, inaccurate and incomplete information and wrong perceptions.
- **Maturing social and moral judgments:** Awareness of the consequences and effects of choices of behavior, attitudes and beliefs increase. Children of this age cope with issues of fairness, loyalty to friends and family and feelings such as frustration, anger and jealousy.
- **Developing group skills:** While exploring new activities, most of which involve other children, and have specific rules and expectations, the child must learn new ways to communicate, accept varied roles, and to cooperate within the constraints of a group.
- **Understanding physical needs:** An understanding of varying growth rates, recognizing the importance of good health, maintaining good hygiene, eating properly, being well rested, exercising and avoiding the use of harmful substances will provide a foundation for life long health habits.
- **Mastering basic academic skills:** Mastery of basic skills such as reading, writing, and arithmetic is important. The use of abstract thinking begins to increase rapidly by age 12. Self-worth is tied heavily to academic success or failure.
- **Expanded social relationships:** At age six almost all-social interactions are family oriented — through family members, family friends, and family activities. By age 11 the young person is increasingly involved in social relationships developed in school, church, organized activities and other areas of community participation.
- **Exploring interests and talents:** Children of this age are joiners. To the frustration of many adults, they often wish to drop out of activities rather than following through to completion. Being able to participate in a wide variety of activities, meet agreed upon terms of participation, and eventually selecting those that meet the child's talents and needs is complicated – but vital.

Several developmental assets in the home and in the community are key to this age group. A child's basic physical needs of food, shelter and clothing must be met as well as medical needs provided. Children need to feel a sense of belonging, safety, and security in their home and community.

Families and other caring adults who assume the responsibility for teaching, building and reinforcing skills, behaviors, and attitudes that lead to a productive life are key to healthy development. Supportive families are involved in their social, moral and ethical, emotional, spiritual and intellectual development. Children need adult models who are encouraging, fair, consistent and truthful. These adults can help a child take risks and accept the consequences of choices.

The educational system and the community must be committed to providing skills, activities, and extended support for families as children discover their strengths, weaknesses, talents, and interests. Extensive practice is needed in basic academic skills with the involvement and encouragement of the family. Children need a wide variety of opportunities to explore individual and group interests as well as opportunities to provide service within their various communities. Participation in these activities will help children understand the relationship between choices, behavior and consequences, foster peer acceptance and the understanding of cultural differences within the community, and strengthen the child's feeling of self-worth.

### **C. Middle School: Ages 12-14**

A healthy child of middle school age is one who is beginning to test boundaries in his/her emerging sense of independence from the family. As major physiological development occurs, youth at this age experience a strong need to be liked and a need for conformity. As a result, unisex cliques are their strongest support system.

This can also be a very volatile and vulnerable stage for many youth. There is both a need to search and a need to feel connected. There is a need for independence and a need for parental boundaries. There is incredible peer pressure that can be manifested in either healthy or unhealthy ways.

The healthy middle school child is able to make positive connections with adults other than parents and to participate in school or community activities that support healthy choices and development. These children are beginning to build competencies regarding good health and the ability to work with others and sustain friendships. They are beginning to problem solve in creative ways. They want to give back to the community and enjoy being given the responsibility to do so. The capacity to understand what tools are needed to maintain a sense of personal well-being is just beginning to develop along with a greater sense of meaning and purpose to their lives.

Relationships are being tested; they are shifting and changing as lessons are learned:

- \_ peer importance and loyalty
- \_ adult connections other than parents
- \_ family still at core

The range of social competence expands although youth is still very self-focused.

- egocentrism/conscious reputation building
- conformity, approval of others, peer review
- communication

A sense of autonomy emerges as self-esteem builds.

- resistance skills
- decision making
- independence from family unit

The importance of participation and a sense of purpose is key to establishing a positive sense of self at this age:

- school connectedness
- belonging to a group
- community service, volunteer involvement

The move from skill building and development to skill mastery is necessary to move from childhood to adulthood:

- ability to work with others, develop and sustain friendships
- ability to cope with difficult situations and use good judgment
- abilities that are valued by self and others

A young person pulls away from childhood and advances into adulthood in a relatively short amount of time. The transition can range from smooth to rocky, fast to slow, dramatic to unnoticed. The changes, however, are momentous, often extending beyond the middle school years. Because there is such a range of experience, need, and level of development at this stage, a multitude of resources should be available to assist youth in continuing their healthy growth. Chief among them continues to be a safe and stable home life. While the natural process of achieving autonomy often drives a middle school-aged youth away from his/her parents, parental involvement in their lives is no less important with this age group...just different! Youth at this age look first to their peer group for a sense of belonging and self-worth. Since so much of their time and energy is devoted to school-based activities, being positively connected at school is therefore extremely important. But parental support is still essential to help them balance peer acceptance with an understanding of the society's values and that "with greater freedom comes greater responsibility."

#### **D. High School: Ages 15-18**

A healthy youth of high school age is a teen committed to social responsibility who has a developed sense of personal integrity and appropriate moral behavior during a period of awakening maturity. The healthy youth would be engaged in feeling a sense of autonomy in their relationship with their parents or other primary adult caregivers, as well as acquiring a sense of reciprocity to the larger community. The healthy teen at this age is exploring issues of vocational and career competency, and is gaining perspective regarding conduct in the world beyond the home and adolescent environment.

One of the key developmental issues for this age group is achievement of their self-identity, their own sense of agency, purpose, worth, and promise. Without a positive sense of who they are, youth risk feeling powerless, without a sense of initiative and direction.

Vocational competency is also important as it relates to interpersonal and intellectual skills youth need to negotiate through the maze of choices, options, and interpersonal relationships they face in the working environment. A sense of task mastery lays the foundation for independence and competence as adults.

Youth at this age often typically face exploring sexual intimacy. The way parents touch, hold, and handle a child lays the foundation for the youth's later development of healthy sexual attitudes and beliefs. Clarifying sexual values is as important as giving youth accurate information of healthy values and the development of critical thinking and decision making skills.

A quest for autonomy and awareness of self as a separate subculture is another developmental issue. Over the course of childhood, youth learn and develop skills of self-management or personal control. The development of autonomy occurs during adolescence, when they start to separate from the family. The transfer of responsibility for self-management from parent to the youth is a developmental quest for separateness. It is through this developmental stage that they become capable of controlling their lives.

Parental involvement and support along with a loving, healthy home environment are still critical assets as the teen seeking his/her self-identity. Having safe situations for youth to develop socially is an important asset. So, too, are opportunities for experiential learning outside the classroom, particularly involving volunteer service to others. This gives the youth vocational competency they seek and promotes a connection with the broader community into which they are headed. Activities that promote these values at home, school and in the community all contribute to the teen's preparation for independent, healthy adulthood.

### **Section III — STRATEGIES**

The Vacaville Youth Roundtable's sub-committees considered the developmental needs and assets for each age group. They then identified a total of 34 specific projects/programs to expand existing community assets or fill in gaps that fit into 8 goals. The YRT conducted a voting process on March 17, 2000 out of which emerged a consensus on the goals and most important projects for the YRT to address first. A Strategic Planning Sub-committee took these priorities and re-packaged them into the following 8 strategies encompassing 30 sub-strategies:

#### **Strategy 1: Promote enhanced pre-natal, infant and child development**

This strategy encompassed such basic needs as appropriate safety, nutrition and access to healthcare as being foundational to healthy development. The consensus was that the related sub-strategies could and should be pursued more expeditiously by other organizations like the Health Vacaville Task Force.

##### **Sub-Strategies:**

- A. To develop a program of trained and supervised volunteers to make home visits to families with newborns
- B. To expand access to pre-natal, infant and child-related resources to address barriers of service delivery; to include outreach, education, awareness and transportation
- C. To heighten awareness of specific infant and family needs through an intergenerational approach using various media forums and outlets

#### **Strategy 2: Ensure all children are ready for school by providing enriched developmental opportunities**

With so many single-parent or dual-income households, finding adequate and affordable childcare is a major issue for many Vacaville families. This strategy speaks not only to the availability of childcare in the community, but also to ensure that the care is structured to enrich the child's development and not just provide supervision.

##### **Sub-Strategies:**

- A. To expand Headstart, Earlystart and State Pre-School Programs throughout the community in areas of need
- B. To encourage more licensed in-home childcare providers and support training for those providers
- C. To expand community awareness regarding the value of providing developmentally-enriched programs through outreach and education
- D. To promote a process where local businesses and corporations will provide on-site or nearby childcare for their employees

#### **Strategy 3: Support families in the development of healthy children in cognizance of the essential role of parenting**

As described in Section III, parents (or guardians) are the single most important asset a youth has throughout his/her development. Each of the sub-committees mentioned the value of a

more formal effort to affirm the importance of parenting and support them with their critical roles.

**Sub-Strategies:**

- A. To design and implement a system at each school site to attract adults who act in a parental role to youth (the parent, foster parent, guardian, grandparent, adult sibling or caregiver). The focus of this system would be to provide parental education and support, especially in the area of defining norms and enhancing their efforts during times of transition for the youth
- B. To support existing efforts by schools to deliver parenting skills classes to students who are parents
- C. To increase awareness of the special needs of the evolving family unit and support efforts to address alternative family structures
- D. To support efforts to raise awareness and celebrate the importance of good parenting skills

**Strategy 4: Raise community-wide individual responsibility for healthy youth development**

While service providers have a responsibility to promote healthy youth development, so, too, does every person in the community. Furthermore, everyone can help provide assets for local youth; no special talents or experience necessary! YRT members have been impressed with the results achieved in several communities that conducted multi-media campaigns informing every segment of the community how they could contribute towards the area's youth assets. Vacaville is well-positioned to gain similar benefits from a campaign which promotes wide-spread responsibility for our youth.

**Sub-Strategies:**

- A. To support the creation and implementation of a Youth Assets Campaign to educate the community regarding the forty developmental assets and how businesses, churches, schools, neighbors and others can make a difference in a youth's life
- B. To support existing efforts of the Gotcha program and business efforts to reward students for academic achievement and positive behavior.
- C. To support existing efforts of the TOUCH Committee and other efforts to enhance youth awareness of Personal Responsibility

**Strategy 5: Promote positive connections between youth and their school, community and other youth**

Healthy youth social development involves a sense of self-worth and valuing and learning to get along with others. There are obviously different ways of encouraging this to happen at different age levels. But the YRT concludes that such activities as sports, recreation and school clubs provide a rich environment for learning these important life lessons.

**Sub-Strategies:**

- A. To develop programs and services to keep young people at the school site after school, rather than leaving and engaging in unsupervised activity. This will be accomplished through a collaborative effort to create and utilize space, especially at the middle school level, for asset building services

- B. To support the existing Challenge Days program, including the transition to presentations aimed at elementary, middle school and diversion youth
- C. To support the development of spirit and fun activities at schools through the enhanced use of community resources
- D. To support an enhancement of the work of student leaders, especially the Student Councils, to provide leadership to school activities and policy decisions
- E. To support the recruitment and use of community volunteers to enrich after-school activities
- F. To support the City's TGIFun program, and to encourage expansion of hours of service and consider transportation issues with regard to access by potential participants

**Strategy 6: Provide timely, professional, and convenient counseling services to youth and their families**

The YRT proposes a number of preventative, asset-building initiatives designed to create a positive environment for youth development. But even under the most ideal circumstances youth and their families will continue having problems. Sometimes the situation calls for outside, professional assistance through trained counselors. The YRT concludes that existing counseling available in the schools and community has proved effective but much is to be gained by reducing caseloads and increasing counselors.

**Sub-Strategies:**

- A. To encourage expansion of the existing PASSS program presented by the Police Department beyond the six schools now benefiting from the counseling services provided
- B. To support the addition of school counselors, especially at the elementary school level, to aid in the identification and treatment of youth problems and enhancement of appropriate classroom behavior

**Strategy 7: Expand opportunities for skill development and social responsibility in youth**

Part of the healthy youth's self-worth comes from using his/her skills in service to others in the community. A community that actively promotes this value can expect more young citizens who apply their knowledge in socially responsible ways.

**Sub-Strategies:**

- A. To facilitate connections between youth and organizations and services that develop skills
- B. To enhance the access by youth to service organizations such as churches and scouting
- C. To support peer mentoring efforts underway in the schools, and to support expansion of such services as a means of helping youth and developing a sense of social responsibility in the mentor
- D. To support efforts by the Chamber of Commerce, the Workforce Investment Act/Private Industry Council and others to develop internships, apprenticeships and other skill development activities in youth

**Strategy 8: Facilitate Coordinated Information and Referral**

Each of the sub-committees identified numerous organizations that provide important services for youth of different ages. The nature and details of these services is constantly changing. There was widespread agreement that these services need to be better advertised to

the families that need them and especially to other service providers to promote cooperation and avoid overlap.

**Sub-Strategies:**

- A. To routinely expand the Community Resource Guide and regularly update it and publish the Guide in several languages.
- B. To ensure the Community Resource Guide is widely used by families and service providers through a public awareness campaign
- C. To maximize the use of the Internet and web-based technology to promote access and use of the Community Resource Guide and the resources of various service providers through a network of sites, search engines and similar methodologies

# 40 Developmental Assets

Search Institute has identified the following building blocks of healthy development that help young people grow up healthy, caring, and responsible.



Category	Asset Name and Definition	
<b>External Assets</b>	<b>Support</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. Family Support</b>-Family life provides high levels of love and support.</li> <li><b>2. Positive Family Communication</b>-Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents.</li> <li><b>3. Other Adult Relationships</b>-Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.</li> <li><b>4. Caring Neighborhood</b>-Young person experiences caring neighbors.</li> <li><b>5. Caring School Climate</b>-School provides a caring, encouraging environment.</li> <li><b>6. Parent Involvement in Schooling</b>-Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.</li> </ol>	
	<b>Empowerment</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>7. Community Values Youth</b>-Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.</li> <li><b>8. Youth as Resources</b>-Young people are given useful roles in the community.</li> <li><b>9. Service to Others</b>-Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.</li> <li><b>10. Safety</b>-Young person feels safe at home, school, and in the neighborhood.</li> </ol>	
	<b>Boundaries &amp; Expectations</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>11. Family Boundaries</b>-Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.</li> <li><b>12. School Boundaries</b>-School provides clear rules and consequences.</li> <li><b>13. Neighborhood Boundaries</b>-Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.</li> <li><b>14. Adult Role Models</b>-Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.</li> <li><b>15. Positive Peer Influence</b>-Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.</li> <li><b>16. High Expectations</b>-Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.</li> </ol>	
	<b>Constructive Use of Time</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>17. Creative Activities</b>-Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.</li> <li><b>18. Youth Programs</b>-Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community.</li> <li><b>19. Religious Community</b>-Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.</li> <li><b>20. Time at Home</b>-Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.</li> </ol>	
	<b>Internal Assets</b>	<b>Commitment to Learning</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>21. Achievement Motivation</b>-Young person is motivated to do well in school.</li> <li><b>22. School Engagement</b>-Young person is actively engaged in learning.</li> <li><b>23. Homework</b>-Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.</li> <li><b>24. Bonding to School</b>-Young person cares about her or his school.</li> <li><b>25. Reading for Pleasure</b>-Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.</li> </ol>
		<b>Positive Values</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>26. Caring</b>-Young person places high value on helping other people.</li> <li><b>27. Equality and Social Justice</b>-Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.</li> <li><b>28. Integrity</b>-Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.</li> <li><b>29. Honesty</b>-Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy."</li> <li><b>30. Responsibility</b>-Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.</li> <li><b>31. Restraint</b>-Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.</li> </ol>
		<b>Social Competencies</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>32. Planning and Decision Making</b>-Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.</li> <li><b>33. Interpersonal Competence</b>-Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.</li> <li><b>34. Cultural Competence</b>-Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.</li> <li><b>35. Resistance Skills</b>-Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.</li> <li><b>36. Peaceful Conflict Resolution</b>-Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.</li> </ol>
		<b>Positive Identity</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>37. Personal Power</b>-Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."</li> <li><b>38. Self-Esteem</b>-Young person reports having a high self-esteem.</li> <li><b>39. Sense of Purpose</b>-Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."</li> <li><b>40. Positive View of Personal Future</b>-Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future</li> </ol>

## **Section IV — TYING IT ALL TOGETHER**

The master plan blends the best research from child development professionals; federal and state agencies; private foundations and national non-profits with the local community knowledge provided by the people who assisted with this plan.

The process began with a general desire to nurture a childhood for all Vacaville youth that would enhance their likelihood of becoming healthy adults. It proceeded into defining and understanding the critical stages in a youth's development as they change from birth to high school graduation. From there, YRT members, assisted by other resource people from the community, studied the assets (good parenting, positive connection with school, adequate health care, etc.) that need to be in place for healthy development to occur and the degree to which they are satisfactorily available in Vacaville already. To the extent there were gaps in these assets, the four age-group committees proposed projects to fill them. Recognizing that all of the strategies and sub-strategies are worthwhile but that there are realistic limitations to consider, the entire YRT voted on the highest priority projects for initial emphasis.

This section summarizes the most critical developmental needs that have been identified for each age group and how the YRT's 8 strategies relate to them.

### **Pre-natal To Kindergarten: Ages 0-5**

#### **Developmental Issues**

Profound physical and mental growth  
Sense of self  
Sense of innocence  
Feeling safe in their environment  
General contentment  
Loving attachments  
Alertness and curiosity  
Formation of cultural identity  
Clear boundaries and reasonable expectations

#### **Assets**

Basic needs (nutrition, shelter, healthcare, clothing...)  
Love from a parent(s)/guardian(s)  
Positive non-parent adult relationships  
Cultural awareness  
Resources to develop learning skills

#### **Directly Related Master Plan Strategies and Sub-Strategies**

Strategy 1: Pre-natal, infant, child development; Sub-Strategies A-C  
Strategy 2: School Preparedness; Sub-Strategies A-D  
Strategy 3: Parent Support; Sub-Strategies A-D  
Strategy 4: Community Campaign; Sub-Strategy A  
Strategy 8: Information/Referral; Sub-Strategies A-C

## **Elementary School: Ages 6-11**

### **Developmental Issues**

Self-image formation  
Maturing social and moral judgments  
Group skills  
Mastering basic learning skills  
Expanding social relationships  
Emerging interests and talents

### **Assets**

Basic needs (nutrition, shelter, healthcare, clothing...)  
Feeling a sense of belonging and safety in their home and community  
Caring adults who teach and reinforce skills and values—good role models  
Moral guidance  
Spiritual support  
Intellectual resources  
Positive individual recreation activities/interests  
Positive group recreation activities/interests

### **Directly Related Master Plan Strategies and Sub-Strategies**

Strategy 2: School Preparedness; Sub-Strategies A-D  
Strategy 3: Parent Support; Sub-Strategies A, C & D  
Strategy 4: Community Campaign; Sub-Strategy A  
Strategy 5: Positive Connections; Sub-Strategies A-F  
Strategy 6: Counseling; Sub-Strategies A & B  
Strategy 7: Skill Development/Social Responsibility; Sub-Strategies A & B  
Strategy 8: Information/Referral; Sub-Strategies A-C

## **Middle School: Ages 12-14**

### **Developmental Issues**

Emerging independence from family  
Testing boundaries  
Physiological change induces strong need to be liked  
Conformity and loyalty to peer group  
Egocentrism  
Autonomy and self-esteem  
Sense of purpose to activities  
Moving from skill development to mastery

### **Assets**

Basic needs provided by family  
Positive relationships with non-parent adults  
Instruction on consequences of choices & resistance skills  
Training and practice in social skills  
Awareness of physiological development  
School connection

Belonging to positive groups  
Participation in community service work  
Group and individual activities and interests to develop skills/interests and demonstrate mastery

**Directly Related Master Plan Strategies and Sub-Strategies**

Strategy 3: Parent Support; Sub-Strategies A, C & D  
Strategy 4: Community Campaign; Sub-Strategies A-C  
Strategy 5: Positive Connections; Sub-Strategies A-F  
Strategy 6: Counseling; Sub-Strategies A & B  
Strategy 7: Skill Development/Social Responsibility; Sub-Strategies A-C  
Strategy 8: Information/Referral; Sub-Strategies A-C

**High School: Ages 15-18**

**Developmental Issues**

Achievement of self-identity (purpose, worth and promise) and autonomy  
Inter-personal competence  
Intellectual competence  
Mastery of tasks needed for adulthood  
Exploring sexual intimacy  
Self-management and control  
Perspective on the future

**Assets**

Basic needs met  
Understanding, supportive parent(s)  
Safe situations for social development  
Career guidance and experiential learning opportunities outside the classroom  
Positive relationships with non-parent adults  
Instruction on consequences of choices & resistance skills  
School connection  
Belonging to positive groups  
Participation in community service work  
Group and individual activities and interests to develop skills/interests and demonstrate mastery

**Directly Related Master Plan Strategies and Sub-Strategies**

Strategy 3: Parent Support; Sub-Strategies A-D  
Strategy 4: Community Campaign; Sub-Strategies A-C  
Strategy 5: Positive Connections; Sub-Strategies A-E  
Strategy 6: Counseling; Sub-Strategy B  
Strategy 7: Skill Development/Social Responsibility; Sub-Strategies A-D  
Strategy 8: Information/Referral; Sub-Strategies A-C

## **Section V — CONCLUSION**

Publication of this master plan represents more of a beginning than an ending. Much has already been accomplished to support Vacaville youth in their healthy development but much more can and should be done. The Vacaville Youth Roundtable's planning process was intended to provide a comprehensive review of what our youth need and to focus the entire community's interest and efforts on the most important asset-building projects. While the "big picture" overview has been accomplished with this master plan, the real work of improving the environment for youth development lies ahead.

Members of the Vacaville Youth Roundtable and the Healthy Vacaville Task Force along with other community organizations and individuals who helped in this planning effort gave generously of their time and knowledge. This truly was a volunteer, low-budget, "grassroots" project. While we are pleased with the process and excited about the final strategies and sub-strategies, we also must acknowledge the plan's limitations. The sub-committees did the best they could to seek out and consult experts on issues and programs affecting their age groups. Despite their best efforts and intentions, we must admit that the complexity of the issues and the sheer number of stakeholders involved is daunting. We don't pretend to be experts on every issue and every program now already available for Vacaville youth. It is possible that if the sub-committees had a couple more years and hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of staff and consultant support, they might have reached somewhat different conclusions on the priority of the strategies that were selected to pursue. We did not have those advantages. Hopefully, the discipline built into the process and the expertise of the people drawn into it largely offsets our inability to talk to everyone who has information to offer, research every question that could be raised and consult every group which could be part of the solution.

So, while acknowledging the plan's limitations, we trust that our work will contribute towards enhancing the already high quality of life that exists for all Vacaville residents and especially for youth and their families. We want to thank everyone who has helped with this project either directly or by authorizing others to contribute. The Vacaville Youth Roundtable stands ready to live up to its mission of working with the entire community to promote the vision of healthy youth.

## **Tab B — The Vacaville Youth Roundtable**

### **A. Composition**

The Vacaville Youth Roundtable (YRT) was launched in November 1991 when a group of people concerned about youth issues met to share information and resources. Early participants were the City Manager, Police Chief, Community Services Director, Superintendents of the Vacaville and Travis Unified School Districts, County Probation, and representatives from local business and churches. Many other agencies and interested individuals have since joined the group including The Reporter newspaper; California Medical Facility and California State Prison, Solano; County Office Of Education; Kaiser Permanente; North Bay Health Care; City Housing and Redevelopment Department; City Fire Department; Vacaville Chamber of Commerce; Napa-Solano Girl Scouts and local non-profit social service organizations. Today, the YRT serves as a clearinghouse and forum for discussions of community youth issues as well as a “think tank” for research and development of programs that are operated by other entities such as a City department or School District.

Since its inception, the YRT has remained informal and non-bureaucratic. It has no by-laws or articles of incorporation, no budget, and no staff. Membership is open to anyone with an interest in youth issues and a willingness to work cooperatively with others. The key to the YRT’s success has been the commitment of the participants to work together and the obvious benefits to our youth that have come from this collaboration over the years.

The Vacaville City Council has chosen to provide an annual contribution from the City’s General Fund of \$20,000 in recent years to support the YRT’s projects. Funding for most projects has come from fundraisers; occasional federal, state or foundation grants; donations from the business community and from local government budgets. The City of Vacaville coordinates the meetings and handles the limited record keeping for YRT revenues and expenses in a separate trust fund.

### **B. Projects**

In the beginning years, the YRT focused on three areas: delinquency diversion, youth recreation and vocational education, each of which achieved early successes. The planning meetings concerning possible interventions to reduce potential delinquency lead to a comprehensive program known as Counter Force. Counter Force combines law enforcement with particular emphasis on gangs, along with counseling, life skills training, employment, community service projects, and special recreation activities (midnight soccer, boxing, drama, etc.) for young people who are especially “at risk” and not typically involved in more mainstream youth activities. The YRT’s role was to research the best models for delinquency prevention and develop the outlines for a Vacaville application. The Vacaville Police Department and Community Services Department developed the details. In an extraordinary show of support for youth and the value of Counter Force, all the City departments reached consensus on cutting their own budgets in order to fund the initial \$600,000 to implement the program.

The recreation focus resulted in a small Teen Center that was equipped and opened in a modular building at one of the City's community centers. Most of the funding for equipment (pool and ping-pong tables, air hockey, video games, etc.) came from a generous donation of one of the business representatives on the YRT. The teens themselves organized fundraisers to help with operating costs and special events like dances and trips.

Finally, the City Manager and Superintendents of Vacaville and Travis School Districts worked together on a report describing the value of vocational education and suggesting mechanisms for better linking the business community with schools. The Vacaville City Council and both Districts' Boards of Education adopted the report. It helped to draw the elected officials together on this important issue and spawned a separate collaborative in 1993 known as the Select Committee On City & School Relations. The Select Committee began with two board members from each of the K-12 School Districts covering Vacaville, two City Council members, as well as the Superintendents and City Manager. Solano Community College and representatives from Travis Air Force Base joined later. The Select Committee meets monthly to discuss matters of concern to both the city and School Districts such as school safety, traffic circulation around schools, planning and funding of facilities, and, continuing promotion of school-to-career initiatives.

The YRT continued its study of local youth needs and research coming out of state and federal agencies. This resulted in a special program: Mentoring, Educating and Supervising Adolescents (MESA) operated by the Solano County Probation Department, Youth and Family Services non-profit and Vacaville Unified School District in a city-owned house in an orchard. MESA provided one-on-one counseling and education of about 12 young people who were on probation and had been expelled from school. The counselors made some positive breakthroughs with their difficult clients until funding constraints ended the program.

Another program incubated by the YRT at the same time as MESA has enjoyed greater longevity. The Parents And Students Seeking Success (PASSS) program trains teachers in Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade to identify children who are showing signs of difficulty coping with school or getting along with other children. The child's parent(s) is contacted by a Master Social Worker from the Police Department and offered the free assistance of counselors known as Family Support Workers (FSW) who go into the home each week to help with whatever problems may be at the root of the child's difficulty at school. The FSWs from the Police Department and interns from local colleges have had tremendous impact in correcting a wide range of problems including child abuse, unemployment, chemical dependency, supervision training, home budgeting and basic household maintenance.

The next significant milestone in the evolution of YRT efforts was the Personal Responsibility campaign. Having launched MESA and PASSS, the YRT held planning sessions to determine its next areas of study. Participants listed all the potential problem areas (gangs, teen drinking, smoking, pregnancy, etc.) and then listed all the organizations that had some potential interest in each of the issues. The meeting room walls were filled with a daunting array of potential issues and stakeholders. The group reached the conclusion that the best way to leverage YRT efforts was to increase the ability of our youth to lead healthy lives rather than dealing solely with the consequences of bad choices. The research on "resiliency factors" (attributes that help a child cope with negative circumstances in his/her environment)

which was the foundation of the PASSS program proved influential in the decision to work on a preventative, “building up” strategy.

YRT members investigated existing programs for helping youth to make good choices and were most impressed by an organization called Challenge Associates that ran Challenge Days. Challenge Days are daylong events for approximately 100 youth and 20 adult facilitators. The participants are taken through a day of fun, group trust-building activities, which builds to emotional discussions about personal problems. The youth learn that everyone has something in their life that has or is causing them pain. From there they learn to value themselves and other people and to take personal responsibility for how they will handle life’s choices in the future. They are powerful sessions!

After 1200 high school students had attended a Challenge Day, YRT members worked with student representatives to organize a conference for the youth to re-commit to the Challenge Days principles of valuing themselves and others and having the power to take personal responsibility for guiding their lives. It was also an opportunity for the youth to report to adult community leaders on the support they would need to implement these principles.

Approximately 250 high school students and 100 adults gave up a Saturday in April 1997 to hear inspirational speakers, have small group discussions on a variety of issues and make plans. The conference concluded with reports from the youth that fell into five areas. Here is a brief summary of what has been accomplished in each of these areas that, in total, comprise the Personal Responsibility Campaign:

- Safe place for teens to “hang out” after school. The City Council approved converting a community center into The Brickhouse teen center that opened in February 1998. It features pool tables, video games, big screen TV, music and quiet areas for talking or homework. A youth Board of Directors oversees policies and organizes dances and other special events.
- More media coverage of positive youth activities. The Reporter newspaper now has a special section on Tuesdays each week featuring articles highlighting youth achievements or topical issues which are usually written by youth.
- Breaking down racial and ethnic barriers. A youth committee now organizes an annual celebration of diversity using keynote speakers and demonstrations of different cultures’ food, dance and history.
- Better preventative measures on health risk behaviors. Funded by a grant from California Health Communities, a youth committee: Youth Takin’ On Tobacco has developed skits and other campaign materials to help their peers understand how to avoid the dangers inherent with smoking, drinking, drugs and other problem behaviors.
- Recognition of good behavior. The YRT launched the “GOTCHA” program which involves local businesses providing small rewards (movie passes, hamburger coupons, etc.) to students who have attained a high grade point average, raised their GPA’s a full grade, or corrected significant behavior problems. The Vacaville Chamber of Commerce has fully embraced GOTCHA obtaining \$50,000 worth of product this year and holding a special skating party for the eligible middle and high school students.

An umbrella youth organization, Teens Organizing and Uniting for Community Health (TOUCH) provides guidance to the overall personal responsibility campaign and serves as the youth liaison to the YRT. Approximately 4000 students from all of the Vacaville middle and high schools have attended a Challenge Day and this past year, the program was modified to include 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders as well. Hundreds of youth are busy in school clubs or TOUCH committees planning and organizing programs that directly tie to YRT projects. The YRT itself meets monthly to receive reports on these youth activities and to provide whatever support is possible.

A more complete description of these and other programs launched by the Vacaville Youth Roundtable as well as partnerships between the City of Vacaville and other agencies can be obtained by contacting:

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