2005-2006 marked another successful year for the Young Women’s Action Team (YWAT). The group of 10 young women has worked to educate about issues of violence and sexism, to break down barriers between men and women, to organize against violence against women and girls, to nurture leadership among young women, and to create a safe place for girls and young women to examine and explore issues in their lives and support each other as women. Below, YWAT members march through Rogers Park to heighten awareness about street harassment (more on page 3).

YWAT HAS A NEW HOME

The YWAT moved into its own office space on February 1, 2006.

The YWAT wishes to thank all of its donors who helped make this new office space at 7067 N. Glenwood Avenue a reality.
Girls’ Leadership Camp

Across the Midwest, young people are building power. The YWAT was featured in a recent study that outlines the landscape of youth organizing and activism in the Midwest. Entitled “At a Crossroads: Youth Organizing in the Midwest,” the report by Melissa Spatz suggests that young people are committed to the values of justice, fairness, and equity. They are also actively working to engage their peers in social change work. With in mind, the current members of the YWAT launched the Girls’ Leadership Camp (GLC) in February 2006. Middle school-aged girls, 11 to 14 years old, were invited to apply for the camp; fourteen participated. The GLC was offered on the last Saturday of the month, February through June, in Rogers Park. The YWAT leadership core implemented and coordinated the GLC. Participants learned about leadership, activism, social change, and other issues of concern to young women (namely violence, sexual health, and education). The GLC’s main focus was on how girls can develop their natural leadership skills to make change in the community and world. Sessions focused on defining the concept of leadership, developing self-awareness, and embracing positive qualities. GLC participants also attended the citywide youth poetry slam, “Louder than a Bomb” on March 4, 2006. GLC members also participated in a self-defense workshop and a poetry workshop.

The YWAT has been supported in developing the Girls’ Leadership Camp by the Girl’s Best Friend Foundation, the Region I Youth Net, the Cricket Island Foundation, and Cook County Commissioner Larry Suffredin, who made a personal financial contribution. Jane Ball, a long-time YWAT volunteer, has also given generously of her time to help make the project successful.

Thank You to All FY2006 Supporters

Individual Donors: Sandi Belushi ◊ Jennifer Burgess ◊ Tawanna Brown ◊ Beth Catlett ◊ Catlin Fullwood ◊ Heather Imrie ◊ Saran Kaba ◊ Sarata Kaba ◊ Ibrahim Kaba ◊ Mariame Kaba ◊ Micaiah Kline ◊ Kristin Millikan ◊ Jobi Petersen ◊ Ashley Ray ◊ An Russo ◊ Laurie Schaffner ◊ Kris Smock ◊ Brigitte Stanley ◊ Larry Suffredin ◊ Michelle VanNatta ◊ Mia Wallace

Public: Region 1 YouthNet (Alternatives Inc.)

Private Foundation: Girl’s Best Friend Foundation ◊ The Cricket Island Foundation ◊ Sisters Empowering Sisters ◊ Mayer and Morris Kaplan Family Foundation ◊ Chicago Foundation for Women

In Kind Support: Jane Ball & Depaul.
The Rogers Park Young Women’s Action Team was recognized with the 13th District’s Unsung Heroine Award for 2006. The Cook County Commission on Women’s Issue granted the award on March 2, 2006 at the 11th Annual Cook County Unsung Heroines Awards Ceremony at the Chicago Cultural Center. Members of the YWAT were honored for their on-going contributions to the health and well-being of the Rogers Park Community.

Day of Action Against Street Harassment: May 4, 2006

The YWAT reached out to women and men, young and old, across Chicago to participate in a Citywide Day of Action against Street Harassment on Thursday, May 4, 2006. The YWAT wanted people to hear and internalize the message that “streets belong to ALL of us.” The goal of the Citywide Day of Action was to have at least 100 different actions, individual and collective, resisting street harassment in Chicago. 140 actions took place across Chicago!

The objectives of the campaign included:

♦ Raise the public’s awareness that street harassment is HARM and a form of violence against women and girls.
♦ Build a base of individuals who are committed to ending street harassment.
♦ Demand community accountability for the eradication of street harassment by involving ALL community members in the effort.
♦ Document the resistance to street harassment through the creation of a photographic exhibit and zine that will capture the day’s events and actions.

The Day of Action was the culmination of a lot of hard work. On January 28, 2006, the YWAT hosted an information meeting at Loyola University and members of the Pink Bloque (www.pinkbloque.org) presented a workshop about creative resistance to street harassment. Thirty-five youth and adults attended this very inspiring session.

Right photo: Pink Bloque Members talk about creative resistance to street harassment at the January workshop.
On October 18th 2005, The YWAT sponsored “No More Violence against Our Sistas” — a film screening and panel discussion. Young women from several organizations including the YWAT, the Young Women’s Empowerment Project, the Brighton Park Neighborhood Council and Alternatives Inc spoke about how girls across Chicago are taking action on issues of violence in their lives and communities. The event was extremely well attended with over 225 people (youth and adults) packing DePaul University to listen to these amazing young women. “No More Violence against Our Sistas” also served as a fundraiser for victims of Hurricane Katrina. $125 was raised through the sale of key chains and individual contributions. All proceeds were donated to the American Red Cross. Thanks to Sista II Sista for allowing us to screen their powerful film. www.sistaiisista.org.

Mitchell wrote a column called “Teen Girls Need Guidance to Avoid Dating Violence” about teen dating violence which appears in the Chicago Sun Times. She interviews YWAT member Emilya Whitis and mentions TDV Awareness Week.

In October 2005, the YWAT published the results of its teen dating violence research in the Fall 2005 edition of the Rogers Park News.

In October 2005, an article about the YWAT called “Young Women Take On Street Harassment, Teen Dating Violence” appeared on the US Women Without Borders website, www.fundforward.org/uswomenwithoutborders

October 23, 2005 – Mary

An update about YWAT’s activities including the Girl’s Leadership Camp and the Day of Action appeared in the Spring 2006 issue of the Rogers Park News (March 2006).

An article about the YWAT’s anti-street harassment work and an interview with Ronnett Lockett was published on www.teenvoices.com in April 2006 and appeared in the Spring 2006 issue of Teen Voices Magazine.

Key YWAT Events

October 10, 2005 – YWAT members presented a teen dating violence train the trainer workshop to students from Marshall and Morgan Park High Schools.

October 25th 2005 – The YWAT presented a two-hour workshop called “Flippin’ the Script: Involving Youth as Leaders in Gender Violence Prevention” at the Illinois Coalition against Domestic Violence Annual Children’s Conference.

December 2, 2005 – YWAT member Daphnee Rene presented a workshop about street harassment at the Heartland Alliance Youth Slumber Party.

December 12, 2005 – YWAT members presented a workshop to youth workers for Between Friends’ “Teen Dating Program Train the Trainer.”

April 6, 2006 – YWAT members presented a workshop called “Organizing 101” at the Kellogg Foundation Youth Innovation Fund National Gathering at Catalyst Ranch.


April 13, 2006 – YWAT members presented a workshop on teen dating violence and street harassment to peer educators at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

April 22, 2006 – YWAT members presented a workshop on teen dating violence to new volunteers at Apna Ghar.

May 10th 2006 – YWAT member Jonnae Taylor presented a workshop about teen dating violence to students at Prologue High School.

June 20th 2006 – YWAT members presented a workshop to youth workers for Between Friends’ “Teen Dating Program Train the Trainer.”

YWAT in the News

Rogers Park News (March 2006).

www.teenvoices.com
Upcoming YWAT Projects: 2006-2007

1. Engaging Young Men as Allies Project

* Producing a documentary project in conjunction with Beyond Media which will premiere on **October 17th, 2006** at Depaul University Student Center–2250 N. Sheffield, Room 120 – 6 to 8:00 p.m.

* A Research Project–Young Men’s Role in Ending Violence against Girls and Young Women

* Creating a Discussion Guide to accompany the documentary

* Co-Leading workshops with our male allies

* Developing a co-ed art-based project

2. Girls’ Leadership Camp

January-June 2007 – for girls from Rogers Park, Uptown, Edge-water in the 6th through 8th grades.

3. Teen Dating Violence Conference

February 10, 2007 – Location: TBD

4. Sister Circle

A support and discussion group for young women ages 10-13.

5. Raising Funds for Women and Girls Displaced by Hurricane Katrina

Applications are due December 14, 2006

Current YWAT Members

- Shay Armstead, 17, Von Steuben High School
- Shannon Bittner, 18, Northeastern Illinois University
- Renee Braggs, 17, Lane Tech High School
- Ronnett Lockett, 17, Lane Tech High School
- Joyce Taylor, 19, Truman College
- Daphnee Rene, 18, Sullivan High School
- Jonnae Taylor, 18, Prologue High School
- Lillian Matamni, 16, Lane Tech High School
- Crystal Villaneuva, 18, St. Scholastica
- Emilya Whitis, 18, Lane Tech High School
The YWAT Goals
To educate men and women about issues of violence and sexism.
To break down barriers between men and women so that they can better understand each other, create alliances, and develop strategies for dealing with issues of violence and sexism.
To organize against violence against women and girls by relying on consciousness-raising and collective action.
To nurture leadership among young women.
To create a safe place for girls and young women to examine and explore issues in our lives and support each other as women.

www.youngwomensactionteam.org

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