In a year...

the Rogers Park
Young Women’s Action Team
2006-2007
ROGERS PARK YOUNG WOMEN’S ACTION TEAM (YWAT) strives daily to end violence against women and girls. YWAT came together in 2003 to respond to the problem of street harassment in Rogers Park. The core team of high-school aged young women is determined to hold the community accountable for violence against women and girls. YWAT first took action against street harassment and then teen dating violence by conducting in-depth community-based research projects. These studies were published into reports that are used to raise awareness among community members and elected officials. In 2004, the YWAT forced broader attention to the issue of street harassment through its RESPECT campaign. The team cooperated with over 125 local businesses and other public spaces to blanket the community with signs demanding a stop to street harassment.

YWAT heightens visibility of often hidden or ignored issues of violence against women and girls through on-going community education workshops. YWAT members directly train both peers and adult allies. Over the past four years, YWAT has conducted over 45 presentations and workshops across the country. The team also invests in the future by hosting a monthly (January-June) Girls’ Leadership Camp for middle-school aged girls at Loyola Park Field House on the last Saturday of the month.

YWAT officially gained Mayor Daley’s support in 2005, when he issued a Proclamation declaring the week of October 17th “Teen Dating Violence Awareness Week in Chicago.” YWAT directly addressed the prevention of teen dating violence with students at twelve Chicago Public High Schools that week, including Sullivan High School. The issue of teen dating violence continues to affect young people’s lives. As such, in February 2007, YWAT hosted over 125 youth and adults at a youth-led conference called “Love is NOT Blind.” Workshops were presented by youth from Lane Tech, Females United for Action, YWAT and its male allies, Aqua Moon and the Young Women’s Empowerment Project.

YWAT recognizes that all community members – including young men – are responsible for confronting violence against women and girls. On May 4th 2006, YWAT organized men and women (young and old) around its mission in the first citywide Day of Action against Street Harassment. The core team hosted a highly visible march in Rogers Park emphasizing that “the streets belong to all of us” and YWAT also supported and catalyzed other local actions by groups throughout the city. In all, YWAT documented over 140 individual and collective actions on the Day of Action. Some of these actions were captured on film and in a zine that was created by YWAT members.

In June 2006, the YWAT launched its “Engaging Young Men as Allies Project” by producing a documentary called “Real Talk: Engaging Young Men as Allies,” which highlights interviews of young and older men about their attitudes and experiences regarding gender violence. This documentary was created through collaboration with Beyondmedia Education. The Engaging Young Men as Allies Project also includes survey research, a discussion guide that accompanies the film, and a workshop created with the help of YWAT’s male allies.

In the following pages, you will learn more about the YWAT’s work over the past year (July 2006-June 2007). Team members invite you to visit their website – www.youngwomensactionteam.org for more information.
ANNUCING YWAT’S NEW DIRECTOR...
Daphnee Rene

The Leadership Core of the Rogers Park Young Women’s Action Team (YWAT) hired our first Director in January 2007. Daphnee Rene is a founding member of the YWAT and was a member of the leadership core for three and a half years. She came to the YWAT as a freshman at Sullivan High School. Daphnee is 19 years old and graduated from Sullivan in January 2007 (6 months early!). She will enroll at Depaul University in Chicago in the fall of 2007.

Over the past four years, the YWAT has grown tremendously. While we have continued to work in our local community, we are being asked to do more and more across Chicago and even nationally. To accommodate our own ideas for expansion, we decided that we needed to have someone who could assume the day-to-day responsibility of running the YWAT. During this year, the Leadership Core was comprised of seven young women between the ages of 16-19. Even with the addition of a Director, we worked as we always have. Core members continued to coordinate specific projects and remain integral to the functioning of our group.

We are proud to have Daphnee as our Director. We all love and respect her and plan to work together to take YWAT to the next level!
ENGAGING YOUNG MEN AS ALLIES

Over the past four years, the Young Women’s Action Team (YWAT) has addressed issues of violence against girls and women through our anti-street harassment and teen dating violence prevention work. We are aware though that we will not be successful in ending male violence against girls and women without the help and support of boys and men. We have always tried to engage young men in our activities but we decided this year that we needed to be explicit in our desire to solicit the support of boys and men in ending violence against girls and women. In much the same way that we do everything in our group, we embarked on a research project so that we could hear the voices and understand young men’s perspectives on male violence against girls and women.

We decided that film would be a powerful way to document this research. The YWAT partnered with Beyondmedia Education, a local Rogers Park organization that focuses on using video and film to affect social change, to produce a documentary called “Real Talk: Engaging Young Men as Allies.” Our documentary project coordinators, YWAT leadership core members Shannon Bittner and Crystal Villanueva, led us as a group through many discussions to help frame the questions that we wanted to ask and the themes that we wanted to cover. We spent most of last summer working on the documentary along with Dylan Mira and Salome Chasnoff. This was only the first project within a larger effort that has four parts to it:

1. Developing a documentary reflecting the importance of engaging young men as allies in ending violence against girls and young women.
2. Creating a workbook/discussion guide that can be used with the film.
3. Developing a workshop along with young men about how they can be allies in addressing sexism and male violence against girls.
4. Documenting what we have learned and sharing our findings.
Real Talk: Engaging Young Men as Allies to End Violence against Women and Girls is 28 minutes long and includes dance, poetry, and interviews. On October 17 2006, over 180 people attended the premiere screening of Real Talk at Depaul University. The film received very positive reviews. Here are just a few of the comments from evaluations:

“It was great to hear MALE voices talking about the issue. I also appreciated the honest expression of ideas – including a range of opinions will make this an excellent film for encouraging debate.”

“The film made me realize that both men and women need to be involved in the fight against violence. It showed something that is not seen very often, men speaking against violence.”

The event also included a panel discussion moderated by Claude Robinson featuring Aaron Matthews, Reggie Griffin, Nick Gainer, Emilya Whitis and Ronnett Lockett. In addition, Edwin and Janine Stone performed some spoken word. The YWAT used the event to raise funds for its New Orleans fund and collected $455 from the sale of t-shirts, posters, and key chains.

Our discussion guide/workbook was completed last September and is available as a resource to interested people.

Other Screenings

- November 2nd 2006 at Northeastern Illinois University. Over 60 people attended and the screening was followed by a panel of YWAT members.
- December 6th 2006 at North Lawndale College Prep High School for 30 students. The screening was followed by a discussion.
- February 10th 2007 at Depaul University for 50 people as part of the Love is NOT Blind conference.
- February 22nd 2007 at University of Illinois at Chicago for 30 students in Dr. Laurie Schaffner’s class.
- June 13th 2007 at the Men Endorsing Nonviolence Committee Annual Conference at the University of Illinois at Chicago on June 13th 2007 – Over 65 people attended.
- June 14th 2007 at an event sponsored by Gender PAC and the Chicago Youth Centers called “It’s Bigger than Hip Hop: a Chicago Community Conversation.” This event featured Talib Kweli and clips from Real Talk were screened at the event. Over 150 people were in attendance.
INTERVIEW WITH GERALD TURNER AND GERMAINE HUNTER – YWAT MALE ALLIES

The following interview was conducted by Ronnett Lockett, YWAT leadership core member and co-coordinator of the Engaging Young Men as Allies Campaign.

Q: Tell me how you became involved with the YWAT?
GH: A few of my close friends are members and they asked me for my opinion on some issues and it evolved from that.
GT: My friend, Ronnett, who is a member of YWAT got me involved by asking me to attend a workshop they were doing. I was interested in helping them ever since then.

Q: What are your thoughts and feelings about violence against women and girls?
GH: I think it is morally wrong. More men should be informed of it and be aware that they are committing such actions. I am strongly against it and I am strongly for raising awareness to older and younger males.
GT: I feel that it is wrong and women should be treated equally.

Q: Why did you choose to take a public role in addressing this issue?
GH: Just saying that violence against women is wrong is not enough. Actually going out and doing something about the issue will better inform people of the issue.
GT: I wanted to inspire my peers and males to take control of the issues that affect their community.

Q: What did you learn in co-leading the workshop with YWAT?
GH: A lot of people were ignorant to the fact that violence against women is a serious issue. I also learned a lot of different statistics.
GT: I learned of women’s experiences when it came to violence against women, which were new to me because no one ever talked to me about it before.

SURVEY RESEARCH

In spring 2007, a small group of YWAT members developed a survey that was administered to 226 young men ages 11 to 22. The purpose of the survey was to better understand young men’s views about the issue of violence against women and girls. A summary of key survey results was produced and was distributed to stakeholders in June.

Some interesting findings from the survey include:
• 58% of young men surveyed said that issues of violence against women and girls are very important to them. Only 3.6% said that these issues were not important to them.
• 50.9% of our respondents said that between 1 and 5 of their male friends or family members would be interested in getting involved in taking action on issues of violence against women and girls.
• 64.2% of young men surveyed have ever asked someone to stop using derogatory or negative terms to refer to girls and women (i.e. slut, ho, bitch).

Only 18.2% of our survey respondents have considered joining or working with organizations that actively confront sexism and take steps to prevent violence against women and girls.
BEYOND BEATS & RHYMES EVENT: Loving Hip Hop with Our Eyes Wide Open. The YWAT was invited to co-sponsor and plan the screening of a new film called “Beyond Beats & Rhymes” by Byron Hurt. The film is a ground-breaking documentary that examines representations of manhood, sexism, and homophobia in hip hop culture. Other event co-sponsors included the Public Square and Females United for Action. YWAT leadership core members, Ronnett, Lillian, and Joyce met with representatives of FUFA and the Public Square on August 17th to plan the content of the event. YWAT and FUFA members continued to meet over the next few weeks to plan the event. The event called “Loving Hip Hop with Our Eyes Wide Open” took place on Saturday, December 2 from 2 to 4:30 p.m. at the Chicago Cultural Center. The event included a screening of the film, a performance by AquaMoon, an exhibit of FUFA’s traveling photo gallery, and facilitated discussions. Three hundred people attended the event. An article about this event appeared in EXTRA Newspaper on 11/21/06.

Listed below are a few of the responses that YWAT facilitators heard during the discussions.

What do you think are the effects of this kind of music?
-I think that it is just all about killing our brothers and killing our community
-It really makes people look at women like they are just objects, like a chair or a lamp
-I don’t think it has any effect. I think the people are just going to do what they are going to do regardless.
-I think that is just makes you think what you already think – if you think that women are bitches and hoes, it just confirms your ideas.

What can we do about it?
-To be honest, I don’t really think that there is much we can do about this.
-We can do what the young women at Spelman did. We can take a stand.
-We should create our own positive music, with positive messages even if it doesn’t get played on radio or doesn’t make money. Not everything should be about making cash. This film should be shown to all people and youth. Schools should show the film and have discussions.

If you had to write a rap, what would you rap about?
-My self and my life
-The struggle out there on the streets my messed up teachers and school

If you were a hip hop artist, would you sell out and change your lyrics to get a record deal?
-Most youth said that people had to do what they needed to do to survive.
-YWAT members said that most of the young people at their tables said that money talks so they felt that everyone would change their lyrics if they were being honest.

How does hip hop affect you personally?
-Many people talked about how much they enjoy listening to hip hop. A lot talked about the beats. A couple of youth mentioned that it is their poetry. Others talked about the fact that hip hop was a whole culture not just music. They felt that hip hop was unfairly being criticized because people only thought of it in terms of the music but the young people said that it was a whole way of life.

YWAT believes that the only way to end violence against women and girls is to get men involved in the discussion. The statistics and our own observations tell us that some men cause most of the violence so they should have the biggest part in solving the problem. We are hoping that we can develop new male allies to help further the message that violence against women and girls is immoral. (continued pg 8)
The YWAT feels very strongly that men must step up to end violence against women and girls. We need ALLIES who take this issue as seriously as we do. Some men are committing the majority of violence against women and girls while the majority of men who are nonviolent stay silent. THIS MUST CHANGE!

The YWAT knows that most men respect women but we also know that most men condone the violent behaviors and attitudes of other men. We understand that as young women it will be difficult for us to convince young men to take a stand against male violence. This is why we are asking our fathers, uncles, brothers, and friends to speak up and speak out. We know that men are more likely to listen to other men. Therefore we encourage men to talk to one another about violence against women and girls. We encourage everyone to use the resources that we have developed as tools to engage young men as allies to end violence against women and girls.

Available Resources:
- Real Talk Documentary
- Discussion Guide
- Engaging Young Men as Allies Survey Results Report
HONORING YWAT’s WORK

Nearly 200 guests convened on October 21, 2006 at Loyola University’s Simpson Center to help honor nearly a dozen people and organizations that work toward the betterment of the Rogers Park community. At this event, the Young Women’s Action Team was honored with the 2006 Spirit of Youth Development Award. This award is sponsored by the Rogers Park Community Council. An article about this honor appeared in the Winter 2006 edition of our local community paper, Rogers Park 2000.

On February 24th 2007, Loyola University’s Gannon Scholars and Feminist Forum honored the YWAT as their 2007 Vagina Warriors. In the words of Hana Kong, a member of the Gannon Scholars, “the YWAT was chosen because of their work in Rogers Park. YWAT is a group that needed to be celebrated and honored because of their stance to fight against sexual harassment and violence. To quote Eve Ensler, ‘the struggle to end violence on this planet is a battle. Emotional, intellectual, spiritual, physical; it requires every bit of our strength, our courage, our fierceness. It means speaking when everyone says to be quiet.’” YWAT’s director, Daphnee Rene, accepted a certificate at the Feminist Forum’s performance of Eve Ensler’s Vagina Monologues.

On May 30th, YWAT director, Daphnee Rene, accepted the Illinois Coalition against Sexual Assault’s 2007 Moxie Award. This award recognized the YWAT for its creative messaging on issues of sexual violence in our communities.
Love Is
NOT
Blind?
Taking Action Against Teen Dating Violence
A Youth-Led Conference

Saturday
February 10, 2007
10:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
DePaul University
McGaw Hall
802 W. Belden Avenue

Workshops Topics Include:
Teen Dating Violence 101 [F.R.E.E.]
Media Violence [Females United for Action]
Organizing against Sexism and Violence against Young Women [YWAT]
Harm Reduction Options for Girls in the Sex Trade [Young Women’s Empowerment Project]
Resisting Violence through Spoken Word [AquaMoon]

Special Programming Featuring:
A Screening of Real Talk: Engaging Young Men As Allies
Teen Dating Violence Speakout
Lane Tech Step Team

This conference is free.
Lunch will be provided.
Pre-registration is required.
Please register by e-mail: rpywat@hotmail.com

Who Should Attend This Conference?
Youth ages 12-20
Interested parents and guardians
People who work with youth

This conference is sponsored by:
Depaul’s Women and Gender Studies Program,
Region 1 YouthNet and The Rogers Park Young Women’s Action Team (YWAT)
www.youngwomensactionteam.org
PROMOTING HEALTHY TEEN RELATIONSHIPS

Over 125 people joined the YWAT at the “Love is NOT Blind: Taking Action against Teen Dating Violence Conference” on Saturday February 10th, 2007. Since January 2004, the YWAT has been addressing the issue of teen dating violence – first through our research and then through implementing an awareness raising project. In our research, we surveyed 296 youth ages 13 to 19 in 2004 and found that 11.1% of teens have been or are currently in an abusive/violent relationship and 62.1% of teens said that they know other teens who are or have been in an abusive/violent relationship. Our most encouraging finding was that 92% of teens surveyed said that if their friend was in an abusive relationship, they would try to help him or her. This means that it is extremely important for us to educate our peers on the warning signs of abusive relationships and to encourage them to speak up and do something to help their friends and classmates. We believe that the best way to prevent domestic violence in the future is to stop the beginnings of abusive behavior now during our teen years.

In the summer of 2005, the YWAT wrote letters to Mayor Daley asking that he proclaim October 17-23 2005 as TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AWARENESS WEEK. The Mayor issued a proclamation which read in part: “I, Richard M Daley, Mayor of the City of Chicago, do hereby proclaim October 17th to 23rd, 2005 to be TEEN DATING VIOLENCE AWARENESS WEEK IN CHICAGO, and urge all Chicagoans to recognize the important contributions that Rogers Park Young Women’s Action Team has made to our community.”

During that week, the Rogers Park Young Women’s Action Team (YWAT) partnered with the Chicago Public Schools, the Mayor’s Office on Domestic Violence, and the Region 1 YouthNet to raise awareness about teen dating violence. We organized several events during the week of October 17th 2005 including a train the trainer workshop where we taught 10 students from Morgan Park and Marshall high schools how to conduct their own teen dating violence workshops. Ten other high schools participated in the week by putting up teen dating violence awareness posters and/or sponsoring their own workshops about the issue. In addition, over 225 people attended an event called “No More Violence against Our Sistas” which included a film screening and panel discussion.

“Love is Not Blind: Taking Action against Teen Dating Violence Conference” was a natural extension of the work that we have been engaged in for the past three years. Congress declared February 5th through 10th 2007 to be “National Teen Dating Violence Awareness Week” and we decided to join others across the country in raising awareness about this issue. We partnered with Depaul University’s Women and Gender Studies Program and Ann Russo who provided us with free space to host the conference. The Region 1 YouthNet was another co-sponsor of this event and provided us with much needed funding.

This day-long conference included a screening of the YWAT’s documentary “Real Talk” along with the following workshops presented by some terrific youth-led organizations:

**Harm Reduction Options for Girls in the Sex Trade**
In this workshop, the Young Women’s Empowerment Project (YWEP) engaged girls to question why the sex trade exists, why girls are involved and what can be done about it, dramatically increasing their knowledge about the sex trade and making that information known in their communities. YWEP addressed relationship violence through the harm reduction strategies they use for addressing the sex trade. This training was targeted for girls in violent situations facilitated by girls with the similar life experience.

**Media Violence**
Adaku Utah and Erin Tinnon of Females United for Action presented this fun, interactive and engaging workshop designed to explore media ownership, portrayals of people in the media, particularly women and girls, and how these images translate into violence against women and girls. (continued pg 12)
Teen Dating Violence 101
Members of Lane Tech’s Fighting for Relationship Equality through Education (FREE) presented a workshop that addressed the dynamics of teen dating violence. In particular during this workshop, participants learned to:

- Identify and demystify myths about TDV.
- Identify the warning signs of an abusive relationship.
- Delineate a teen’s rights and responsibilities in a dating relationship.
- Access resources to address TDV.

Resisting Violence through Spoken Word
Veronica Bohanan and Camil Williams of Aqua Moon offered a creative safe space where youth received writing and performance tools, resources, feedback, and encouragement to create written and performance-based poems/prose about gender violence.

It’s Not Just One Thing: Young Women’s Oppression and Resistance
YWAT members Emiyla Whitis, Shay Armstead, and Lillian Matamni presented this workshop which highlighted the way that young women are treated under the current system. Presenters talked about the ways that YWAT has tried to resist violence. During this workshop, participants:

- probed the roots of injustice against women and girls
- examined how the oppression of women plays out in society learned about how young women are resisting and organizing to address key issues.

Engaging Young Men as Allies
YWAT member Ronnett Lockett and male allies Germaine Hunter and Gerald Turner co-led this workshop that addressed men’s role in helping to end sexism and violence against women and girls. The workshop suggested concrete ways that men can be allies to women and girls. It also provided concrete activities developed by the YWAT and its male allies that participants can use with young men in your communities to start a discussion about gender violence.

The evaluations from participants were very positive. The following are comments collected over the course of the day.

A youth participant who attended the resisting violence through spoken word workshop wrote: “I really learned a lot; to speak out and to say something and share with people because we shouldn’t give up and take the abuse.” Another youth participant wrote: “I learned that I can write something and it can be poetry.”

A youth participant of the TDV 101 workshop wrote: “I learned not to give up on victims who don’t want help.” An adult participant of the same workshop wrote: “Having youth speak to youth is a very good tool, more effective.” A youth participant wrote: “I really liked the workshop. I’m only 13 years old and now know a lot about abusive relationships and how to prevent from being in one.” Another youth participant wrote: “I learned a lot. I learned to stand up for myself, to say no to things I don’t want, to believe in myself, to have courage to stand up and share my thoughts.”

A youth participant, named Naomi, who attended the “young women’s oppression and resistance workshop” wrote: “Not all of these things happen in high school. I’m 13 in 7th grade and things happen there too.”

A youth participant who attended the Harm Reduction and the Sex Trade workshop wrote: “I learned something new. It just made me look at things different.” Another young person wrote: “The workshop changed my attitude by giving me a more open mind about the reasons girls get involved in the sex trade.”

We were lucky to be joined by many other presenting organizations. Thanks to our wonderful partners without whom we could not have had such a successful conference!
The Young Women’s Empowerment Project’s (YWEP) mission is to offer safe, respectful, free of judgment spaces for girls and young women (ages 12 to 23) impacted by the sex trade and street economies to recognize their goals, dreams and desires. We are run by girls and women with life experience in the sex trade and street economies. No judgments. No pressure. Just positive options, resources, and people who will really listen. We celebrate girl’s ability to take care of themselves and help others while in the sex trade or surviving on the streets. We train, support and pay girls and young women currently or previously involved in the sex trade to reach out to other girls with harm reduction. www.youarepriceless.org

Females United for Action (FUFA) is a coalition of young women leaders that is dedicated to educate not only ourselves, but others as well, on issues that affect women and girls. We organize to bring attention to the issues and take action to address them. FUFA is formed by girls and young women from all over the city of Chicago, from all backgrounds & nationalities, ranging from 12 years of age & up. These active girls and young women are from different communities and represent organizations including the Brighton Park Neighborhood Council, Centro Comunitario Juan Diego, Alternatives Girlworld, Access Living Empowered Fe Fes, the Mikva Challenge and the Illinois Caucus for Adolescent Health. FUFA is coordinated by the Women & Girls Collective Action Network.

F.R.E.E. (Fighting for Relationship Equality through Education) is a Lane Tech student group dedicated to educating individuals about relationship violence. F.R.E.E. was founded in the spring of 2006 by Lane Tech faculty members who recognized the need for discussion and education about teen dating violence among the student population. A diverse group of twenty Lane Tech students work to raise awareness and distribute resources about TDV throughout the Lane Tech community.

AquaMoon (CamiI.Williams and Veronica Precious Bohanan) is a Chicago-based, youth, and womyn-centered writing, performance, and artistic team. AquaMoon upholds its motto, “Dismantling the Culture of Silence,” by helping to bridge the gap between the streets, hip-hop feminism, performance activism, and academia.
TAKING ACTION AGAINST STREET HARASSMENT

2nd Annual Day of Action against Street Harassment
Another Success!

On the evening of May 4th 2007, the YWAT hosted our own action which was an anti-violence showcase. Performers included dancers, steppers, singers, and poets. We thank the Chicago Youth Centers (ABC and BBR sites) for coming and adding so much to the evening. There were more than 100 people who attended, an overwhelming number of them were teenagers like us.

Below is a small sample of other actions that took place around the City of Chicago on May 4th, 2007

- Rogers Park Community Council Club 137 passed out brochures and wore orange

- Christopher House Teen Parent and Infant Development Services conducted a creative action and wore orange

- Chicago Rape Crisis Hotline created post it notes with messages that point out sexist comments.

- Chicago Alliance Against Sexual Exploitation (CAASE) created home-made buttons and wore them on the 4th.

Alison M. Janus and Max wore orange and discussed “what it take” to end violence.

Christine Rene, Cait Patterson, Amanda Bruscino, Heather Hain, Jermaine Palacio, Sheena Reeves, Bella Tronou, Pascal Simard and Jane Ball wore orange in support.
ALL THE THINGS YOU ARE GOING TO WITNESS AT
THE ROGERS PARK YOUNG WOMEN’S ACTION
TEAM

ANTI-VIOLENCE SHOWCASE

When: Friday, May 4th  Time: 6:00 to 9:00 PM
Where: Loyola University Lakeshore Campus Bremmer Lounge
1125 W. Loyola Avenue

Featuring:

DJ SHAVONN  OPEN MIC

4 $50 PRIZES  FREE FOOD
ANTI-VIOLENCE SHOWCASE!  MAY 4, 2007
INTRODUCING,
YOUNG WOMEN’S ACTION TEAM ASSOCIATE MEMBERS!

My name is Amber Burwell. I am 15 years old. I attend Von Steuben High School. I love to play basketball. I hope to learn a lot from being part of YWAT.

My name is Chelsea Whitis. I am 15 years old and I attend Lane Tech High School. I enjoy being part of YWAT and it gives me lots of opportunities. I want to be able to get lots of things done during my involvement with YWAT.

My name is Briana Jackson. I am 14 years old. I will be attending Sullivan High School this coming fall. I am very responsible. I joined YWAT because it can help me better myself and my community.

My name is Adeola Matanmi. I am 14 years old. I will attend Sullivan High School this coming fall. I joined YWAT because I believe in social justice and I believe that I can make changes in this world.
GIRL’S LEADERSHIP CAMP 2007,
A Great Success!

Over twenty-five young women between the ages of 12 and 15 participated in this year’s YWAT GLC. Sessions included discussions about reproductive justice, body image, self-esteem, violence, friendship, and solidarity. The girls are given a variety of formats to communicate their thoughts and feelings on these challenging topics including, art, dance, poetry, spoken word, and group dialogue. In this environment, the girls are able to learn from a variety of professionals and leaders in the community, including members of YWAT, but also from each other. This makes GLC a unique and necessary project for YWAT and the Rogers Park community.

YWAT leader, Emilya Whitis was instrumental helping to develop this year’s girls’ leadership camp (GLC). She was greatly assisted and supported by YWAT Director, Daphnee Rene. With support from YWAT associate members and Daphnee Rene, thirty young women were recruited to attend GLC sessions on the last Saturday of every month from February to June 2007. GLC sessions included discussions about friendship, body image, self-esteem, sexual health, and violence against women and girls. The sessions often included interactive activities, discussion, and a creative activity like making a communal quilt, decorating a picture frame, and the like.

On May 5th 2007, Twenty GLC participants accompanied by YWAT leaders, Emilya, Shannon, Lillian and Daphnee took a field trip to Camp Butterfly’s Double-Dutch A Fund at the DuSable Leadership Academy. They watched performances from the Jesse White Tumblers and from talented double dutchers. On June 27th 2007, 20 GLC participants attended a matinee of the hit musical Wicked.
GIVING BACK TO OUR COMMUNITY AND BEYOND

YWAT believes that one of the foundations of leadership is service. We believe as Marian Wright Edelman has written that “service is the rent you pay for living.”

Santa’s Sistahs Project
In November 2006, the YWAT responded to a request made by school social worker Marie Smith to collect winter clothes and accessories for youth ages 5 to 15. This drive benefited students from Harvard Elementary school on the Southside of Chicago. We called this project Santa’s Sistahs and it is in line with YWAT’s servant-leader orientation. The donations were delivered during the week of December 18th. Over 50 young people benefited from this drive.

The principal of the school, Mr. David Hannsberry, wrote a letter thanking the YWAT for our contribution. It read in part “It provided an excellent opportunity for our students to have an enjoyable holiday, something that may not have been possible without your assistance. Numerous parents and students stated how much they appreciated the recognition and the token they received.”

Marie Smith also shared her thoughts: “Personally, I was overwhelmed by YWAT’s response to my request for help with clothing for my students. I was only expecting ‘gently worn’ clothing. When I got home and saw the new clothes, I was overjoyed. Not just with the gifts that the children would receive but with the thought that these gifts were given by teens to other children. I told and shared the YWAT’s information with all the school staff and parents. My students could not believe that they were getting “name brand” gifts. They were very thankful. In all we must have given a gift to at least 50 students.”

New Orleans Fundraising Project
The YWAT was profoundly impacted by Hurricane Katrina and the failed response of the government to this tragedy. Nine YWAT leadership core members had spent several days in March 2005 attending the Incite! Women of Color against Violence Conference in New Orleans. Just a few months later, New Orleans was devastated. In October 2005, YWAT used its event “No More Violence against Our Sistas” to raise funds for the American Red Cross. Over $200 was raised and donated.

The YWAT has an ongoing commitment to New Orleans and decided to spend this school year (September 2006-June 2007) raising money for the Women’s Health and Justice Center – a health clinic and women of color organizing center in the Treme community of New Orleans. Selling t-shirts, key chains, posters, our documentary, and soliciting donations, the YWAT raised $1615. YWAT associate members, Adeola Matamni and Brianna Jackson raised $150 from friends and family to add to this total. Our goal was to raise at least $3500 by June 2007. While we fell short in our goal, we are proud to offer the funds that we raised to the Women’s Health and Justice Center in the Treme community of New Orleans.
OTHER YWAT WORKSHOPS AND PRESENTATIONS

August 11th, 2006  Four YWAT members (Shay, Emilya, Lillian, Ronnett) presented two workshops at the Teenology Conference sponsored by Afterschool Matters. Over 150 young people participated in the He Say, She Say and Teen Dating Violence 101 workshops. YWAT members were interviewed for an article that appeared in the Austin Weekly about the Teenology Conference.

August 30th, 2006  Lillian and Ronnett presented a street harassment 101 workshop at the YWAT office on August 30th to 25 entering freshman from Depaul University. The one hour workshop included an opportunity for participants to craft their own anti-street harassment message.

October 23rd, 2006  YWAT members Renee and Emilya presented a workshop about street harassment to eleven young women at Francis Parker School.

October 28th, 2006  YWAT members Emilya and Ronnett presented a workshop called “It’s Not Just One Thing: Young Women’s Oppression and Resistance” at the 2006 Black Women: Loving the Mind, Body and Spirit Health Symposium at Malcolm X College, 1400 West Van Buren.

November 4th, 2006  YWAT members Daphnee, Lillian, Emilya and Shay presented a workshop titled Power to the People: Bringing People Together for Your Issue and Gaining Support at the Mikva Challenge – Issues to Action: Youth Activism Conference. Over 40 people attended the workshop.

January 26th, 2007  YWAT member, Emilya Whitis, partnered with Mariame Kaba to offer a two-hour workshop called “Mobilizing Youth for Social Change.” The Young Women’s Action Team was invited to present the workshop to 38 sexual assault counselors who work with children and teens. This was part of the Illinois Coalition against Sexual Assault’s Child Counselor 30-hour Training.

February 2007  YWAT members Emilya Whitis and Lillian Whitis conducted an hour long workshops for members of FREE at Lane Tech High School about Effective Presentation Skills.

March 2, 2007  YWAT member Lillian Matanmi spoke about the YWAT’s work at the release party of Dr. Laurie Schaffner’s book called “Girls in Trouble with the Law.” YWAT members Emilya and Shay also attended. The YWAT is featured in the book as an example of how young women resist violence in their lives. The event was held at Women & Children First bookstore.

March 3, 2007  YWAT members Daphnee and Lillian participated on a panel at an International Women’s Day conference titled “Overcoming Obstacles, Empowering Women” at UNITE hall. Over 45 people attended the panel.

April 26, 2007  YWAT director Daphnee Rene participated on a panel about organizing and advocacy sponsored by the Chicago Foundation for Women. Over 30 people attended.
LEADERSHIP CORE MEMBERS (2006-2007)

Shay Armstead – Shay is a founding member of the YWAT and graduates from Von Steuben High School in June 2007. Shay will attend Northern Illinois University in the fall of 2007.
Shannon Bittner – Shannon is a founding member of the YWAT and graduated from Howard Area Alternative High School in June 2006. She is the mother of two young girls.
Renee Braggs – Renee is a student at Lane Tech High School who will enter her senior year in fall 2007.
Ronnett Lockett – Ronnett is a founding member of the YWAT. She graduates from Lane Tech High School in June 2007 and plans to attend college this fall.
Lillian Matanmi – Lillian is a student at Lane Tech High School who will enter her senior year in fall 2007.
Daphnee Rene – Daphnee is a founding member of the YWAT. She graduated from Sullivan High School in January 2007 and is planning to attend DePaul University in the fall. She is now the part-time Director of the YWAT.
Joyce Taylor – Joyce is a founding member of the YWAT. She graduated from Sullivan High School in June 2005. She has been working full-time while attending Truman College. Joyce plans to transfer to Northeastern Illinois University in the fall of 2007.
Emilya Whitis – Emilya is a founding member of the YWAT. She graduates from Lane Tech High School in June 2007. She will attend Northern Illinois University in the fall of 2007.

YWAT ALUMNI

Karia Campbell – Karia is a founding member of the YWAT. She graduated in June 2005 and has a young son. Karia works full-time.
Christine Rene – Christine is a founding member of the YWAT. She is currently at student at Truman College.
Jackquette Smith – Jackquette is a founding member of the YWAT who just completed her sophomore year at Central State University.
Jonnae Taylor – Jonnae is a founding member of the YWAT who graduated from Prologue High School in June 2006. Jonnae currently works full-time while she decides on her educational future.
Crystal Villanueva – Crystal is a founding member of the YWAT who has completed her freshman year at Illinois State University.
Ashley Ward – Ashley Ward has completed her sophomore year at the University of Wisconsin – Stevens Point.
Geri Whitis – Geri is a founding member of the YWAT who is currently studying massage therapy in Indianapolis while working full-time at a day care center.

Visit our website — www.youngwomensactionteam.org for more information about us and our work.
YWAT IN THE NEWS

Austin Weekly (August 2006)  
RP 2000 – Fall 2006  
Extra News – 11-21-06  
Chicago Tribune – 2-9-07  
Chicago Flame – 4-16-07

FY2007 Supporters and Donors

**$5,000 and over**  
Ben & Jerry’s Foundation  
Chicago Foundation for Women (What Will It Take Initiative)  
Girl’s Best Friend Foundation  
Illinois Violence Prevention Authority  
Kaplan Family Foundation  
Region 1 YouthNet  
Sophe Family Foundation  
Step Inc.

**$2,500 - $4,999**  
Crossroads Fund

**$1,000 - $2,499**  
Little Angel Foundation  
University of Illinois at Chicago

**$500-$999**  
Larry Suffredin  
Northeastern Illinois University, Women’s Studies Class

**$100- $499**  
Tawanna Brown  
Chernoff Family Fund  
Northeastern Illinois University

Loyola University  
Ann Russo  
Melissa Spatz and Alex Poeter

**Under $100**  
Sandi Davenport Belushi  
Sarata Kaba  
Ibrahim Kaba  
Anne Pizzi  
Shonettia Smith

**In Kind Support**  
Depaul University – Women and Gender Studies Program  
Depaul University – Steans Center (for website development)  
Depaul University – Women’s Center  
Depaul University – Peace and Justice Program  
Loyola University – Lakeshore Campus – Community Affairs  
Jane Ball  
Mariame Kaba  
Julie Kramer