

Youth Involvement Vision Statement

The American Cancer Society is committed to providing youth with challenging and rewarding volunteer opportunities through Relay For Life – helping them develop leadership skills, and helping the American Cancer Society accomplish its 2015 goals.



The American Cancer Society is the nationwide community-based voluntary health organization dedicated to eliminating cancer as a major health problem by preventing cancer, saving lives and diminishing suffering from cancer, through research, education, advocacy, and service.

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American Cancer Society



Youth
Involvement





Why Should Communities Involve Youth?

The American Cancer Society has a long-standing tradition of mobilizing volunteers to address cancer issues within communities across the United States. Youth make up a unique and powerful demographic and the Society is committed to engaging them in our mission to beat cancer. In 2005, more than 25,700 youth teams participated in Relay For Life events.

Understanding and embracing the intricacies of youth involvement will enhance Relay For Life and its impact on the community. The most important approach to remember when working with youth is RESPECT. Youth want to be treated as equals and know they are valued. Cancer does not differentiate between youth and adults. It affects people of all ages. Youth are the future volunteers and staff leaders of the American Cancer Society. Remember, youth deserve the opportunity to make a difference.

What Can Youth Do For YOUR Relay?

Youth can be more than day-of volunteers and participants on a team. With a little support and encouragement, youth make dynamic team captains and valuable committee members. When you choose to include youth on your committee you will benefit greatly from their creativity, energy and new way of thinking. Recruit youth from the very beginning of the planning process. Both youth and adults should be involved early so that they can learn by going through the stages of group development together. Getting youth involved early will create a more cohesive working committee.



Success Story – A Senior High School student in Phoenix, Arizona approached the school counselor for her support to start a youth Relay at the school. Ms. Adams, also a cancer survivor, gladly accepted the advisor role. Ms. Adams is a respected teacher and gained the support of her fellow faculty.

She encouraged her coworkers to support the youth effort at the school campus. Ms. Adams' ability to foster support for the students while engaging the faculty proved a huge success. The first year Relay raised \$140,000!! The youth were empowered to be the decision makers, while the teachers were the support. The combination of adult guidance and youth leadership is best.

Top 10 Reasons to Involve Youth in Relay:

- 1) Youth may have an advantage in fundraising; it is difficult to say no to youth working for a great cause.
- 2) Youth can be very creative and think outside the box with ease, their innovative ideas will provide a fresh point of view for your Relay.
- 3) Many schools have incorporated leadership training into their curriculum and may offer credit for community service. It is great for their resume too.
- 4) Today's youth are tomorrow's leaders.
- 5) Youth bring diversity to Relay For Life.
- 6) Youth are impacted by cancer too. Support them in making a difference.
- 7) When youth get on board, the additional help can prevent adult burnout and help share the workload.
- 8) Youth are more flexible in how to achieve goals and are not held back by "the way things have always been done."
- 9) Youth have a large circle of influence in their age group and beyond.
- 10) Youth who volunteer are more likely to do well in school, graduate, vote, and volunteer the rest of their lives.