

Impact

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Understanding Impact

By Scott Mautte

What drives individuals, people and organizations to move forward in the face of adversity, economic uncertainty, and shifting thoughts and opinions? What motivates the underpaid and overworked line staff to give up their afternoons day after day to spend time with a room full of pre-teens that seem to just give them attitude day in and day out? What rallies people around a noble cause compelling them to invest their time, talents and treasures to further that cause? I would submit that the reason that these things occur is that people want their lives to make a difference in the lives of someone or something else—they want to have im-pact.

So when we talk about impact, what do we mean? Impact is the reportable, quantifiable difference, or potential difference, that one person, project, program or organization has on another person's life (Internet Article http://www.extension.unl.edu/c/document_library/get_file?folderId=3602&name=DLFE-2444.pdf). It's the power that one person's life can have on another. This truth came to life for me recently when I watched the movie, "To Save a Life." This movie tells the story of Jake Taylor who had it all: friends, fame, a basketball scholarship and the hottest girl in school. He neglects a good friend, Roger, when the politics of high school pull them apart, but after Roger takes his own life the tragedy rocks Jake's world. Something breaks loose and starts him questioning everything (<http://tosavealifemovie.com/index.php>).

Jake's own journey in the movie is really a journey that each of us takes in some way, shape, or form, when we ask, "What do I want my life to be about?" This question is the question of impact. As we answer this question, we find out what drives us, what's at the core of who we are, and what kind of difference we will make in the world around us.

As you move forward to make a difference here are a couple of suggestions to help you stay in your sweet spot of impact:

1. Know your strengths. Find out what it is that makes you who you are--and live your life from that place. Pour those gifts and talents into the people around you.
2. Keep a "So that's why I keep doing what I'm doing" file. This is a file where I keep all the letters, emails, cards, etc. that parents, youth, colleagues and partners send me, telling me how my life has impacted theirs. Then when I am having a bad day, I take this folder and find a quiet place and a cup of coffee and read through some of them as a reminder that my life is making a difference and that what I am doing does matter.

I hope that you find this edition of YDN Connections to be inspiring, encouraging and helpful in bringing about change throughout your organization, program and life.

Impact: (n.) im'pakt'

the power of an event, idea, etc. to produce changes, move the feelings, etc.

How Core Values Impact an Organization

By Adrian Ruiz

For the last three years YDN has been spending quality time practicing and sharing our core values with the Sacramento community. From A Co-Executive Director point of view I can testify to the power of creating, practicing, and holding ourselves accountable to, YDN's core values. Our core values have shaped and defined our staff climate and culture and, dare I

say, they have even made us more attached to our ultimate mission of creating life-changing experiences for the youth of the Sacramento region.

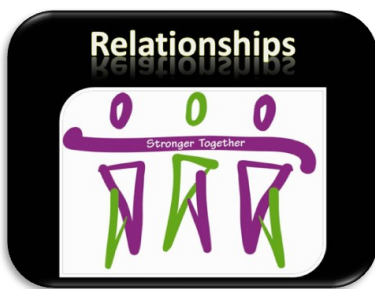
It wasn't always like this though.

Early on, some staff members were weary of core values. They questioned how core values were different than a mission or vision statement. Some staff wondered if this was just some other thing to help YDN market itself or help YDN be more attractive to funders. To be honest with you, I almost said, Forget it. It's just going to take too much time to get the investment from staff and to upload our core val-

ues into the everyday practices of the organization.

After several facilitated conversations with staff, I could see them slowly but surely getting on board. In retrospect the very act of sharing our personal values brought us closer together and attracted others to the Youth Development Network. Externally speaking, it is awesome to see people wanting to partner and work with us because they believe in what we stand for and of course it is always nice when they like how we do our work as well. But perhaps the greatest gift of cementing the YDN core values has been how it

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YDN—Our History of Impact

by Bina Lefkovitz

YDN began as a network of youth serving organizations in 2000. The impact we sought was helping youth workers understand youth development and also better connect their resources. By mid-2002, the youth worker field was more knowledgeable about youth development as a result of YDN informational and networking events. We were then asked to help workers and organizations understand how to put these concepts into practice. To this end, in 2003 YDN brought the Youth Development Institute (YDI) to Sacramento, which was created by our San Francisco friends, [Community Network for Youth Development](#) (CNYD).

YDN used the YDI to train teams of staff from organizations (including managers) on youth development practices to create organizational changes around youth development. From two external evaluations, we learned that agencies who put concepts from the YDI into practice increased their student attendance, increased the number of youth leadership opportunities and peer mentoring programs, and expanded the array of skill building activities they offered youth. Agencies that employed youth development practices usually replicated what they learned from the training for their staff. We also saw agencies become interested in measuring how well they created engaging environments for youth. YDN provided a youth survey tool to help agencies measure the quality of their environments from a youth perspective. Some agencies changed their mission statements and others created strategic plans around the five supports and opportunities. The most interesting example of this was the [City of Sacramento](#). The City used the youth development framework as a guiding tool for their Parks and Recreation master plan. Also, Teen Services has been framing their division's strategic plan around the youth development supports and opportunities for many years.



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The Ripple Effect

By Scott Mautte

Changing the world can seem like an ominous and overwhelming task. So don't try. Instead focus on changing one life at a time and watch your impact grow exponentially. This is the premise around our 20² campaign but it also captures the general premise behind the systems change that we seek to make happen through our work.

I have been in youth work for 21 years because of a spiritual mentor that I met midway through my sophomore year in high school. Like many young people my life was filled with chaos, much of which I tried to keep hidden from the people around me. I met Joel at a critical time in my development and have been forever changed for the better as a result of his life.

The first night that I walked into the Cheshire Teens youth group, I was immediately welcomed by other kids and was taken around to others and introduced. It was like a great big family. That night I met Joel Shirk, the youth pastor, and he took some time to get to know me. As Joel and I got to know each other I began to get more involved--doing everything from running the sound systems on Sunday mornings for the whole church to planning youth group events. I really felt like I belonged.

When I graduated from high school, Joel gave me a chance to volunteer with the middle school group and I loved it! I was given a small group of junior high boys to mentor and I immediately started doing the things that Joel had done with me. This continued through college and into my work as a youth pastor which spanned over 15 years (I wanted to be just like Joel). As a result of his impact on my life, I have been able to touch the lives of thousands of young people over the years. As I reflect on the lives of those I have encountered, I can see images of others who have continued this legacy of impact that began with Joel's impact on me. Their legacy is now part of his legacy and mine as well.

"I came here to save my wife and my two children... six billion lives... it's too much. I just hope I'm smart enough and brave enough to save three."

Serge Leveque—The Core, 2003

The Ripple Effect Applied: Crandal Rankins Executive Director—CrossOver Scholar Athletes Inc.

Crandal Rankins is a long-time youth developer in the Sacramento community. He's a YDI Alumni and an SYLP Camp Facilitator. He took a moment to share with us how his participation in the YDI has had a ripple effect on hundreds of young people.

Some years ago after pulling things together to write the original ASSETS Grant for Encina High School, I knew that I needed to sharpen my saw so that I would be better qualified to oversee this grant once we received it (because I knew we would). I had known about YDI training and was about to ask if I could be considered to attend the YDI that spring. However, before I could ask for an application, Adrian and Bina approached me to see if I would be interested in the YDI and talked to me regarding the time commitment. I told them that I would check my schedule and see if it would be possible.

I left the room soaring. I would do whatever it would take to adjust to be a part of YDI. What was incredible was that the hours for the institute fit my schedule with very little adjustment. Words cannot fully convey the YDI experience that I had. It was life empowering, it gave a common youth development language that youth and adults could use. During the training I could see how churches, teachers (especially those from schools who have "houses" or academies) could implement the structure and adapt what they were doing to the Youth Development Framework. This would aid in bridging gaps and strengthening relationships within their schools, their organizational structures, and improve the relationships between youth and adults in a multiplicity of ways. To this day I use bits and pieces from the YDI in everything that I do. My staff at Encina received both the training from me and from Adrian, as did our core youth.

Now at Grant I am looking for new ways to implement the training. The young people I work with will be part of the next generation of students to continue to build the legacy of YDN's impact.



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The other major impact we wanted to make in the region was to grow the number of people trained in YDI. Our strategy for this was to create (through specialized training) more community-based trainers who could go on to deliver YDI training in their spheres of influence. This created more people who could train around the method who were also embedded in their organization so that the organization could continue to sustainably train staff and its partners; This also dramatically increased YDI exposure. To date we have fifty-five community YDI trainers in the field. These trainers have delivered ten YDI trainings on their own (with our support), thus helping to train an additional 250 people in YDI, whom YDN on its own could never have reached with our small staff.



Another step in learning to help transform organizations to employ youth development was helping change their organizational cultures. This helps staff understand and experience the sense of empowerment we wanted them to create for their youth. We realized that managers whose organizations employ youth development practices need to understand how to be a steward and coach and not a “director”-type manager.

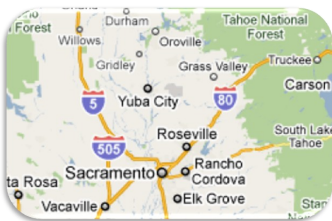
To that end, we created a Managers’ Training in 2005, to compliment the YDI. This training has been used in the [City of Sacramento](#), as well as with twelve state-funded after school programs in the region.

In 2007 YDN partnered with the [Forum for Youth Investment](#) and the [Black Oak Mine Unified School District](#) to work to increase regional program quality. The focus of this work was to train partners in the region to be [Youth Program Quality Assessment](#) (YPQA) certified trainers and assessors and for them to use the YPQA observation tool with agencies in their sphere of influence. YDN has pursued this strategy in order to help promote a tool that agencies can use to measure how well they employ the youth development supports and opportunities. This leads to higher quality programs and better outcomes for youth.

From 2006-2010, YDN has had the opportunity to work with the [Sierra Health Foundation](#) in helping them implement their [REACH](#) program. For YDN, this work represented the next logical step in creating impact for youth in our region. REACH is focused on helping change the way communities perceive youth and working to create policies and systems that support youth development. In addition to being a community change effort, REACH put youth at the forefront of being the change agents for their communities. The impact these youth have had in their communities includes such things as: Getting a bus designated to support a teen center in El Dorado; youth raising awareness about the need for teen pregnancy prevention services; youth helping get a park cleaned up in Galt as well as helping to create a youth master plan for the community; youth working on getting the school board in West Sacramento to have a voting youth member (along with the support needed so that they would be successful).

In addition to supporting REACH, YDN also hosts the [e:merge](#) coalition, a regional effort to impact policies and systems across sectors that can support youth development. The e:merge coalition has been successful in raising the awareness of youth development with five city councils, over 150 businesses, and six school districts. The e:merge coalition is now organizing to ensure more safe places for youth. This will include helping cities establish youth centers (run by youth), increasing access to existing centers (including expanding the hours of those centers via partnerships), and helping get a parcel tax measure passed to support investment in developmental supports.

In 2008, YDN also partnered with [Valley Vision](#) to begin to address the question of how we strengthen networks and service coordination in the region. Through this partnership YDN worked with Valley Vision to create [YSP Connect](#), an online tool to help agencies know what services are out there so they can better network their resources. YDN continues to work with Valley Vision to get agencies to use YSP Connect and also to provide networking opportunities for agencies to continue to build relationships and explore practices they can use to strengthen their networks to support youth using a “youth at the center” common framework.



Also of note, in our impact, is our expanded geographic focus over the last nine years. Back when the YDN first started its work in 2001, our focus was largely limited to Sacramento. Now our work has grown to the many surrounding counties, especially Yolo, Placer, Yuba, Sutter, Nevada, Solano and El Dorado counties, so that our impact can now accurately be described as “regional.”

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has made us more cohesive as a staff. Allow me to explain this a bit more.

From Me to We to Community

At the same time as we at YDN were creating our core values, we were also doing some pretty cool work out in the community. Staff was busy helping youth practitioners and organizations create amazingly engaged environments for youth to live, work, play and learn in. However, internally we had hit some rough patches. We officially made the decision to become our own non-profit, which was a huge undertaking. We hired new staff, and we

were striving to sustain the same volume of work that we had in previous years. For my own sanity I will not go into all of the details associated with this critical moment in the history of the YDN, but I will share with you that we had some splintering going on and that some of us had adopted a “me” mentality. Individually we all cared for this work and for the youth it was intended to benefit but we were no longer functioning as an optimal tribe. I can blame this on a multitude of factors but I think it will be more entertaining to share with you how establishing our core values got us out of the “me-funk.”

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Social Responsibility



CHANGE

“Learning to fly, but I ain’t got wings...”

By Summer Thommen

Imagine you never knew that you can fly. All this time you’ve been hoofing it and stuck in traffic. Think of all the things that you could have done--the *good* that you could have done-- had you just known that you were capable of flight, if someone had just invited you to try. What if you were Luke and never met Obi-Wan?

The stated goal of the Youth Action Teams is to support youth in discovering the civic super-power to create positive impact in their immediate communities and in their own lives. Teams of youth from local agencies come together to identify, research, publicize, and advocate for policy change that addresses an issue in their community. With the support of their agency coordinator, they build their impact muscles and learn to use them to engage in the civic process and advocate for change around their issue. In the short term, youth learn they have power to make a difference in their everyday lives--to better ask for help, to articulate what they want and need, to get resources, to work in teams, to resolve conflict, to problem-solve, to understand their talents, and to feel they matter and can make a difference. In the long term, the youths’ actions may be felt years ahead, and here’s where it gets exciting. These young people are not only addressing one problem (such as graffiti, gang violence, or teen pregnancy), but they are finding and flexing their political power to create lasting change that positively impacts their communities. They are engaging those civic muscles in a way that will serve them, their families and their communities for generations as they go on to become adults who strive to make change in their community wherever they are.



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YDN Staff Spotlight—Elisa Villarreal

I got to spend a little time with Elisa Villarreal on her last day at the YDN office before getting ready to embark on a new chapter of her life's journey. As a way of thanking and honoring her, and to reinforce the fact that she will always be a part of our YDN family even when she's not on our current staff roster, I wanted to spotlight her for this edition.

YDN: *What brought you to the Youth Development Network?*

Elisa: I had just graduated from college and was looking for a job. I knew that I wanted to work in the non-profit arena and have an impact on community involvement. I was referred to Bina for the position by a mutual friend.

As I researched YDN as an organization I thought that it focused more on direct services to youth and would be a valuable learning opportunity for me. Shortly after I began, I realized that although YDN does offer some direct services for youth, it primarily supports the adults and organizations that directly serve youth.

YDN: *Describe your experience of the work environment at YDN.*

Elisa: The work environment at YDN is different than anywhere else I have ever worked. Everyone shares information about what they are doing and I have had the opportunity to use my strengths and skills to further the work here, even if the work that I wanted to do fell outside my job description. It is a fun office when everyone is here and when everyone is out and about it is quiet and peaceful. This works well with my primary job duties which are to process all the quantifiable data which validates the work that we do.

YDN: *What has been your favorite YDN memory?*

Elisa: I would definitely have to say the Sacramento Youth Leadership Project (SYLP) camp. This was one of the projects that allowed me to go beyond my job description and be more than an administrative support person. I was able to have direct impact on youth through 1-on-1 mentoring and be able to see the impact that the camp has had on past alumni of the camp. It was also awesome to see our YDN facilitators modeling the principles that we present in our trainings.

YDN: *What (if any) impact has YDN had on your future?*

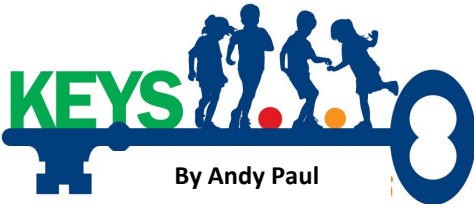
Elisa: I have always wanted to work with youth. When I graduated from college, I began looking for an organization that put youth at the center of what they did and also understood the needs that today's youth have.

Although the majority of my work with YDN was not direct contact with youth, YDN helped me gain a common language and approach to talk about and implement the principles of youth development.

YDN: *If there was one thing that you would want to communicate about youth development to our readers, what would it be?*

Elisa: There is so much value in this youth development approach to anyone's life. The supports and opportunities are relevant, meaningful and ubiquitous to all. They cross all boundaries of race, age, cultures and arenas (not just schools) and provide wonderful tenants for treating anyone.





to Having Impact

We all strive to make a difference for our youth—isn't that why we do this work?—but how do we know that we *are* making a difference? This key issue of whether or not our efforts are having impact on our youth should drive and focus all of our work, but it is often lost to other things that seem more pressing: budget, schedules, crazy workloads, bureaucratic details, paperwork, etc. It might be a horrifying thought, but what if all of your efforts are having no impact at all? Take a moment to think about the following questions, with regard to your program or work with youth:

What impact are you hoping to have? What do you hope will be different?

The Youth Development Framework for Practice provides an outline for thinking about impact. It identifies certain outcomes as *long-term* impacts we hope our work with youth will have (These are healthy family/social relationships, economically self-sufficient, and being a contributor to the community). The framework also names the key skills that youth need when leaving home or school, in order to reach these long-term outcomes (how to be productive, how to be connected, and how to navigate). While these are the desired outcomes down the road, the framework points us to a different focus for what youth need right now: the youth development supports & opportunities. These five things (Safety, Relationship Building, Youth Participation, Community Involvement, and Skill Building) are not new to you if you're familiar with YDN and our work. They are the critical experiences that research tells us youth need in order to be successful healthy adults down the road. In order to maximize our impact, then, our goal should be to make



sure these are happening for all of our youth as much as possible. Let's use this as a starting point for reflecting on what kind of impact you hope to have. Maybe you want your youth to report feeling safe at their program, or that they all feel they have someone to talk to if they are having a problem. Or perhaps you want all youth to report that they feel like they belong at your program, or that they are developing skills that are interesting to them. These are the kinds of things youth say when they are experiencing the supports and opportunities. And this is how we know we're having impact.

How are your strategies (or day-to-day program designs) focused on the impact you want?

Many programs have practices, activities, and schedules that they have inherited. Someone chose these and/or created them, but for what purpose? Did they have a specific impact in mind? If you want your program activities to focus on providing the youth development supports and opportunities, then examine each offering and ask, how does this contribute to helping youth feel safer, or closer to each other, or as if they have a voice in what is happening? If you like your answers, then you can skip on to the next paragraph. If not, take a moment to think about what kinds of

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When we created our core values together as a staff it was a bumpy yet rewarding process. We had everyone share their own personal core values with the rest of the team. After that we started searching for resonant core values, those values that we all seemed to share or were somehow closely associated with one another. A big part of this process was for everyone to share their own story associated with their core values and we also shared how we felt that these resonant core values had helped the YDN be successful in years past. Finally, we were able to identify and define our core values: Relationships, social responsibility, change, and fun! Because our core values were created using a “me to we” process, I felt that most of our staff had bought in and they just needed to see how we could make our values a real living document (which would require practice, practice, practice).



YDN’s core values have impacted everything within our organization. They have impacted how we train, how we create, how we celebrate, how we involve others, how we hire, how we “valueate” staff, what goals we set for ourselves, what we will do to make the Sacramento region an amazing place for young people, and so on.

It has been incredibly gratifying to put our core values into action and to have a place where as a staff we can all look at each other in the eye and know that we share something more than just the same place of employment. We share a common cause held together by core values that we all share in some way or another. At the YDN, we have become a community that cares for each other and our partners in ways that is seldom seen in today’s modern “me-first” work world. As a community we are willing to give the extra effort to resolve conflict and give the extra personal power to make our mission and vision a reality. Don’t get me wrong; we still deal with some of the “me” issues and the reality of our world’s economic woes. We are a group of people of different religion, race, gender, sexual orientation, political views, socio-economic status, humor levels, and needs... but isn’t that what community is after all?

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Civically engaged youth become civically engaged adults who vote and volunteer! Groups of civically strong citizens who have the tools to solve problems constructively make for strong, sustainable, healthier, and more connected societies. When we engage youth in thinking critically about issues and solutions, we invite them to discover a super-power within them that they never knew existed. Through practiced facilitation of that process, they learn to identify their strengths and talents--to be the change, to make our world more responsive to their needs and wants, and to make the world a place they want to inherit. They learn to fly.



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activities would better provide these experiences for youth. Would more teambuilding improve the emotional safety and/or relationships at your program? Where could youth be allowed or encouraged to step up more and lead?

How do you measure your impact? How do you know if you're being successful?

So you know what you want, and you've created strategies to get there, now you have to ask yourself: Is it working? Funders want to know and so do you and your staff. Sometimes we know it's working when we see happy kids or we hear success stories about our youth, but sometimes those are unreliable indicators or else they come few and far between. Ask yourself: what do we do in a consistent way to measure whether we are making our youth? Do we hold focus groups where go deeper with discussion to get more in-evaluation of our program that uses our desired impact (i.e. whether youth more connected to their community, options for measuring success are us-Program Quality Assessment tool, practices that create positive environ-research behind this tool is that it can meas-tive youth development experience by observing whether certain staff practices and behaviors are occurring—this is a relatively new tool that does a great job of concretely measuring impact (If you have more questions about the YPQA tool, contact Scott or Andy at YDN. YDN staff and many of their community partners have been certified to use this tool and are strong believers in its accuracy and effectiveness).



YDN Toolbox—Resources to further your knowledge

Youth Program Quality Assessment Tool

The Youth Program Quality Assessment (YPQA), which was developed by the [High/Scope Educational Research Foundation](#), is an evaluation tool that is becoming widely used by the afterschool field. This tool allows program staff (or external specialists) to conduct evidence-based research on programs via observation and interview methodologies. Notes, observations, and interview data are used as evidence to score items, and these item scores are combined to create an overall program quality profile.

California After School Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool

The new and improved, second version of the [California Afterschool Program Quality Self-Assessment Tool](#) (QSA) and [User's Guide](#) have recently been finalized with extensive input from the California after school field. Programs can use the tool to self-assess their program and make plans for program improvement. [The California Afterschool Network](#) is happy to offer both resources for free download to after school programs.

To Save A Life (MOVIE)

Great movie about impact and youth development. [To Save A Life](#) is a must see!



The YDN wants to know...

How did you spend your last \$20?



Did you spend it on a new shirt?

Or maybe you spent it on appetizers and cocktails with friends?



Do you even remember where you spent it?

And what if you could spend your next \$20 in such a way that it suddenly became worth much more than \$20? What if when you spent that \$20, it magically became \$400? (Ka-ching!)



Welcome to YDN's 20 squared campaign. We want your \$20. Why? Because we believe that your \$20 donation becomes much more than that. Your \$20 goes towards one more person attending a training where they receive high-impact strategies and practices that will change their program and improve the hundreds of lives of the youth they come in contact with. Those youth go on to become more successful and healthy adults. The impact of each of these new adults is multiplied a hundredfold as they become contributing citizens and leaders in our community.

The effect of your \$20 multiplies and multiplies and multiplies. We want your \$20 because when you invest it in YDN, it impacts dozens of programs, hundreds of youth, thousands of lives.

That's a great investment.

Want to make a difference? Donate to YDN's 20 Squared campaign. Imagine the impact your donation will have.





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