



Youth Programs



Youth United Adviser's Guide

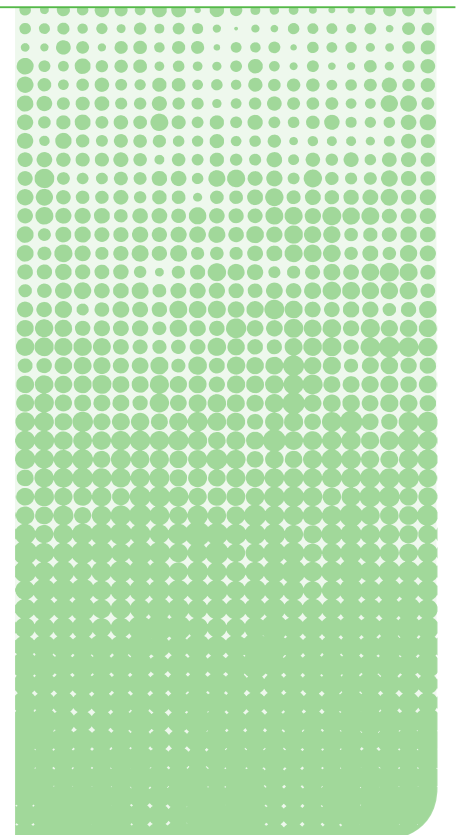


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About HFHI Youth Programs

Habitat for Humanity International Youth Programs seeks to mobilize youth volunteers and involve them as leaders in the work of Habitat for Humanity through campus chapters, Youth United, Collegiate Challenge and Service Learning opportunities. State Farm Insurance is the official corporate sponsor of Habitat’s youth programs.



Youth United

What is Youth United?

Youth United mobilizes young people ages 5 to 25 to help fund and build a house, conduct rehab work, or participate in A Brush with Kindness projects with their local Habitat for Humanity affiliate. It brings young people from all walks of life together to play active roles in transforming their communities.

Advice from the field

'The goal isn't for the adviser to lead the group. The goal is to make it as easy as possible for the youth to lead themselves. Clearly define roles for the members, and clearly define deadlines. The best advice my host site manager gave me was to make sure the youth look up to you and know how much you care about the success of YU. If you can form bonds with and within your YU group, the members will want to work hard for the sake of the team.'

—Sarah Pliske, AmeriCorps,
Dupage Habitat (Illinois)

Students:

- Learn teamwork skills.
- Learn leadership skills.
- Gain a better understanding of their community and poverty housing.

The four goals of Youth United:

- Involve youths in their community.
- Engage youths in Habitat's mission of eliminating poverty housing.
- Foster teamwork among diverse groups of young people.
- Develop youth leaders.

What is the structure of Youth United?

Adviser

The adviser is an adult who provides direct support to the Youth United steering committee members by sharing vital information about Youth United, overseeing all projects and events, and providing leadership. Affiliates can use a staff member or AmeriCorps member, or recruit volunteers to serve as Youth United adviser.

Adult co-adviser (optional)

Provides support to the adviser and Youth United committee. This person can step in to take the lead if the adviser is unable to attend Youth United projects. For affiliates that use AmeriCorps members to serve as the Youth United adviser, having a co-adviser or forming a parent committee will help Youth United overcome the challenge of yearly changeover with AmeriCorps members.

Steering committee

This is the core group of youth members. These young people work closely with each other to develop a strong Youth United project. Ideally, the steering committee would oversee all fundraising, recruitment, advocacy and education, and out-

reach with the help of their adviser. The Youth United steering committee is made up of a chair, co-chair, secretary, treasurer and chairperson of subcommittees.

Subcommittees

A subcommittee is a team of YU members focused on a specific task for the Youth United group. Sample subcommittees are Fundraising, Special Events, Education, Publicity, Younger Youth, Homeowner Family Youth, etc. The subcommittee is made of a chairperson and committee members.

Members

Youths who want to participate with YU, but not in a leadership role.

Important forms and deadlines

Youth United yearly requirements

In an effort to keep track of Youth United efforts across the country, Habitat for Humanity Youth Programs will have yearly requirements for each Youth United group. To remain an active Youth United chapter, be eligible for any future grants or awards, and use the Youth United logo, a Youth United chapter must meet these requirements. Unless otherwise noted, new requirements will take effect at the beginning of the next school year.

- 1) **Annual letter of intent.** To remain an active Youth United program, the group must sign a letter of intent at the start of each school year. This will be due by Oct. 1 each year.
- 2) **End-of-year report.** The group must complete the [end-of-year report](#). This report is designed to gather accurate information regarding the Youth United group and to provide an opportunity to evaluate the group's progress through the past school year. The deadline for completing these reports is June 30. Note: To be eligible for any grants that take place in the 2011-12 school year, chapters must complete the end-of-year report by June 30, 2011.
- 3) **Steering committee.** A steering committee of at least five youths must be in place to lead the Youth United program. The steering committee should consist of a chair/president, co-chair/vice-president, secretary, treasurer and subcommittee chairs (as needed). Additional positions and committee members can be added based on the needs of the group or community.

Recommended activities

- 4) **Advocacy event.** Youth United teams can take their program a step further by leading or participating in advocacy events. We highly encourage Youth United groups to participate in World Habitat Day or Act! Speak! Build! Week or plan their own advocacy event. These activities can make the group more competitive for grants we offer during the year.

- 5) **Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative projects.** A Brush with Kindness, weatherization, rehab projects and other NRI activities offer young people the opportunity to help Habitat build communities. (Please refer to page 19 for more information on involving young people in NRI.)
- 6) **Fundraising goal.** It is useful for Youth United groups to establish a fundraising goal for each year, and to center their fundraising plan on this goal.

Youth United manuals and guides

habitat.org/youthprograms/ages_14_25/youth_united/you_resources.aspx

- Youth United Resources Manual
- Affiliate Guide to Youth Involvement
- Working With Youth

Youth United grants and awards



Through the gracious support of State Farm, Habitat for Humanity International Youth Programs offers grants and awards to qualified affiliate Youth United groups and campus chapters throughout the year. habitat.org/youthprograms/ages_14_25/grants/grants.aspx

State Farm Matching Grant

Youth United groups have the opportunity to apply for matching grant funds that can be used for rehab and A Brush with Kindness projects in addition to house sponsorships. Grant winners also have the opportunity to receive an action planning session by a Habitat for Humanity International Youth United coordinator. Applications for this grant go online around August and are due around Oct. 1.

State Farm Youth Advocacy Grant

The Youth Advocacy Grant provides funds for grantees to attend advocacy-related training and to organize events that involve more youths and community members in Habitat's advocacy efforts. Recipients will be selected based on their past successes, previous participation in advocacy efforts and the innovativeness of their plans to expand advocacy within their community. Applications for this grant go online around April and are due around May.

State Farm Service Learning Grants

The Service-Learning Partnership offers two grant opportunities (one for primary schools and one for secondary schools) that provide funds for teachers and schools to develop and implement sustainable service-learning projects in partnership with their local Habitat affiliate. Applications for this grant go online around April and are due around May.

State Farm Financial Education Grant

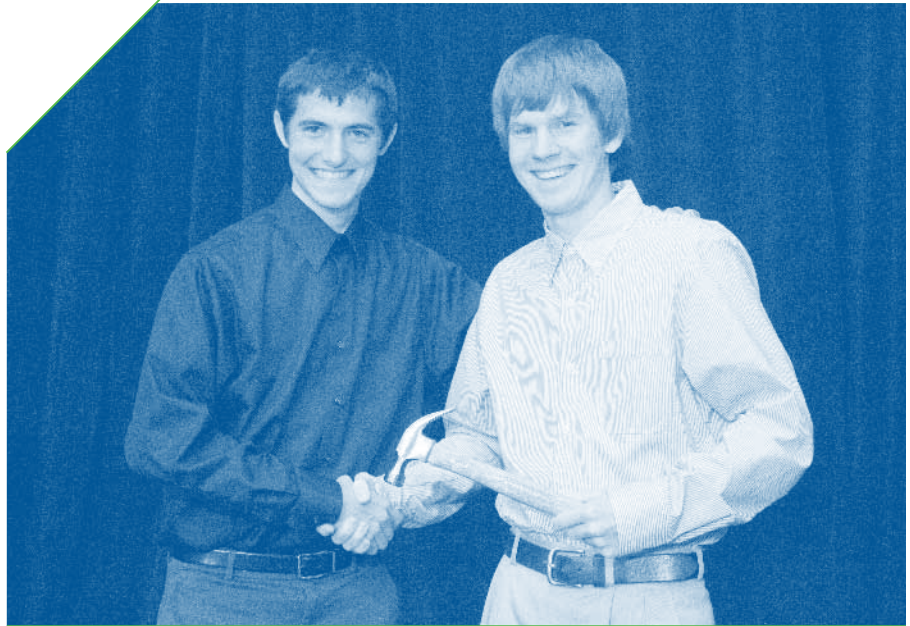
Any U.S. affiliate, campus chapter or Youth United group in good standing may apply for this grant, which provides resources to help train and empower youths to educate their community about financial issues. Applications for this grant go online around April and are due around May.

Youth United Building the Future Award

This award recognizes a Youth United group that fulfills the four goals of the Youth United program and has shown outstanding performance in all aspects. Affiliates have an opportunity to nominate their Youth United group for this special award. Applications for this award go online around March and are due around May. The awards will be presented at the annual Youth Leadership Conference.

Build Louder Youth Advocacy Award

This award recognizes the advocacy and policy change contributions of a campus chapter or Youth United group. Affiliates and student groups can nominate their campus chapter or Youth United group for this award, which is given through Habitat for Humanity's Government Relations and Advocacy department and is not State Farm-sponsored. Applications go online around March and are due around May.



Training resources

HFHI Youth United coordinator

General inquiries email: youthunited@habitat.org Phone: 800-422-4828, ext. 2412

Western Region (U.S.): 800-422-4828, ext. 7981

Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin, Wyoming

Eastern Region (U.S.): 800-422-4828, ext. 7571

Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Vermont, Virginia, West Virginia

Youth Programs Update e-newsletter

The Youth Programs Update is a monthly e-newsletter that provides the latest updates from Youth Programs and action items groups can do during the month to get involved with Habitat. Anyone can subscribe by sending a blank email to join-ypupdate@lists.habitatforhumanity.org.

Youth Leadership Conference

An annual opportunity for youth volunteers and advisers to network and make new friendships. Training topics cover all facets of Habitat work through youth volunteers. Learn more at habitat.org/gvylc.

Conference calls

These calls are great opportunities to connect with other Youth United groups and campus chapters, share best practices, and discuss topics that will help build a sustainable Youth United or campus chapter.

Yearly mailings

Youth United groups receive an email including valuable resources at the beginning, middle and end of the school year.

Youth Programs website

This site, habitat.org/youthprograms, is designed to involve youths of all ages in Habitat's work. Advisers are also encouraged to visit the site periodically to stay up to date on the latest youth news and to locate activities and resources to incorporate into their youth programs.

Youth United Best Practices Bulletin

Spotlights the accomplishments of Youth United chapters across the U.S. and offers help, advice and tips that can help each Youth United group reach its highest potential. habitat.org/youthprograms/parent_teacher_leader/youth_united/yp_program_updates.aspx

Learn and Build Experience

Young people between the ages of 16 and 18 can apply to travel with HFHI Youth Programs for a two-week summer build trip. Participants will have the opportunity to build and learn skills that will empower them as future Habitat leaders. habitat.org/youthprograms/parent_teacher_leader/learn_build_experience/lbe_default.aspx

Your role as adviser

What makes an effective YU adviser?

Your expertise and real-world perspective are important values that you give your committee members. You serve as their mentor and cheerleader.

Consider which tools you may need to help drive the success of Youth United:

- What other adults can share their expertise with your committee members?
- What expectations need to be established to hold your youths accountable for YU?
- What tools do we need to cultivate leadership in our youth members?
- Is the Youth United project headed in the right direction?
- How sharp are your active listening skills?
- Do the youths have a concrete assurance that their voice counts?
- What networking opportunities are available for Youth United?
- Do you understand how to effectively mediate and help resolve conflicts that may arise?
- What are the necessary steps to make Youth United sustainable?

Sample job description

[AFFILIATE NAME]

Job Title:

Youth United adviser

Goal:

To develop, implement and maintain a Youth United program within [AFFILIATE]. Youth United is a program where young people ages 5-25 organize, fundraise and build a home with a partner family in need.

Responsible to:

[VOLUNTEER COORDINATOR / EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR]

Time required:

10-15 hours per week.

Responsibilities:

- Design and implement recruitment/publicity plan for Youth United.
- Coordinate and facilitate interest meetings and meetings with school/ youth groups.

Advice from the field

'I would say to always keep open eyes, ears and mind. They should keep open eyes because they may be walking in thinking they will be teaching a lot to the YU members, but in fact they will be learning a lot from the youth by simply being present and paying attention. They should keep open ears, because youth are often overlooked, and their voices are not heard. YU is their opportunity to voice their opinions and learn to become analytical, creative thinkers. Therefore, they need a supervisor that will also give them that platform to voice their opinions and learn how to lead. Finally, they need to have an open mind. Working with youth is never an easy task. There are always obstacles and issues that arise, especially in a group setting. Therefore, remember that YU is in fact youth, but they are youth leaders. Everyone in the room is there because they share something in common, and sometimes the best ideas come from youth.'

—Melissa Killian, AmeriCorps, Habitat of Greater Los Angeles

- Serve as liaison between youth/youth group leaders, [AFFILIATE] staff, and HFHI YU coordinator.
- Work closely with youths to form steering committee and leadership structure for the program.
- Mentor youths as they design and carry out their project plans.
- Attend all committee meetings.
- Attend youth-led events as necessary.
- Work closely with construction staff and youths to organize youth build days and building activities.

Skills/qualifications:

Youth United volunteer will need excellent oral and written communication skills, strong organizational skills and a flexible schedule. Volunteer must also have a desire to empower youths to make a difference in their communities and a commitment to Habitat for Humanity's mission. Experience working with young people is a plus.

Training provided:

Conference call training (on topics related to organizing a Youth United program) provided by Habitat for Humanity International.

Benefits to volunteer:

Excellent opportunity to develop leadership skills, work with youths, and affect the community in a positive way.

Important traits for every adviser:

Willingness to listen
 Flexibility, adaptability
 Patience
 Creativity
 Being self-driven
 Commitment (willing to dedicate enough time to Youth United)
 Persistence
 Understanding of working with youths' schedules
 Confidence
 Compassion
 Outgoingness
 Leadership skills
 Energy
 Organization
 Resilience
 Optimism
 Fun
 Multitasking
 Determination
 Open-mindedness

'We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give.'

—Winston Churchill

Pulling together a steering committee

Working with your steering committees to set realistic goals for a Youth United project can be challenging without the proper tools. For the most part, the function of the steering committee is to provide leadership, representation, direction and motivation for the Youth United project. Let's face it, young people are full of energy and ideas, and they often need our guidance to see the big picture.

One effective way to help your steering committee plan Youth United projects is an action planning session. The session is a way to organize group discussion about issues such as fundraising, recruiting more members, service projects, etc., with a goal of developing a plan of action. Your role would be to keep the group discussion on track and encourage the flow while allowing each member to feel comfortable about sharing.

Other key tasks of the Youth United steering committee:

- Promote diversity.
- Communicate vision, goals, tasks and YU updates to all group members.
- Hold members accountable for various commitments.
- Ensure all members have a voice in decision making.

Establishing the steering committee

The size of your Youth United project will determine the size of the steering committee, and that will vary at each affiliate. Steering committees should represent the diversity of your community, but keep in mind that having too many members on a committee makes it difficult to organize, schedule meetings, communicate and arrive at shared decisions. Large steering committees may also make participants feel less responsible and discourage them from taking initiative.

When recruiting steering committee members:

- Ask teachers and school/club advisers for assistance in identifying and recruiting youths.
- Mirror the diversity of your community (ethnicity, race, geographic location, socioeconomic situation, points of view, talents, etc.).
- Include your homeowners' children and younger youths.
- Involve well-respected young people who can rally others.

Resource:

[Facilitators Guide to Action Planning \(See Appendix\)](#)



Sample steering committee position description

by Youth United of Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East

Youth United Build Leadership Committee—Volunteer Description

Habitat for Humanity's mission

To build partnerships among volunteers, families and the community to transform lives and revitalize neighborhoods by enabling families in need to earn and own a simple, decent, affordable home.

About Youth United Build

Youth United Build, formed in 2009, brings youths together to raise funds and to build a home. Children under 16 years of age assist in fundraising and promoting the project to the community. Older youths and young adults have the opportunity to participate in the construction of the house, in addition to fundraising and advocacy.

Advice from the field

'Really get to know your Youth United group. Make it clear to the students what different steering committee positions entail. Find a balance to let YU have ownership of the program. research as much as possible what other Youth Uniteds are doing and what the Youth United in your area has done (find out what worked and what didn't). Always tell the students they are doing a great job and that you appreciate their hard work.'

— Allysen Mahaffney, AmeriCorps, Forsyth Habitat

The four goals of Youth United are to:

- Involve youths in their community.
- Engage youths in Habitat's mission of eliminating poverty housing.
- Foster teamwork among diverse groups of youths.
- Develop youth leaders.

About the leadership committee

The purpose of the leadership committee is to work together to define overall strategies to complete a Youth United Build home. The committee will be in charge of recruiting and organizing 300 young people to raise funds and construct a home for a hardworking Portland family. Committee members will focus on promoting community awareness of the work of Habitat for Humanity and host outreach events. From this experience, members will gain valuable volunteer and community experience and leadership skills, and serve as the young voice of Habitat for Humanity.

Qualifications

- Enthusiastically believes in Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East's mission and Youth United Build and is willing to promote the mission and Youth United Build in our community.
- Has strong organizational skills.
- Is goal- and results-oriented.
- Possesses a desire to develop event-planning skills.
- Is interested in developing networking connections in the community.
- Appreciates the opportunity to be an active member of a diverse group.

Responsibilities

- Attend once-a-month meetings at the Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East office.

- Dedicate additional time if serving on a subcommittee.
- Assist in planned events, including setup and cleanup.
- Organize youths in the Portland metro area to be a part of Youth United.
- Educate the community on Youth United.
- Help with construction of Portland's Youth United Build.

Sample steering committee application

by Youth United of Habitat for Humanity Portland/Metro East

Youth United Build Leadership Committee Application

Applicant information

Name (print): _____ Date: _____

DOB: _____ Age: _____ Gender (Circle): Male Female

Address: _____

Street

City

State

ZIP Code

Home phone number: _____

Mobile number: _____

Email: _____

**Please note: most communication will be done through email.*

Current grade: _____ High school/college: _____

If under 18, please provide the following:

Parent/guardian: _____

Parent/guardian signature: _____

Short-answer questions

Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability. Feel free to answer the questions in the space provided below or on a separate sheet.

1. What aspect of Habitat for Humanity is most inspiring to you?

2. Based on the description of Youth United Build's leadership committee, what else could you envision the committee undertaking? (Projects, fundraisers, etc.)
3. How would you outreach to youths about the Youth Build program of Habitat for Humanity?
4. What personal skills do you possess that would be an asset to this committee?
5. Do you have any previous leadership experience? (Example: clubs, teams, youth groups, etc.)
6. Please list any commitments that you anticipate in 2010-11.

Applicant signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Maintaining affiliate support

Affiliate commitment and support are the keys to the success of your Youth United project. Your role serves as a liaison between the youths, the affiliate staff and your Habitat for Humanity International coordinator. To create a sustainable Youth United program, every adviser needs a clear understanding of:

- Affiliate expectations for Youth United.
- Construction logistics.
- Fundraising/house sponsorship goal.
- Plan for project if youths do not meet fundraising goal.

Good communication between the Youth United adviser and the affiliate staff help to ensure the success of the Youth United project. Your youths should be a viable part of Habitat's work in the community. Think of ways to engage other full-time staff members at the affiliate. Are any representatives on the affiliate board of directors willing to be a part of the Youth United meetings or activities? This will strengthen the affiliate buy-in of the Youth United program.

Resource:

HFHI legal policies for youth volunteers (See Appendix)

Legal and liability issues

Each Habitat affiliate is responsible for organizing its own risk-management program, which includes the four components of safety: training, emergency response, insurance and waivers of liability. Youth United advisers should discuss risk management with the affiliate to determine what is required of participants. Any projects that Youth United members work on or undertake must be approved by the affiliate. When working with other organizations, it is important to discuss

safety and liability issues before the event.

This manual is only a guide to highlight issues each affiliate should carefully consider, not an exhaustive list of potential risks.

Making contacts

Part of the vision of Youth United is to get community organizations working together for the sake of empowering young people and, in turn, housing a Habitat for Humanity family. The following organizations work with youths and partner with Habitat for Humanity. You might have a chapter in your community. They might have advice to offer on how to recruit or work with young people. Check them out.

Girls Inc. www.girlsinc.org

Boys and Girls Club of America www.bgca.org

Big Brothers/Big Sisters www.bbbsa.org

UNITY (The largest group of Native American youths in the U.S.)
www.unityinc.org

Youth Service America www.ysa.org

America's Promise www.americaspromise.org

Futures for Children www.futuresforchildren.org

Campfire Boys and Girls www.campfireusa.org

Rotary Club www.rotary.org

Other organizations and groups to look into:

Student councils

National honor societies

Key Clubs

Model United Nations

Amnesty International (www.amnesty.org)

Future Business Leaders of America (www.fbld-pbl.org)

Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (www.fcclainc.org)

Family organizations on military bases

Religious youth groups

Student exchange clubs

United Way (national.unitedway.org)

Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts (www.scouting.org; www.girlscouts.org)

Salvation Army (www.salvationarmyusa.org)

Juvenile delinquency programs

Park districts

After-school programs

Home-school associations

YMCA (www.ymca.net)

Advice from the field

'Be creative. Learn about your affiliate while you learn about YU, then shape what parts of YU are the most important parts for your affiliate. Is your affiliate interested in having a house sponsorship every year from the youth? Or are they more hoping for lasting community relationships and the development of youth leadership and community service? I think the hard part for me was figuring out how I envisioned the program to be at my affiliate. After you have a clear plan, it's easier to sell your ideas to your advisers.'

—Elizabeth Weaver, Ameri-Corps, Habitat of Greater Charlottesville (Virginia)

Sustaining Youth United

Create a written plan

- How does the affiliate envision Youth United five years from now?
- What will Youth United look like in your community?
- What steps will you need to take to make this vision a reality?
- How far are you from this goal?
- What young people are already involved at your affiliate, and what leadership roles can they fill?
- How can you involve Habitat homeowner youths and other diverse populations of youths?
- What age-appropriate activities are you able to support at your affiliate?

The answers to these questions will help your affiliate create a written plan for a sustainable Youth United program. Youth United is an affiliate-driven program that will benefit the entire affiliate, and a written plan will give your steering committee members a good foundation.

Grow your Youth United program

Once you understand how Youth United can further Habitat's mission in your community, it is time to recruit young people to join your YU project. As you identify youth organizations that can partner with Youth United, it might be helpful to understand their recruitment strategies for ideas that you might be able to implement.

- Establish recruitment goals and develop job descriptions for Youth United positions.
- Create a list of youth organizations in your community.
- Develop a YU information packet.
- Make a presentation for community groups and faith-based organizations.
- Plan an initial interest meeting, and follow up with interested youths.

Advice from the field

'Take time to understand your affiliate's goals with Youth United. You need your affiliate to support the program so that you can have their support at fundraisers, or to get youth on the building site, and if you aren't working toward their goals for the program, they won't give you that support. Youth United's goals might not be exactly what your board/affiliate is wanting from the program.'

—Liz Henderson, AmeriCorps,
Junction City Habitat
(Oregon)

Sample agenda for an interest meeting

Welcome (5 minutes)

Thank everyone for coming. Give a brief history of Habitat and your affiliate.

PowerPoint presentation or Youth United explanation (25 minutes)

Review purpose of Youth United, including:

- Builds.
- Ages 5-25 participate.
- Ages 16-25 build on site.
- What people younger than 16 can do.

Four Youth United goals:

- Recruiting diverse groups of young people from different organizations, faiths, ages and backgrounds.
- Providing meaningful roles for homeowner children.
- Providing leadership roles for young people.
- Giving more young people an understanding of Habitat's mission and engaging them in its work in their own communities.

Organization (10 minutes)

Tell participants what their roles can be before the project. Go over the steering committee and subcommittees. Have people think about what subcommittee they will want to work with.

Timeline (5 minutes)

Go over the Youth United timeline. Give your expectations for fundraising and building.

Question-and-answer session (10 minutes)

Encouragement (5 minutes)

Tell everyone to go out and talk about Youth United and to bring interested people to the next meeting. Tell them the time, date and place for the next meeting. Thank them for coming.

***Note: Either have the [Youth United expression of interest form](#) at each chair or pass it out at some point during the meeting. Make mention of the form during the meeting. Make sure you get everyone's expression of interest form back before they leave!**

Leadership transition – adviser's checklist

Resources library: Youth United Resources

Youth United Resource Manual
 Getting Started with Youth United
 Facilitator's Guide to Action Planning Sessions
 Fundraising Guide
 Advocacy Tool Kit
 Youth Programs website: habitat.org/youthprograms

Affiliate structure. Whom does the adviser report to?

Key contact list (Phone number, addresses, email addresses).

Steering committee members, current and past members.
 Key supporters (event contacts, media contacts, etc.).
 Past donors (See Appendix: Fundraising for youth volunteers – Donor tracking worksheet).
 Area school information.
 Faith relations contacts.
 HFHI Youth United Coordinator: 800-422-4828, ext. 2412.
 HFHI Affiliate Support Center: 800-422-4828.

Review/summarize role and responsibilities of AmeriCorps volunteer.

Calendar of important dates:

Youth United: annual fundraisers, educational activities, action items, pending issues, deadlines.
 For your affiliate (set build days, annual events).
 For HFHI (milestone events, trainings).
 Event descriptions.

Important documents: Youth United guidelines, YU Letter of Intent policies of HFHI Youth United, your affiliate, your school.

Key initiatives and activities: Include current status and necessary future follow-up.

Copies of key documents: Include correspondences, recruitment and fundraising fliers, advertisements and other press, grants and other funding, miscellaneous forms.

Meeting minutes/summary notes from all Youth United meetings and activities.

Lessons learned:

Toughest challenges faced as Youth United adviser?
 Successful processes that should be continued: What worked?
 Ideas for improvement: What didn't work? How can we change it?

Summarize current status/action items/pending issues/follow-up needed.

Involving youths in NRI

The Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative allows affiliates to serve more families by responding to community aspirations with an expanded array of products, services and partnerships, with the mission of empowering residents to revive their neighborhoods and enhance the quality of life.

- Weatherization
- Critical Home Repairs
- A Brush with Kindness
- Rehabs
- New construction

Young people can enhance the work of affiliates enrolled in Habitat for Humanity's Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative by rehabbing a home, participating in A Brush with Kindness projects, and using their time and energy to promote community development.

Youth NRI accomplishments:

Habitat for Humanity Cabarrus County (North Carolina) partnered with the City of Kannapolis to implement the Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative in the deteriorating Carver Community. North Carolina State University students compiled a neighborhood action plan that will help Habitat Cabarrus and the City of Kannapolis help more than 150 families and bring new life to this historic community.

Park School Habitat for Humanity (Baltimore, Maryland) has initiated and is leading a Build-A-Block coalition of 16 schools to rehab six houses and develop a community green space within the same city block.

The Youth United team of Our Towns Habitat (North Carolina) will rehab a home that was bought from a current Habitat homeowner who is relocating, recycling it for a new family. The home needs minor repairs and maintenance to be ready for this new Habitat family. YU members painted the walls and moldings, repaired the flooring, completed landscaping work, cleaned the exterior of the house and performed punch list items.

Youth United of Coastal Fairfield County Habitat (Connecticut) teamed up with neighborhood families and the city mayor to help restore a community park damaged by a natural disaster.

Youth United members of Greater Charlottesville Habitat (Virginia) planted trees and created a community garden at the Southwood trailer park, an impoverished area the affiliate is working to revitalize.

For more information on NRI, contact:

Rebecca Hix, Neighborhood Revitalization director RHix@habitat.org

A Brush with Kindness

A Brush with Kindness is an opportunity for affiliates to serve more homeowners who struggle to maintain the exterior of their homes. ABWK projects focus on exterior repair services such as painting, minor exterior repairs, landscaping and exterior cleanup. This provides a wonderful opportunity to get young people

involved in developing the community, particularly those who are too young to build on an active construction site. Because ABWK projects have lower sponsorship costs, affiliates might find ABWK projects offer a more realistic goal for their Youth United members.

For more information on A Brush with Kindness, contact:
Walter Fields, program manager, ABWK@habitat.org.

Educational resources for building community

The Youth Programs website includes lessons and activities to help youth volunteers recognize the value of building community and take action to strengthen neighborhoods.

Sample lesson plans:

Elementary:

Making a beloved community

Middle school:

We're All Connected

Poetry: Bringing together a community

High school:

Building a Beloved Community

A Global Issue

Faith-based:

A community offering

One step further

Mentoring youths

Nurturing the future

Youth United fosters leadership in community youths who want to make a positive impact. As their mentor, you play a valuable part in helping your Youth United members take complete ownership of the program. Keep in mind that all youth members should feel like Youth United is their program and the future of Habitat for Humanity depends on them.

Leadership training

Training opportunities and written job descriptions will help young people better understand their roles in Youth United.

Leadership development

Are there any campus chapter members or college students who are willing to offer their experience to help mentor the Youth United members?

Leadership transition

Current members can take the necessary steps to keep Youth United moving forward when they leave. Involving younger members, giving newly elected officers time to shadow outgoing officers, and actively recruiting youth volunteers are excellent ways to keep Youth United from dying out.

Leadership opportunities

Are there opportunities for Youth United members to be involved in affiliate events and activities? These opportunities not only help Youth United feel more connected to the overall work of Habitat in your community, but will also strengthen leadership skills and boost their level of confidence.

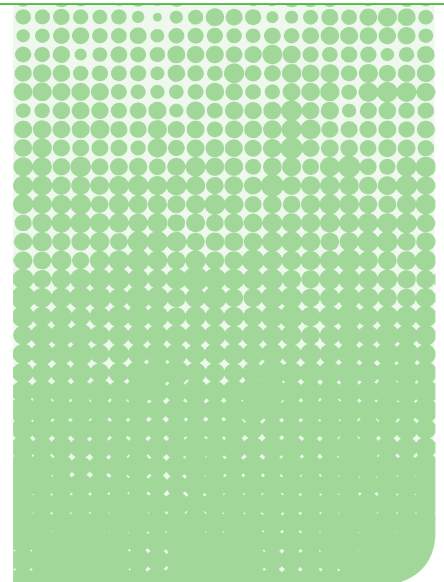
Leadership recognition

Rewards and recognition provide a great incentive for young people to excel. Taking time to appreciate young people for their commitment and hard work highlights their value to the mission of Habitat for Humanity.

Advice from the field

'Believe in what you are doing, and always have an open mind. You never know what will happen from one day to the next. Everything that you put into Youth United will come back to you in some way. Never forget that it is a privilege to be where you are.'

—Cyrus Weigand,
AmeriCorps, Summit
County Habitat (Ohio)



Tips for developing personal ownership and interest

Customize your Youth United program to incorporate the talents and interests of your young people.

For example, a student who enjoys working with computers might be an excellent leader for developing a Youth United Web page.

Use your young people as Habitat representatives.

Send volunteers out to conferences, trainings, community events and exhibits.

Groom future leaders early.

Allow your older members to mentor younger ones, and develop age-appropriate leadership opportunities for your younger members.

Capture youths' interest with media products and promotional items.

Design videos, slideshows, PowerPoints, etc., that highlight the Youth United program and its impact in the community. Include media products at meetings, events, recognition parties, etc. Youth volunteers can design T-shirts, water bottles or small hands-on building projects that can be sold or worn around town.

Be an advocate.

Act! Speak! Build! Week is a week of advocacy in which students move their communities to social action for affordable housing. On World Habitat Day (the first Monday in October each year), students can make plans to raise their voices for affordable housing across the globe. Consult these [Act! Speak! Build! Week resources](#) to help your Youth United group take action through advocacy.

Localize an event, such as fundraising efforts.

Have each individual school or youth group plan and sponsor a fundraising event for Youth United. Hosting local events increases success and pride as well as the visibility of your program.

Encourage youth volunteers to play a greater role in leadership.

Ask volunteers to mentor younger members, sit on a subcommittee, or co-lead a project or event. Guide young people up through a chain of increasing responsibility and leadership.

Recognize and thank ALL volunteers.

Include ALL volunteers — from event attendees to sponsors, subcommittee members to steering committee leaders. Let them know how important they are to Youth United — younger members can also help out with writing and decorating thank-you cards.

Advice from the field

'The best thing to do is to give the youth ownership over their projects and make them feel accountable for making things happen. If they don't feel that, often a lot of work will be left undone because it is assumed that the YU adviser can handle it themselves.'

—Larry Galante, AmeriCorps, Austin Habitat (Texas)

Youth and advocacy

By changing the attitudes, policies and systems that lead to poverty housing through advocacy, Habitat for Humanity can have an even greater impact. Empowered youths who understand how to use their voice to raise awareness and advocate for affordable housing can help Habitat reach our goal. People are never too young to help with Habitat's advocacy work. All it takes is the dedication to support Habitat's work, and the desire to inspire the community to get involved.

Habitat for Humanity International's Build Louder campaign focuses on changing U.S. policies surrounding neighborhood revitalization and "secure tenure" (living without fear of eviction) to improve access to adequate and affordable housing around the world. Learn more at habitat.org/gov/take_action/GRA_Build_Louder_default.aspx.

Youth Programs resources to help young people understand advocacy and housing issues:

[Advocacy Resources](#)

[Advocacy in Action activities](#)

[Welcome Home Housing Simulation](#)

[Secure Tenure 101](#)

[Advocacy Toolkit](#)

[Act! Speak! Build! Week](#)

AmeriCorps members: Because advocacy is a prohibited activity for AmeriCorps members, any advocacy events and activities should be initiated and planned by the youth volunteers or affiliate staff. Please contact your HFHI program specialist to clarify your role if your Youth United program is engaging in advocacy.

****NOTE: As a nonprofit organization, we cannot endorse candidates, encourage others to elect or defeat a candidate, align with a party or contribute to a candidate.**

HFHI Government Relations and Advocacy office email: HFHIAdvocacy@habitat.org

Building a team

Your Youth United project should emphasize a good sense of community. After all, Youth United brings young people together from all walks of life to transform their community through teamwork. Plan fun activities that help young people overcome the barriers that often occur when bringing people together from diverse backgrounds. Activities that build a better understanding of Habitat for Humanity's mission will help your youth members realize the value of community. Icebreakers, team-building exercises and games create a fun atmosphere that will increase your group's productivity.

Example games and icebreakers

Clump

Everybody mingles, constantly moving until the leader shouts out a number. All players must then try to get into groups by number (e.g., leader shouts “three!” and youths try to get in groups of three). Any group that doesn’t succeed is out.

Communicating challenge

Try the “Line up game” this way: Give everyone a number. They have to arrange themselves in numerical order, communicating without speaking or holding up fingers. They make up their own sublanguage or sign language, and it often is pretty amusing.

Round 2: Have people arrange themselves in order of birth or in calendar months.



Human bingo

Create a bingo card grid on a sheet of paper and divide it into a grid of fairly large squares (say 3- or 4-centimeter minimum) using a thick pen or pencil and a ruler. In some of the squares, write a phrase that would be interesting to know about someone, such as “Has climbed a mountain,” “Rides a bike,” “Has run a marathon,” “Works for a charity,” etc. The number of squares you fill in is up to you, but the more you create the more time it will take to complete. Blank out all remaining squares by coloring them in, then photocopy enough copies so that everybody who will be there can have one. At the start of the session, give each person a copy and tell them to find one person who has done each thing. If the player being

asked has done that activity, they sign their name to that box. Players can ask only one question before moving on to another person (but they can meet the person again later and ask another question). Keep going until someone has all of the boxes filled in. (Note: If you have time or the opportunity, you might ask participants something about themselves before the meeting and use that information.)

My.Habitat resources

[Giant Jenga Game as Youth & Educational Activity](#)

[Educational Activity Guide](#)

[Developing cohesion within your Youth United group](#)

Monthly meetings

In the beginning stages of building a Youth United program, the adviser will have more responsibility in planning and organizing meetings. The ultimate goal is empowering young people to take the lead, while the adviser provides the necessary guidance. How often the team needs to meet depends on the structure of the Youth United and is best determined by the steering committee, taking into consideration each member's schedule. It might help to establish ways to communicate in between meetings to keep everyone informed.

Some useful communications tools:

- Facebook (remember to keep personal information off the site)
- Email
- Newsletter
- Text messaging (for quick updates)

Common challenges

Q. Are there any strategies to help us incorporate new members into our steering committee throughout the year or transition if a steering committee member leaves midyear?

It is always great to give youth groups and volunteers the responsibility to bring in others to Youth United. Depending on the new members' level of commitment and interest, it should be fairly easy to incorporate them into your steering committee if they desire to take on leadership roles. Find out what the new member is good at, and try adding it as a subcommittee position within the steering committee. It might be a good idea to have a second member serve as an assistant for key steering committee positions, to help with the transition if a steering committee member leaves midyear. Don't forget to reach out to homeowners' children to serve on the steering committee.

Q. Making new contacts has been a challenge, especially coming into my position after the school year. How can I handle this?

It may be difficult to schedule time to talk with school administrators about Youth United once the school year has started. How can your current youth members help you make contact with the school's administration? Is there a public affairs contact at your district school board? Many schools allow community organizations to set up tables to recruit students for community service opportunities; this might be an effective way to get your foot in the door.

Consider partnerships with Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts or other youth agencies by providing opportunities where they can earn a badge or plan a Scout project. Many organizations will have existing connections within the school system and can help you make new contacts.

If there is a home school association in the area, think about how you can form a partnership with it.

Q. We are having trouble keeping the youths interested in Youth United; it is a challenge finding enough things for them to do at our affiliate. Any recommendations?

Be creative. Your Youth United members can brainstorm activities that appeal to young people. To keep the momentum going with your team, remember how important it is to plan for fun. Fundraiser after fundraiser, event after event, meeting upon meeting is a quick way to burn out, and many young people are already bogged down with hectic daily schedules. Celebrating your members through rewards, incentives and special recognition will give them a sense of pride about their accomplishments, great or small. The Youth Programs website also offers plenty of resources that will help affiliates provide meaningful activities for youth volunteers: habitat.org/youthprograms/parent_teacher_leader/parent_teacher_leader_resources.aspx.

Q. The youths seem reserved and uncomfortable with asking for donations and support we need for successful fundraisers and events. How can I help them overcome this?

The Fundraising Guide includes step-by-step tools to help empower young people to fund Youth United and campus chapter projects and build their donor base. The guide features role-play exercises to prepare young people to solicit community support. Whether it is appealing to a potential donor, soliciting donations for an upcoming event, or making the legislative ask to advocate for affordable housing, sometimes fear or shyness can hinder your members. Role-play is an excellent way to help them overcome fear. It might also help to allow Youth United members to shadow others who are more comfortable with making the important ask. Remember, Youth United is an opportunity for young people to learn new skills, so we want to make sure we create an environment where they can grow and flourish.

Q. We have lots of young people interested in building on site, but limited slots for volunteers on build days. What can we do to keep these young people included?

Many affiliates set days aside as a “youth” build day for those who are old enough to build. Along with building and fundraising, education and advocacy are important parts of Habitat's work; it will be useful when volunteers understand how each of these components makes it possible to swing the hammer. Not only are they necessary, but they are meaningful and fun! The big picture is that the young people want to be involved, and they want to have fun doing so.

Young people can also help your affiliate with community building by creating community gardens or planting trees. Is there an off-site building project Youth United can take ownership of? Some groups build bookcases, picnic tables or other small projects for new homeowners. Is your affiliate involved in A Brush with Kindness projects? Youth United members can paint or landscape — this is a great tool to involve younger members and parents as well. Are there any service projects that your youth volunteers can complete for existing Habitat homeowners? A monthly service day is a great way to give the youths a short-term sense of accomplishment as they work toward their long-term goals.

Best Practice Bulletin

This is a monthly bulletin that spotlights the accomplishments of Youth United groups across the U.S. and gives action steps to help duplicate their success. Please visit the Youth Programs website if you are interested in submitting one of your Youth United events to be featured in an upcoming YU Best Practices Bulletin: habitat.org/youthprograms/ages_9_13/youth_united/yu_program_updates.aspx.

Suggested ideas and best practices from other Youth United groups: Advocacy

- Team up with other affiliates and campus chapters in your state to host a youth advocacy conference.
- Connect with local civics or government classes to incorporate advocacy into the curriculum.
- Work with your youths to design an advocacy promotional mailing that goes out to encourage your community to advocate for affordable housing.
- Hold a school administration breakfast. Young people can sponsor a breakfast at their schools, inviting faculty, staff and students not already involved with Habitat to educate them and advocate for affordable housing.

Engaging youths under 16 and partner family children:

- Provide meals and prepare thank-you notes for volunteers.
- Create hands-on building projects, such as building a picnic table (or birdhouses, planters, etc).
- Landscape and clean the house to prepare it for the dedication.
- Start a “cookie crew” to make cookies for volunteers.
- Decorate construction hats for volunteers on the work site.

Construction/build days

One affiliate sponsored a Saturday that was designated as a “powerless” build day. All power tools and other obstructions were removed from the work site for the day, and younger volunteers came out and were able to work on homes.



Appendix:

Resources from My. Habitat

Youth United Recruitment Presentation

This PowerPoint presentation is a great recruiting tool to use at interest meetings.

Youth United Advocacy at a Glance

Appropriate for all ages, this explains advocacy and gives ideas for advocacy events.

Youth United Standards of Excellence

Evaluate your Youth United group's strengths and weaknesses.

Turning Youth Volunteers into Leaders

A resource for engaging and developing Youth United members into leaders.

A Brush with Kindness presentation: Youth Leadership Conference

This PowerPoint address ABWK basics and benefits, youth involvement, and ABWK resources.

Age-Appropriate Activities

Activities divided up by age for Youth United, campus chapter and other youth volunteers on and off the work site.

Facebook Guidelines for Youth-Focused Account**Fundraising for Youth Volunteers**

A great collection of resources to help young people organize more successful fundraisers.

Youth United Projects and Events

Useful resources and forms to help track and document successful Youth United events, and success stories.

Twenty Presentation Fundamentals

Tips to help young people speak about Habitat.

Fundraising for Youth United and Campus Chapters *(facilitator's guide)*

Learn the principles of fundraising for your campus chapter and Youth United, and how to organize and lead a training.

Affiliate Guide to Youth Involvement

Learn about ways to engage young people in furthering Habitat's mission. Includes information about all of Habitat's programs for young people ages 5 to 25, teacher and youth leader resources, a short guide to managing youth construction volunteers, and more.

HFHI Legal Advisory: Youth Involvement in Work Sites and NRI

(September 2010)

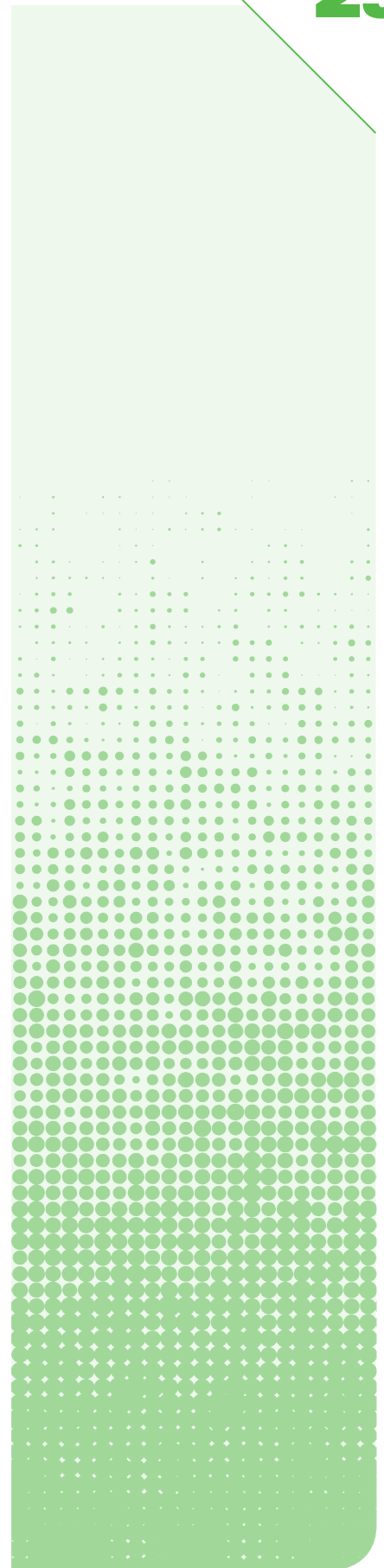
This advisory explains Habitat for Humanity International's policy regarding the appropriate involvement of people under the age of 18 on work sites. It should guide affiliates in determining how they wish to involve young people on their work sites.

HFHI Legal Advisory: Youth Involvement with ReStores *(September 2010)*

This legal advisory discusses the appropriate involvement of young people in Habitat ReStore operations.

Youth United Brochure and Materials

Location to order Youth United brochures and materials on BuildBrand.





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