



Annual Report 2019

Mentoring – Community Service – Teen Court. Three different programs with one common aim: connecting disengaged young people with their community and helping them make responsible choices.

For nearly 40 years, Volunteers for Youth has worked to make a difference in the lives of Orange County children and youth. With a focus on children and teens who are at risk of being failed by the community, Volunteers for Youth provides guidance to young people in need of a helping hand.

In 2019, Volunteers for Youth faced the challenges of meeting the needs of children coming of age at a time when the divide between the haves and have nots grows bigger every day. In spite of those challenges, with the help of dedicated employees, board members, volunteers, and community partners, the three core programs of the organization are thriving, bringing needed services to even more local youth.

MENTORING

Volunteers for Youth operates Orange County's longest running mentoring program. Mentoring is the organization's original, signature program. Research shows that mentoring is an effective means of promoting positive behavior. Thousands of children matched with mentors through Volunteers for Youth are living proof that mentoring works.

In 2009, Volunteers for Youth formed a mentoring partnership with the SMART project, a UNC Buckley Public Service Scholars program. Through this partnership, 185 UNC students have been matched one-on-one as mentors to 185 local children who could benefit from time with a caring mentor. As participants in a fall and spring semester sociology class, the SMART mentors commit to spending the entire academic year with their young "mentees." Volunteers for Youth salutes the SMART students for their leadership role in this innovative collaborative project.

To reach as many youth as possible, Volunteers for Youth's mentoring program includes group mentoring. Three groups for middle-schoolers, Every Girl Counts, Brotherly Empowerment, and La Familia, meet weekly and are designed to empower their members and set them on a path to future success. Every Girl Counts, led by Abby Gillis, brings girls at Smith Middle School together to participate in fun activities that help them explore the challenges of growing up and how to make wise choices when faced with those challenges. In addition to their regular meetings, Every Girl Counts sponsors occasional out of school activities such as service projects and field trips to college campuses. At Stanback Middle School, Eliud Mburu heads up Brotherly Empowerment and Steven Rodriguez leads La Familia. As with Every Girl Counts, the groups for male students help participants develop tools for future success.

Along with SMART mentoring and group mentoring, Volunteers for Youth continues its traditional community mentoring program, matching trained volunteers with children who could benefit from positive adult role models. In 2019, 21 community mentors were paired one-on-one with 21 local children. Together these matches explored the community, learned new skills, attended live performances and sporting events, and developed lasting relationships.

Executive director Susan Worley, social work intern Piper King, and group coordinators Abby Gillis, Eliud Mburu, and Steven Rodriguez facilitate the mentoring program at Volunteers for Youth.

JUVENILE COMMUNITY SERVICE AND RESTITUTION

Volunteers for Youth oversees the community service work of all young people in Orange County who are assigned community service by the courts after getting in trouble with the law. Volunteers for Youth recruits nonprofits throughout the county to serve as work sites for the program, where volunteer supervisors evaluate and manage the youths' work. By completing community service hours, program participants learn valuable work skills and accountability for their actions. Sixty-eight young people have participated in the program in 2019.

While it's a constant challenge for Volunteers for Youth to maintain worksites that are easily accessible to all young people wherever they may live, the burgeoning interest in locally grown food has given rise to a number of food-related worksites. We are fortunate to have community gardens throughout the county that welcome community service youth – the Community Farm at Chestnut Ridge in Efland, Sankofa Farm and Anathoth Garden in Cedar Grove, Hope Garden in Chapel Hill, Genesis Farm west of Chapel Hill, and Duke Campus Farm on the eastern border of Orange County. New partnerships at local community centers in Chapel Hill and Cedar Grove give youth an opportunity to help with maintenance, gardening and assist with special activities. In the summer of 2019, youth worked on several hands-on, short-term projects led by coordinators Scott Dreyer and Steven Rodriguez such as landscaping at the Department of Juvenile Justice office in Hillsborough and washing cars for the fire departments in Carrboro and Hillsborough.

Scott Dreyer and Steven Rodriguez coordinate the community service program at Volunteers for Youth.

TEEN COURT

Teen Court is an alternative court program for young people who have committed minor offenses and are referred from law enforcement, juvenile services, or the schools. These first time offenders are tried and sentenced by a jury of their peers, with other teens playing the roles of defense attorney, prosecutor, and other court officials. Teen Court is run by young people and provides hands on opportunities for teens – both offenders and volunteers – to gain insight into the legal system while also learning from their mistakes and gaining valuable life skills along the way. Positive peer pressure helps participants learn to accept responsibility for their actions and then pay back their community through community service and other sentencing. Fifty-six youth participated in the program in 2019.

Teen Court meets two Mondays a month at the courthouse in Hillsborough. Along with the teens who run the program, several adults are in the courtroom to lend advice and to supervise activities. Kate Giduz and Steven Rodriguez, the program coordinators, are assisted regularly by attorneys Skye MacLeod, Fran Muse, Jeff Nieman, Hathaway Pendergrass, and Shilanka Ware. UNC law students coach and mentor the teen attorneys and the courtroom is monitored by a deputy from the Orange County Sheriff's Office.

Kate Giduz and Steven Rodriguez coordinate the teen court program at Volunteers for Youth.

Making a Difference!





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