

# 1001 YOUTH VOICES

WHAT TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS IN THE  
SOUTHERN NEK THINK, WANT AND HOPE



YouthCatalytics

We are grateful to the many individuals who made this report possible.

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Between January and April 2010, Youth Catalytics (formerly New England Network for Child, Youth and Family Services or NEN) administered an online survey to 101 young people between the ages of 14 and 21 in Caledonia and southern Essex counties. Youth Catalytics was an advisor to a local project called YouthFactor NEK that is working to create new opportunities for young people in northeast Vermont, particularly those at risk of unemployment and homelessness who are transitioning to adulthood without family support.

YouthFactor NEK is a five-year demonstration project for rural youth funded by the Family & Youth Services Bureau of the US Administration for Children and Families. The initiative is headed by the Vermont Agency of Human Services and led locally by Northeast Kingdom Community Action in Newport. Early in the project, to assess youth needs in the area, Youth Catalytics worked with both NEKCA in Newport and Northeast Kingdom Youth Services in St. Johnsbury, both of whom helped us reach out to young people. This report is a companion to *Young People Like Me*, the Newport-area report produced in summer 2010.

The communities participated in identical processes. In both, an online survey was coupled with a youth photo project meant to document the positive and negative aspects of life for young people. The overall technique, called “Zoom-In,” is a needs-assessment method that Youth Catalytics deploys in communities to uncover youth attitudes and experiences, and to stimulate thinking about ways to improve opportunities for young people. The survey findings and photos represent a diverse range of youth experience and opinion; while the overall findings from the two communities overlap substantially, there are very real local differences that make each report unique.

We hope that the communities of the Northeast Kingdom and youth themselves find the information valuable as they work together to create a more positive environment for young people as they grow into adulthood.

### The Survey

The online “Tell It Like It Is” survey was administered in the following locations: St. Johnsbury Academy, Danville High School, Caledonia School, L.E.A.R.N., Northeast Kingdom Learning Services, Community Justice Center, Northeast Kingdom Community Action/Parent Child Center and Northeast Kingdom Youth Services. While technically not a random sample, an array of young people was recruited from across high school populations, and, more narrowly, at agencies that work with youth in need of specialized services. Young people were promised anonymity, and paid \$5 each for participating.

The survey asked 21 questions focusing on three overarching themes: the people, places and activities that youth found helpful or encouraging in their communities; the people, places or activities that troubled or upset them; and what they thought their communities could do to improve life for them and their peers.

We also asked specific questions about teens’ job status and perceptions about the local job market; whether transportation was a problem for them; whether they knew people their age who had no permanent place to live; and whether they planned to stay in the area or leave as they approached adulthood. We also asked them for ideas – in this case, ideas about the kinds of jobs they would like to see in the area for people their age, and about how the transportation system could be improved for people their age. (See the survey on page 32.)

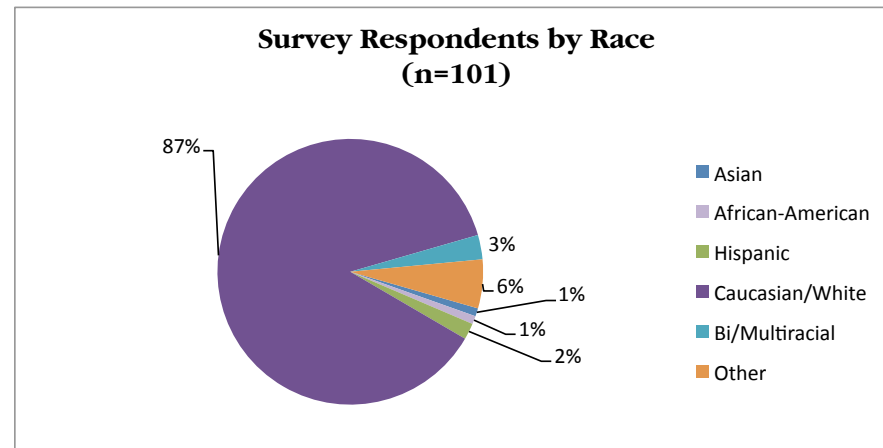
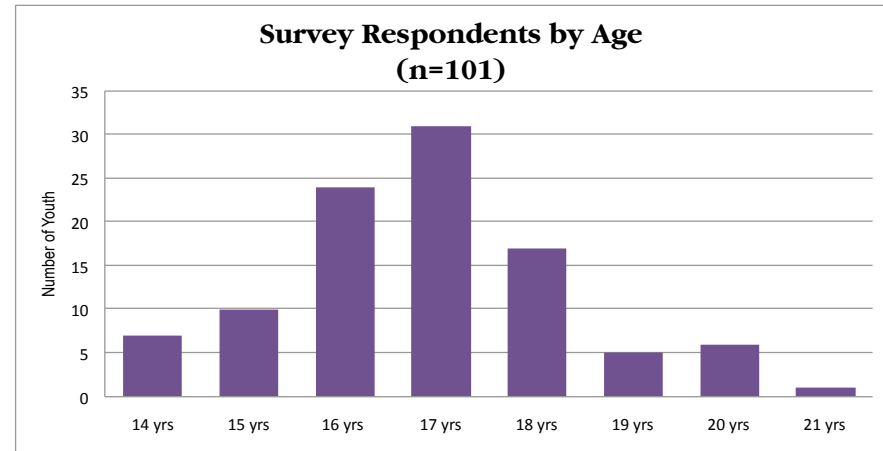
Most questions are accompanied by charts and a sampling of typical comments; links are provided for additional comments where available. Our goal, as much as possible, is to limit our own interpretation and let young people speak for themselves. As you will see, they are eminently capable of doing so.

### The Photos

Photovoice is a technique for gathering information and expressing opinion that has been used by groups all over the world as a way of promoting positive change. In the local project, a group of young people, most of whom volunteered through their high schools, came together for training in basic photography. They took about six weeks to capture images of the positive and negative things about their communities, then reassembled to select their best photos and write captions for them. The photos appear in a collection starting on page 24.

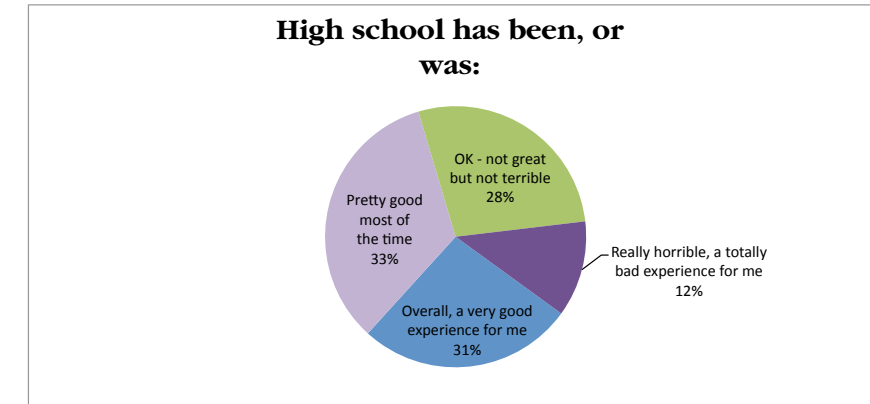
## The Survey Respondents

We enlisted the help of area high schools and social services agencies to recruit young people ages 14-21 to take the survey. Respondents were split about evenly between males and females; two young people identified themselves as transgender. Close to 90% were white, and the average age of respondents was 16.8 years. Responses to several questions were stratified by age so that views of older and younger youth could be examined separately.



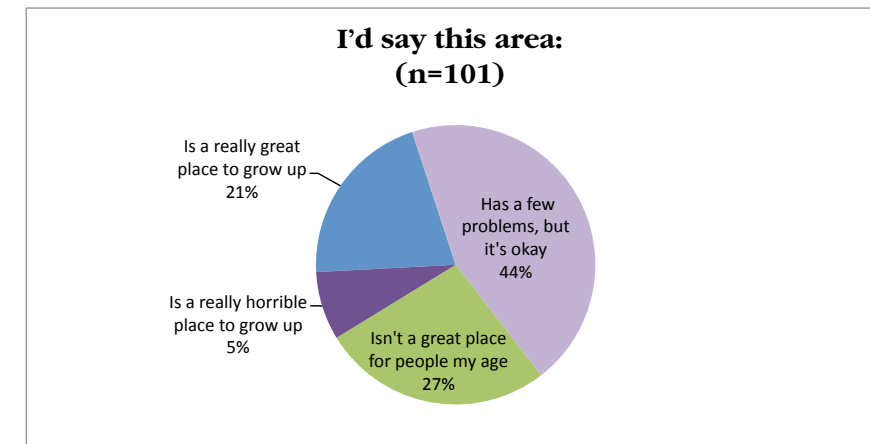
## The High School Experience

Most of the young people we asked – 61% – said high school was or had been a good experience for them, while about 12% said it had been “horrible.” Youth had plenty to say about high school and how it either encourages them or causes them worry and stress. Although most of the comments were positive, for some youth, school is a difficult and troubling place. Young people’s comments and suggestions about school appear in the following sections.



## How Young People Feel About Life in the Southern NEK

As the chart below indicates, most survey respondents said the St. Johnsbury area is generally a positive one for young people. But just over a third were less enthusiastic, calling in just “okay,” or “really horrible.” Younger respondents had a slightly more positive view of the area than older youth. Reasons for that discrepancy may be that older youth want or need different things from their community, or that the opportunities that do exist are geared toward younger teens.



## What Young People Do for Fun in the Area

When asked what people their age do for fun in the St. Johnsbury area, the majority of youth mentioned outdoor recreation or sports as “good things” to do. This makes sense given the abundance of natural resources in the Northeast Kingdom. Several young people also named bowling, going to the movies or driving around back roads as fun to do with friends. But 15% of youth struggled to name a single thing. Some of the most common answers are listed below.

### “” Typical Comments:

Go to the Living Room [teen center], going to the movies with friends, hanging out with positive people. (f, 21)<sup>1</sup>

Hunting, snowboarding, driving. (m, 16)

I don't feel like there is stuff to do except for summer, when we go to the beach and to the parks to hang out. (f, 19)

Workout, hang out with friends, and to be creative. (m, 17)

Hang out with friends and go to the river to go fishing. (f, 18)

Go to the movies, skate, go to open mic, hang out with friends on campus. (m, 14)

Hang out with friends, computer, video games, looking up colleges. (f, 17)

The only fun thing to do around here is go to the movies, or me personally to get my nails done or go to the local Chinese joint with friends. (f, 16)

Four-wheeling, snowmobiling, hanging out with friends, splitting fire wood, etc. (m, 17)

Ride around on dirt roads. (f, 18)

Mudding, 4 wheeling, riding snow machines, snowboarding, skate boarding. (m, 19)

Go to Lake Willoughby, exercise, walk my dog, go bowling, watch movies, attend school [CCV], attend community events. (f, 18)

*More comments on good things for young people to do in the area ...*

## What Youth Do in Their Free Time, and What They Wish They Could Be Doing

Next we asked youth not about the possible ways they could spend their time, but instead what they actually do on a typical day. Here we find out that in addition to doing outdoor activities and sports, youth spend much of their time watching television, surfing the Internet or playing video games. By far, though, the most popular response to both questions was “spending time with friends.” We also asked young people what, if anything, they wished they could be doing.

### “” Typical comments:

I like to read all the time and ponder the meaning of life. (transgender, 17)

I watch tv and listen to music and hang out with my cuzn because i live with her, sometimes we go to the movies. We don't really do anything though – we're usually just really bored wanting to get out of the house but even if we could get out there isn't much to do. I wish i was hanging out with more people, shopping or at a party or something a lot funner than what i would normally do. (f, 15)

I watch TV or i work out at the gym. i would like to be out more, possibly in pick up sports teams and public places to play music with other musicians. (m, 17)

With my free time I go snowboarding, exercise, fish, hang out with friends and loved ones. Going to the mall and just riding around with my friends. (f, 18)

Make music/practice DJing. [Would rather] go to concerts. (m, 15)

I love playing sports and hanging out with my friends. Right now there is nothing else I'd rather do. (f, 16)

I play video games and read a lot but i'd rather be working. (m, 20)

*More comments on what young people do and wish they could do ...*

## People or Places that Encourage Youth to Succeed

The young people who responded to this survey have reached an age where they are seeking at least some measure of independence, but they need many sources of support to attain it. Responses showed that young people are exquisitely sensitive to where that support lies.

*(Top responses, in order of frequency)*

**Parents and family.** The most commonly mentioned source of support and encouragement in young people's lives was family members. Almost 70% of respondents talked about how their parents, siblings, grandparents or other extended family (including their own young children in some cases) help them get through tough times and inspire them to excel. Popular belief to the contrary, young people also said they appreciated their parents' efforts to keep them on track and set good examples for them.

### “” Typical comments:

My cousin is the one person [who] encouraged me to succeed. She went through high school and made me think that if she can do it then i can do it. (f, 15)

My mom has always influenced me in a good way... because she's always there for support. (m, 17)

School, friends and family. They encourage me because i know that they want me to do good and they look out for me and know i can do good as well. (f, 18)

Family, because what they do will affect my future. (m, 16)

My parents because they make me do things i don't want to do. (f, 17)

My brother, he sees all my potential even more than i do. (m, 15)

My parents and my son because i want to make them proud. (f, 20)

**School, teachers and guidance counselors.** Schools and the adults who work there were also mentioned by young people as influences that help them to succeed. Forty-one percent of the respondents described schools as positive places for them – sometimes because of the practical skills they learn there, sometimes because of the positive messages and sense of high expectations they get from teachers and coaches.

### “” Typical comments:

My parents motivate me to look into colleges and things, etc. School opens my eyes to things i should get involved in. (f, 16)

School teaches me to succeed. Teachers push me to do work and learn. (m, 17)

St. Johnsbury Academy, because they make you feel as if you can always do your best. (m, 17)

Teachers, bcuz they are so demanding to keep me in line. (f, 14)

I think the school is a good influence on us kids because they are always talking about the future. (m, 16)

Many people such as my parents and teacher but mainly my sports coaches who have pushed me to work harder. (f, 17)

My family members and my school members, including the school, because those things keep me determined to succeed. (m, 16)

[A teacher at Northeast Kingdom Learning Services], she gives me that extra bit of confidence when I feel like giving up. CCV, they are always there to help you succeed and do well in school. (f, 18)

**Friends.** Not surprisingly, 34% of survey respondents also said they look to their friends for support and encouragement.

### “” Typical Comments:

My friends, they help me keep my self esteem up so I know I will always do well. (f, 18)

Parents, friends, they help through hard times. (m, 16)

My friends because they are good people and they want me to do well in school and life. (f, 14)

My parents encourage me to succeed and make the best of life and my friends help me get there. (m, 16)

**Social service agencies and other “helpers.”** Many young people (15%) named local agencies and their staff as sources of support – youth say the adults they meet in these places encourage them to make good decisions and give them a safe place to talk about their troubles.

### “” Typical comments:

My sister. The Youth Services. They encourage me in what I feel is important in my life and help me achieve my goals. (f, 15)

The National Guard offices located right here in St. J. [The Sergeant] tells me to do good in school all the time. (m, 17)

People at school and Youth Services, they help me know what options I have. (f, 16)

Kingdom Recovery Center, to play pool and socialize with recovering addicts. (m, 19)

Department of Labor: helps me with jobs and trying to keep me busy doing good things. (f, 18)

Northeast Kingdom Youth Services and school, they help me stay out of bad things and not get into trouble. (m, 19)

<sup>1</sup>Direct quotes from young people have been lightly edited for spelling and grammar.

My counselor, mom and dad. They've watched me grow for a lot of my life and want me to succeed and thus encourage me to do so in any way that I can. They support my [smart] decisions and give advice where ever possible. (m, 17)

Friends, family, Youth Services. They are all really good support systems and I can talk with them about everything and they always help me when I need it. (f, 20)

**Other encouragers.** Two young people mentioned work, four mentioned personal hobbies [nature, music, inner reflection], and three mentioned community places or activities [library, gym and "open mic" events].

“” *Typical Comments:*

I find it in myself to succeed. (m, 20)

I like to take walks on the nature trails, lets me clear my head and have fresh air. (f, 20)

Musicians and music venues. These people and places provide inspiration and a look into an exciting life. (m, 18)

*More comments on what encourages young people...*

### People or Places that Discourage, Upset or Worry Youth

Just as young people can easily name sources of support, they can also name the people and situations that they find depressing and discouraging.

*(Top seven responses, in order of frequency)*

**Bullying or unmotivated peers; discouraging adults.** Sometimes respondents mentioned adults – parents, teachers, police – but almost one in every five young people mentioned their own peers as sources of negativity. Young people said they were dragged down by other youth who judged or made fun of them, and by peers who are destructive or “going nowhere.”

“” *Typical comments:*

Negative people – because they are so vulgar and don't care about others or their actions if they hurt the people around them or not. (f, 18)

People i go to school with i think drag me down the most, because none of them want to be in school, so that makes me feel like i shouldn't either. (m, 17)

One thing that makes me upset is when people judge one another by their looks or just who they are as a person. No one should have to deal with cruel comments and rude looks, it just makes the person that's giving them look bad. (f, 16)

[My friend's] mom. She always talks to me about the negative happenings of the community. (m, 16)

People that don't care about what happens to them upset me, because it bothers me that they waste a lot of their life. (f, 17)

Teachers are kind of discouraging at times. They don't understand kids like they say they do, and assume too much. (m, 17)

**Drugs.** Being exposed to drugs was also a common source of worry to young people. Twenty percent said they had friends caught up in drugs or talked about how drugs had negatively impacted their own lives.

“” *Typical comments:*

All of my old dealers. (m, 19)

People that encourage drug use. Drama filled girls. Drugs and Drama bring me down. I think that both will in no way better myself now or in my future. (f, 15)

When i'm with my dad, because he does drugs and i don't feel safe when i'm with him. (f, 16)

It seems to me that there is a lot of drugs in St J. Seeing the drugs makes me mad because people are taking advantage of what other people are trying to help them. (m, 16)

People who do drugs drag me down. I live in a town where mostly half of the population does some type of drugs. (f, 17)

The more drug-filled parts of town, and the constant flow of people trying to sell you drugs. (m, 14)

**School.** Even though many young people feel inspired and encouraged by school, 15% of respondents described it as a source of stress and worry in their lives.

“” *Typical comments:*

School is very stressful cause i don't always make it there and i have alot of issues surrounding school.... There's also a lot of people who are pressuring me to figure out what i'm going to do for a career when i have no clue. I'm already scared cause i feel like i'm running out of time and my choices are also limited, so they are just stressing me out even more. (f, 15)

School authority figures are at the forefront. They're mostly all hypocrites about rules and although they usually claim to be helping students, all they seem to do is stress us out and make our lives much harder than they need to be. Without the use of logic, their only arguments fall back on the same old: age difference, life experience, and position of power (because I said so), and using rules (that are ridiculous in the first place). If we don't do what they say, we can leave. (m, 17)

School drags me down a little cause I am at school all day and then I go home and I do homework until we have to go to bed. So there is no time to explore any of our interests outside of school because our entire

life revolves around studying and doing homework instead of enjoying life and enjoying our talents. We should have more time to do things that we enjoy because without them it feels like ur a robot on the same track every day. (f, 14)

**Families.** Just like school, some youth say their families support them to succeed but many others describe how their family holds them back or discourages them. Young people talked about conflict with parents and the negative messages they get from family members; some also worry about the poor choices they see relatives making in their own lives.

“” *Typical Comments:*

Parents – they do my head in sometimes. (m, 17)

I love my family, but we also have a lot of problems, from my mom being an alcoholic, in and out of jail, and my dad not being around!! I had to kinda grow up quick but then again it also took me away from doing so many things ... (f, 17)

Old hometown, my mother and stepfather's whole family. (m, 18)

My brother makes me feel sad because he hasn't got any where in life and i don't want to end up like that. (f, 15)

My mom – she makes me feel like a bad person. (f, 17)

**Poor infrastructure.** About one in 10 youth said the physical environment of the area has a negative impact on them – especially parts of town that are rundown, impoverished or isolated. Sometimes young people seemed depressed by having to pass through these parts of town; other times they referred more to the kinds of activity they see happening there.

“” *Typical Comments:*

When I see kids smoking it can be a little depressing. The slums of St. J where all the drug trading goes on is also a little depressing. (m, 16)

I'm kind of scared to go to the mall because it's very far out of town and kind of looks like a ghost town. Also the stabbing there didn't ease my fears. (f, 18)

Some streets in St. J and some people who don't have any jobs that need one that just sit on the side of the street and do nothing. (m, 17)

The town itself is kinda run down and there's nothing really for youth to do. The drug usage here upsets me. (f, 16)

Just walking through town and looking at the state of things. (m, 17)

**Nothing to do.** Respondents repeatedly said they were discouraged by the lack of positive or fun things to do in the area. Furthermore, they suggested that not having better ways to spend their time – either because there's "nothing to do" or because they can't afford to participate or find ways to get there – is one of the reasons youth turn to drug and alcohol use and other dangerous pastimes.

“” *Typical comments:*

The lack of things to do upsets me. There aren't a lot of things to do in Saint J and it gives a feeling of not being able to amount to or accomplish anything. (m, 18)

Some of my friends worry me because there is a lot of teenage partying in this area. For kids, there is not a lot to entertain them, so instead of being creative, they decided to drink and/or do drugs. (f, 18)

The lack of things to do here. While there is much to do, there is still more that there isn't, and this leads to bad things. (m, 17)

*More comments on what young people find discouraging...*

## Homeless and Almost Homeless: Youth Disconnection from Family

In a finding that might surprise some adults, over half of all respondents said they knew at least one person age 21 or under who had left home (or been kicked out) and was living somewhere else temporarily. Although older youth were more likely to know someone in this situation, 29% of young people ages 14-15 also said they knew someone under 21 with no permanent place to stay.

We then asked young people to tell us where homeless and almost homeless peers were living, if not with their families. The number one answer: sleeping on friends' couches, sometimes a different one every night. Several others mentioned the homeless youth shelter, staying in cars or on the street, or trying to make it on their own in an apartment.

### “” Typical Comments:

Anywhere they can sleep or stay warm for a few hours. (m, 20)

Me and my mom had to move in with my grandparents because we couldn't afford to live in our trailer anymore. (f, 15)

Friends couches. (m, 18)

Usually in their car. (f, 16)

Myself and three other males my age are living in a homeless shelter. (m, 19)

I know many people in saint johnsbury that sleep in a different place every night. (f, 16)

Bumming at friends' houses, including mine. (m, 17)

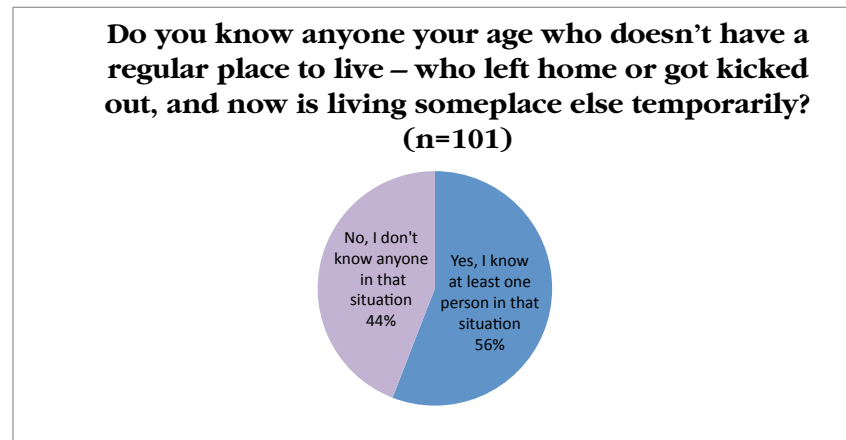
The shelter, other people's homes, jail. (f, 18)

At their cousin's house, but they once spent a week living in a skate park. (m, 16)

On the streets. (f, 16)

They bounce back and fourth between friends and family's couches, and if they have no where to stay they just sleep outside in random places or find an abandoned building. (f, 18)

In a motel until they can find more money or a cheaper place. (m, 19)



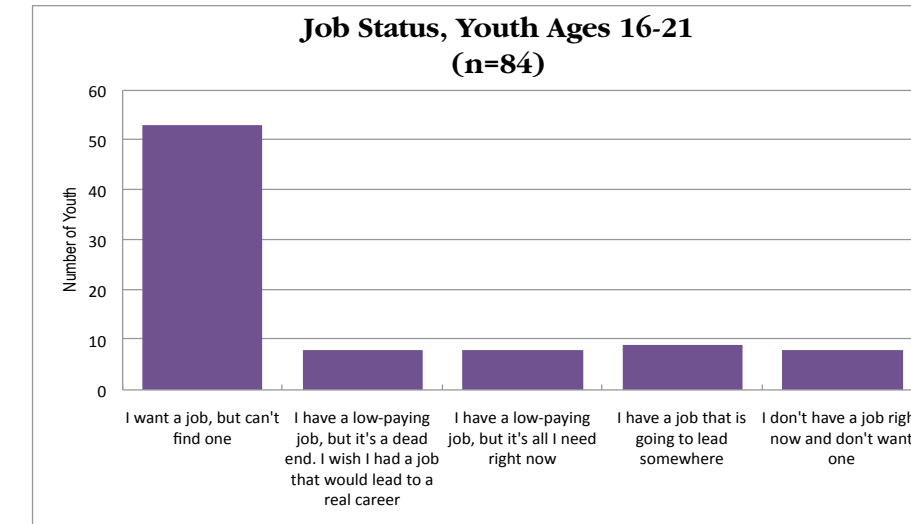
At a shelter which is provided by the state. (m, 17)

My house. (f, 18)

They bounce between places and a lot of the time I let them stay at my apartment because I can't stand to see people I know or care about on the streets. (f, 20)

## Jobs: What Young People Have, and What They Would Like to Have

The current state of the economy is affecting people across the nation, but youth are among the groups hit the hardest. In the St. Johnsbury area, nearly two-thirds of young people 16-21 said they wanted a job but couldn't find one, and 10% more said they had a low-paying dead-end job and wanted something better.



As the charts illustrate, a majority of respondents had negative attitudes about the state of the job market for young people. Many youth talked about trouble getting started and building necessary experience when they can't get hired in the first place; others focused on what they consider to be the low quality of jobs available to teens. The oldest youth (19-21 year olds) had the least positive attitudes about job prospects, but responses did not differ greatly among respondents as a whole; almost two-thirds agreed with older youth that the job market in the area is "depressing" and that jobs are either non-existent or too low-paying to help youth get ahead.

### “” Typical comments:

Saint Johnsbury is a slowly dying town, in a few generations this town will be no more than a dot on the map. (m, 19)

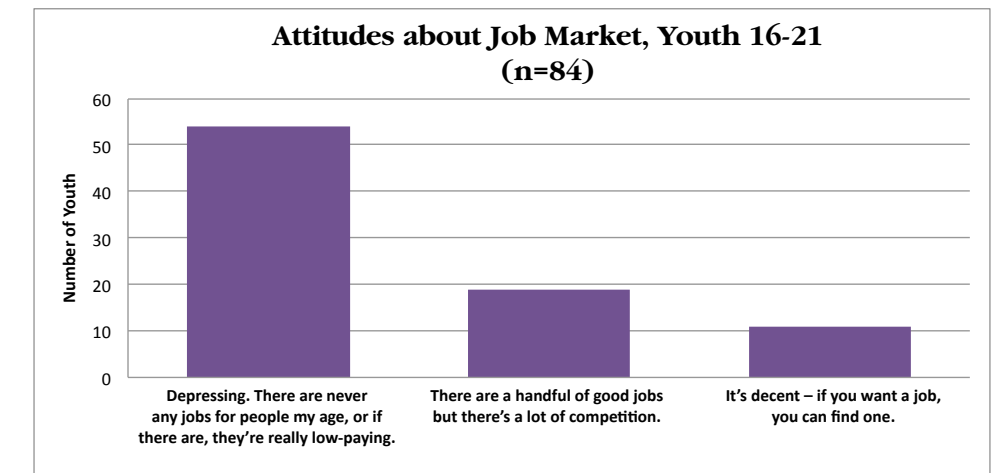
On the whole, you can't have a job without experience, and can't have experience without a job. (f, 17)

They are few and far between at the moment and they are all going quickly to people with large resumes. (m, 17)

There isn't very many places around here for teens to work. And alot of places that are hiring kinda judge you on where u go to school. (f, 18)

They're non existent. Move to a different state where they pay more and have better jobs. (m, 20)

I'm on Reach Up. I make \$500 a month and have to work 20 hours a week for it. If i could find a real job, i would have already, but i have applied everywhere. There are little to no job opportunities in the area. Reach Up is definitely a dead end. (f, 18)



You're better off just living on the street and eating out of a garbage can. (m, 17)

If there were more things to do around here we would need people to work [at those places], so it would work out perfectly. (f, 19)

I have a job through the Department of Labor in the Work Incentive Act program (WIA). The job that I have will only last for 3 months, then I will be jobless again. (m, 19)

They need more young people working because they need time to learn, too. (f, 18)

My hours have been drastically cut recently. Not cool. (m, 17)

You got to know people to get a job. (f, 20)

The few job opportunities i find don't have places in the hours for a full time school student. (m, 17)

I had a job at the local store in town but i got laid off because they over hired. (f, 16)

## What Kinds of Jobs Would Young People Like to See?

We asked young people to tell us what types of jobs they wish were available for people their age in or near St. Johnsbury. This open-ended question allowed youth to answer in their own words and to list as many types of jobs as they liked. Many young people just asked for more of any kind of job or internship, or for more “fun” jobs, but others had very specific aspirations – they talked about jobs in the mechanical and building trades, working with animals, and helping older adults or children. Because many respondents named several types of jobs, the total below exceeds 101.

### Jobs and Training Opportunities Respondents Would Like to See for Youth

Type of Job	Number of Mentions
More jobs, more variety of jobs, increased access to jobs, access to job postings, lower age for workers	22
Trade (carpentry, cosmetology, electrician, mechanic, etc.)	20
Internships, apprenticeships, job shadowing, and “career ladder” jobs in general	17
Retail jobs (food service, cashier, clothing store, movie theaters, etc.)	15
Natural resource management and agricultural (farming, veterinary, logging, outdoor work, etc.)	14
Food industry (wait staff, chef, grocery, culinary, etc.)	12
Human services (counseling, child care/babysitting, teen center/peer mentoring, “helping people,” etc.)	12
“Fun” jobs	6
Jobs that pay well	6
General labor (cleaning, labor, janitorial, etc.)	5
Civic/other (military, jobs involved with local community, summer jobs at schools)	5
Arts (photography, fashion and design, music, visual art, etc.)	4
Business/finance (banks/office work, secretarial work, etc.)	3
Health care (doctor, nursing, physical therapy, job at hospital, etc.)	3
Recreation (ski instructor, “outdoor activities,” water park, etc.)	2
Emergency services/police/fire	1
Education (early education, teaching, etc.)	1

#### “” Typical comments:

I would like to see a lot more mechanical jobs in the trades, such as construction, mechanics, roofing, welding, etc. to give young adults training so that we will have those trades to offer to any future employer. (m, 19)

Fun jobs like working at a pool, or lifeguarding on the beach in the summer, or teaching lessons at the mountain in the winter, or anything that could just be fun where other teens can come to visit. (f, 17)

Well, for one, if we had an actual mall there would be tons of places for people to work. More local places for shopping would be great, too, as well as more restaurants for a better variety of food choices and places to go on dates! It all comes back to our population being like 7,000. Nothing’s going to happen with so little people in the area, because all everyone does is sit at home and hang out and do nothing. So things like the above would need to be created for people to actually WANT to go out. (m, 17)

Jobs that you have to work hard at builds character. I am a housekeeper. You have to start at the bottom to learn about the world. (f, 16)

Should be more of everything, road work, construction work, stores to work at. There should also be ways to get somewhere. The RCT takes really long to get anywhere if a person doesn’t have a driver’s license. (m, 19)

I like working with cars, if they had some jobs where u could go in and watch a mechanic do work, learn and get paid, that would be cool. (m, 17)

I think it would be really educational and fun for us young people to be able to work for the state in an early educational center, so we not only learn proper ways to take care of a child but also can get more experience with a career, and working with children doesn’t feel so much like you’re working but almost like you’re just having fun. A lot of people my age don’t want to feel like they’re at work, they

want to love and have fun and make things interesting while they work, and I’d say working with children is the perfect way to do that. (f, 16)

Apprenticeships for building houses and fixing cars – those kinds of things. (m, 17)

Something in the fashion or music industry – glamorous jobs that you might be able to intern for if you lived in New York or somewhere where it’s a lot more common. But because of the place I live, a job like that literally seems impossible. I’m afraid of my small town holding me back and that I’m never going to try to get a job like that because it’s so far off base. (f, 15)

More chances for internships and jobs to be more involved in the community. (m, 16)

Less crap work and more proud work like working with people and working outdoors to better the community. (m, 17)

I would really like to see more opportunities for interns at veterinary offices, more scientific stuff going on, and more advertising for jobs that are available, because I’m never sure. (f, 18)

Something that does not involve filling bags with food for eight hours straight. (m, 16)

Any jobs!! Something that’s enjoyable and is going to actually take you somewhere. Not like Mcdonalds, but maybe a job where you can train for the part, and use that training elsewhere. Maybe like nursing, mechanics, auto body work, stuff that a lot of people really get into and enjoy doing. (f, 18)

I would like to see more opportunities for counselor and mentor positions. Opportunities that could be provided and benefit the youth of our community. (m, 18)

We need more stores maybe like a Wal-Mart, Applebees, Burger King, Sears, anything, I mean that doesn’t really help people my age with stuff to do on the free time, but it does open up so many more jobs. And that’s something that we really need!! (f, 17)

*More comments about desirable jobs ...*

## How Young People Get Around

Reliable transportation is necessary to a healthy, productive life, and in rural areas, where school, work and leisure activities are spread out over great distances, lack of transportation can be a real barrier. Rural youth without adult support who can’t afford a car are at particular disadvantage. When we asked young people in St. Johnsbury about how they get around, about one-quarter said that transportation was either “impossible” or very difficult for them to find. We asked youth to tell us what an ideal transportation system would look like for someone their age by choosing as many options as they wanted from a list. Not surprisingly, the most popular choice for both males and females was buying their own car; almost half of female respondents also chose buses, compared to only 34% of males.

### Ideas About Creating a Better Transportation System

A few youth suggested walking, which might include making areas more pedestrian-friendly (e.g., safe, well-lit sidewalks, new paths between key locations or better locations for important places youth need to go).

#### “” Typical Comments:

Taxi for teens? Donations only? (f, 16)

Yes, buses, maybe a year pass for a minimal fee. There’s not a lot of money around here. (m, 17)

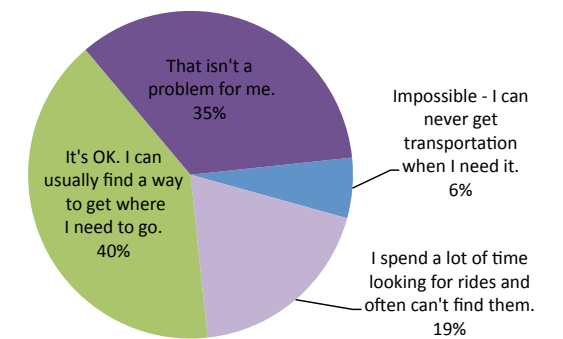
No youth clubs vans. People would think it is somewhat creepy to ride in. (transgender, 17)

Parents [who] share a car. (m, 16)

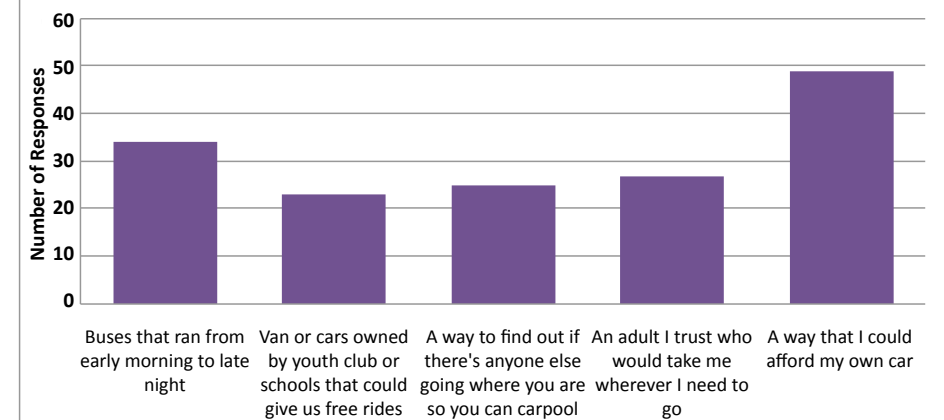
A train. (f, 20)

Personally I haven’t got my license yet and I don’t understand how to get my license when I am not employed. (m, 19)

### What’s it like getting around your town to do things for fun, work or school? Youth 16-21 (n=84)



### The ideal transportation system for someone my age is:\*



\*Respondents could answer in more than one category.

## What Would Improve Life for Young People in the Southern NEK?

We asked each survey respondent to give us three suggestions for ways to improve life for youth in the community. Although some responses overlap categories, we decided to report them separately in an effort to give as much definition as possible to what youth told us. The top categories are listed below, in order of popularity.

**More fun things to do.** The most common suggestion was to have more low-cost activities for young people. This included a consistent plea for more retail stores, more places to shop or eat, and more fun things to do (such as opportunities for outdoor recreation, arts, and community events with other youth). Almost 90% of all respondents asked for new and better ways to spend their time.

“” *Typical Comments:*

Have organized and safe activities to do with others of the same age that are fun. provide opportunities to get out of dodge and experience the world on a larger scale. (f, 16)

Community sponsored teen events. (m, 18)

Have places stay open later. (f, 18)

More places to go and do things like pool, air hockey, video games. A place to hangout! (f, 17)

**More safe, drug-free public spaces where young people can congregate.** One quarter of respondents who suggested more hang-out places specifically mentioned a teen center – one with extended hours, that is safe, that appeals to all youth, and that doesn't expose young people to negative influences.

“” *Typical Comments:*

Build a place where kids can go on a Saturday night to have good clean fun, to prevent teenagers from looking for fun through drugs or alcohol. (f, 15)

Make a place that kids can hang out where there is no danger. (m, 17)

Have more places for the kids to do things, like a coffee house. (f, 16)

Come up with places that are safe and positive places for people to hang out and avoid boredom and stupidity so we don't turn to drugs. (f, 18)

A community center for teens. (m, 19)

Maybe something like a free indoor pool during the winter that has other fun things to do inside. (f, 17)

### More retail options.

“” *Typical Comments:*

An actual mall, more restaurants to eat/work at, regular public transportation [not every 2-3 hours]. (m, 17)

Video arcade. (f, 16)

More places to take girls out on dates. (m, 16)

Make the mall bigger and add better clothing shops. (f, 15)

Small local stores. (m, 15)

**Less drug use, violence and crime.** More than one in ten suggestions focused on reducing drug or alcohol abuse and crime in the area, suggesting that young people want to feel safer in town and be insulated from influences that could derail their chances for success.

“” *Typical Comments:*

Keep bad people off the street, keep drug addicts off the road, don't let kids drink. (f, 16)

No crimes, no street drugs, more cops. (m, 16)

Find a way to cut down/eliminate drug abuse and the crime rate. (f, 18)

Crack down on drug and alcohol problems. (m, 15)

**More guidance and support in the community, and more places to get specific kinds of help.**

“” *Typical Comments:*

Don't look down on us for our mistakes. (m, 16)

Stronger eye in schools for harrasment. (f, 15)

More information on lifes problems. (f, 16)

Have a model, like some one that points you in the right direction. (m, 17)

Recognize the hardships of being a young adult. (m, 19)

I think that there should be more programs to help younger people achieve their goals rather than tell them what to do. (f, 20)

More programs to help you plan your future plan. (f, 14)

More focus on peer-pressure and how to handle it. (m, 16)

Have more inspirational programs for all children/teens. (f, 18)

Talk to students to see if they have any problems. (f, 17)

### General community improvements.

These suggestions included improving infrastructure – things like cleaning up run-down parts of town and making it easier to walk to places – as well as making the atmosphere in town more “youth-friendly,” community-oriented and positive.

“” *Typical Comments:*

Adults need to be more trusting of the younger people because not every teen or young adult is out to ruin their life. (f, 20)

[More] art in the environment. (f, 16)

Encourage healthy behavior, like exercise. (m, 14)

Safer streets at night – less creepy, better lit. (f, 18)

Clean up. Paint ugly buildings, do something about the Convenient One.... It's been like that long enough! (f, 18)

Care, love and compassion. (f, 17)

Need more parks. (m, 16)

### More jobs for young people.

“” *Typical Comments:*

Have people find the young people jobs. (m, 17)

Provide more job opportunities that aren't so difficult to get. (f, 16)

Stop refusing us jobs. (m, 17)

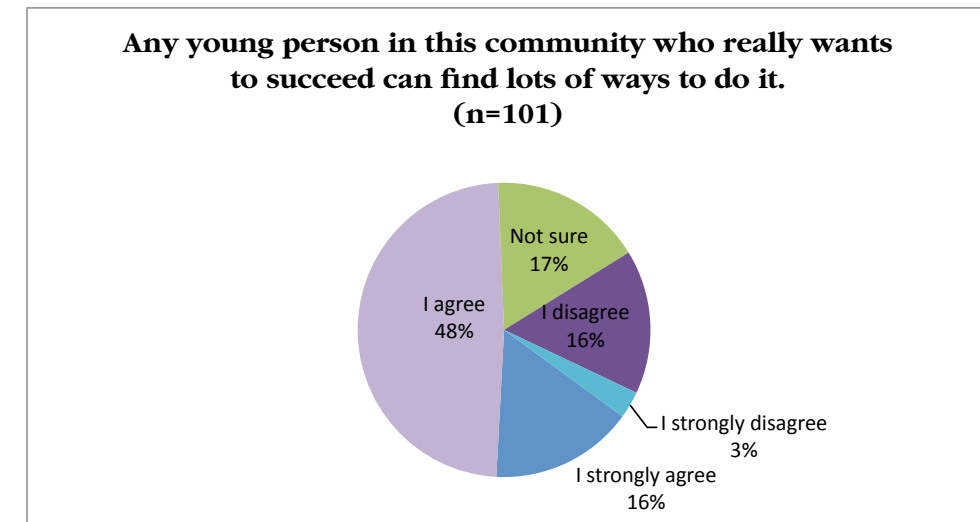
Have some skill things for younger kids. (f, 14)

Make more jobs available. (m, 20)

*More comments on ways to improve life for young people in the area ...*

## Chances for Success, and What Success Will Take

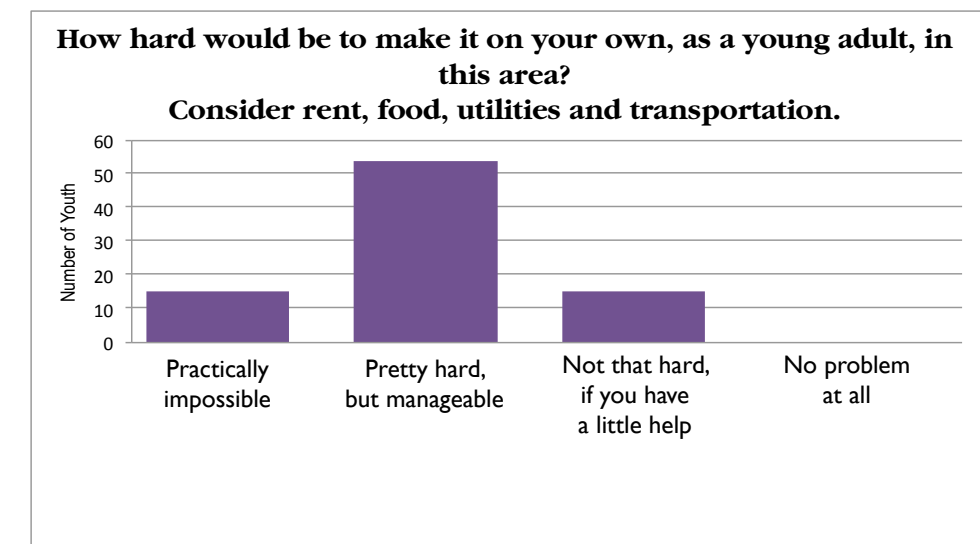
The growth and achievements that young people experience during adolescence lead them toward successful lives as adults. But depending on the range of local resources and opportunities, gaining access to adequately rich experiences can be difficult. The chart below suggests that most young people in St. Johnsbury are optimistic about their chances for success in the community. Males were slightly less optimistic than females, however – 20% of males compared to only 16% of females disagreed or strongly disagreed with the question below.



Yet when we look just at youth 16 and older and ask them to rate how easy or hard it would be to make it on their own, attitudes shift. The majority of young people predicted it would be “pretty hard” or “practically impossible” to live on their own in St. Johnsbury, and the rest anticipated needing at least some help to do it.

The older the respondent, the darker the picture becomes: 25% of 19-21 year olds (compared to only 17% of 16-18 year olds) said it would be practically impossible to make it; not a single young person in the older age range said it would be “not that hard” or “no problem.”

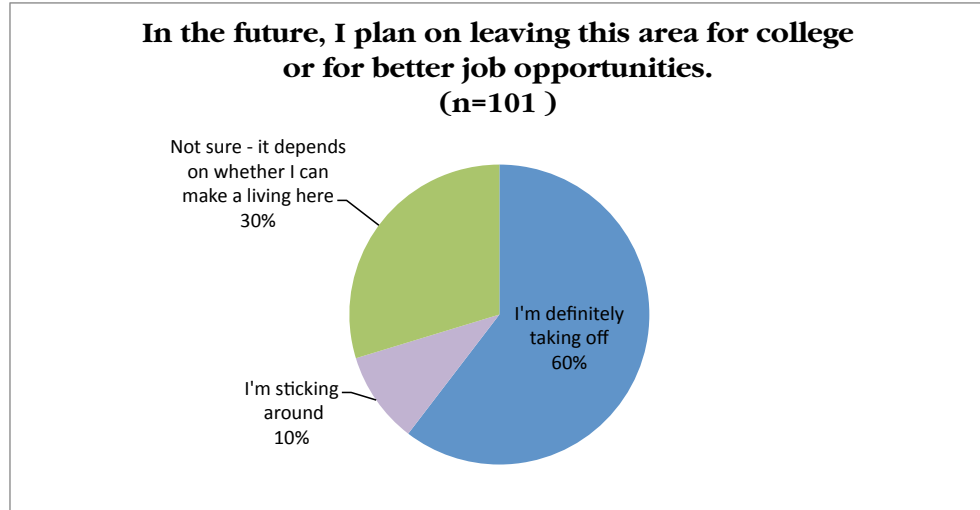
The most commonly cited reason for the anticipated difficulty? No jobs that pay well enough to cover expenses. While young people ages 16-18 were more likely to mention trouble finding work and “nice, affordable apartments,” some 19-21 year olds said things like, “I've been on my own and couldn't make it work for long.” The oldest respondents also often cited specific expenses like heat and utilities, suggesting they already had a realistic idea of the costs of independent living.





**What the Future Looks Like**

Moving away from home for college or work is a natural and appropriate step for many young people. But if large numbers of young people leave, towns will become less vigorous over time. This drain of young people is a well-documented source of concern for several states in New England, including Vermont. When we asked youth in the St. Johnsbury area about their future plans, three out of every five said they were definitely leaving, while only 10% said they planned to stay. For those who are undecided, it seems to simply be a question of economics. Can the area offer them the job opportunities they will need to stay? For them, it seems that only time will tell.



**WHAT FUN, COOL OR INTERESTING THINGS CAN YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE AREA DO?**

Community Service. The recreation Building. The Academy Gym, pool, and courts **living room**

**Teen Center! Skating Rink!** **there is a skatepark and a tattoo parlor**

Go fishing. Four wheeling. Sliding. **Ice skating rinks in winter, skate park in the summer, still limited activities and resource**

There is the living room and the field house at the St Johnsbury academy. it has a gym, work out facility, and a swimming pool. they can help you become a more fit person and healthy.

**youth services** **skateboarding, mountain bik-** **swimming, bowling, movie theater**

**hang at center** **Nothing** **There aren't many things, mostly going bowling or to the movies, or just hanging out with friends. Things that will help us achieve our goals are all that our teachers do for us outside of school.** **Things that people can do around here is to go bowling or hang out with friends.** **i like to read all the time and ponder the meaning of life**

**Sports** **snowboarding/hunting** **Go to the movies/school** **Hit up the club.** **plays and** **There isn't much. the only thing i do sometimes is go to the field house at the academy to swim or workout** **School functions, etc** **go to the movie theater and go out to eat and bowling** **The only thing to do is bowling and the movies.**

**open mic, movie theater, skiing/snowboarding, library, recovery center, skatepark** **Going to the skatepark, Hanging out with friends, Going fishing, Swimming! There's not really that much to do in this town!**

**I make bows, swords out of wood** **skiing, bowling, the packer, drink, smoke weed, 4 wheel/ dirt bike, the movies, swimming holes**

**the bowling place is fun** **There is a skate park where kids like to hang out and skate. I like to hang out in a cool and calm environment.** **there really is that much to do in saint jay but i like swimming at kiwanis and goin to the movies, sled sometimes in the winter**

**Bowling is fun, but the hours are inconvenient (ex. league night is on a weekend night, so the alley is closed to teens), Academy sporting events take up most of my time - playing or watching** **We can go to the movies, go out to eat, drive to places like Littleton to go shopping. There are lots of Vet. offices, schools, or Dental places for people to intern at to help some people achieve their life goals. Other than that, I don't really know.**

**drafting, bowling, movies, sports, going to games, a little shopping, etc....** **Hanging with friends and boyfriend at his house** **Go to the movies. Nothing other than that. St. Johnsbury = boring.**

**Go to the movies, or different events the local schools are holding.** **work on cars and cooking**

**Programs for volunteer work** **snowboard, watch tv... latin homework** **The gym is a great place to go, also the Movies and the skate park. and i also love to play guitar. watching sports games during the school year is also somewhat fun** **There is nothing to do**

**it's basically in the woods so hiking and biking, playing video games, snowmobiling, and tv.** **Outdoor activities such as sports, 4 Wheeling, Paintball. You can also go to the movies and dances.**

**there is the field house, movie theater, places to eat, and probably other things i'm not aware of.**

# WHAT DO YOU DO IN YOUR FREE TIME, AND WHAT ELSE DO YOU WISH YOU COULD BE DOING?

I Like to hangout with my friends. Watch movies occasionally. Play basketball. etc. I wish that I could Travel more see more of the world.

I wish there were more places in town for teens to hang in a safe environment. Like when we had the rec center

hang out with whoever is around at the time. i would rather be listening to people play music or go to a concert

I spend my free time playing pool and looking for a job, i wish i could be fishing

**Spend time with my family mostly, i wish there were more jobs at least...**

I come to the living room or i go and hang with my friends around the town till i have to catch the RCT to go home.

**play guitar**

i listen to and make music, skateboarding

**play pool i wish i could go to the gym more**

**I socialize during my free time. I wish I could travel.**

**Sing and dance, hang with friends at the teen drop in center**

i wish i had a perfect life i am depressed all the time. i deal with stuff i have since i was born, it isn't fair. i wish i was a singer, that's what i wanna be.

**I work and go to school or i am with my friends**

hang with my girl, and wish i had work.

the thing i love the most is hanging out with my friends, and i wish that there was a cool place for us to hang out, like a teen club with music where we could just hang out drug and alcohol free.

I mostly hang out with friends away from my house because i like to get away from home. i am involved in sports during all seasons and this keeps me busy. i wish there were more things to do besides go bowling or go to the movies.

I either stay home or go hang out with me friends that I know are good influences because the last thing I want to do is get in trouble with the law because out of almost all my friends I am the only one with out some kind of criminal record.

Internet surfing, homework, drawing, listening to music, and i wish i could be outside or with a theater club

**Photography.**

**I play video games. I wish there was an area to be more active**

If I had more time I would draw more and write more so I could actually get to the level that I want to be so I can become professional at drawing and writing.

**i drive around. i would like having a arcade or something entertaining to do**

going to open mic, going to church, i used to skateboard, i wish their was more open mics more often.

I don't really do any thing with my free time because all my friends are not into the same kind of things as me cuz they aren't growing up and i am.

Bust some rhymes with my home boys.

in winter time play video games go snow boarding but usually stay inside unless its summer or hunting season

stay home and play x box and eat food cuz this town is kinda boring. and what i wish i could be doing is going somewhere to hang out with my friends that doesn't have to be outside in the cold. something like a bar but without beer like the sports tavern.

**[Work with] electricity and no, i like working with electricity**

**i read and try to find solutions for today's problems**

In my free time I bake cookies. I wish i could be shopping in REAL mall.

I am on a basketball team and I spend a lot of time with my family..

I make bows, swords out of wood. be a carpenter

on the computer most of the time, i wish there was somewhere teens could go and hangout and stuff.

another really cool thing would be if there was a ice skating rink that rented skates because alot of people that like and want to skate here in saint johnsbury can't because they don't have things like skates to do it.

cooking and get all my work done

work on cars or talk to friends

**i like to play guitar, go to movies, hang out, listen to music. i wish i had a job.**

staying at home, hanging out with friends, reading, taking a walk. I wish I could be learning how to ski

make model cars and build things

I play sports, travel, read, participate in community service and extracurricular clubs (school). I am content with how I spend my free time but however I do wish there more opportunities for teens to get a job.

In my free time i like to work. I wish there were more businesses in stj so i could have a choice of a job that i could learn on.

# WHAT PEOPLE OR PLACES ENCOURAGE YOU TO SUCCEED AND DO WELL IN LIFE?

People at school and youth services, they help me know what options i have.

The Academy. this is because they always give me ways to help me succeed and the tools.

the cold, tired, and lonely. because they inspire the need to fix people's problems

**my girl**

**probation officer**

My friends and family encourage me to be a good person :)

my friends and teachers and parents because they push me to strive for my goals. my workout class and my school keeps me focused on what i would like to achieve

**dad, brother, grandmother, great grandfather**

My friends and family and at home because it is the best place to relax.

my mom cuz even though she doesn't understand me alot of times, she loves me.

**my teachers because they try to help me as much as they can.**

northeast kingdom youth services , school, they help me stay out of bad things and not get into trouble.

**Mom, Dad, Sisters, Cousins, Grandmother, Friends, Teachers, Principal, Peers, Nephews!! NKHS School**

my friends ...that i hang out with like 24/7 and i am usually at their house

**None**

i think living in st. johnsbury encourages me a little bit because i'm not too fond of this town and i don't want to live here for the rest of my life, i want to be in a good, clean and decent town.

The Academy. [Faculty] always give out chapel speeches about achieving your best and doing what's best for the community.

**school, parents, electricity class, because i enjoy these things**

my parents expect me to do more with my life then my older brother, they feel i have potential to do great things in life, so that is a really big inspiration to me, and working with special needs children also inspires me because i have an autistic little brother and not too many people want to work with children that have problems.

My parents, teachers, coaches, and family. They all want to see me succeed and do well in life. They don't want me to go down the wrong path.

everyone who has ever taught me, inspired me to study international classes

Open mic, School, Skate Park, Friends.

My dad, because he's successful in a career that i see myself doing in the future.

[My counselor] offers great opinions and help, and the gym offers a good healthy lifestyle.

**I go to the St. Johnsbury Academy, which is a very encouraging school and encourages me to do my best in life.**

The woods, coaches, forestry teacher, parents.

**My foster mom because she wants me to be able to do my career.**

my mom and my dad because i like my parents.

People in my life that are always encouraging me to do well and to succeed are my brother and my mom. They are always pushing me to go further, and to do my best. They want this for me so i can become a strong independent leader.

Parents because they want you to succeed. Library for studying.

Parents, teachers, friends, school. These people and support systems encourage me to become all I can be and to never limit myself.

**My mom is the one that encourages me to be successful in life even though we fight alot**

Classmates and family because they advise me.

My parents because they support me in anything I do whether it's right or wrong, as long as it's appropriate.

My dad and mom. I have wanted to be like my dad for a long time, do his job, and work around the house.

**my girlfriend and my son because they encourage me to succeed**

some of the people that work at NEKCA are very motivating. [They] are always there to answer any questions, give you any feed back, and help you with anything you need help with, whether its educational or not. The only thing they really require is your respect.

# WHAT PEOPLE OR PLACES DISCOURAGE, UPSET OR WORRY YOU?

"Friends houses" illegal activities

The place that brings me down is the part of town that i live in. i live in the St Johnsbury center near the green mountain mall where there is no good stores to go too and it is not much of a hang out spot. people who don't want help when they so obviously need it

**the shelter**

Racist people upset me with the comments that they make.

when I hang out with the people I used to be friends with when I was between the ages of 15-17 because none of them have got their lives together or grew up and they are all to consumed with doing drugs or getting in trouble with the cops.

**I don't let people drag me down**

People going nowhere, with bad attitudes

**mean girls at my school**

**st. johnsbury pd**

People who do drugs bother me. I'm not so sure [they] upset or worry me.

Mean people at school who are rude for no reason, and also dreary winter days when the power goes out really ruins my day.

Family and the economy. They drag me down and worry me because family can get rough and bumpy and the economy, everything is going up in price and it's getting harder to get things and to get around.

**police they keep tryin to arrest me**

**School, Home**

some of my friends have me do some dumb stuff but that's about it.

**being in town because i have alot of bad memoires**

**homework drags me down to do other things I want to do**

Mostly everybody has a positive impact. Occasionally in the workplace there is stress between employees which is a drag because drama takes energy to deal with.

People who worry me are my friends that are either blatantly stupid about the choices they make or completely immersed in the mass conditioning we're all put through since the beginning of our school years. I hope they make it out ok, without getting caught or snapping from all the stress school and parents put on them. People who upset me are the people who are just miserable and try to make everyone around them miserable as well instead of improving their own lives. They don't feel the hurt that their words and actions inflit on others.

Drug addicts (SOME) could go in the category of negative people b/c they influence you into doing bad things. Dark allie ways-it reminds of the past.

the town cops bring me down because they like focusing on the teenagers and it seems like there always trying to get us in trouble like looking for ways to get us in trouble

school, i'm always getting stressed out with my work and drama, my friends and other people just irritate me and sometimes i get depressed.

my family can also be really dramatic and judgmental which upsets me cause they really don't understand alot of the things i have to deal with and go through, and they think just cause they "were young once" they do, but being young doesn't mean you've lived the same life and they don't understand that.

people that don't get along and places that make me depressed

**home, my brothers annoy me and my parents ground me.**

**the druggies they are just dumb.**

**no people or places drag me down, worry me, or upset me**

**grave yards**

there seem to be alot of homeless people and i don't like seeing that because it makes me feel bad

i worry that i am going get in trouble

This group of kids drag me down a lot. They are bullies and are not worth my time.

Some teachers. They frustrate me and make me worry about my future.

**The school because the teachers are giving too much homework**

**My Birth mom because it makes me uncomfortable**

Negative people or places. I am an energetic person who loves to have fun. I don't like it when people have negative outlooks and give up on the task at hand.

people that I care about and that care about me. anywhere my family lives could worry me.

the fact that nowhere is highering employees upsets me because i need a job

People who use drugs/alcohol in an addictive manner.

Down Town because it's not safe.

**NOBODY DRAGS ME DOWN. BUT THEY TEND TO MAKE ME ANGRY SOMETIMES.**

# WHAT KIND OF JOBS DO YOU WISH WERE AVAILABLE FOR PEOPLE YOUR AGE?

Daycare. Salons. Homes for elders. etc. There should be more opportunity in the community to help us get farther in life

**farmering, working on cars, working on small engines**

**better auto shops more like west coast customizing shops**

any jobs really, like ones dealing with money to help them with the math aspect of life as well as the money management of the world

any really, the job market is really drained

**dog walking**

me donalds - whites market

**working with animals**

**anything that doesn't suck**

I think that people who do the hiring for jobs should give people chances, even if they have a past. Everyone makes mistakes and how do they know that someone really has or hasn't changed if they don't get the chance to prove themselves.

**Electrician**

anything that will give me a pay check

Para Educator help with [school] completion

**More youthful jobs that can be more entertaining for teens. maybe places where other teens go**

More Hands-on understanding jobs.

**Being able to help out people who need it and to let others know how we feel about their situations or problems.**

The Pet stores, Vets office, Restaurants, Just little things that younger people could learn from.

**jobs that will end up being full time**

I would love to work with small children, or i would love to work in a restaurant as a cook.

something that gets them involved with their hands like carpentry, building. etc.

fast food, hardware store, book store, gas station

**doctor type jobs like physical therapy or at the hospital** More jobs like, movie theater jobs, zoo keeping jobs, cashier jobs, simple jobs like that.

I would like to see jobs involving community work and maybe an internship program to get shy people out there

**More jobs at the school to work at over the summer.**

Pretty much anything, there isn't much as it is.

**mowing lawns for older people**

**farming, painting, waiting tables, any decent job really, just something fun..ish or at least interesting.**

Assistant to a fashion designer. Waitress maybe. Cashier.

**helping others for free and working with relatives**

**more jobs for younger kids.**

**Video games store**

i like to work on cars and like to cook

**Just more jobs in general. Unless you want to work at a grocery store you're screwed.**

like logging, mechanics, banks, the army

**More waitressing jobs**

The kinds of jobs I would like to see for young people my age would be jobs like working with younger students

**things that are fun, photography, more artistic work**

I want more jobs other than grocery stores and fast food. Maybe a teen center, I would love to work at one of those or a place like a water park. Fun things like that they need a lot of people to work there.

Internships, I intern at the hospital and I love it.

I wish there were any good job opportunities around here, even if it's just stockboy or something small like that. Any regular high schooler jobs would be nice.

More positions for busboys or stocking

**I would like to have good paving jobs with good hours.**

more jobs that i can help animals with

**pre vet programs or internships, jobs that cant take you to other locations, chances for underwater welding classes**

I think there needs to be more internships in daycares, the police station, therapist's office, etc., to help people decide of career choices.

I would like to see more space available in town garages for kids, i am in autobody in my school and it's hard to get a job in a shop as a kid because they don't think you are well taught or just don't have enough experience in general

# WAYS TO MAKE THE COMMUNITY A BETTER PLACE FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

**More places that are safe but fun**  
More places for teens to work.  
open up a concert hall  
big brother sister programs  
bring in a wider variety of people  
create a place for young adults to hang out off the streets open consistant regular hours i.e. 8:00 am to 6 or 7 PM  
more youth programs  
host more activities for young adults  
make the mall more of a shopping and hang out spot for all ages  
recognize the hardships of being a young adult  
have more places free of charge to hang out  
have more out of school programs to get the teenagers involved and active  
bigger skatepark  
have more funding for schooling options  
More jobs  
Things to do  
better living conditions  
dont let kids drink  
banish smoking  
have boxing or mma gyms  
keep bad people off the street  
keep drug addicts off the road  
have a model like some one that points you in the right direction  
adults need to be more trusting of the younger people because not every teen or young adult is out to ruin their life like a lot of people.  
Stronger eye in schools for harrassment.  
Youth groups  
Have more teen clubs  
More ideas for children to communicate more.  
More programs to help you plan your future plan  
programs where kids interact with each other  
more things for young people to do  
build a place were kids can go on a saturday night to have good clean fun to prevent teenagers from looking for fun through drugs or alcohol.  
programs where kids get taught about their future  
More Community stuff  
more places for young people to go  
Crosswalks  
big movie theater  
provide more job opportunities that arnt so difficult to get  
have organized and safe activities to do with others of the same age that are fun  
Put in more safe "Hangout places"  
I don't know what a better life for people my age would be like but I'll guess: have a teen hang out that doesn't encourage drinking or drugs  
More scheduled activities for older students  
make a place that kids can hang out where there is no danger

Help us learn to be more independent  
More information on lifes problems  
have a teen center  
free homes  
peer leaders  
24/7 store  
YMCA Center  
more oppertunities for fun  
People to talk to  
Walmart  
sports teams basketball  
more job opportunities  
they could try to set up more activities that younger people are interested in  
I think that there should be more programs to help younger people acheive their goals rather than tell them what to do.

More recreation  
give us more things to do  
have more teen programs  
clean it up  
Re-open the rec center  
tell cops to ease up on the teenagers  
more open mics  
have a teen center  
stop refusing us jobs  
art environment  
make it less crumby and have more rules, cops need to have discipline  
a place to go and just hang out  
Better mall  
more cops  
Buses or transportation to fun things like Burke Mountain or Burlington.  
buildings, do something about the Convenient One...(It's been like that long enough!)  
fishing tournaments  
after school programs  
not have smokers  
Use more respect  
Plow the sidewalks  
More places to take girls out on dates  
have a better sports facility where kids can get involved  
have less apartments  
make a recording studio  
Small local stores  
Small local stores  
community service  
Small local stores  
encourage kids to appreciate everything, instead of taking it all for granted.  
video arcade  
not so strict with rules  
More focus on peer-pressure and how to handle it.  
More things to do  
no street drugs  
Better stores for teenagers  
Buses  
Not bash the Academy in publicity (that means you, Caledonian Record!)  
more places to hang out with fields and mini skate parks  
teen hangout place  
expose kids to outdoor activities  
more education on the police and how they can be friends  
care love and compassion  
have more international study  
less substance users  
help kids who do drugs and other crap.  
Better stores at the mall  
more wealth  
have more places for the kids to do things like a coffee house  
more softball time  
more education on the police and how they can be friends  
stop smoking  
more social places  
more transportation  
they need more schools  
more interesting things to do  
more wealth  
have places for kids to hang out  
drug test all sports teams  
less homework  
There is really nothing they can do. We live in a place with little population & money.  
Community sponsored teen center  
More recreational activities  
football teams  
tell the cops to lay off we are not all bad  
working buses  
Get rid of all the drugs  
have a better library- more  
harsher punishment for drug users  
Get the drug addicts off the streets  
more jobs  
a bike park  
Come up with places that are safe and positive places for people to hang out and avoid bordum and stupidity so we dont turn to drugs.  
skate park  
Clean up the garbage  
More summer programs  
An actual mall, more restaurants to eat/work at  
Local movie theater  
Have places to work.  
nice low kill animal shelter



Almost the whole town can be captured in one picture. Welcome to Lyndonville.  
Photo: Emily Mentes



This is a fun place to hang out with friends.  
Photo: Emily Mentes



There must be a fine line between the right amount and too much salt on the sidewalk ... right? Our poor shoes and pant legs.  
Photo: Matthew Wynn



Kiko has to be put down soon. Old and new memories are always going to be in my head. It's hard to say goodbye.  
Photo: Sierra Perkins & David Willson



One of my best friends in this town. Without it, life would be so much more slow.  
Photo: Matthew Wynn



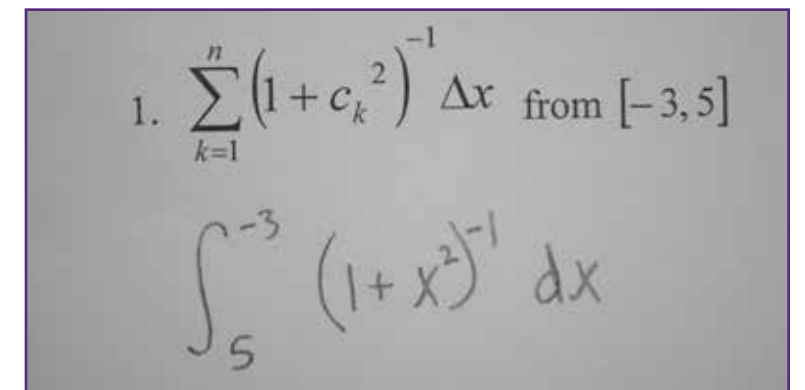
I'm on Facebook a lot, talking to friends.  
Photo: Jessica Smith



Let's have a tongue contest. How long can you hold yours out? This picture shows how you can have fun doing simple and goofy things.  
Photo: Sierra Perkins & David Willson



This is a youth-based project but not many use it for two reasons – one, it is so small, and two, since the skate shop closed.  
Photo: Savannah Fellows



Teens have a lot to worry about, like trying to figure out things like this.  
Photo: Jeremy Therrien



The rec center got closed down even though so many went there after school, during vacation, or the weekend. (Editor's note: Rec Center programs are now housed at St. Johnsbury School.)

Photo: Savannah Fellows



My 18th birthday, at my bank, making a checking account. Now I can buy things online that are nonexistent in my area.

Photo: Matthew Wynn



These textbooks at my school are the start of a career for many. I find psychology class to be very captivating.

Photo: Matthew Wynn



The conditions of the roads are despicable and don't help with the transportation..

Photo: Timothy Blanchard



This is my necklace, I wear it every day.

Photo: Jessica Smith



I've played this game, King's Corners, with some of the elderly men at The Pines during my internship. One day I hope to be a nurse.

Photo: Felicia Daignault



The old Mental Health/Human Services building. It's not one of the nicest buildings in town.

Photo: Felicia Daignault



Someone to count on. Faith, love, companionship. The dog Bud.

Photo and caption: Jessica Smith and Kristin Durrant



It is too bad that some people feel like ruining the scenery.  
Photo: Jeremy Therrien



Almost everyone I go to school with has been to The Convenient One, or C1 as known by many. But now we have to walk a ways to get that drink or snack before or after school.  
Photo: Savannah Fellows



Some people are careless drivers. It makes it dangerous to drive around.  
Photo: Sierra Perkins & David Willson



This is the most relied-on transportation.  
Photo: Timothy Blanchard



My uniform for the Army – it's my way of life. I was bred for the Army.  
Photo: Kevin O'Donnell



The group of us, diverse as we are, we succeeded in helping the Haitians at the Hilltopper where I work.  
Photo: Timothy Blanchard

At the time of this project...

**Sierra Perkins**, 14, was a freshman at L.E.A.R.N., in Lyndonville. Her goal is to become a professional photographer and one day open her own photography business. She says through this project, adults may come to “see what teens see, through our eyes.” She adds, “Maybe if we voice the bad things, they could help change them.” **David Willson**, 17, was a junior at L.E.A.R.N., in Lyndonville. He says, “My main interest is music. I play the guitar and am in a band.” The PhotoVoice Project allowed him to express himself, so that adults can “learn more on how things affect our community, and how it can be better.” He partnered with Sierra Perkins on photos for this report.



**Emily Mentes**, 17, was a senior at Lyndon Institute in Lyndonville. She likes to hang out with friends, listen to music and play piano; her goal is to become a teacher. “Many people probably have no idea what there even is in such a rural area,” she says. “I hope that adults who see this project will see that teens find things to do even when there aren’t many options.”



**Felicia Daignault**, 18, was a senior at St. Johnsbury Academy. Personal interests include hiking, fishing, swimming, taking walks on the beach at night, and trying different things such as ethnic foods, mudding, and 4-wheeling. Her future goals are to become a licensed nursing assistant in Vermont, “make good money, have a family, a nice house in a nice environment.” She says of the project: “We’re all human beings and it’s good for us to be heard with our opinions.”



**Jeremy Therrien**, 18, graduated from Lyndon Institute in Lyndonville in June 2010. He’s worked as a lifeguard, and loves to hang out with friends and watch movies. He says he plays to use college as a springboard to “a good-paying job.” He says the PhotoVoice Project enabled him to reveal the parts of his life that other people can’t see. “A lot of people don’t know what life is like for others,” he says.



**Matthew L. Wynn**, 18, was a senior at St. Johnsbury Academy. His personal interests are “playing and feeling the beauty that is music, drawing, reading, bike-riding, psychology and Japanese.” His short-term goal was graduating from STA with high honors; long-term, he wants to be a successful graphic novelist. He says that this project enabled him to use his imagination to show what life is like for youth in St. Johnsbury. “I hope that adults will find a little bit more to relate to with their young adult counterparts,” he says.



**Savanah Fellows**, 16, was a junior at St. Johnsbury Academy. She is part of the Youth Health Service Corps and her personal interests include reading. She plans to major in social work in college. “Being a teen in St. Jay, it’s hard to find a place to hang out and have fun with friends. I think PhotoVoice was a great way to show the community what we should make better.”



**Timothy Blanchard**, 17, was a senior at St. Johnsbury Academy, where he participated in Jr. ROTC and studied culinary arts. After high school, he plans to enlist in the U.S. Army and later work in a “high-end restaurant.” He says, “I’m a Vermont native and have lived here most of my life. I am a student in a top school in the U.S. and a total patriot. I have lots of friends and my passion is culinary arts. My hopes are to become a successful chef.” He says he hopes this photo project helps adults “try to figure out how to make things better, and leave the good things alone.”



**Jessica Smith**, 15, was in tenth grade at Caledonia School in St. Johnsbury. When she’s not babysitting, she’s on Facebook, listening to music, and hanging out with friends, family and pets. “My goals are to get good grades and finish high school and go to college,” she says. “I want to get a job that I love and that pays a lot.” As for her photos, she says they offer people a window into her life. “They wouldn’t know what my life was like if I didn’t tell them.”



Not shown:

**Kristin Durrant**, 15, was a sophomore at Caledonia School. She likes to spend time with friends, go places, take photos, and babysit. When she graduates from high school, she wants to work with children. She partnered with Jessica Smith on the St. Johnsbury Youth PhotoVoice Project.

**Kevin O’Donnell**, 20



Welcome to the **'TELL IT LIKE IT IS'** St. Johnsbury Area Youth Survey. Why are we doing a survey? Several groups in the county are talking about how to make this area a better place for people your age. To do that, we need to know what you think is already good about your area, and what you think is bad. Needless to say, there are no right answers – just thoughtful opinions. That's what we're asking you to give.

In fact, we value your opinions so much that we're willing to pay you for them. That's right – we'll give you \$5 for filling out this survey (it'll just take a few minutes).

**HOW WILL WE KEEP TRACK OF WHO'S FILLING THIS OUT?** We'll ask you to give us your BIRTHDATE, and the name of the STREET you live on. This gives everyone filling out the survey a unique identity (it's a survey thing, trust us). You don't have to tell us your actual name, unless you want to.

**HOW WILL WE GET YOU YOUR CASH?** Depending on where you're filling this out, you may be able to get it immediately. Or you may need (or just want) to get it through the mail. If you do want it mailed to you, you'll need to give us your name and address. We'll ask about this at the bottom of the survey.

No matter how you decide to get the cash, we won't use your name in the final report in which these survey results will appear.

Thanks for doing this – you are really, really helping us. More important, you're helping make your community a better place for young people.

**WAIT!! ONE MORE THING, AND IT'S REALLY IMPORTANT:** This survey is about the COMMUNITY you live in. When we talk about your community, we mean everything that surrounds you – the schools, parks, streets, businesses, stores, religious institutions, and social service agencies, plus all the people who work in those places or are part of your life. So, as you answer these questions, think of the WHOLE community around you, how it affects you, and what it offers you and doesn't offer you.

**TO GET PAID FAST ...**

- 1. Answer This Survey As Soon as You Get It! Be Serious and Give Your Best Ideas
- 2. Read the Instructions Carefully, and Answer All the Questions

**1. In this box, write your BIRTHDATE, the name of the STREET on which you live. That's two pieces of information. Ex: "3/24/1989 Main St."**

**2. Gender**

- Male
- Female
- Transgender

**3. Age**

- 14
- 15
- 16
- 17
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21

**4. Race**

- Asian
- African-American
- Hispanic
- Caucasian/White
- Bi/Multiracial
- Other

**5. What good things are there for people your age to do in this area? Name things you think are cool or fun, or that are going to help you achieve your life goals. (Note: This question asks about THINGS TO DO.)**

6. What people or places in your life encourage you to succeed and do well in life? Say why. (Note: This question asks about PEOPLE and PLACES.)

7. What people or places drag you down, worry you, or upset you? Say why.

8. What do you do with your free time? Is there something else you wish you could be doing? Please answer both questions, and be specific.

9. High school has been (or was):

Overall, a very good experience for me  
Pretty good most of the time  
Okay – not great but not terrible  
Really horrible, a totally bad experience for me

10. Any young person in this community who really wants to succeed – to get a good education and a decent job - can find lots of ways to do it.

I strongly agree  
I agree  
Not sure  
I disagree  
I strongly disagree

11. I'd say that this area:

Is a really great place for a kid to grow up  
Has a few problems, but it's okay  
Isn't a great place for people my age  
Is a really horrible place – I would never want my kids to grow up here

12. Name three things your community could do to make life better for young people:

1.  
2.  
3.

13. In the future, I plan on leaving this area either for college or for better job opportunities.

Yes, I'm definitely taking off  
No, I'm sticking around  
Not sure yet – it depends on whether I can make a living here

14. Which one describes you?

I want a job, but can't find one  
I have a low-paying job, but it's a dead end. I wish I had a job that was leading to a real career.  
I have a low-paying job, but I'm okay with it – it's all I need right now.  
I have a job that feels pretty solid – it's going to lead me somewhere.  
I don't have a job right now and don't want one.

I have another comment ... (optional)

15. What would you say the job market is like for young people in your community?

Depressing – there are never jobs for people my age, or, if there are, they're really low-paying  
There are a handful of good jobs but there's a lot of competition  
I'd say it's decent – if you want a job, you can find one.

My feeling about the jobs around here is:

16. Describe what kind of jobs (including internships, apprenticeships or other kinds of opportunities) that you would like to see available for young people in your community. THE MORE DETAILED YOU ARE, THE MORE HELPFUL YOU WILL BE!

**17. What's it like getting around your town to do things for fun, work or school?**

Impossible! I can never get transportation during the times I actually need it  
I spend a lot of time looking for rides and often can't find them  
It's okay – I can usually find a way to get where I need to go  
This isn't really a problem for me

**18. What would be the ideal transportation system for someone your age? You can check as many as you want – but only select the ones you would use, or your friends would use.**

Buses that ran from early morning until late night  
Vans or cars that were owned by the schools or youth clubs that could take us where we want to go for free  
A way to find out if there's anyone else going where you are so that you could carpool or share a ride more easily  
An adult I trust who would be there to take me wherever I need to go  
A way that I could afford my own car

I have another good idea:

**19. Rate how easy or hard you think it is (or would be) to make it on your own, as a young adult, in this area. Speak from your own perspective, considering your own personal circumstances. Think about the cost of renting an apartment, transportation, paying for food and utilities – the whole thing.**

Practically impossible  
Pretty hard, but manageable  
Not that hard, if you have a little help  
No problem at all, really.

If it would be hard, say specifically what would make it hard.

**20. Do know any people your age who don't have a regular place to live? Think about anyone you might know under age 21 who left home or got kicked out, and now is living somewhere temporarily.**

Yes, I know at least one person in that situation.  
No, I don't know anyone in that situation.

If you do know someone who doesn't have permanent place to stay, where are they living right now?

**21. Please give us your email address or another way of reaching you, like a phone number. We won't contact you unless we have a question about how to send your cash to you.**

**22. Do you want us to mail your cash to you, or do you want to get it now, on-site?**

I want you to mail it to me.  
I'm getting it directly from an adult on-site.

**23. If you are getting your cash on-site, please write in the location where you filled this out.**

**24. If you want us to mail it to you, give an ADDRESS below, with your NAME. (Again, we won't use your name in the report or give it to anyone. We promise.) Don't forget to say which TOWN you live in.**

**25. Are you interested in becoming a youth advisor to any work we end up doing in your community?**

Yes, definitely.  
No.  
Maybe – send me see the details.

**26. If you do want to be involved, make sure you've given us information to reach you!**

parents, friends, they help through hard times. (m, 16) **My friends, they help me keep my self esteem up so I know I will always do well.** (f, 18) Teachers, bcuz they are so demanding to keep me in line. (f, 14) **Northeast Kingdom Youth Services and school, they help me stay out of bad things and not get into trouble.** (m, 19) My sister. The Youth Services. They encourage me in what I feel is important in my life and help me achieve my goals. (f, 15) **People at school and Youth Services, they help me know what options I have.** (f, 16) Kingdom Recovery Center, to play pool and socialize with recovering addicts. (m, 19) My parents encourage me to succeed and make the best of life and my friends help me get there. (m, 16) **others of the same age that are fun provide opportunities to get out of dodge and experience the world on a large scale.** (f, 16) **Have places stay open later.** (f, 18) More places to go and do things like pool, hockey, video games. A place to hangout! (f, 17) Build a place where kids can go on Saturday night to have good clean fun, to prevent teenagers from looking for fun through drugs or alcohol. (f, 15) Make a place that kids can hang out where there is no danger. (m, 17) **Have more places for the kids to do things, like a coffee house.** (f, 16) Come up with places that are safe and positive places for people to hang out and avoid boredom and stupidity so we don't turn to drugs. (f, 18) **A community center for teens.** (m, 19) Maybe something like a free indoor pool during the winter that has other fun things to do inside. (f, 17) **An actual mall, more restaurants to eat/work at, regular public transportation [not every 2-3 hours].** (f, 17) **Video arcade.** (f, 16) More places to take girls out on dates. (m, 16) **Make the mall bigger and add better clothing shops.** (f, 15) Small local stores. (m, 15) Keep bad people off the street, keep drug addicts off the road, don't let kids drink. (f, 16) **No crimes, no street drug, more cops.** (m, 16) **Find a way to cut down/eliminate drug abuse and the crime rate.** (f, 18) Crack down on drug and alcohol problems. (m, 15) Don't look down on us for our mistakes. (m, 16) Stronger eye in schools for harrasment. (f, 15) **More information on lifes problems.** (f, 16) **Have a model, like some one that points you in the right direction.** (m, 17) Recognize the hardships of being a young adult. (m, 19) **I think that there should be more programs to help younger people achieve their goals rather than tell them what to do.** (f, 20) **More programs to help you plan your future plan.** (f, 14) More focus on peer-pressure and how to handle it. (m, 16) **Have more inspirational programs for all children/teens.** (f, 18) Talk to students if they have any problems. (f, 17) Adults need to be more trusting of the younger people because not every teen or young adult is out to ruin their life. (f, 20) [More] art in the environment. (f, 16) **Encourage healthy behavior, like exercise.** (m, 14) **Safer streets at night - less creepy, better lit.** (f, 18) Clean up. Paint ugly buildings, do something about the Corner Convenient One ... It's been like that long enough! (f, 18) **Care, love and compassion.** (f, 17) **Need more parks.** (m, 16) **Have people find the young people jobs.** (m, 17) Provide more opportunities that aren't so difficult to get. (f, 16) Stop refusing us jobs. (m, 17) Have some skill thing for younger kids. (f, 14) **Make more regular public transportation [not every 2-3 hours].** (m, 16) More places to take girls out on dates. (m, 16) **Make the mall better clothing shops.** (f, 15) **Keep bad people off the street, keep drug addicts off the road, don't let kids drink.** (f, 16) **Find a way to cut down/eliminate drug and alcohol problems.** (m, 15) Crack down on drug and alcohol problems. 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YouthCatalytics