

# lots more **POSITIVE ATTITUDE**

What young people in windham county say they need to be happy, healthy and productive



New England Network for Child, Youth & Family Services

Cindy Carraway-Wilson

Andi Waisman

Melanie Wilson

We would like to express our gratitude to the many individuals who helped us with this project.  
For recruiting young people for the survey, we thank:

Ann Bolognani, Twin Valley High School  
Lori Greenberg, Leyland and Gray High School  
Maryann Spofford, Brattleboro Union High School  
Bethany Larson, Bellows Falls Union High School  
Beth Baldwin-Page and Ricky Davidson, Boys and Girls Club of Brattleboro  
Ellenka Wasug-Lott, Boys and Girls Club/Bellows Falls  
Peter VanWageningen, Vermont Community High School  
Mary Ide and Erin Marshall, Vermont Adult Learning  
Janet Van Alstyne, Compass School  
Katie Knapp and Bianca Fernandez, Youth Services of Windham County

For providing technical assistance:

Grant Christiansen, Optima Computers  
Micheal Kiziltan, Brilliance  
Adhi Palar, The Tinder Box

Most of all, we thank the 213 young people who generously offered their ideas, opinions and insights. Twenty-two of them went even further and volunteered to become part of the overall Youth ImPact Windham County initiative. We are honored to have them join us as youth advisors and participants in the task of making Windham County a better place for young people.

Participants in the Windham Youth PhotoVoice Project (including adult sponsors and youth photographers): **West River Valley:** Lori Greenberg from Leyland and Gray Union High School and Cooper Feiner-Homer; **Brattleboro:** Ricky Davidson from the Boys and Girls Club of Brattleboro and Autumn Kendell, Zach Gilbeau, and Ann-Marie Bliss; **Bellows Falls:** Ellenka Wasung-Lott from the Boys and Girls Club and Danielle Southwell from Youth Services Inc., and Crystal Thomson, Jacqueline Cantor and Abi Baker; and **Wilmington:** Shelly Park, Sarah Dumaine, Michael Squiers, and Tony Roy.



## INTRODUCTION

Between February and April 2008, New England Network for Child, Youth & Family Services (NEN) administered an online survey to 213 young people between the ages of 15 and 21 in Windham County. NEN is the coordinating agency of Youth ImPact Windham County, a newly formed collaborative effort that brings youth services providers and the local faith community together to improve opportunities for young people in the county. The initiative is federally funded and is one of three such county-wide projects NEN is leading in New England.

The youth survey was part of a community needs assessment meant to inform the coalition partners about needs of young people in the county. But the survey results should find a larger audience as well. They represent a diverse range of youth experience and opinion that communities throughout the county should find invaluable, particularly as they seek ways to effectively address problems such as youth drug use and violence, and enhance opportunities for healthy development. (For more about Youth ImPact and its partners, go to [www.nenetwork.org/Youth\\_Impact/](http://www.nenetwork.org/Youth_Impact/).)

The survey was administered in the following locations:

**Brattleboro Union High School**  
**Bellows Falls Union High School**  
**Leland and Gray Union High School**  
**Twin Valley High School**  
**Vermont Adult Learning**  
**Community High School of Vermont**  
**Boys & Girls Club of Brattleboro**  
**Boys & Girls Club of Bellows Falls**  
**Compass School**  
**Youth Services Inc. of Windham County**

In addition, several area clergy referred young people to the survey, and youth in downtown Brattleboro (Harmony parking lot, The Tinder Box and other locations) were surveyed. Young people were promised anonymity, and paid \$5 each for participating.

The survey asked 19 questions focusing on three 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 youth thought their communities could do to improve life for them and their peers. (See the survey in Appendix A.)

Youth respondents found some questions easy to answer. Asked who or what encouraged them, an overwhelming majority named parents. Asked to name the positive things to do in their areas, a high percentage named sports and recreational activities. Many also seemed to know about and appreciate youth-centered resources such as the Boys & Girls Club.

On other topics, respondents were mixed. School, for instance, was alternately cited as a source of anxiety and inspiration. Spending time in town with friends was noted as a common and popular activity, but frequently youth complained about feeling unwelcome in public spaces, and some reported that they or their friends had been harassed by the police. Some youth mentioned community resources such as the New England Youth Theater; but then noted that they were expensive for many young people. And while the survey itself explicitly named faith institutions as an example of potential support for young people, references to it were entirely absent in youths' reflections about their communities.

As to the negative aspects of life in their communities, youth seemed in general agreement. The prevalence of drugs was a source of enormous worry to many respondents, either because they feared peers who sell them or use them, or worried for friends caught up in them. A majority of youth said there wasn't enough to do in their communities, and some linked the lack of constructive, available, and affordable activities to young peoples' decision to use drugs in the first place. Asked what his town could do for youth, one young man wrote: "Make drugs not the #1 thing to do in Brattleboro." Another wrote: "I smoke a lot of weed every day. I wish

there were more productive things to do in town but there is simply nothing."

Many young people also seemed sensitive to the rundown environment of their towns, calling attention to vandalism, litter; decaying buildings and dilapidated neighborhoods.

What would improve life for young people in Windham County? Survey respondents were asked to make three suggestions each. The list included creating more public spaces where young people can congregate; creating more opportunities for physical recreation; reducing drug use, violence and crime; improving the quality of the schools; making jobs more available to young people; improving police-youth relations; cleaning up downtown areas; and making low-cost activities available to young people. Their precise quotes, in answer to this and other survey questions, are found throughout the report, in subsections entitled "Youth Voices." Quotes in those sections have been lightly edited for grammar and spelling.

## WINDHAM PHOTOVOICE PROJECT

Just as the Windham County youth survey project was ending, another, related project was beginning, this one meant to gather further information from the county's young people about how they see their environment. PhotoVoice is a technique of 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, small groups of young people from four distinct areas of the county – Bellows Falls, Brattleboro, Wilmington, and the West River Valley – came together for training in the PhotoVoice process, then took two weeks to capture images of the positive and negative things about their communities. The group then reassembled to select its best photos and to write captions for them. Those photos will become a traveling exhibit in the county, and will inform the larger work of the Youth ImPact coalition as it seeks to understand the needs and concerns of young people. The photos appear throughout this report, and in a special section at the end.

**SURVEY FINDINGS**

**WHO TOOK THE SURVEY: DEMOGRAPHICS**

The age breakdown of survey respondents is below. The high numbers of youth between 15 and 18, and the relatively low numbers of youth between 19 and 21, suggest how much more visible and accessible the younger population is. Younger teens can be found in high schools and at community youth centers; older youth are dispersed and, in more rural areas of the county, sometimes isolated.

**Sex and race:** Fifty-six percent of respondents were male, 43% female, and 1 percent transgender. Slightly more than 86% (179) were white; 7% (15) were bi/multiracial; 3.8% (8) were Hispanic; 1.4% (3) were African American; and 1.4% (3) identified themselves as “other.” No youth reported that they were Asian.

Youth from the following towns are represented in this survey: Bellows Falls, Brattleboro, Dummerston, Guilford, Jamaica, Putney, S. Newfane, Townshend, Vernon, Wardsboro, Westminster, Westminster Station, Whitingham and Wilmington.

**HOW YOUTH FEEL ABOUT HIGH SCHOOL**

Almost half of youth respondents said their experience in high school was, or is, “pretty good most of the time.” One-third said high school was “okay – not great but not terrible.” Relatively few reported that high school had been a terrible experience for them; about one-fifth said it had been or is a very good experience overall. Concerns about school – the stresses of homework, perceived unfairness by administrators, worry about graduating on time – was a main theme for youth. On the other hand, teachers, guidance counselors and coaches were frequently cited as sources of support and encouragement.

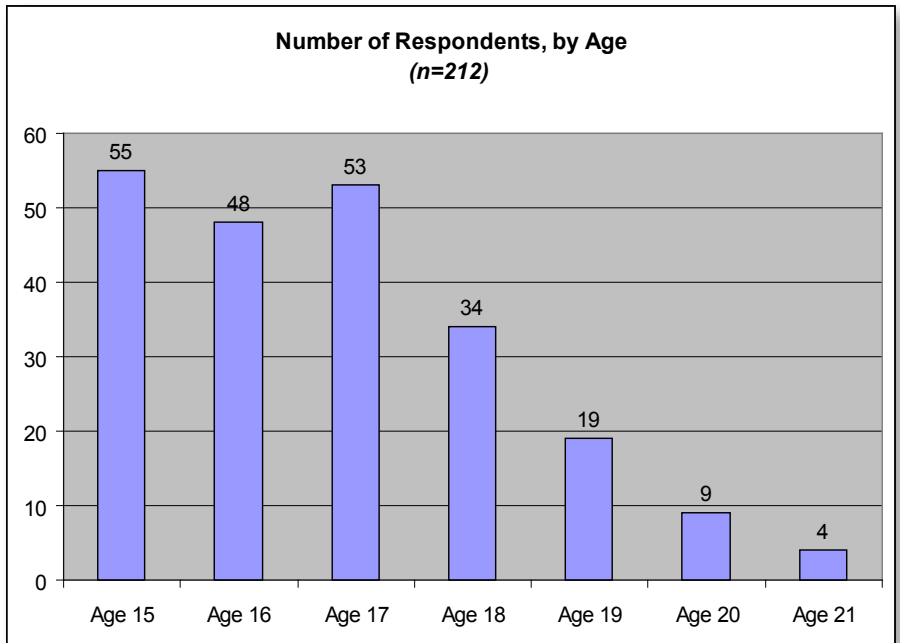


Figure 1

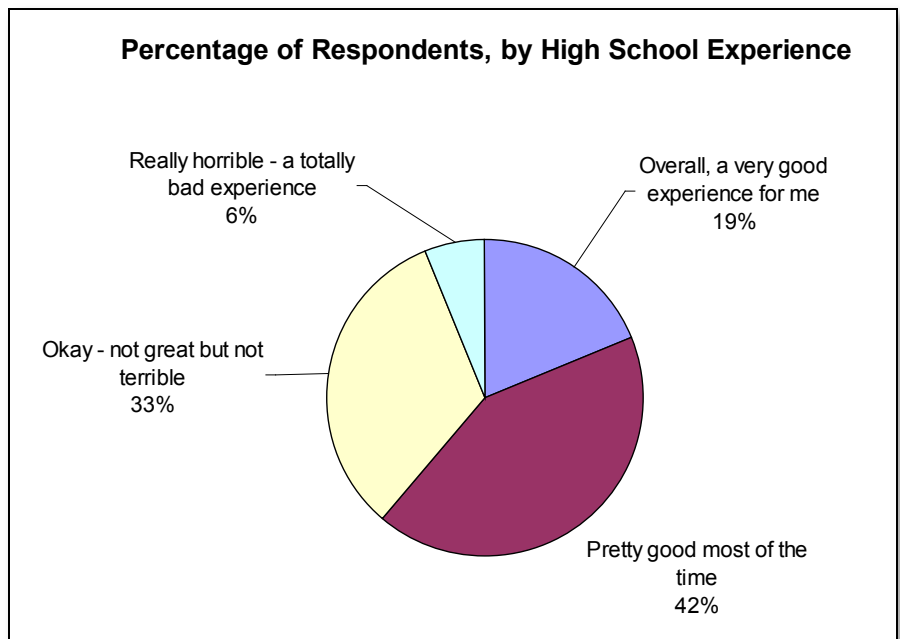


Figure 2

## HOW YOUTH FEEL ABOUT THEIR COMMUNITIES

The survey asked respondents to rate their community – where they lived and/or went to school – on whether it was a good place for people their age. It also asked them to assess young people’s chances for success in those communities. Almost 75% said that their communities were acceptable or even great places for young people, while 28% rated their areas unfavorably (6% called their area a “terrible place” for young people). A majority agreed that young people can succeed in their communities if they are motivated.

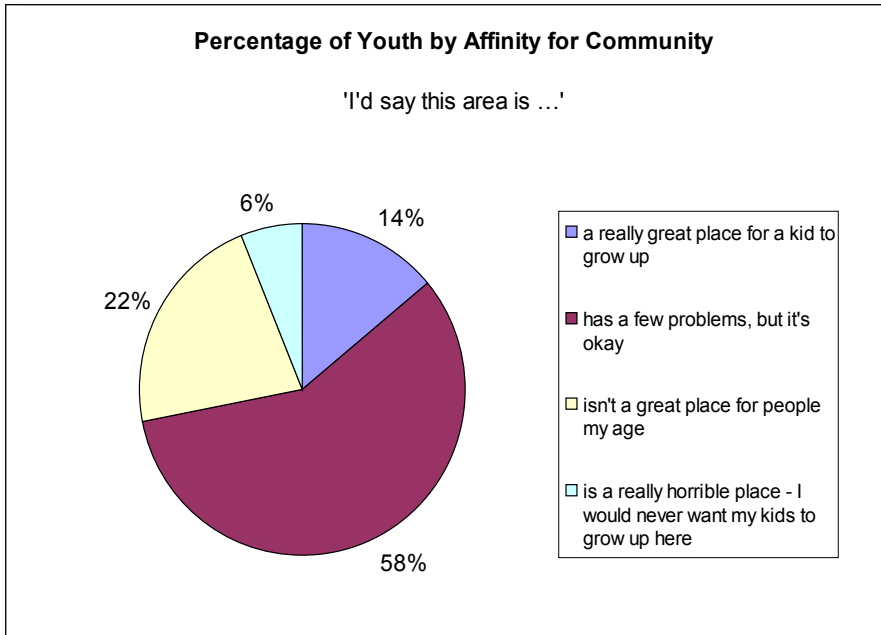


Figure 3

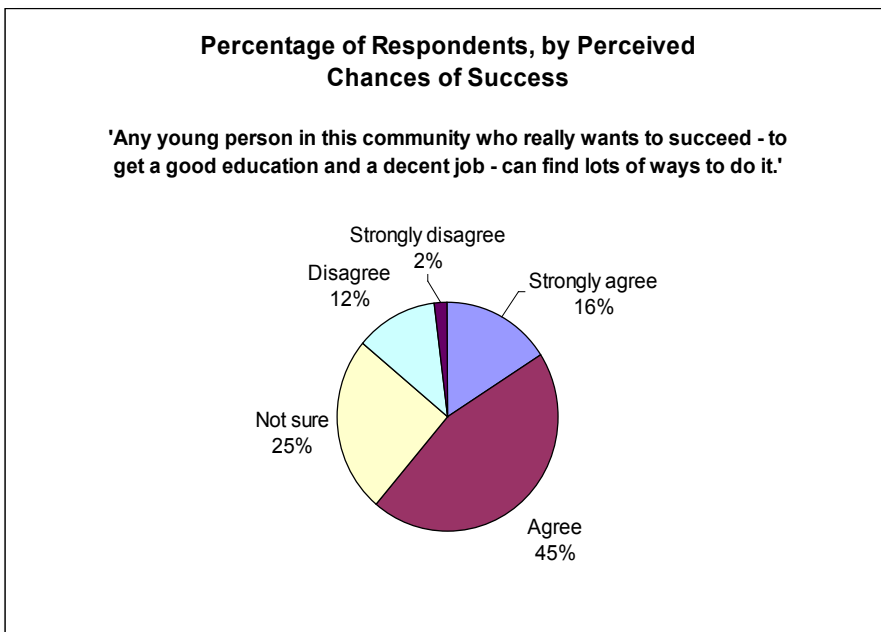


Figure 4



## SOURCES OF SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

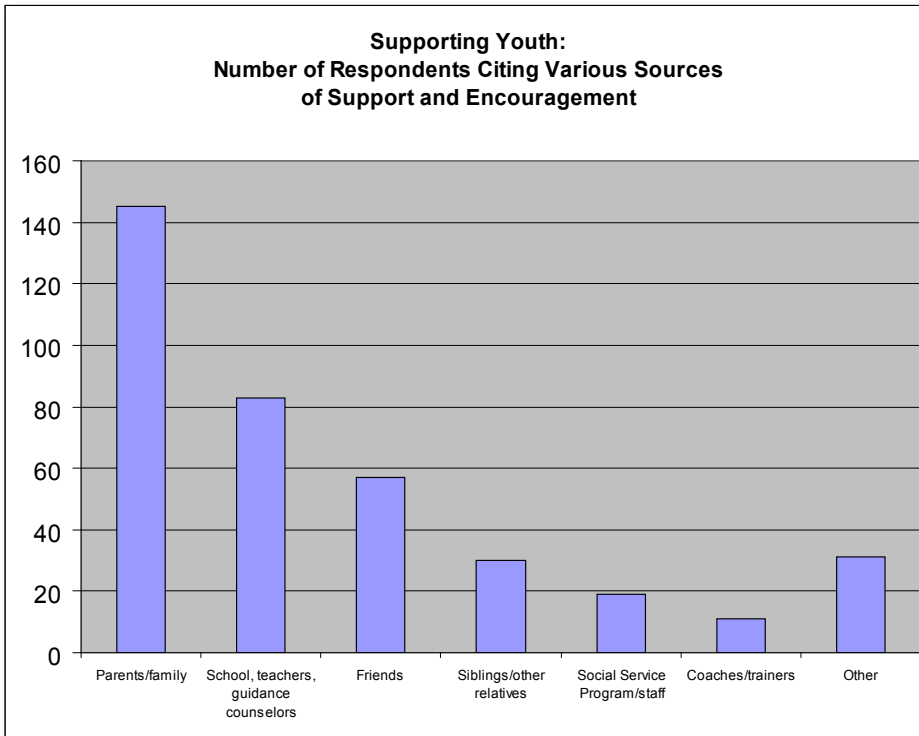


Figure 5

**Supporting Young People:** A majority of youth in the survey said that their parents and family were main sources of support, with school staff and friends a distant second and third. Notably absent were references to faith communities and faith leaders – a bit surprising, since national studies indicate that about quarter of all young people are actively involved in religious life. There is no indication that public figures – politicians, celebrities, or sports heroes – have a positive impact on youth. While such figures may be vaguely inspiring, it would seem that for youth, support is practical, day-to-day, and most of all, personal. Almost 93% of youth said they had at least three adults in their lives who they thought liked and respected them.

### YOUTH VOICES: What People or Places Encourage You to Succeed in Life?

School, especially the hope of going to the WRCC next year for Law Enforcement because i want to get into the Criminal Justice field of work. My Mom because she wants me to be able to do the things that she didn't and my sister because she looks up to me and I want to make good choices, if not for myself, then for her.

*F, 16, S. Newfane*

My grandparents and most the peeps at the boys and girls club. And friends and family.

*M, 15, Brattleboro*

My girlfriend's family, because they actually care about me.

*M, 17, Bellows Falls*

Personally, high school. The best place to be is the high school! That's where you want to learn and make the most out of life.

*M, 19, Brattleboro*

My mom, she is a fantastic person, she is so smart she is behind me 100% in anything i do.

*F, 15, Brattleboro*

Well i look at my family & lifestyle that i am living right now. i have had a hard past dealing with substance abuse and i just use that as encouragement that i am doing much better now.

*M, 15, Brattleboro*

My case manager, my probation officer and my friends and family encourage me to succeed because they think i have a lot of potential.

*F, 18, Putney*



Family boys and girls club staff friends school because they want me to have a good life and a good reputation.  
*F, 17, Bellows Falls*

My Mom and Dad so I pick a good job and do good in my lifetime.  
*M, 16, Westminster*

Bellows Falls, cause I want to get out of that town.  
*F, 19, Bellows Falls*

My mother and my boyfriend I would say encourage me the most. In a town like Brattleboro, you have to work hard to succeed. There are not

many options here in Brattleboro to help you make a successful career for yourself, so you have to push yourself to get to the next level. You really have to encourage yourself.  
*F, 20, Brattleboro*

Everyone knows everything about all of us, for better or for worse. in a pinch we've all got each other's backs. I've found a tremendous amount of support from friends and strangers alike in all of my endeavors.  
*F, 19, Brattleboro*

My friends encourage me to be more successful because I don't want to be like them.  
*M, 17, Brattleboro*

The place that encourages me is the library because you can find good books that can help you get through tough times.  
*M, 15, Bellows Falls*

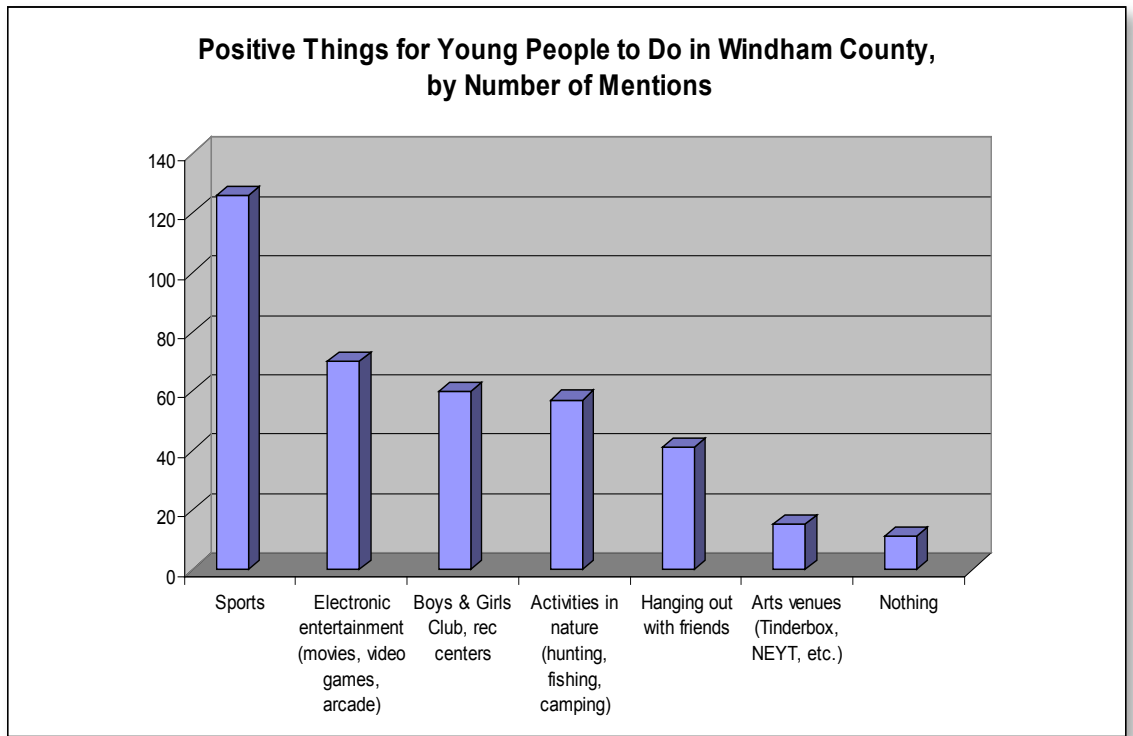


Figure 6

**What the County Offers Youth:**

This survey question, 'What are the 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,' asked young people to consider community resources for youth in general. Interestingly, there was an imperfect correspondence between what youth mention as positive community resources, and what they later said they personally did in their free time. For instance, there were 126 references to sports and athletic activities as positive activities for youth, but only 79 youth actually said they did such activities in their free time. The same was true of community youth centers: more youth cited them as good places for young people than actually said they made use of them themselves. There are several possible explanations for this discrepancy. One is that young people assume

their peers are engaging in certain activities to a greater extent than they are; another is that youth are good at recognizing positive resources in the abstract, though circumstances in their own lives may prevent them from taking advantage of them. Other "good things" mentioned were going downtown (23); cafés (3); library (4); school (9); restaurants (8); shops downtown (7); tattoo shop (2); and music store (1).



There aren't really many things to do, there is NEYT of course but that takes money and you have to be an actor. i guess there is the boys and girls club but that's not for everyone. there really isn't much to do.

*F, 15, Dummerston*

Nothing really...You can go to the community center in Bellows Falls, but I don't know what else there is to do.

If you like the outdoors you can:

Mountain bike, ski, snowboard.

*M, 17, Bellows Falls*

The good thing here in this town is the boys and girls club.

*F, 15, Brattleboro*

### YOUTH VOICES: What Good Things Are Available Locally for People Your Age?

Not really much to do in westminster but in bellows falls you could go to the movies.

*F, 16, Bellows Falls*

For life goals, Vermont Adult Learning! But in general things to do are lacking. There are not any healthy activities for people my age. You can swim, bowl, and ski/snowboard. A lot of kids resort to partying for entertainment which leads to a lot of drug and alcohol abuse.

*F, 19, Brattleboro*

The only thing that i can think of is going to the bowling ally and thats only friday and saturday night its fun. other than that there really is not that much thing to do here.

*F, 18, Brattleboro*

The Tinder Box Dance Music and arts! Nonviolence, Harmony Parking lot as a hangout. Gallery walk. Observation of Arts Culture! Brattleboro fest, Freedom and games, general altruism.

*M, 21, Brattleboro*

Hang out at the boys and girls club, hang around down town/ harmony parking lot, going to the movies, any after school sports or clubs.

*F, 18, Vernon*

There is nothing that is fun or cool in this area that will help me achieve my goals.

*M, 16, Bellows Falls*

There are solid athletic programs at the youth level that will assist me in possibly grabbing an athletic scholarship.

*M, 17, Bellows Falls*

In this area you can go to the skate park, hang out down town, or go swimming for \$10.

*F, 15, Wilmington*





## SOURCES OF CONCERN AND WORRY FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

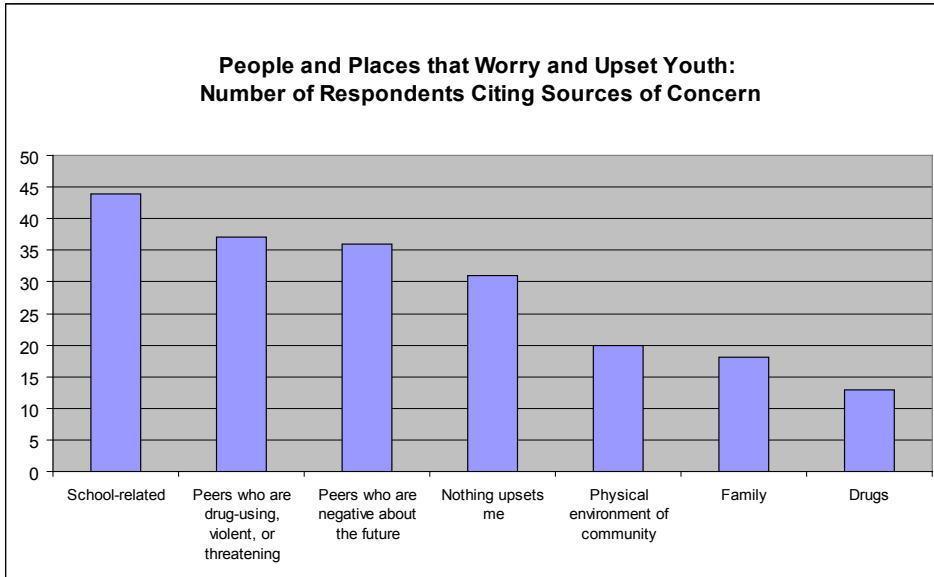


Figure 7

The top three concerns of survey respondents were pressures and dissatisfaction related to school; peers who use drugs, or are violent or threatening; and the negative attitudes of peers. Concern about the prevalence of drug use in general, disconnected to any particular group, was also high. In addition, many youth, particularly from the Bellows Falls area, said the physical environment of their communities was depressing or even frightening.

### YOUTH VOICES: What People or Places Upset, Worry, or Drag You Down?

The homophobic kids in my school make me very upset and feel down.

*Transgender, 17, Brattleboro*

The punks in town that go around and beat on everyone because there isn't any thing else to do.

*M, 18, Bellows Falls*

School drags me down because classes are not interesting, school also upsets me because i can't go down the hall without getting in trouble or being watched where ever i go.

*M, 17, Brattleboro*

People who are so negative, it just brings me down to a point where i cant do anything.

*F, 15, Brattleboro*

Party spots in the woods with acquaintances.

*M, 18, Brattleboro*

People that worry me and drag me down would be some of the administrators in my school. I am not saying i don't like them because of what they do. i don't have a problem with them bringing discipline to the school i just think that most of the decisions they make are poor.

*F, 16, Brattleboro*

No one and no places really bring me down, but I don't like how some kids ("gangsters," that's what they act like) hang around corners smoking and swearing so everyone can hear it. I usually don't like to walk down that street because I think that they are talking about me or that their going to start something.

*F, 15, Brattleboro*

People that are smoking downtown, because I know they are making a wrong choice.

*M, 16, Brattleboro*

My house because there is always yelling and fighting.

*F, 17, Bellows Falls*

The town of westminster and bellows fall make me upset because there is nothing to do! I'm always bored.

*F, 15, Westminster*

My mother cause she moved to a different state so i worry if she is ok.

*M, 15, Brattleboro*

My family when we argue because me and my family are really close and it bothers me when there's arguments. And sometimes i get upset when i am home because i live so far away that i feel suffocated and i can't always leave my house when i need space.

*M, 18, Brattleboro*

Harmony parking lot has become a place that welcomes violence instead of an enjoyable place to hang out with a relaxed atmosphere as it once was.

*F, 18, Putney*



The stairs in town ... they're just creepy.

*F, 17, Westminster Station*

The town, because it is full of people who do not care about anything.

*M, 17, Bellows Falls*

The president, I have many issues with how we're handling the war on terror and war in Iraq, it worries me wondering when America will finally anger a nation or group of people into retaliating against us.

*M, 21, Brattleboro*

The new social climate of Brattleboro is really bringing me down. It is all very negative as opposed to the freespirt hippie vibe we had going on for a little while. Now it is about how tough you are, how many

drugs you can sell, and pardon me for saying, how much \*hit you can talk. It is a bad bad vibe that is going on, and it is mostly found in the downtown area which used to be a place of great excitement for me. Now I avoid it as much as possible.

*F, 20, Brattleboro*

People who are intolerant of others really make me mad. I have witnessed older men beating up some younger kids because "they were hippies". Also, the police can really abuse their power. I know of someone who was arrested for being in a parking garage because he was supposedly banned. I think that they have nothing better to do so they sometimes harass the younger people.

*M, 18, Putney*

The police drag me down because I'm black and they are always trying to find something to lock me up for.

*M, 17, Brattleboro*

Drugs, because they're big around here.

*M, 15, Wilmington*

Harmony lot makes me feel anxious. Too much crap happens here, and it's in danger of outweighing all the good the lot has to offer. Depending on who you ask, people love it or hate it. But it's a part of everyone's life and we have to deal. The police have really questionable intentions; I know a few of the good ones and hear all kinds of horror stories about the abuse and the unnecessary intimidation. Do your job, but don't bug the kids who aren't doing anything.

*F, 19, Brattleboro*

Bars and some of the people who hang out in Brattleboro worry me because of the way people act to you sometimes. I feel unsafe sometimes.

*M, 17, Townshend*

A big place and experience that has in the past worried me and dragged me down was big schools with hundreds of people per grade. For me as a learner I like a small school where you can know your teachers on an individual basis. I have gone to big schools before and they have caused me so much trouble I have homeschooled rather than endure it.

*M, 17, Brattleboro*

## WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE DO WITH THEIR FREE TIME, AND WHAT THEY WANT TO BE DOING

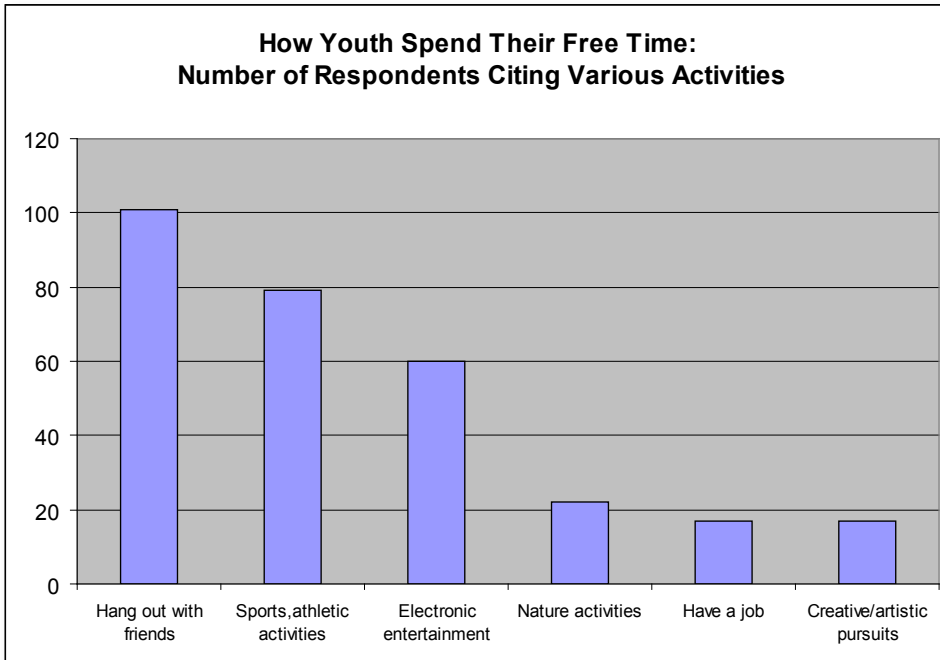


Figure 8

**Free Time:** Like young people everywhere, Windham County youth report spending a great deal of their free time hanging out friends, doing nothing in particular. Sports and athletic activities, sometimes organized and sometimes casual, were also a highly popular pastime for youth, especially when outdoors activities such as hiking or camping are considered in the same category. As to what they wished they could be doing, an overriding theme for youth was the desire for more places to be together – at night, on the weekends, indoors and outdoors, for low cost or free. Older youth in particular cited a need for more places appropriate for their age group – nightlife venues with dancing and music, where they are allowed to take responsibility for their own behavior without

suspicious adults monitoring them or assuming the worst. Fourteen youth cited a need for more recreational activities, and 11 said they wished they had jobs.

**YOUTH VOICES:** How do you spend your time free? Do you wish you could be doing something else?

With my free time, I usually hangout in town with my friends doing nothing. I wish there were more stores or a boys and girls club like brattleboro.

*F, 15, Westminster*

Hangout with friends, I wish there more things to do in bellows falls.

*F, 18, Bellows Falls*

Homework, hang out with friends. I used to do drugs, I think our community needs to work on that issue, because it seemed to me like that was the only thing to do. And then I got in trouble for it.

*M, 18, Putney*

I read and do as much school work as I can so I can graduate on time. I listen to music and hang out with my friends too. I wish there was a bowling alley around here.

**That would be fun.**

*F, 17, Bellows Falls*



In my free time I hang out in parking lots with friends or I watch movies at my house. I wish there was a place for kids to hang out at night.

*F, 20, Brattleboro*

I wish there were a place that I could exercise.

*F, 15, W. Brattleboro*

I work and hang with some friends. I wish I could rock climb and white water raft.

*M, 17, Guilford*

I smoke a lot of weed every day. I wish there were more productive things to do in town but there is simply nothing.

*M, 20, Putney*

I hang out with my friends and try to do as much physical stuff as possible. I wish there was more stuff to do.

*F, 15, Wilmington*

I play hacky sack and just have good conversations downtown with friends. I also go to music show sat the tinderbox on weekends and friends houses. I think there could be a lot more to do but adults make the kids feel like they're doing something wrong even when they are not.

*M, 18, Brattleboro*

I read and paint. But I want to do more things in the community, more hands on things. Volunteer for projects.

*F, 17, Bellows Falls*

Some kids have too much time on their hands and they get involved with some pretty bad people, and things.

*F, 15, Wilmington*

## MAKING COMMUNITIES BETTER FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Every youth respondent was asked to name three things that his or her community could do to make the area better for young people.

The question was open-ended, meaning that youth were free to offer whatever suggestions they wished. Answers were grouped into broad categories, which appear below under the 'Youth Voices' headings. The number of youth naming the particular issue is given in parentheses, followed by selected quotes from the surveys.

### YOUTH VOICES: More Things to Do

#### TOTAL SAYING:

Create more activities for us in general. (66)  
We'd like to spend time together, in a safe place. (55)

**Make drugs not the #1 thing for teens to do in Brattleboro.**

*M, 18, Putney*

**Make more places for us to go to keep us out of the streets and let us hang out with our friends and have fun.**

*M, 17, Brattleboro*

**Have more places to hang out safely.**

*M, 16, Brattleboro*

**Allow to congregate in public places like the harmony parking lot.**

*F, 15, Putney*

**Create a place for Gay, Bi, Tran, etc. youth to hang.**

*Transgender, 17, Brattleboro*

**Have more open things that don't cost too much or anything at all.**

*F, 18, Brattleboro*

**More structured places to hang out for all ages.**

*M, 18, Brattleboro*

**Think more outside the box.**

*M, 18, Brattleboro*

### YOUTH VOICES: More Recreational Facilities & Activities

#### TOTAL SAYING:

More after-school sports and other activities (28)  
More or expanded youth programs/venues, such as a bigger B&G Club or new YMCA (22)  
Mentions of 'skate park' (20)  
Mentions of 'rec center' (15)  
Outdoor facilities, such as more or better parks, walking trails, and playgrounds (12)  
New or expanded recreational facilities, unspecified (10)  
Swimming pools/community beaches (4)

#### Other activities mentioned

Bike park  
Go-Kart track (2)  
Park (2)  
Amusement park (1)  
Indoor roller skating rink  
UFC camp  
Ice skating  
Free snowboard/skiing  
Frisbee  
Batting cages  
Laser tag  
Better summer programs (2)  
Weekend activities  
Horseback riding



**Add a skate park FOR ALL AGES.**

*M, 19, Brattleboro*

**Start a basketball team other than school.**

*F, 16, S. Newfane*

**Better athletic facilities, not just programs.**

*M, 17, Bellows Falls*

**Allow rollerblading and skateboarding, etc.**

*F, 18, Brattleboro*

**More organized sports but less competitive.**

*M, 17, Brattleboro*

**Make risk-taking things like rock climbing.**

*M, 17, Guilford*

**Indoor roller skating rink (they are so much fun).**

*F, 17, Jamaica*

**Give more money to the rusty ass boys and girls club.**

*M, 17, Brattleboro*

**Have more athletic places close.**

*F, 16, Westminster*

**Maybe rentals of skate boards, bikes, and other thing to use in the park.**

*M, 15, Brattleboro*

**YOUTH VOICES:  
More Entertainment & Retail Places**

**TOTAL SAYING:**

Music/dance/concert venues for young people (24)

Malls/more businesses (15)

Cinemas, more/cheaper (11)

More fast food (7)

Coffee shops (2)

*Others places mentioned*

Teen-oriented stores, such as GameStop

Arcades

More commercial industry

More urbanization

More skate/snowboard shops

Theme park (2)

Not so much fast food

**Movie night at kipling cinema all students get in free on wednesday.**

*M, 15, Brattleboro*

Better night life for young people without the harsh restrictions and reminders of how young we are. Ex: instead of having a place that says "fun activities to do without drinking" ... automatically lame. I am not saying that underage people should be allowed to be intoxicated, but just that statement automatically says, "adults are watching," "we are too young to do anything." People need freedom, and if they cannot handle the freedom, then the consequences should be applied.

*F, 20, Brattleboro*

**More things to do for fun, physical exercise, music shows and other things at night.**

*M, 16, Putney*



**YOUTH VOICES: Adults Should Try to Like Us More**

**TOTAL SAYING:**

Adults in general (19)  
Police (10)

**Remember what it's like to be a teenager and younger kid.**

*M, 18, Brattleboro*

**Meet the cops.**

*M, 17, Westminster*

**Give teenagers a break we are not always up to no good.**

*F, 16, Brattleboro*

**Be more open minded about youth, don't just label them delinquents.**

*F, 18, Vernon*

**Shopkeepers shouldn't automatically expect all teenagers who come into stores will steal things.**

*F, 15, Putney*

**Some adults could think of teenagers as good nice people.**

*M, 16, Brattleboro*

**Be nice and smile.**

*M, 16, Brattleboro*

**Get better cops.**

*M, 17, Bellows Falls*

**Terminate the 5 new Police positions that were created.**

*M, 20, Brattleboro*

**Make police harassment toward teenagers more known.**

*M, 18, Putney*

**Stop the racism by police.**

*M, 16, Brattleboro*

**Just start caring more and go the extra mile.**

*M, 18, Brattleboro*

**YOUTH VOICES: Better Education & Schools**

**TOTAL SAYING:**

Improve the schools - physical condition, quantity/quality of classes and teachers (22)  
More types of educational opportunities, such as alternative education (4)  
More/better sex/drug education (2)

*Other*

College tour  
College scholarships (2)  
More career programs (2)  
Less homework  
Later school start time (2)  
Better mental health awareness programs in and out of school  
More tutors in school

**Get walls in my school.**

*M, 16, Bellows Falls*

**Build up the school a little better.**

*F, 15, Bellows Falls*

**More school scholarships/jobs for teens especially with low income.**

*F, 15, Brattleboro*

**Have a place for the drama department.**

*M, 17, Townshend*

**Fund the schools.**

*M, 15, Brattleboro*

**Update the technology of the schools. Do things to make the schools look better.**

*M, 15, Townshend*

**YOUTH VOICES: More Job Opportunities**

**TOTAL SAYING:**

Help us find more/ better jobs. Be willing to hire us. (26)  
Provide job training/internships. (4)



*Other*

Better salaries (2)  
 Have a career center  
 Reduce working age from 15 to 14

Show local businesses that want to hire young workers.

*M, 15, Townshend*

Reach out and make more jobs.

*F, 19, Brattleboro*

More job training for teens.

*F, 15, Brattleboro*

**YOUTH VOICES:**  
**Clean Up the Community**

**TOTAL SAYING:**

Clean up rubbish/trash (16)  
 Fix decay and blight (5)

Clean up the streets.

*M, 17, Bellows Falls*

Try to get people to think that downtown isn't a scummy place to hang out.

*F, 17, Brattleboro*

Try and stop all vandalism.

*M, 18, Bellows Falls*

Clean up trash and rubbish that we all have to look at.

*M, 17, Wilmington*

Make it look nicer.

*F, 16, Townshend*

Clean up parts of the town.

*M, 20, Whitingham*

**YOUTH VOICES:**  
**Get Together as a Community**

**TOTAL SAYING:**

Work/play together as a community. (11)

Get more people involved in the community, such as events and celebrations during holidays.

*M, 17, Westminster Station*

Have a soup kitchen or something like it giving people food and kids the opportunity to help out with their environment.

*F, 17, Brattleboro*

Have more community gatherings (potlucks, festivals, dance parties...).

*M, 20, Brattleboro*

Walkaton or bikathon?

*F, 17, S. Newfane*

More things like Brattfest.

*M, 20, Brattleboro*

Lots more positive attitude.

*M, 15, Bellows Falls*

Hold charity events.

*F, 17, Brattleboro*

Have more outside activities to bring the community together.

*F, 15, Wardsboro*

**YOUTH VOICES:**  
**Deal with the Drug Problem**

**TOTAL SAYING:**

Reduce drug use/help youth stay off or get away from drugs. (19)

Reduce the drugs and bad influences around brattleboro...too many druggies.

*F, 15, Brattleboro*

Try do reduce the number of groups of kids that smoke downtown. Like more cops or watch people.

*F, 15, Brattleboro*

Less bars.

*F, 17, Jamaica*

Not do drugs and drug dealings in harmony parking lot.

*M, 16, Brattleboro*

Keep a closer watch on kids who choose to drink or do drugs.

*F, 17, S. Newfane*

Sell less cigarettes so people won't die.

*M, 15, Bellows Falls*

Crack down on drugs.

*M, 17, Bellows Falls*

Diversion board should have ex-drug users/alcoholics.

*M, 18, Putney*

**YOUTH VOICES:**  
**Adults Should Get Involved**

**TOTAL SAYING:**

Seek youth input and ideas (3)  
 Reach out and help us with our tasks (jobs, education, etc.) (5)  
 Other (5)

Volunteer at boys and girls club

*M, 15, Brattleboro*

**Big brother big sisters**

*F, 18, Vernon*

**Bring back freespirited mentors.**

*F, 20, Brattleboro*

**Try and show a more positive image from the adults.**

*F, 17, Bellows Falls*

**Help out at local schools.**

*M, 17, Brattleboro*

**Talk to and listen to kids.**

*M, 16, Brattleboro*

**YOUTH VOICES:**

**Safety**

**TOTAL SAYING:**

Reduce violence (7)

More/more effective police presence/metal detectors (6)

Reduce crime (2)

**More police presence.**

*M, 17, Bellows Falls*

**Make the area safer.**

*F, 21, Westminster Station*

**YOUTH VOICES:**

**Transportation & Basic Needs**

**TOTAL SAYING:**

Better/more/cheaper public transportation (11)

More social services (such as mental health services) (2)

Other (8)

**More resources for kids to get help with getting their life on track.**

*F, 20, Brattleboro*



**Smoother roads.**

*M, 16, Westminster*

**Have transportation more available.**

*F, 15, Putney*

**Get a grocery store.**

*M, 16, Brattleboro*

**YOUTH VOICES:**

**Leadership**

**TOTAL SAYING:**

Help create youth empowerment/leadership opportunities. (4)

**Talk to young people my age and understand us to figure out what could be done.**

*M, 16, Brattleboro*

**More ways to involve teens in making decisions about their community.**

*F, 15, Brattleboro*

**YOUTH VOICES:**

**Low-cost Lessons**

**TOTAL SAYING:**

Create low-cost opportunities for us to pursue creative activities/ hobbies. (7)

**More music education for a good price.**

*F, 20, Brattleboro*

**Support for independent art and music.**

*F, 19, Brattleboro*

I would really like to see more support for photography in the town; the in-sight gallery is great, but it's the only one.

*F, 19, Brattleboro*

**YOUTH VOICES:**

**Younger Kids**

**TOTAL SAYING:**

Younger kids need more to do and more places to go – parks, organized activities, etc. (7)

**More playgrounds for younger kids, with more stuff in the playground.**

*F, 17, Bellows Falls*

**Cub scouts for the youngins.**

*M, 16, Brattleboro*



BELLOW FALLS



These beautiful flowers really bring out the beauty in Bellows Falls.



People hang shoes on telephone wires when people they know die.



Vandalism or a moving Canvas?

Dari Joy is a place we can be with family and friends to go eat food and ice cream. When Spring comes all of the people get excited because that is when Dari Joy opens.



WILMINGTON



They say that this is a skate park, but when you look at it, it's just a dumb ramp. We need something more flashy, modern and bigger!



I'll collect anything with wolfs on it because they are like me. They don't like being messed with and they don't stay in one spot for a long time.



A lot of people resort to these no matter what age from pressure stress or thinking its cool.



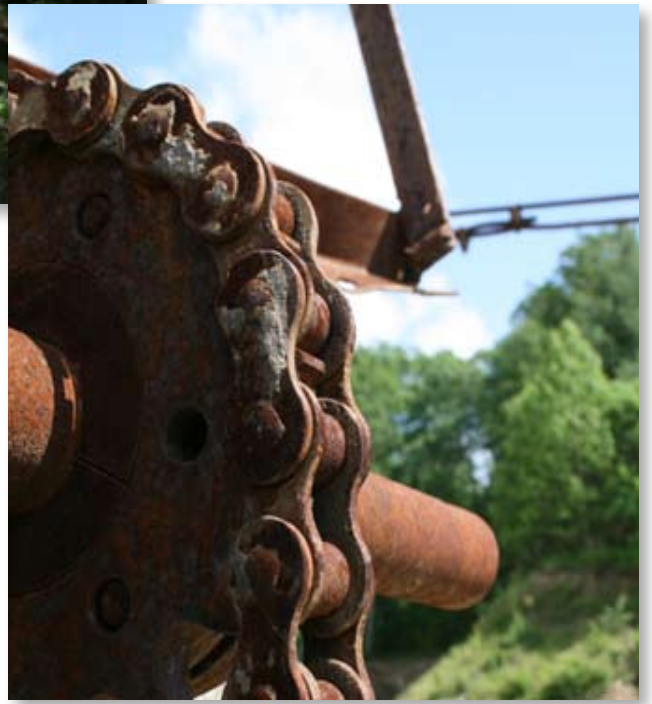
This statue resembles the proud fighters, soldiers, and defenders of this country knowing that they will always take arms and risk their lives to protect this country. A lot of the teens from this town join the military to make a difference.



WEST RIVER VALLEY



We live in a beautiful area, but in rural VT, nothing exciting is very near and with little transportation, there's not much to do.



A scene near Williamsville.



There are a few people who always trash the road I live on. They toss out their beer cans, bottles cigarette packs and fast food wrappers. It makes me mad, what's the point of trashing such a beautiful area?

BRATTLEBORO



Shows how the community can work together to turn something ugly into something better.



Youth need room to grow. Communities need room to grow. We all need to learn how to grow together.



Many of the youth are faced with this image daily. We need to change that!



Music is something I am learning, but I also love to listen to music; it helps me get past tough times.





New England Network for Child, Youth & Family Services

Cindy Carraway-Wilson

Andi Waisman

Melanie Wilson

NEN

PO Box 35

Charlotte, VT 05445

Ph: 802.425.3006

[www.nenetwork.org](http://www.nenetwork.org)