
Editor's Notes

All of us who care about promoting the well-being of our young people have something to contribute. We strive to create a community-wide response that keeps the hope of young people alive, while offering them a range of ways to grow and learn about life. This effort needs to be flexible enough to make use of a wide range of resources while being organized enough to keep them all connected and working together.

Adina Davidson, The Family Center, Somerville,
Massachusetts

THIS ISSUE IS devoted to the connections of youth development and community building. Although there may be much familiarity in the field of youth development as to the principles and practices of working with youth, community building as a field is perhaps not as well known. People are familiar with community organizing, which offers tools and strategies to organize people to create change. This is only one strategy in the tool box of community building. It is also one that may not have lasting effect or offer a systemic solution for transforming communities. Community organizers can often leave out youth, not recognizing this age group as having clout or the ability to understand the dynamics of power, and therefore not enabling them to participate as full players in the drama of community strengthening. Tapping into and creating social capacity across all issues and collective activities is the essence of community building. It offers a wider perspective, recognizing that relationships and networking, and connecting the many issues and people, are the key elements to opening the doors for change.

Ultimately the many stakeholders must be part of the change process and learn to work constructively with one another, and the many issues that people and communities are struggling with must

be linked. Joining people, resources, energy, and talents across a spectrum of groups, organizations, and issues will provide the fertile ground from which the community can respond to the needs of youth. If we recognize that the needs of youth are related to those of the wider community and if we respond accordingly, then we are understanding community building.

The vision includes the creation of a sustained citywide mobilization to bring people and groups together as allied supporters of youth. The mission is to address and connect distinct needs and to ensure that the people involved are:

- Linked by core beliefs about what is needed
- Guided by a shared sense of accountability
- Willing to share their talents and resources
- Accepting of youth sharing in the dynamics of power and decision making
- Receiving the supports that they need in order to be effective
- Driven by a common desire to ensure that all young people and their families have the supports, opportunities, and services needed to prosper and contribute where they live, learn, work, and play

This volume first outlines a framework, reflects about the past ten years, and introduces an innovative, educational perspective. The issue then moves to case examples of community programs with a clinical, educational, youth empowerment, and artistic foci. The final chapter is provided by youth.

Taken together this work shows that it is critical that we create strategic alliances among the full range of organizations, groups, and individuals that invest in youth and their families. It is also essential to forge strong connections with those who are invested in the success of communities.

Joel Nitzberg
Editor

JOEL NITZBERG is a senior faculty member and director of the Division of Lifelong Learning of Cambridge College in Cambridge, MA.