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# WHY US? NEWS

## “It’s All About Connections”

By Lou Gilbert, Executive Director

Dear Friends:

I don’t know what it is about fall, maybe the cooling temperatures or the changing colors that always make me reflect at this time of year. Recently, I have been reflecting on the fact that I first came to work at Y-US ten years ago this past summer. How things have changed in not so short a time! When I started at Y-US, there were not very many of us running a one program agency serving about 70 youth in the southern neighborhoods of Hartford. Today, we employ a staff of twenty-six, managing four programs serving over 400 youth within Connecticut.

Some of the first children and youth with whom I worked are now in their late teens and twenties. Not infrequently do some of these young adults stop by our office to see various staff members that are still here. (We are happy to see that many still feel a “connection” to us after so many years!)

Aside from making me feel old, I am struck by the contrasts in many of their lives. A few whom we thought would be “successful” are in fact sitting in jail today. Others who we did not have much hope for, but helped them as best we could, are struggling to be successful and slowly achieving meaningful employment and families.

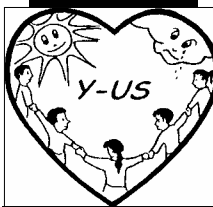
Several staff members and I recently attended a Quinceañera (Latino Sweet 15 Birthday Party). The event was like a Y-US reunion

in many ways, with former children of various ages served by our agency in attendance, as well as several of their parents. It always amazes me the informal connections that people in our community have; word gets around and guests multiply!

Our focus since founding Y-US has always been to support children and youth for the long-term (though not always possible due to funding constraints). You could say that our goal is to stay connected to our youth even after they leave us. One of these long-term children began with us the same year I started in 1995. Now eighteen, Jeff (not his real name) is finishing up his studies at one of the federally-funded Job Corps Centers out-of-state. A mason by training, he has just been recruited by his trades union to serve a two and a half year contract in the Gulf Coast region helping with the rebuilding efforts following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. It is with pride that we wish him and many others like him well as they contribute to serving our human family.

Lastly, while we are on the topic of connections, please see our request on page two to help us connect to your friends and colleagues and spread the word about Y-US.

In closing, I wish you the time to reflect during this season of change and the time to connect with people and things that are important to you.



Serving Community Youth Since 1989

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What's New this Fall?

We are thankful for the help of a group of employees from Walker Systems Support in Farmington led by Kate Emery, who volunteered at our Retreat House in September. The group of 30 people dedicated their morning to a fall interior and exterior clean-up, some painting, and various odd jobs. As a result, the space again looks clean, bright and appealing for the youth we serve. Incidentally, the Retreat House is used Monday through Thursday for the middle group's (ages 11-15) after school support program and at least two Saturdays a month for therapeutic recreation activities for all ages.



Walker Systems Support employees install a sports bench at the Retreat House

Other volunteer groups deserving thanks include Pratt & Whitney employees who volunteered with our youth at the Retreat House in August, and the Newington Rotary Club who hosted an annual cookout at the Retreat House in September.

We would also like to acknowledge two in-kind donors—Bethel AME Church of Bloomfield for the donation of school supplies, and Corpus Christi Church of Wethersfield for the donation of snacks and school supplies. *Many thanks to these people and many others!*

Welcome to Sean Kane of the Jesuit Volunteer Corps, who recently began a one year assignment with Y-US as a Youth Worker. Sean is a 2005 graduate of Gonzaga University in Washington State who originates from Columbus, Montana.



Y-US WISH LIST

Please note that you may now contribute to Y-US online through our website [www.y-us.org](http://www.y-us.org) See the "Just Donate" button on our home page!

Can you help us with two new play items for our younger children?

- 1) Little Tikes Sit and Store Shelf (Target)
- 2) Little Tykes Sand & Water Play (Wal-Mart)

Also, please contact Kate or Kelly at the number below, in mid-November if you, your friends, or fellow employees would like to be a "Secret Santa" for one of our kids during the holiday season. We will also accept donations of new toys for youth between the ages of 5-15. See our website at [www.y-us.org](http://www.y-us.org) for specific items on our holiday wish list.

**PLEASE HELP US GET CONNECTED!**

We need to spread the word about the good work that Y-US does for at-risk youth in the community. We have a good story to tell and we would like more opportunities to tell it!

Do you belong to a religious, fraternal or community group that may be interested in learning more about Y-US? We would be happy to visit your group and talk about our history, programs, and volunteer opportunities. Groups we have addressed include women's clubs, Rotary clubs, school groups and social action committees. Please call Kate Kerchaert at extension 109 for more information or suggestions. You can help us expand our network of friends and supporters!

The Y-US newsletter is published in the spring and the fall. For more information, please contact:

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"THE  
GREATEST  
GOOD YOU  
CAN DO FOR  
ANOTHER IS  
NOT JUST  
TO SHARE  
YOUR  
RICHES,  
BUT TO  
REVEAL TO  
HIM HIS  
OWN"

— Benjamin Disraeli

## Y-US Learns about People in the Community...

The first week in October was “People in the Community” week at Y-US. This theme was chosen to introduce the youth to community figures and help them understand that a community is a team made up of many different people and services. We started off the week with a trip to the Hartford Public Library on Main Street. The kids had a tour, visited the children’s room, read books, and began the application process for their own library cards. Next, we visited the local Fire Station at Park & Affleck Streets for a tour and talk about fire safety. The firefighters showed us their complete fire gear and the kids got to sit in a real fire truck. Lastly, we had a visit from Hartford Police who brought a K-9 police dog named Duke to our offices. Duke demonstrated his detective skills by locating one of our staff members who was hiding in a closet! The kids ended the week with some games about different figures in the community to reinforce the theme.



**Hartford Police Officer Dennis O'Connor shows off his K-9 Partner "Duke" at Y-US.**

“ THE  
MIRACLE IS  
THIS —THE  
MORE WE  
SHARE, THE  
MORE WE  
HAVE.”

- Leonard  
Nimoy

### Quotes from Y-US kids...

*What did you like about the summer program?*

“It was fun when we went to Six Flags because we got to bring our families and meet new people—other people’s parents”

“We went to a New Jersey water park. I was scared at first but I tried it and it was fun!”

“I liked meeting some of the new staff. They are good!”

### Summer Fun at Y-US!!

During the summer, our program hours change to allow for more day time activities including lots of outdoor recreation. This helps working parents with day time care and also let’s our kids experience the joy and fun of summer. Most youth participate in at least one overnight camping trip to a local state park where there is plenty of swimming and canoeing. Other recreational outings include trips to the beach or lake, baseball games, cookouts, a fishing derby and roller skating. We try to balance all the recreation with some educational activities. This year they included a visit from “Mad Science” to make slippery slime, a trip to the Trolley Museum and a tour of the State Capitol. Family outings included a trip to Six Flags Amusement park and the Ron-A-Roll roller rink.

**For information on supporting Y-US through your estate planning, please call us or consult with Leave a Legacy at:**



[www.CTphilanthropy.org/lal](http://www.CTphilanthropy.org/lal)

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**WHY US? NEWS**

*Did you Know?*

*Y-US Mission Statement*

**For the fiscal year ending 6/30/05,  
Y-US served:**

- 411 Connecticut youth
- 53% were male and 47% female
- Approximately 80% of youth served lived in some form of foster care
- 42% of youth lived in Hartford with other concentrations in Bloomfield, Windsor, East Hartford, Bristol, New Britain, & Manchester
- Positive program outcomes included improvement in communication skills (95%), improvement in behavior (80%), and increased ability to make friends (80%)

Y-US, Inc. is a Connecticut-based nonprofit organization helping youth who have experienced trauma develop into healthy and responsible people. Y-US strives to improve lives and futures through peer support programs promoting positive youth development.

- Adopted 7/16/02