Alexandria Youth Ambassadors: Youth Safety and Resilience Recommendations

January 23, 2024

Review of Key YS&R Activities

➢Focus groups with youth gathering information on:

- *Their knowledge and participation in youth programs*
- *Places and elements that make them feel safe or unsafe;*
- *Best approaches for outreach, engagement, and working with adults;*
- *Interest in participating in future youth engagement initiatives.*

➢Release of Youth Safety and Resilience Report

➢Enhanced Youth Resource Page and Engagement of Youth Serving Partners

➢Youth and Caring Adult Summit

➢Recommendation Development and Follow Up

Alexandria Youth Ambassadors (AYA) Program:
Enhancing Youth Safety and Resilience

Alexandria Youth Ambassadors (AYA) Program
- Initiated in response to the tragic killing of a youth on May 22, 2022, highlighting the urgent need for proactive measures.
- The primary objective of the program is to enhance youth safety and resilience, addressing the root causes of violence while fostering a supportive environment for Alexandria's youth. Based on the feedback from our first initiative, the Youth and Caring Adult Summit, we want to highlight our recommendations to improve youth safety and resilience in our community.
- Program is compromised of 10 Alexandria City High School students who are committed to promoting positive changes within their peer group, as well as with the schools and broader community. The AYA meet 6 to 8 hours each week.

Enhancing Youth Safety and Resilience

The importance and benefits gained from enhancing youth safety and resilience.

Community Well-Being:

- Contributes to the overall well-being of the community, fostering a sense of security and trust among residents.

Long-Term Positive Outcomes:

- Sets the foundation for positive long-term outcomes, reducing the likelihood of negative life trajectories associated with violence or trauma

Prevention of Future Issues:

- Preventive strategy, reducing the occurrence of violence, crime, and other issues that may arise from unaddressed challenges during adolescence.

Community Cohesion:

- Build stronger community bonds, promoting collaboration among residents, schools, and local organizations for a collective effort in creating a secure environment

Reduction in Crime:

- Creating a safe environment for youth helps mitigate the factors that contribute to deviant behavior, reducing crime rates and improving the of school neighborhoods.

Increasing Youth Safety and Resilience:
Key Recommendations

Communicating About Resources in the Community.

Awareness Gap

Many youth are currently unaware of the numerous programs available in the community.

Lack of awareness contributes to missed opportunities for personal development, recreation, and social engagement.

Empowering Youth With Information

Improved communication serves as an empowerment tool for youth.

Awareness of available programs enables them to make informed decisions about how to spend their time, enhancing personal growth.

Diverse Communication Methods

Recognizing that different individuals have varied communication preferences; the Youth Ambassadors propose using a variety of methods.
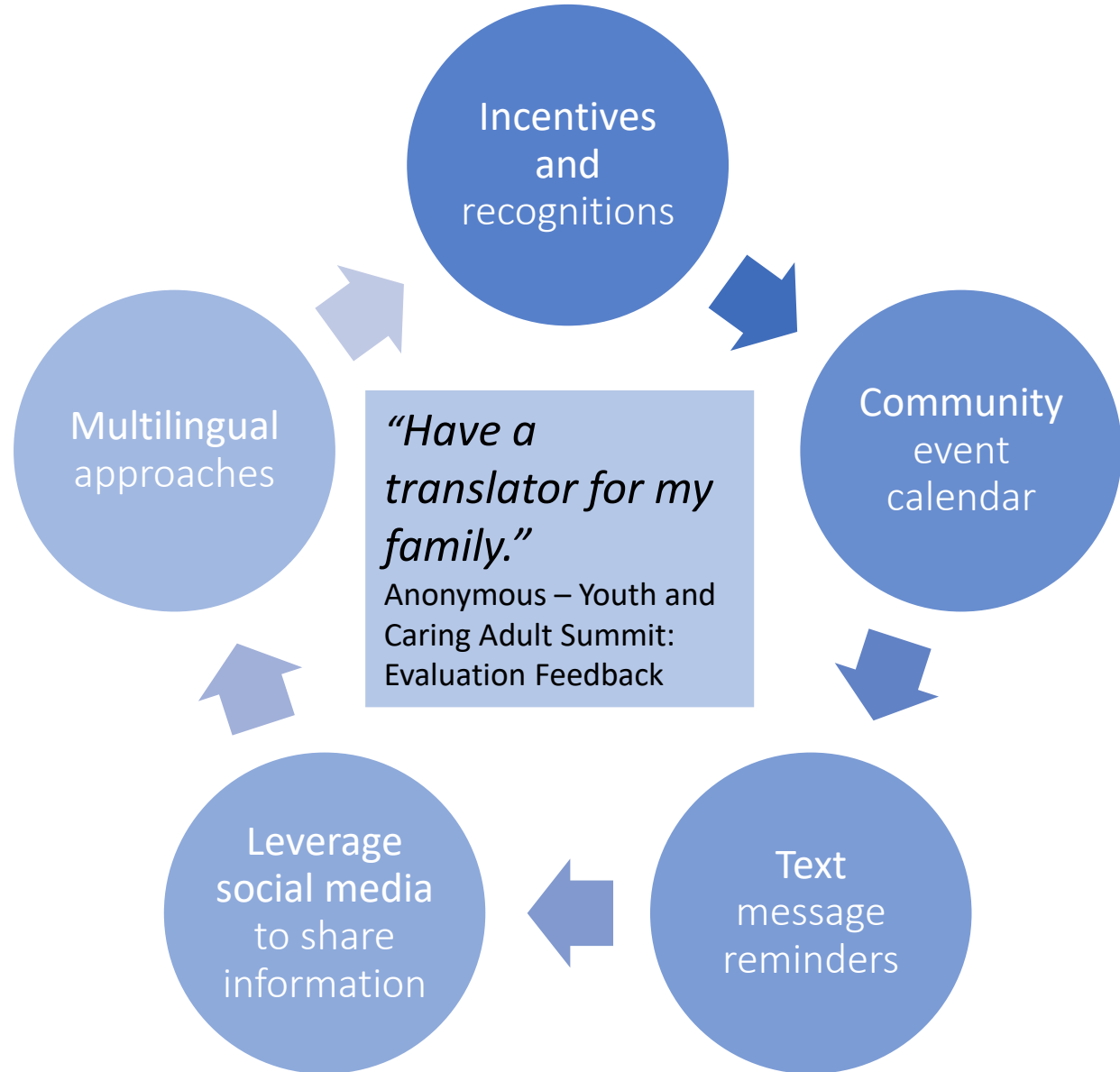
This includes leveraging school and school-based programs, as well as electronic communication methods, to reach a broad audience.

Increased Participation Rates

Effective communication directly correlates with increased participation rates in community events and programs.

By addressing the awareness gap, we can anticipate a surge in the engagement of youth in various community initiatives.

Recommended Strategies for Improving Communication

Incentives and recognitions

Community event calendar

Text message reminders

Leverage social media to share information

Multilingual approaches

"Have a translator for my family."
Anonymous – Youth and Caring Adult Summit: Evaluation Feedback

Reasons for Creating a Dedicated Space for Teens

"Having a dedicated space for teens where they can gather, engaging positive activities, and find support is vital to their overall well-being." - Submit participant.

Intergenerational Tension

Crisis Response

Targeted Resources

One-Stop Shop

Increased Peer Interaction

Tailored Support

Dedicated Space for Teens: Proposed Features

Tailored Support	A dedicated space for teens, operating outside of school hours, allows for targeted resources and support systems to address their unique needs during a critical developmental stage.
Peer Interaction	It fosters a community where teens can interact with peers facing similar challenges, promoting social connections and a sense of belonging.
Safe Environment	Creating a safe and monitored space ensures that teens can explore their interests and share experiences without encountering inappropriate content or potential online risks.
Specialized Content	Tailoring content to the interests and concerns of teens ensures that the information provided is relevant, engaging, and resonates with their experiences.
Identity Exploration	Teens can use dedicated spaces to explore and express their identities, interests, and values, contributing to personal growth and self-discovery.
Mental Health Support	Providing resources for mental health awareness and support is crucial during adolescence to help teens navigate the challenges they may face.
Positive Role Models	Teens can benefit from exposure to positive role models and mentors within a dedicated space, guiding them through decision-making and personal development.
Privacy and Confidentiality	Having a dedicated space ensures that teens can discuss personal matters more openly, knowing that their conversations are within a designated and private environment.
Empowerment	By having their own space, teens are empowered to take ownership of their experiences, opinions, and contributions, fostering a sense of autonomy and responsibility.

Concerns Related with Transportation for Youth

Transportation Recommendations Tailored for Youth

Expand

- Expand Transportation Services
  - Increase current operating hours and routes of the DASH bus.
  - Provide additional services to accommodate the schedules of programs/events catering to youth.

Increase

- Increase collaboration
  - Collaborate with local transportation services to address the specific needs of youth.
  - Explore extending bus services during peak hours for youth-related programs.

Implement

- Implement Flexible Solutions
  - Explore flexible transportation solutions, such as on-demand services, during late hours.
  - Tailor transportation options to the unique needs of youth attending programs that extend into the evening.

Provide

- Provide Shuttle Service
  - Establish a community shuttle to transport youth to and from programs during extended hours.
  - Explore partnerships with local businesses or organizations to increase youth transportation options.

Raise

- Raise Awareness about Existing Resources
  - Clearly communicate information about available transportation options for youth.
  - Collaborate with schools, youth-serving organizations, and sources that youth rely on to share information about transportation offerings.

Provide Diverse Programs for Teen Engagement

Provide a variety of programs offered for teens and engage youth in the planning and execution of the program. Some of the recommended offerings include:

Digital Awareness Campaigns	Peer-to-Peer Webinars	Artistic Expression Workshops	Digital Storytelling
Interactive Workshops at Schools	Digital Mentorship Programs	Community Garden Projects	Fitness Challenges
	Positive Affirmation Campaigns	Digital Publications	

Implementing Proposed Recommendations

Engage
- Actively engage youth throughout the process

Provide
- Provide free programming and services to increase access

Offer
- Offer programming that addresses issues relevant to teens' lives