

## **Board of Directors Information Packet**

### TABLE OF CONTENTS

Getting to Know the WYO	
Mission and Objectives of the WYO.....	2
Current services.....	3
Facts & Statistics.....	4
WYO Board membership	
Duties and Obligations.....	5
Advisory Board.....	6

**Thank you for considering Board Membership!**

## Getting to know the WYO: Mission & Objectives

### Mission

To foster individual development in junior high and high school youth throughout the North Shore by providing adult to youth mentoring, prevention services, and opportunities for leadership, citizenship, and education within a safe, informal environment.

### Philosophy and Objectives

The program's underlying philosophy has remained constant over the years. As described in the *Winnetka Talk* as early as 1973, the WYO's basic purpose is to "give young people a place to spend time after school and on weekends in an informal atmosphere; it's a place to relax, meet friends, do homework, and talk about problems."

While the basic needs of teens have not changed much, the environment in which teens are coming of age has changed dramatically. Even in close-knit communities with much to offer their young people, teens are faced every day with difficult choices involving alcohol, drugs, and violence. Many teens face pressure from their peer groups when they do not participate in such destructive behavior, making it more important than ever to provide young people with positive choices. Therefore, the WYO strives to provide teens with viable, safe alternatives during their formative years by:

- Providing a positive, safe environment where young people can be recognized as individuals
- Engaging youth in activities and programs designed to develop leadership skills and constructive behavior patterns
- Sponsoring activities that promote tolerance and understanding of others
- Assisting in meeting youth needs for friendship, status, safety, and adult mentoring
- Facilitating cooperation and communication between the teen population and the community at large
- Enlisting the support of community members, agencies, and institutions to share financial and physical resources to strengthen services to youth

In an area where the predominant high school contains 4,000 students, the WYO provides a space small enough for teens to be recognized as individuals, but large enough for them to become an integral part of a group that makes positive contributions to its community. In addition to providing teens with safe, positive alternatives to the prevailing youth culture, we provide a valuable support network of friends, mentors, and professionals who can provide assistance in times of crisis, large or small. Teenage life is increasingly complex, and the WYO is available when needed.

The WYO is not a substitute for parental guidance. We are a service to complement and support teens outside of their daily lives and we partner with parents as well as other community agencies to support a holistic approach to wellness. That means nurturing each youth's individuality, assessing their strengths and weaknesses and building a base of support that they can lean on in times of crisis.

## The WYO's Current Services

The Winnetka Youth Organization is a private, non-profit, community social service agency that has served Winnetka for forty years. Each year we make over 3,000 contacts with local youth and the support structure and trust we build helps them through the difficulties of adolescence and the pressure to succeed in area schools. We are open every day except Mondays afterschool and late on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays. The center is run by two full-time staff, the Executive Director and the Program Director, as well as 4 part-time youth workers who work evening and weekend shifts and act as mentors.

### **Recreational**

The YO is first and foremost a place for junior high and high school age teens to relax, unwind, relieve stress, and develop as individuals. We allow this by providing a space filled with games (pool, ping-pong, foosball, air hockey, wii, board games) and staffed by caring young adults. We offer a variety of programs after school and on the weekends including yoga nights, game tournaments, movie marathons, writing workshops, poetry slams, comedy club meetings, art projects, trips downtown to go thrift shopping and holiday shopping, outings to festivals during the summer, lock-ins, dances, barbeques and picnics, beach parties, open mic nights and concerts.

### **Leadership**

Within our space we encourage teens to be leaders, whether it be with an internship over the summer, sponsorship of a senior project, or through our youth board. Most of our regular teens join the youth board as they progress through high school to help get the next group of YO-sters involved, and to provide insight to our program administrators about what sorts of programs to offer. Each semester the Youth Board elects officials to manage social service projects, publicity events, fundraising efforts and the board as a whole. These positions provide students the freedom to excel, and it is often in students that take these leadership roles that we see the most growth.

### **Citizenship**

We also encourage our teens to give back through monthly collection drives, soup kitchen visits, and our annual service trip. In the past we have volunteered with Chicagoland organizations such as WTTW, Hilda's Place, the Chicago Food Depository, and the Night Ministry, as well as local organizations such as the NTT Food Pantry, Winnetka Park District and Heller Nature Center. For our annual trip we take a group of around 10 teens to a unique destination to live and work in a community for a week. During the summer of 2008 our trip took us to Tahlequah, Oklahoma where we stayed in a small town in Cherokee Nation and spent the week revitalizing community buildings.

### **Education**

Although we are a space where teens can unwind from school we often incorporate discussions about political, moral, social, and emotional issues into fun activities in order to create a safe space where teens can get to know themselves, explore their voice and connect with the staff on a deeper level. That type of interaction is really at the core of what we do and why we are important. Some examples include concerts that benefit various charity organizations, our news and awareness posters throughout the center, and book and movie discussion nights each month.

### **Prevention**

In recent years the YO has stepped up its efforts to reach teens at a younger age in order to foster the base of support earlier on in their life and help prevent future crises and promote healthy choices. The YO has always been a safe alternative to the dangerous and destructive activities in which many teens on the

North Shore participate. In the 2006 NTHS Youth Risk Behavior Survey, it was reported that 27% of NTHS students engage in binge drinking; this is 1.5% higher than the national average. Even more disturbingly, 46% of seniors and 37% of juniors reported engaging in binge drinking within the last 30 days.

In the spring of 2009 the WYO opened to Junior High Students two days a week so that younger teens ages 10 - 13 could see the center and get comfortable with it and the staff before they transition into high school. The WYO has also joined the New Trier Township Prevention Council (NTTPC) which is a coalition of community representatives that works to decrease substance abuse among youth in NTT.

## Get the FACTS about the WYO

### Location

Lower Level of the Winnetka Community House at 620 Lincoln Ave. Our entrance is off of the pine street parking lot and is pictured to the right.

### Hours

Tues 3-6  
 Weds 3-6  
 Thurs 3-9  
 Fri 3-11  
 Sat 3-11  
 Sun 2-6



### Agency Funding

Total Agency Budget  
 \$117,070

#### Grant Agencies:

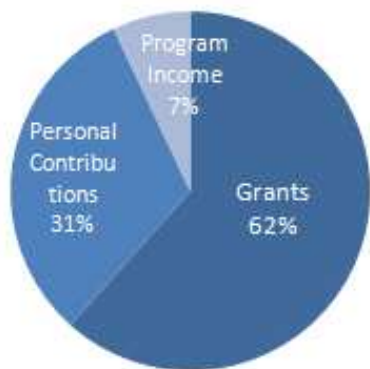
- New Trier Township
- Winnetka-Northfield United Way
- Wilmette Youth Commission
- Winnetka Park District
- Winnetka-Northfield Rotary Club
- Christ Church Winnetka
- Winnetka Congregational Church

**Teens Served last year: 837**  
**Total Contacts: 2,639**

#### Age Breakdown by Grade\*:

7 & 8th	13.09%
9th	8.92%
10th	18.85%
11th	27.48%
12th	24.60%
Graduates	7.05%

\*statistics from the 08-09 school year



#### What communities do we serve?

Home Town	% of Total
Winnetka	27%
Wilmette	22.5%
Glencoe	11.4%
Glenview	5.4%
Northbrook	5.4%
Northfield	5%
Lake Forest	3.9%
Chicago	3.8%
Buffalo Grove	2.9%
Kenilworth	2.9%
Other/Not Reported	9.8%

For more information visit [www.winnetkayo.org](http://www.winnetkayo.org)

## WYO Board Membership

Our WYO Board of Directors is an integral part of our organization structure, and Board Membership will allow you to take an active role in the safety and well-being of local teens. With our new strategic plan in place there has never been a better time to join the WYO Board of Directors, whether you want to contribute your experience in non-profit business and fundraising, or simply provide your insight and knowledge as a parent and/or community member. Duties of a Board Member are as follows:

- **Attendance at Board Meetings**

The WYO Board meets on the second Wednesday of every month, except August. Meetings are in the Community House, and run from 7pm until about 8:30pm. Members are encouraged to make a commitment to attend all meetings; however, alternative arrangements can be made with advance notice.

- **Familiarization with the WYO's Staff and Programs**

Board members receive monthly reports from the WYO staff prior to each board meeting in order to keep members up to date on program success and new initiatives. Board members should make sure to read over the report before each meeting and bring questions and ideas for improvement.

- **Understanding our Financial Resources**

The WYO has historically had a hard time procuring grants from government and private funders due to the fact that these monies are typically set aside for underprivileged communities. Therefore, it is up to the parents and community leaders of the North Shore to work to make a difference in the lives of local youth. The Board is responsible for finding new sources of funding and maintaining relationships with our current supporters. As part of this duty, Board Members plan two to three fundraising events per year. Each year over a third of the money needed to run the WYO is raised directly by the Board.

- **Fund Letter** - The annual winter fund letter allows us to raise awareness of our agency within the community while we raise funds to keep our doors open. New members are encouraged to bring new contacts to our lists and give input on fund letter layout and wording.

- **Annual Benefit** - Each spring we hold a Benefit at a local venue or restaurant with a widely varying theme. Usually the benefit includes dinner or appetizers, drinks, auction and/or raffle. Board members coordinate the event with the Executive Director and help solicit donations from community partners.

- **Display a Commitment to and advocate for the youth of the community**

As a Board Member, you will be a representative of the WYO in our community. The effect we have by speaking positively of the teens in our community is our greatest means of raising awareness of the WYO's services.

- **Personal Donation**

As a Board Member, you will be asked to make a donation to the WYO each year that is personally significant to you. This can be in the form of in-kind donations to the teen center or to a fundraising event, or a financial contribution. Many Board Members choose to make this donation in the form of a ticket to our annual benefit.

- **Board Recruitment**

If you decide to join our Board of Directors, we ask that you help to build and strengthen our Board by referring and recruiting new and replacement Board Members.

## **WYO Advisory Board Membership**

The WYO Advisory Board is an excellent option for community members who have busy schedules but would still like to support us by offering important insight in their area of expertise and participating in community events. Examples of advisors include Clinical Advisor, Legal Advisor, Education Advisor, Financial Advisor, etc. We are currently in special need of people who can act as liaisons between New Trier High School and our organization. However, we appreciate your expertise in any field, including parenting! Advisory Board member duties are as follows:

- **Provide insight related to your area of expertise**

When a staff member or board member has a question you can answer (i.e. about understanding our lease, or finding a new insurance agent, etc), we might call you for help. As an advisor, you will provide your contact information to the Executive Director and the Board Chairperson in case an issue arises that you can help us to resolve. This means that you support us simply by being available once in a while, and your free time remains free!

- **Attend an annual meeting**

The Advisors are asked to attend one board meeting per year, in May, when we approve our budget and do staff evaluations. Attendance at this meeting allows you to provide insight in a more public forum when it can be of the most use to our organization, and consequently, to local teens.

- **Provide fundraising assistance and referrals**

The WYO is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization operating exclusively for charitable purposes. We often work with socially responsible companies through corporate giving and fund-matching campaigns. Advisors play a critical role in referring and maintaining business contacts within the community to help us further our mission and provide valuable services to youth.

## **Thank you for considering WYO Board Membership!**

We appreciate your interest in supporting local youth!

We sincerely hope you will take the next step and join our Board of Directors or Advisory Board.

If you would like to join, or if you would like more information about anything in this packet, please do not hesitate to call Joanna Swift, Executive Director, at (847) 446-0443 or email her at [admin.wyo@gmail.com](mailto:admin.wyo@gmail.com).