



## What's this?

Welcome to *Innovate*, the newsletter of the Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development. This quarterly publication will connect the ideas and individuals that are creating change and advancing the field of youth development. We hope you find these stories and tools useful and look forward to your input and ideas.

## Youth-Focused Grant Making in Action: The Time Warner Youth Advisory Board

In 2003, Time Warner's Office of Corporate Responsibility engaged the Innovation Center to help create a youth advisory board to provide input on the company's new youth-focused grant making strategies. This advisory group includes eight young people that consult with staff on grant making,



**Time Warner has dedicated itself to the development of the next generation of leaders from among diverse and underserved youth.**

to translate this commitment into philanthropic programs that incorporated the youth voice in a meaningful way. With years of experience helping organizations develop and implement youth-oriented initiatives, the Innovation Center was asked to help. Elayne Dorsey, *Senior Director of Training and Field Services*, headed up the Innovation Center team on the project. The planning process began with a series of questions, including:

- What are the strategic opportunities and methods to make the best use of young peoples' time and potential contributions?
- What are the training needs of the young people and the Time Warner staff?

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planning and program development. The Innovation Center's role was to gather advice from Time Warner employees, conduct a series of training sessions for adult staff and youth advisors to prepare them for the work, and to provide sustained support as the process began.

Time Warner Inc. is one of the world's leading media and entertainment companies, whose businesses include filmed entertainment, interactive services, television

networks, cable systems and publishing. On a corporate level, Time Warner has dedicated itself to the development of the next generation of leaders from among diverse and underserved youth. In 2003, the question for *Vice President for Programs Pam Stevens* and her staff at Time Warner's Office of Corporate Responsibility was how

## NEW from the Innovation Center

### ■ Learning and Leading: A Tool Kit for Youth Development and Civic Activism

Drawing on lessons from the Youth Leadership for Development Initiative, this tool kit includes practical training, activities and resources on civic activism as a strategy for developing personal, community, and organizational leadership.

### ■ Lessons in Leadership: How Young People Change Their Communities and Themselves and Extending the Reach of Youth Development through Civic Activism

Youth Leadership for Development Initiative research that documents how innovative strategies from across the country challenge young people to become agents of change to the benefit of themselves and their communities.

### ■ PERC website (<http://ase.tufts.edu/adsiper/>)

An online clearinghouse of evaluation and planning tools, kept fresh by a community of practitioners and researchers who share their resources, ideas, and suggestions to improve evaluation of youth development work.

### ■ Creating Change: How Organizations Connect with Youth, Build Communities and Strengthen Themselves

Stories from extraordinary individuals and organizations that explore the complex links between youth development, community engagement, and social justice.

TO ORDER, ACCESS, OR LEARN MORE about these and other products from the Innovation Center, visit our website at [www.theinnovationcenter.org](http://www.theinnovationcenter.org)

## From the President

WENDY WHEELER, *President*

*Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development*



I'm very pleased to welcome you to this inaugural issue of the Innovation Center's *Innovate* – a quarterly newsletter that will highlight best practices in youth and community development and tell the stories of young people who are making a difference in the lives of those around them.

One of our goals in starting this publication is to encourage a continuing dialog about innovation. At the core of the Innovation Center's work is participation, and in communicating with all our friends and colleagues through this publication, we will be trying to make sure that your voices come through loud and clear. The lessons that we've learned are, after all, lessons that we have learned together. It may seem obvious, but change in our communities only occurs when people come together with a commitment to find a new way. There's no formula for all of this – no preconceived, cookie-cutter solution that can be imposed from the outside. Organizations like ours do their best work when they facilitate youth and community involvement and provide a supportive environment for exploration and problem solving – it's people in the community who ultimately make change happen and who live with the results.

The Innovation Center's primary goal is to learn what works, use what we learn to inform the field, and translate it into practical tools that enable organizations to work more effectively with young people. One of *Innovate's* regular features will be a section on new resources from the Innovation Center that have been developed for use by youth and community leaders around the country. We hope that these manuals and tool kits will have wide dissemination and provide the basis for meaningful change.

In this issue, you'll learn about how Time Warner became one of the first corporations in America to engage young people in the company's philanthropic activities. By creating a youth advisory board to provide input on its new youth-focused grant making strategies, Time Warner was able to hear from the young people who form such a large part of their customer base. This simple but extraordinary commitment, which started at the top with Time Warner CEO Dick Parsons, is something that other companies could and should emulate.

I am always amazed by the generosity of people in the community who are at the heart of our work to unleash the potential of youth, adults, and communities to work together to create a just and equitable society. From community volunteers to colleagues in the field to corporate leaders and government officials, and most importantly the young people themselves, all of you have given of yourselves to make a difference. We're very proud to be a part of your efforts.

## How to Reach Us: [www.theinnovationcenter.org](http://www.theinnovationcenter.org)

Share your reactions to this issue, ideas for future issues, or suggestions for ways we can create change together. Contact us at **Innovation Center for Community and Youth Development:**

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Would you prefer to receive *Innovate* electronically? Let us know by calling or emailing us.

- What are the opportunities to create youth advisory structures that reflect the geographic and program focus of the organization?
- How and when can input from youth advisory structures best inform the corporate planning cycle?

The youth advisory board structure evolved in a series of discussions with Time Warner staff and took final shape during the first meeting of the board itself. Dorsey talked with each young person individually before the board's first meeting to help increase their comfort level with the process. She says that the Innovation Center's goal was "to create an environment that unleashes trust and creativity, where new connections are made and where people work

chance to convert all the good intentions into action.

In the course of the May 2004 meeting that lasted for a day and a half, youth advisory board members and Time Warner staff members reviewed over 100 grant applications, eventually selecting 20 for funding. Board members were paired with Time Warner employees and each team was given a stack of applications to review and asked to come back to the larger group with a recommendation. There were some disagreements between the young people and their teammates, but according to advisory member Christine Mendoza, "In almost every case the younger board member was able to convince the larger group that they had a better sense of the which organizations had the best youth-focused projects."

youth involvement in corporate philanthropy. **Wendy Wheeler**, *President* of the Innovation Center, notes that one of the most important outcomes of this project is that "we brought a diverse group of young people from marginalized communities to the table with people from one of the



*Youth Advisory Board in action*

By engaging its youth advisory board in the company's grant making activities, Time Warner has created a successful model for

largest corporations in America. We helped them learn to trust and value one another as partners. This is pretty revolutionary, in my view." ■



***Time Warner Youth Advisory Board***

together and listen to each other in new ways." Everyone involved demonstrated strong commitment to listen and learn from each other. "I was surprised at how easily the youth and adults came together," said Time Warner's Stevens. "The young people are truly interested in the work and open about sharing their advice and expertise. We developed a real team."

The eight youth advisors, who range in age from 14 to 22 and come from communities all around the U.S., are a diverse group, with a wide range of interests, backgrounds, and education levels. Some were skeptical at first, wondering if they could really have an impact on the company's philanthropic giving. Staff members also had questions. Would the young people understand the company's approach to philanthropy and be able to play a constructive role? But both youth and adults stuck to their commitment to make it work and in the process of the 2004 summer grant review they had a

**Profile**

**CHRISTINE MENDOZA**

*Time Warner Youth Advisory Board*



At 22, Christine Mendoza is an accomplished documentary filmmaker who has been teaching her craft for the past three years. A senior at Hunter College in Manhattan, Christine is pursuing a degree in Media, with a minor in Sociology and is interested in a career in broadcast journalism.

Christine is one of eight members of Time Warner's Youth Advisory Board, which has provided direct guidance and feedback about the company's youth-based grant making activities over the past year. Christine thinks that her time on the board has been worthwhile: "When I first learned that I'd been nominated for the board I knew that the Time Warner position would look good on my resume. I was, however, a little skeptical that the board would actually do anything. But after we met for the first time, I understood that the people at Time Warner were serious about listening to us and giving us a voice in deciding how they were going to distribute their summer grant money."

Christine has come a long way from her days as a young teenager in New York City. One of three children, she was raised by her mother, who was single and on welfare. She dropped out of high school at 15 and moved away from home. Although she reentered high school at 16, she says that she was "just going through the motions" until she chose to do an internship at the Educational Video Center, a pioneer in teaching young people documentary production and media analysis.

Christine found new opportunities for growth at the meetings of the Time Warner advisory board, which is composed of young people of very different backgrounds. She notes that, "All of us have strong personalities, but the discussions are positive - we share ideas and feed off each others' questions. I realized during the meetings how important it is to be patient and listen to everyone before moving to a conclusion.

Christine has also learned a great deal about how a corporation works, especially in terms of how they manage their philanthropic activities. She speaks highly about the dedication of the Time Warner staff, but was surprised by how seriously they took input from the advisory board: "They asked us for advice about getting the word out into the community about their grant programs. I mean, here's this giant media company asking a bunch of high school and college students about how to get the word out. "

## Calendar of Events

### ■ October 3, 2004 – October 6, 2004

National Extension Association for Family & Consumer Sciences  
ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
Nashville, TN  
Exhibit and workshop on the Innovation Center Building Community process.

### ■ October 11, 2004 – October 13, 2004

COUNCIL ON FOUNDATIONS 20TH FALL CONFERENCE FOR COMMUNITY FOUNDATIONS  
Minneapolis, MN  
Innovation Center exhibit.

### ■ October 28, 2004 – October 29, 2004

ATLANTIC REGIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING CONFERENCE  
Philadelphia, PA  
Workshops on evaluation outcomes and service-learning as a strategy for community and youth development.

### ■ October 31, 2004 – November 4, 2004

National Association of Extension 4-H Agents  
58th ANNUAL CONFERENCE  
Oklahoma City, OK  
Exhibit and workshops on service-learning, evaluation, and youth development as a strategy for civic engagement.

### ■ November 4, 2004 – November 6, 2004

INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP ASSOCIATION: IMPROVING LEADERSHIP AROUND THE WORLD CONFERENCE  
Washington, DC  
Workshop on the lessons and implications of the Youth Leadership for Development Initiative.

### ■ November 4, 2004 – November 6, 2004

Search Institute  
HEALTHY COMMUNITIES-HEALTHY YOUTH CONFERENCE  
St. Paul, MN  
Exhibit and workshop on planning and evaluation of community and youth development.

### ■ November 19, 2004 – November 21, 2004

Youth and College Leadership Summit  
6th ANNUAL SUMMIT  
Washington, D.C.  
Workshop on the Building Community process and Youth-Adult Partnership process.



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



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