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## Great Minds at Work

### From the President



WENDY WHEELER, President,  
Innovation Center for Community  
and Youth Development

What do you get when you mix young people, adults, service-learning, collective leadership and the Arizona desert? The first Learning Group Meeting for the [Innovation Center's Collective Leadership Works](#) initiative!

From December 11-13, youth and adult participants from Youth Development Training and Resource Center (YDTRC) in New Haven, CT, the Monterey Bay Aquarium working in Watsonville, CA, and Tohono O'odham Community Action (TOCA) in Sells, AZ gathered in Tucson, Arizona for the project's first learning group meeting. One of the meeting's many highlights included a tour of the Tohono O'odham nation, a lunch of native foods, and an evening celebration with the community. Said one participant, "The trip to the O'odham Reservation gave me ideas about communities - it was just amazing."

We couldn't sum it up better ourselves. Participants learned how their peers are implementing collective leadership and service-learning in their communities, and had the opportunity to share their own work. Several young people credited their host agencies with creating opportunities for youth voice. In the words of one participant from Watsonville: "It seems like in other groups they kind of tell us what to do. In this group we get it done." By encouraging young people to play a lead role in their service-learning projects, these agencies are promoting a positive investment in community life.

Check out the [Collective Leadership Works](#) portion of our website for updates on what all the sites are doing, and stay tuned to hear about their future projects.

You can also browse the [online photo gallery](#) for images from the weekend.

### Activity of the Month: Talking the Talk

This activity, "Talking the Talk," was one of the most effective and popular activities from the Learning Group Meeting. It engages participants in actively learning about the principles and process of both collective leadership and service-learning. [Read more...](#)

### Partner of the Month: New Haven, Connecticut YMCA

In New Haven, Connecticut, the local YMCA is a place of transition. Located on Chapel Street, the YMCA borders both Yale University and New Haven's Dwight neighborhood, a federal empowerment zone where high school dropout rates are high and nearly 40% of the population is below the poverty level. "You go a street up," says YMCA Youth Director Maggie Scalzo, "and people are walking around with everything they need; you go a street back, and people haven't eaten in two days." But at the Y, transition signifies more than a passive geographic reality, more than a phase in an urban planner's blueprints for gentrification. At the Y, positive transition is the active goal of a group of dedicated Dwight neighborhood teens - and they're well on their way to reaching it. [Read more...](#)



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