



Youth Opportunity Center

August *News Flash!*

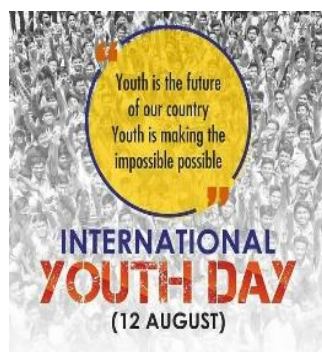


So far, Summer has brought so much fun. I hope you have been able to enjoy much of it. Especially now with fall around the corner, I am pretty sure we'll have a ball. In the meantime, as we get passed August, focus on reflecting on a time you felt was a most challenging one.

What is one life lesson you have learned from that it molded you to the person you are today? What's your story to share? And if you do, how will you impact someone that is experiencing what you have already overcome? (take a moment)

Reflect on these questions and give yourself an embrace of gratitude **that you have** the opportunity to make a difference in someone's life today *which* has contributed to your growth: Mentally, Physically, Spiritually and Emotionally; Academically, Professionally, and Personally.

Depending on the situation, take this opportunity and reciprocate your life lesson; look back a bit and remember what it was for you to break free from what most held you down and out of yourself. Be that sunshine in someone's life and make them smile *or* laugh out loud. You never know with some people what you could deliver them from, and the positive *impact* that you will be pouring into their life.



Hopefully you have had the opportunity to celebrate the Youth in your life and all around. Theirs' the future and for that reason we celebrate them every day. ~ Evy.

"Innovate, Educate, Activate – **Youth** Leading the Way!"
"**Youthful** Energy, Endless Possibilities!" "Aspire to Inspire – Happy **Youth Day!**" "Dare to Dream, Strive to Achieve!"
"**Youth:** Today's Visionaries, Tomorrow's Leaders!"
"Energize the Nation – Saluting **Youth** Power!"

<https://www.binq.com/search?q=international+youth+day+slogan>

Youth Services Director and Housing Manager takes a stand to “Elevate” at the 2025 conference in Denver, Colorado. <https://www.icjaonline.org/>

A Conversation Regarding Youth Homelessness and the Criminal Justice System

➤ **Elevating the Youth Perspective** by Nick DiGiammo



Nick and Mao (Veasna Kang)

Work Shop Summary

It is an understood reality that the United States is facing a housing crisis that has spanned generations and has increased disparities between economic and social “classes” of our population. While there are many variables - most of which are socio-economic in nature such as access to resources, jobs that provide a livable wage, a lack of affordable housing, and generational poverty - there is no one solution that will relieve us from this now overwhelming issue

According to Citizens’ Housing Planning Association (CHAPA - 2025), the Commonwealth of Massachusetts alone is 250,000 units short of what is required to provide housing for families and individuals. Exacerbated by social inequities affecting safe and affordable housing are barriers created by social norms and systems that reach beyond simply “a roof over your head”. Those who share such experience due to inequality and marginalization are often left out of the conversation regarding the systems they are connected to and the services they receive.

A key example includes those who have been justice-system involved, specifically youth and young adults. The ability to include the perspective of those with lived experience welcomes trauma-informed solutions and also allows for greater levels of understanding on behalf of the affected individual – and, therefore, greater likelihood of success – and provide more accountability and autonomy for people with lived experience to take control of their circumstances.

Who better to have a voice in the conversation than those who are navigating challenging systems directly? What better way to elicit this point of view, than having a task force or advisory board centered around those with lived experience? And how can we expect this task force or advisory board to show measurable impact? On a localized, state, and national level, we have seen the positive results of the power of Youth Advisory Boards aimed at ending Youth Homelessness, a population that tends to be negatively impacted by cyclical criminal justice system involvement.

These Youth Action Boards have given Youth with lived experience the opportunity to elicit direct feedback on grants that provide services for their unique population as well as on policies, resulting in alignment of understanding and attainable goals to stability.

More importantly, Advisory Boards offer a seat at the table for decision making. It is well documented that persons released from incarceration struggle with housing insecurity at disproportionate rates compared to the general (Nowhere to Go, Couloute 2018). The establishment of advisory boards would help to lessen these barriers, as has been the case when focusing specifically on youth housing insecurity.

The results of this work have been observed through increased housing stability over time, greater access to housing to meet the need, and longterm engagement with wrap-around services that promote a full-circle approach to case management and goal setting, all of which are continued barriers for Youth in the criminal justice system (It Shouldn’t Be This Hard, Sample 2019). Introduction of these practices for justice-involved youth would benefit outcomes in sectors of housing instability, economic independence, and community building, all of which would have a direct impact on rates of recidivism.

In addition to creating a structure for the elevation of the voices of those with lived experience, advisory boards serve as a tool to provide leadership opportunities, life skills, community – and, where possible, compensation - all of which are vital to the success of those re-entering the community after incarceration especially those under probation or with parole requirements. This presentation will focus on the possibilities of improving existing systems to ensure that outcomes are attainable and more successful by increasing the voice of those at the center of the conversation – those with lived expertise.

August 21, 2025

✓ Highlight Spotlight, *What a Fun Sight!* 😊

August 5, 2025 Lowell, MA. At the Morey Elementary School (National Night Out Fun!)



Nick teasing the kids but they surely did dunk him



More Summer Time Fun! 😊

Healthy choices should not be an option; so, come and enjoy the rest of the Summer with a variety of vendors at the Farmer's Market ~ CTI



Although on Fridays from July to October there's a variety of opportunities to enjoy the healthy choices of farmer's market; choosing a healthier eating style is beneficial to everyone overall. In fact, the farmer's market has held "kids' day" as well which provided further resources for parents about healthy eating for their children, loved ones, and for future generations to come.

For more information or volunteer, visit Lowell Farmer's Market at the address provided in the flyer. Also, go to their website: [Lowell Farmers' Market - Community Teamwork](http://LowellFarmersMarket.org)

BACK TO SCHOOL



At the Youth Opportunity Center, *Youth Family Foundations* in particular, received backpacks filled with school supplies for young families with school-age children. Thanks, Richard (Facilities) for dropping off the backpacks to YS Drop-In Center.

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Know someone that could benefit from the youth opportunity center? click below!

[Youth Services Connection Request](#)

Until Next Issue