

Youth Volunteers on the Rise

Today's youth are compassionate, creative and generous when it comes to helping those in need.

Teenagers are finding their place in charitable work by starting their own charities, sitting on grant-making boards, raising money, volunteering or leading efforts to solve problems in their neighborhoods, schools and beyond, according to the *Chronicle of Philanthropy*.

The U.S. Department of Education recently released numbers noting a sharp increase in youth volunteers.

With more than half of all American public high schools requiring community service or volunteer work to graduate, the numbers continue to grow.

In fact, the number of students who said they volunteered increased 686 percent to 6 million from 1984 to 1997, according to Department of Education figures.

"Young people are stepping up in ways they haven't before," Maureen A. Sedonaen, executive director of the [Youth Leadership Institute](#), a nonprofit organization in San Francisco, told the *Chronicle*. "Youth involvement has moved forward. It is no longer seen as a rebellious act, the way it was a few decades ago."

YLI "implements Community-Based Programs that provide youth with opportunities for developing leadership skills in the area of prevention, youth philanthropy, policy and civic engagement," according to the organization's Web site.

The Higher Education Research Institute reported that nearly 83 percent of incoming freshman in 2001 said they volunteered. In 1989, only 66 percent said they volunteered.

The Do Something Young People's Involvement Survey, part of Princeton Survey Research, reported that 73 percent of young people said they believed they could make a difference in their communities.

And, teenagers are putting in a lot of time to volunteer—2.4 billion hours annually, according to Gallup. Gallup also reported that teen service is worth about \$34.3 billion to the U.S. economy.

John A. Calhoun, president of the National Crime Prevention Council and founder of Youth as Resources, a program that recruits teenagers to design and carry out projects to solve problems in their neighborhoods, told the *Chronicle* that today's youth really believe they can make a difference.

This generation of teens has diverse interests, including "improving the juvenile criminal-justice system, raising organic crops for soup kitchens, collecting school supplies for disadvantaged kids, or distributing clothes to AIDS orphans in Africa," the *Chronicle* reported.

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