

Parish Staff Findings

For the National Symposium on Effective Youth Ministry Practices in Catholic Parishes Project

Introduction

Within this research project, 23 parish staffs were interviewed. The composition of the staff members present for the interview varied by site, but in general, the interviews included the pastor, director of religious education, music or liturgy coordinators, and staff members related more to the administration of the parish. In most sites, the coordinator of youth ministry did not participate in the parish staff interview because he or she was part of the adult leader interview. In many of the sites, members of the parish staff also identified themselves as parents of youth and spoke from that perspective.

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Legend / Description of Terms Used in this Report

Findings are the outcomes that resulted from exploring and compiling the research data in light of the focus of inquiry.

Quotations from Interviews are selected quotations that are representative of a much larger base of data from which this finding emerged. These are direct quotations from the interview transcripts.

Key Findings are the most salient and important findings for this constituency group.

Supportive Findings are those findings that support and help build toward the key finding.

Related Findings are findings that are related to the same topic as the key finding.

Other Findings are those findings that emerged from the data but stand alone. They are not directly related to or supportive of a key finding.

Parish Staff Interviews – Summary of Key Findings

Support for Youth Ministry

1. Youth Ministry thrives with support from the pastor, the staff, and the whole parish community.

Youth Role within Parish

2. When you are serious about effective youth ministry, then youth are the weavers and the woven. They are integrated throughout parish life including decision-making.

Parish's Relationship to Youth

3. Parishes with effective youth ministry genuinely like and know youth and show their affection by welcoming them and their contributions, by affirming them, by encouraging them. Youth feel at home and safe in these parishes.

Coordinator of Youth Ministry

4. The person of the coordinator of youth ministry is formed by a deep sense of vocation and, "I'm not the show." They believe it is their role to call forth and empower the gifts in the community. They balance direct ministry with coordination to animate dynamic youth ministry.

Faith Formation

5. Faith formation is at the core of youth ministry and aims to touch the hearts of youth and their families. In adolescence, faith formation happens differently. It involves youth in planning and teaching. It involves hospitality and openness to mystery. It is about real life for the long haul. It is about the "so what."

Youth Leading within the Parish

6. Youth are willing, excited, passionate leaders in the parish. They share their gifts and energy as leaders in parish life and in ministry to their peers.

Effects of Youth Ministry

7. Effective youth ministry has a transforming effect for a lifetime. The ministry plants seeds that help youth grow into great people and leaders who are faith filled, enthusiastic, mature, change agents with a good moral compass, and have the ability to face life's challenges.

Effects of Service

8. Service changes young people's lives, sometimes radically, sometimes for life. Service alters youth's self-image and creates empathy.

Parent and Family Involvement

9. Effective Youth Ministry insists on and gives real opportunity for parent and family involvement.

Adults who Work with Youth

10. Youth are open to Adults who:
 - go where they are
 - are real
 - companion youth
 - build respectful relationships

Balance within Youth Ministry

11. Effective youth ministry balances the social, educational, formational, sacramental, and service dimension. It is "permeable" and there are no boundaries between the dimensions.

Responsive Youth Ministry

12. Effective youth ministry doesn't begin with a model, but rather responds to the real lives, needs, and interests of young people in the community. The leadership creates ministry by experimenting, taking risks, and "trying again." They put the pieces together in a way that is responsive to youth.

Parish Staff Interviews – Key Findings with Quotations and Supportive and Related Findings

Support for Youth Ministry

1. Youth Ministry thrives with support from the pastor, the staff, and the whole parish community.

Quotations from interviews:

Youth ministry is just as important as religious education ministry as a base for ministry. That importance is placed on the ministry by the parish, and by the priests of the parish, and the staff of the parish; it is a priority of our parish.

...the adults really support the kids. And we call them up front when they get a good report. When anything happens in their school we hear about it and call them up, and the people just go crazy. So they have total support.

Support from the other staff and from our pastor. I mean if you're not getting it from the top, you won't get it...

If you don't have a pastor and a set of directors, or a parish team, that isn't supporting to one another, you have got all kinds of problems. It has got to be a team effort all the way.

What we are really trying to emphasize...is trying to support each other's ministry. Well it is not like we come up with the ministry and then you are off all by yourself, you don't need the help of other people. That is a no-no in our community. Our task is to build community. It is supposed to be a co-responsibility because church is a co-responsibility, trying to build one family working together. I think the youth ministry here, really, they are very strong in that. They really try to reach out and support other ministries.

Supportive Findings:

- 1.1. Pastor support for youth ministry is crucial. There are different ways to be supportive: some pastors work side by side with other leaders in youth ministry, while other pastors are present to youth, but work to support and empower the Coordinator of Youth Ministry and team.
- 1.2. Effective youth ministry needs the support of the whole parish.
- 1.3. Youth ministry is the heart of the parish. It's everyone's job.
- 1.4. In parishes with effective youth ministry, the parish staff works together as a team: supporting each other; not isolating ministries; supporting youth; collaborating; sharing resources.

Youth Role within Parish

2. When you are serious about effective youth ministry, then youth are the weavers and the woven. They are integrated throughout parish life including decision-making.

Quotations from interviews:

So I see them involved in part of the fabric of the parish of inviting people to come together with each other but also inviting us to reflect, be it through dramatization or their regular schedules of retreats, that it is known that they go on retreats and pray for—or the service kinds of projects that they do, that there is a strong witness that will touch people in different ways just because they are involved with a broad range of what it means to live the gospel.

...we have some youth represented that play an active role and are full members of the parish council.

Everything comes full circle.

...inviting, inviting the youth, that it's your church you are part, not apart, but part of our community.

Supportive Findings:

- 2.1. The entire parish community desires youth ministry that is infused into the mainstream life of the parish. They have imagined and practiced a dance between distinctive ministry to youth and ministry throughout the life of the parish. They don't want an isolated youth program.
- 2.2 A resolve for inclusiveness and a practice of "all youth have a home here" produces awesome, fun, amazing youth ministry that is a blessing to the whole parish.

Parish's Relationship to Youth

3. Parishes with effective youth ministry genuinely like and know youth and show their affection by welcoming them and their contributions, by affirming them, by encouraging them. Youth feel at home and safe in these parishes.

Quotations from interviews:

The point is, they feel at home. This is their home and they may not come home as often as you'd like them to, every week, or more often; but they know where home is when they need to drop in.

I see youth ministry as our work, our effort to help our young people just to feel at home here in their parish. It's as simple as that.

...they were just so appreciative of the teens being there and they all - each teen introduced themselves and said what particular event they had participated in. They were all so precious - "this event changed my life," and "this meant so much."

Other kids are starting to look at this, and say, "It is time to go home." They enjoy being here. This is a safe haven and they have so many adults in their lives...where on one Sunday we had 85 standing on the altar that work with youth in one way or another.

I would say the third thing is really that the kids do feel respected and affirmed by the leadership here. They are not seen as sub-humans or anything like that. They are seen as people who really can contribute and do a great job.

One more thing that works is if you show these kids love. I love them.

Related findings:

- 3.1. Effective youth ministry unleashes the power of youth faith witness to children, peers, the parish, the world. Youth's faith witness is vulnerable, bold, eloquent, deep, profound, authentic, vibrant, moving. It includes, uplifts, invites.
- 3.2. There is something distinctive about youth today. They're openhearted. They are inquisitive. They are looking for more. They demand answers. They expect adults to deliver. They are spiritually hungry and searching. They would like to get into the scriptures.

Coordinator of Youth Ministry

4. The person of the coordinator of youth ministry is formed by a deep sense of vocation and, "I'm not the show." They believe it is their role to call forth and empower the gifts in the community. They balance direct ministry with coordination to animate dynamic youth ministry.

Quotations from interviews:

A great gift for a youth minister, or anybody in a leadership position, is knowing that you cannot do it all by yourself, and it is very important for them to surround yourself with good people - adults and kids.

...she has the internal satisfaction; she knows that this is her bigger purpose...

...God has called me to this.

...not his responsibility but the parish's responsibility, and he coordinates it all. This is the process we're working through.

I think a lot of that credit goes to (the youth minister.) When we first started looking at hiring a youth minister it (...), some people would say you can have youth ministry—it is just youth group and service hours and something. He said, "No it is not, it is, has got to be, total youth ministry."

Related Findings:

- 4.1. Effective coordinators of youth ministry are healthy, well-balanced people. They network, tap into community resources, and exercise good judgment. They know what is at the core theologically and programmatically.
- 4.2. Good coordinators of youth ministry have these personality attributes and virtues. They are: awesome, dedicated, open, approachable, caring, faith-filled, visionary, smart, trustworthy, fun, loyal to the parish, enthusiastic, upbeat, sincere, fun, and open-minded.
- 4.3. Effective coordinators of youth ministry really love, appreciate, and respect youth. They build relationships through invitation and welcome.

Faith Formation

5. Faith formation is at the core of youth ministry and aims to touch the hearts of youth and their families. In adolescence, faith formation happens differently. It involves youth in planning and teaching. It involves hospitality and openness to mystery. It is about real life for the long haul. It is about the “so what.”

Quotations from interviews:

I say teaching instead of catechesis because that includes the many community-building events and all of those other things. The quality of the education I think is really top notch. I think that is the key to having a successful youth ministry as opposed to youth community building.

It's also an occasion of education. They are educating each other at the same time. But still kids who are coming, who are participating, are really participating and are learning and sharing and growing...

One other thing in terms of talking about the initiation is hearing from the parents how many of them are coming back to church because it's the kids that are bringing them. It's not the parents bringing the kids.

I suspect our parish is not unlike other parishes out there in that those parents that take an active level of participation in their children's lives, both with parish activities and non-parish activities alike, they understand what goes into it.

I think when you get to the teenagers and the young adults, there has to be something more (...) peer relationship rather than adults running the class.

We are not just going to say, “the lesson plan for tonight is...”

Our numbers are up, and I think it's a better education style—as opposed to somebody coming in, reading out of a book with the book strategy—and more subject to what's really relevant to this day and age.

Related Findings

- 5.1. Parents feel inadequate in forming the faith of their children and there is a growing hunger for, and urgency about, adult faith formation.
- 5.2. Young people best learn the spirit and skills of how to be faithful through mentoring.

Youth Leading within the Parish

6. Youth are willing, excited, passionate leaders in the parish. They share their gifts and energy as leaders in parish life and in ministry to their peers.

Quotations from interviews:

...want to be involved in.

...they will, they are there, and they do want to be part of it.

You can always call on a youth to do whatever...

...just kind of tap in their talents

They are just excited about coming.

It is neat for the adults that are around. It is exciting.

We try to look and see where the kids' energy is and where their passion is.

Supporting Findings:

- 6.1. Empowering youth to plan ministry and to be in ministry with their peers builds "right on target" ministry, creates ownership, opens creativity, and instills leadership skills.
- 6.2. Young people are doing surprising things in the parish. When given the opportunity to lead, they gain self-esteem, become active in the parish, and develop as religious leaders.
- 6.3. Youth who are involved in liturgical roles bring a powerful presence and energy to the community and the community takes pride and joy in the youth.
- 6.4. There are many ways youth participate in liturgy.

Effects of Youth Ministry

7. Effective youth ministry has a transforming effect for a lifetime. The ministry plants seeds that help youth grow into great people and leaders who are faith filled, enthusiastic, mature, change agents with a good moral compass, and have the ability to face life's challenges.

Quotations from interviews:

...they can be touched by that truth and see the transformation of them...

I think youth ministry helps people, or the young people, have a greater relationship with God. It makes them stronger in their lives as Christians and just to be able to grow, to be very mature, healthy people.

I think the kids coming out of this program are going to be great people, all of them in one way or another. Some of them might be great leaders.

I know seeds were planted in their hearts.

I feel that we plant the seed. It took 22 years for it to blossom.

I see them as disciples of Christ and that journey will continue because if they're seeking that and they're doing those type of things, they will teach their children, the next generation, to have the same values and continue.

Related Findings

- 7.1 Young people that participate in parish youth programs have an orientation to stay involved with their parish as young adults. College-age students are coming back to their parish and ministering there. They are "yeast in a culture and a church that needs to be lifted up all of the time."
- 7.2 Youth learn values and faith practices from the parish community.

Effects of Service

8. Service changes young people's lives, sometimes radically, sometimes for life. Service alters youth's self-image and creates empathy.

Quotations from interviews:

...put themselves into other people's places [...] to Mexico last summer, it really has a whole life-long learning effect on those kids. I see that kind of thing having a real long-term effect.

...you can see those boys and the parents being changed through the experience [...] putting themselves in somebody else's shoes; (it's the) empathy aspect

...teaches them compassion and patience and gets them motivated to continue doing service for other people...

It's another chance to empower one another in their numbers, to feel valuable.

Related Findings:

- 8.1. Youth and adults who are rooted in the theological reasons for service understand themselves to be touching the wounded Christ and being the body of Christ in the world.
- 8.2. There are a variety of ways that service is incorporated into youth ministry.

Parent and Family Involvement

9. Effective Youth Ministry insists on and gives real opportunity for parent and family involvement.

Quotations from interviews:

I think the parent involvement is a real vital part. Here the parents are very much—it's a real faith community. The parents are involved.

We use ministry for the youth but that alone won't cut it. It needs to follow the family as well and a relationship with the family.

If you work with just the youth, it just doesn't work. You have to work with the whole family.

Parents have to be open, and the church has to be open to the fact too, that we are living in a real world and not one with our ethics we had forty or fifty years ago. We have to adapt to the child and look at the reality.

I think that's a key too that our current youth minister is absolutely set on the parents being there ...And at the commissioning ceremony she was on the phone until the last minute getting parents there because she was bound and determined to have the parents there for this commissioning ceremony. And so I think that's part of why things work.

...bringing in the parents ...It really helps when they understand what's going on, they're not just dropped off, it enhances the attraction.

Parents encourage their children to join the youth group. It's because they themselves are committed to their faith and to the faith formation of their children.

You trust what is happening. As a parent, that is why you feel better. I trust what is happening. It isn't just well I trust (our youth minister). He isn't going to let anything go wrong, of course, that is here. It is more than that. There is a dynamic among the young people that is extreme, it transforms people. So if my kid brings her creepy friend that is fine.

Related Finding:

- 9.1 Parents feel inadequate in forming the faith of their children and there is a growing hunger for and urgency about adult faith formation. (See also: Finding 5.1.)

Adults who Work with Youth

10. Youth are open to Adults who:

- go where they are
- are real
- companion youth
- build respectful relationships

Quotations from interviews:

To go where they are before you can get them to come where you want to be. You can't stand on the street and holler that you have something great over here unless you go over to their side of the street and see where they are at. To be present and then that give ideas on how to make them be present on your side of the street.

This is the whole idea of companion is, I think, our young people have sense of being companioned.

...But to drone on and on and on. They're just like, "Okay, okay, ...you can't relate to what I'm going through, to be real." You have to be real.

You can't—you have to be yourself. With all your little, you know flaws, and everything else. And they love your flaws.

So, they really like to see the real person. If you're phony, that's it. You cannot be phony. You have to be who you are.

Supportive Finding:

10.1. To attract and keep volunteers, youth ministry leaders: pray; provide clear job descriptions; match gifts and interest with roles; challenge the community to get involved; provide training and support.

Balance within Youth Ministry

11. Effective youth ministry balances the social, educational, formational, sacramental, and service dimension. It is “permeable” and there are no boundaries between the dimensions.

Quotations from interviews:

...needs to balance the social, the educational, the formational, the sacramental, the parish life of service. And the really good youth ministry program, I think, will have a lot of very permeable, or no boundaries between them.

I think too having it well-balanced. Having opportunities for fun, opportunities for faith formation, opportunities for outreach. Young kids like to help. They like to serve. We have a nice blend of those opportunities. Then the kids have a well-balanced experience of what it means to be Christian. All those things are part of being Christian.

...(Effectiveness in our youth ministry is credited) to the multifaceted nature of the program. Not only does it make it a holistic program, but also it enables the program to tap into different young people who will respond to different things.

...(We have) a multidimensional, multi-layered approach.

Related Finding:

- 11.1. Faith, fun, friends, and food = the formula for effective youth ministry.

Responsive Youth Ministry

12. Effective youth ministry doesn't begin with a model, but rather responds to the real lives, needs, and interests of young people in the community. The leadership creates ministry by experimenting, taking risks, and "trying again." They put the pieces together in a way that is responsive to youth.

Quotations from interviews:

You put the pieces together and you create something to put that model together.

So we joke about it, but it is like experiment number 793... We shift if things don't go the way we thought they would go. You have to be flexible. Shifting position and the direction is very important because there is very little, ultimately, that doesn't work out.

...we strive to meet youth where they are at.

...to taking a chance and trying new things that might backfire on you, but you can always go back to your old ways. We always have our old plan to fall back on, but I think it is important to jump out there and try new things.

Some things might work here and might not work someplace else. People say we want to find a model. It is hard. Something might work in this parish, but won't work in another. They want to see this happening and are not willing to take risks.

Other Findings

Small Groups

13. Being intentional and deliberate about building life-giving relationships means building and nurturing small groups.
14. Parishes have a variety of small group ideas, including: Super Sundays; trips to the mall; intergenerational ice cream socials; scavenger hunts; bible trivia; bibles and bagels.

Retreats and Trips

15. Retreats and trips to Catholic youth events build Catholic identity, connect, empower, and touch even the most difficult teens, energize both adults and teens, and keep them coming back.

Confirmation

16. Other than the common element of comments about the effectiveness of sponsors, there were no clear insights into how confirmation is a part of effective youth ministry.

Middle School Ministry

17. It is important youth begin to experience ministry in middle school and throughout the adolescent years. Youth are more available in middle school and they need the church as their foundation during this time.

Parish Staff Interviews – All Findings with Quotations

Support for Youth Ministry

1. Youth Ministry thrives with support from the pastor, the staff, and the whole parish community.

Quotations from interviews:

Youth ministry is just as important as religious education ministry as a base for ministry. That importance is placed on the ministry by the parish, and by the priests of the parish, and the staff of the parish; it is a priority of our parish.

...the adults really support the kids. And we call them up front when they get a good report. When anything happens in their school we hear about it and call them up, and the people just go crazy. So they have total support.

Support from the other staff and from our pastor. I mean if you're not getting it from the top, you won't get it...

If you don't have a pastor and a set of directors, or a parish team, that isn't supporting to one another, you have got all kinds of problems. It has got to be a team effort all the way.

What we are really trying to emphasize...is trying to support each other's ministry. Well it is not like we come up with the ministry and then you are off all by yourself, you don't need the help of other people. That is a no-no in our community. Our task is to build community. It is supposed to be a co-responsibility because church is a co-responsibility, trying to build one family working together. I think the youth ministry here, really, they are very strong in that. They really try to reach out and support other ministries.

Supportive Findings:

- 1.1 Pastor support for youth ministry is crucial. There are different ways to be supportive: some pastors work side by side with other leaders in youth ministry, while other pastors are present to youth, but work to support and empower the Coordinator of Youth Ministry and team.

Quotations from interviews:

...the pastor lets the youth minister do his or her job. The pastor is good at delegating. The pastor doesn't have to micromanage.

I think that you need that support from your pastor.

Support from the other staff and from our pastor. I mean if you're not getting it from the top, you won't get it...

...the main leadership is the pastor and I think our youth look to the pastor and his involvement, I think, is a must...

1.2 Effective youth ministry needs the support of the whole parish.

Quotations from interviews:

I think all the youth activities and the youth ministry of the parish is becoming, "Yes, there's something that we want to be involved in."

Youth ministry is just as important as religious education ministry as a base for ministry. That importance is placed on the ministry by the parish, and by the priests of the parish, and the staff of the parish; it is a priority of our parish.

It's an ownership; we try to do that not only with our youth, but with everything, everybody in the parish.

...the adults really support the kids. And we call them up front when they get a good report. When anything happens in their school we hear about it and call them up, and the people just go crazy. So they have total support.

1.3 Youth ministry is the heart of the parish. It's everyone's job.

Quotations from interviews:

I think youth ministry in this community is at the heart of what we do as a parish. Just about anything we do pretty much is the heart of it, and everything evolves around our youth ministry.

...basically everyone on our staff is a youth minister.

And not separate it from the life of the parish. Youth ministry isn't this thing that we orbit around the parish but it is actually a part of and we're involved in parish stuff.

...it's all of our job

Together we are youth ministry.

1.4 In parishes with effective youth ministry, the parish staff works together as a team: supporting each other; not isolating ministries; supporting youth; collaborating; sharing resources.

Quotations from interviews:

If you don't have a pastor and a set of directors, or a parish team, that isn't supporting to one another, you have got all kinds of problems. It has got to be a team effort all the way.

What we are really trying to emphasize...is trying to support each other's ministry. Well it is not like we come up with the ministry and then you are off all by yourself, you don't need the help of other people. That is a no-no in our community, but our task is to build community. It is supposed to be a co-responsibility because church is a co-responsibility, trying to build one family working together. I think the youth ministry here, really, they are very strong in that. They really try to reach out and support other ministries.

(Our parish) has a very integrated approach to ministry across the board that all the ministries feed in and out of each other and that get included in the life of youth ministry.

The other thing that strikes you is the ability to really have a sense of teamwork and rely upon each other. It is part of what is the "know how." If I don't know what to do, I can ask someone else.

So it is not necessarily a youth ministry thing but we are collaborating with other ministries.

Youth Role within Parish

2. When you are serious about effective youth ministry, then youth are the weavers and the woven. They are integrated throughout parish life including decision-making.

Quotations from interviews:

So I see them involved in part of the fabric of the parish of inviting people to come together with each other but also inviting us to reflect, be it through dramatization or their regular schedules of retreats, that it is known that they go on retreats and pray for—or the service kinds of projects that they do, that there is a strong witness that will touch people in different ways just because they are involved with a broad range of what it means to live the gospel.

...we have some youth represented that play an active role and are full members of the parish council.

Everything comes full circle.

...inviting, inviting the youth, that it's your church you are part, not apart, but part of our community.

Supportive Findings:

- 2.1 The entire parish community desires youth ministry that is infused into the mainstream life of the parish. They have imagined and practiced a dance between distinctive ministry to youth and ministry throughout the life of the parish. They don't want an isolated youth program.

Quotations from interviews:

There is a beautiful dance going on between the ministry of youth over on one side, but it is at the same token bringing them in and keeping them part of the larger parish... There is a lot of faith in our youth ministries with that wisdom, I think.

...infused in the community...

Now the parish wants a much more inclusive kind of ministry.

(It's about) both the family and the extended family of the parish, and the whole idea that we wanted to build a program that wasn't just a bunch of programs but that was integral.

- 2.2 A resolve for inclusiveness and a practice of "all youth have a home here" produces awesome, fun, amazing youth ministry that is a blessing to the whole parish.

Quotations from interviews:

I remember it divided us because at the time we had two groups. One was Spanish speaking and one was English speaking, and there was also a division there. There was never any sharing of calendars or other things. What happens after a while is...and not inviting other people in, and I think that is not what we want. We were tired of it. We wanted something more.

They have to be able to open up. They can't exclude certain kids because of their background.

"...well, you know, my daughter is totally deaf, and I would love for her to be involved with the youth group." And I said, "Well, bring her to youth group; we'd love to have her. We already had two hearing impaired children." And from that, she has brought, what, four or five more kids with her. And so it's just, it's just amazing how those things happen.

They totally mingled and mixed with the hearing kids. It was awesome, it was awesome.

A welcoming environment and loving and supporting environment in which a person, a young person, within the group is able to feel like they have a place, and they have a voice, and that they count in who they are, and what they are, and what they dream, and what they think matters.

So we are becoming a little bit more ecumenical than we have known youth ministries in the past, which has been pretty fun.

Parish's Relationship to Youth

3. Parishes with effective youth ministry genuinely like and know youth and show their affection by welcoming them and their contributions, by affirming them, by encouraging them. Youth feel at home and safe in these parishes.

Quotations from interviews:

The point is, they feel at home. This is their home and they may not come home as often as you'd like them to, every week, or more often; but they know where home is when they need to drop in.

I see youth ministry as our work, our effort to help our young people just to feel at home here in their parish. It's as simple as that.

...they were just so appreciative of the teens being there and they all - each teen introduced themselves and said what particular event they had participated in. They were all so precious - "this event changed my life," and "this meant so much."

Other kids are starting to look at this, and say, "It is time to go home." They enjoy being here. This is a safe haven and they have so many adults in their lives...where on one Sunday we had 85 standing on the altar that work with youth in one way or another.

I would say the third thing is really that the kids do feel respected and affirmed by the leadership here. They are not seen as sub-humans or anything like that. They are seen as people who really can contribute and do a great job.

One more thing that works is if you show these kids love. I love them.

Related Findings:

- 3.1 Effective youth ministry unleashes the power of youth faith witness to children, peers, the parish, the world. Youth's faith witness is vulnerable, bold, eloquent, deep, profound, authentic, vibrant, moving. It includes, uplifts, invites.

Quotations from interviews:

...having a young person speak at a liturgy, and their spirituality is awe inspiring. To hear some of them speak about their spiritual life and how they feel...

...(It was such an) eloquent and deep, profound, moving testament that they were giving to their faith.

...very profound theologies ...

...are odd and have odd piercings and things like that, but I have had people say when you meet somebody like so-and-so and their hair is sticking out and they have got an earring here and this and that and you learn what a great kid they are...

And when the kids come in and they see him, and they're like, "That kind of person is a Christian, that's amazing!"

We are in awe of them as well.

3.2 There is something distinctive about youth today. They're openhearted. They are inquisitive. They are looking for more. They demand answers. They expect adults to deliver. They are spiritually hungry and searching. They would like to get into the scriptures.

Quotations from interviews:

There's definitely a distinctiveness in this generation of the church.

The inquisitive nature and almost demanding nature can be a real negative thing to some. To me, it is healthy that someone is thinking. They have an open mind and also an open heart to take in what was told to them.

...they are really inquisitive and will ask questions and will not take simple answers. They are coming and demanding, and they expect us to deliver. They are far more serious. They are far more inquisitive or curious but far more demanding. They won't accept partial answers, or if they find an answer they are not happy with, they will tend to push harder to get an answer they are looking for.

I think the hunger we see in the children is maybe greater than that which is in the parents.

When I see how people really are searching and wanting to develop a spiritual life...

A strong percentage of the youth were very interested in that. I think sometimes it is easy to overlook the depth of which they would like to get into scriptures.

Coordinator of Youth Ministry

4. The person of the coordinator of youth ministry is formed by a deep sense of vocation and, “I’m not the show.” They believe it is their role to call forth and empower the gifts in the community. They balance direct ministry with coordination to animate dynamic youth ministry.

Quotations from interviews:

A great gift for a youth minister, or anybody in a leadership position, is knowing that you cannot do it all by yourself, and it is very important for them to surround yourself with good people - adults and kids.

...she has the internal satisfaction; she knows that this is her bigger purpose...

...God has called me to this.

...not his responsibility but the parish’s responsibility, and he coordinates it all. This is the process we’re working through.

I think a lot of that credit goes to (the youth minister.) When we first started looking at hiring a youth minister it (...), some people would say you can have youth ministry—it is just youth group and service hours and something. He said, “No it is not, it is, has got to be, total youth ministry.”

Related Findings:

- 4.1 Effective coordinators of youth ministry are healthy, well-balanced people. They network, tap into community resources, and exercise good judgment. They know what is at the core theologically and programmatically.

Quotations from interviews:

...when parishes look for youth ministers they have to look for healthy, well-balanced people who don’t have particular leanings towards any one ideology. And they then are able to bring the health and balance to the whole program. I think attracting the right talent and person is crucial.

You’re not fooling around with kids. You’re not their pal or anything like that. You are, although you’re being mentored too, you are a mentor.

...knows enough to know what is central, and critical, and can’t be compromised, and what can, or if not compromised, not dealt with right now. He has a good sense of what is really at the core and needs to be there.

They are more than willing to reach out to the young people. I think just knowing where to tap your resources.

Our youth minister is good at making connections, networking among the other parishes and dioceses and other dioceses at the national level.

A good youth minister is going to keep that communication going and the program going.

4.2 Good coordinators of youth ministry have these personality attributes and virtues. They are: awesome, dedicated, open, approachable, caring, faith-filled, visionary, smart, trustworthy, fun, loyal to the parish, enthusiastic, upbeat, sincere, fun, and open-minded.

Quotations from interviews:

We have a great youth minister. She's awesome.

It's the dedication of that youth minister. It just comes down to that.

...very sincere and caring of the people...

...enthusiasm is contagious and it starts with your youth minister and goes from there.

He brings laughter to the table; they need that.

Open-minded—that's the first thing...

...he's a person of faith and a person of mission. That forms what the program is.

(We need) people of great faith, charity, and love.

He is intellectually gifted and spiritually gifted, and he uses it for community and as I say, educationally. I think he is a professional, and I think those are important aspects of a church ministry.

4.3 Effective coordinators of youth ministry really love, appreciate, and respect youth. They build relationships through invitation and welcome.

Quotations from interviews:

They loved (our youth minister), and it was because of his, I guess, love of the faith.

I think, as has already been mentioned, his ability to invite the youth, as well as the parents, who may not feel like they have any, they may not feel comfortable in that

situation. He invites them in. And he learns what they may not know about themselves, or where they might fit in some part of the ministry. I think that is really a strong gift.

I guess it probably goes without saying, they have to really love the youth. You have to love youth, their music, their way of dressing, their way of speaking, their own little culture. You have to know and appreciate and respect that. For many of us, we have moved away from that.

We are fortunate to have a youth minister who is quite capable and who has a rapport and ease of interaction with these kids that they perceive and pick up right away.

This goes back to where we started, back to relationships, back to the youth minister because there is a lot of time in building relationships with the kids and with the parish. It has worked out.

She has really gone a long way in the last three years in drawing in new kids because she is so welcoming. She gets in there and she laughs with them and jokes around with them, and they love that. They just love that. The kids we have now, they're the ones planning the events, and that's why we are so successful.

Faith Formation

5. Faith formation is at the core of youth ministry and aims to touch the hearts of youth and their families. In adolescence, faith formation happens differently. It involves youth in planning and teaching. It involves hospitality and openness to mystery. It is about real life for the long haul. It is about the “so what.”

Quotations from interviews:

I say teaching instead of catechesis because that includes the many community-building events and all of those other things. The quality of the education I think is really top notch. I think that is the key to having a successful youth ministry as opposed to youth community building.

It's also an occasion of education. They are educating each other at the same time. But still kids who are coming, who are participating, are really participating and are learning and sharing and growing...

One other thing in terms of talking about the initiation is hearing from the parents how many of them are coming back to church because it's the kids that are bringing them. It's not the parents bringing the kids.

I suspect our parish is not unlike other parishes out there in that those parents that take an active level of participation in their children's lives, both with parish activities and non-parish activities alike, they understand what goes into it.

I think when you get to the teenagers and the young adults, there has to be something more (...) peer relationship rather than adults running the class.

We are not just going to say, “the lesson plan for tonight is...”

Our numbers are up, and I think it's a better education style—as opposed to somebody coming in, reading out of a book with the book strategy—and more subject to what's really relevant to this day and age.

Related Findings:

- 5.1 Parents feel inadequate in forming the faith of their children and there is a growing hunger for, and urgency, about adult faith formation.

Quotations from interviews:

...parents need the formation. I agree that they feel inadequate. How do we get those parents here to educate them? Parents have not allowed themselves the time they need with their kids or for their own spiritual growth.

It gives me hope that the church is getting serious about adult education. It's wonderful.

...hopefully you're in some kind of prayer group, so that they can come together, reinforce your common beliefs and goals; and then go out again and face the world.

I think the adult faith formation which the church is moving towards is so critical in middle school and high school.

I guess it is an answer that adult formation has been sorely lacking, and I see it more and more that people are interested in learning.

Parents are asking regularly for parenting stuff: "How do I communicate with my kids?" Our parents have also requested parent education for themselves.

5.2 Young people best learn the spirit and skills of how to be faithful through mentoring.

Quotations from interviews:

...mentoring that happens and accompaniment of young people in their individual journeys of dealing with their first issues and dating or in conflict of values that they are dealing with at school or other conflicts in their interpersonal relationship; being able to be walked through it in a constructive way so that they learn experientially the skills of how to be faithful.

I think that is a real kind of foundational element that individuals are being strengthened in their being and in the consciousness of their faith and being able to bring it into different aspects of their life.

Youth Leading within the Parish

6. Youth are willing, excited, passionate leaders in the parish. They share their gifts and energy as leaders in parish life and in ministry to their peers.

Quotations from interviews:

...want to be involved in.

...they will, they are there, and they do want to be part of it.

You can always call on a youth to do whatever...

...just kind of tap in their talents

They are just excited about coming.

It is neat for the adults that are around. It is exciting.

We try to look and see where the kids' energy is and where their passion is.

Supportive Findings:

- 6.1 Empowering youth to plan ministry and to be in ministry with their peers builds "right on target" ministry, creates ownership, opens creativity, and instills leadership skills.

Quotations from interviews:

...leadership is shown by the kids themselves. That they weren't just waiting for someone to tell them what to do.

The kids are part of the planning.

So you know you have to work with that. They are very creative. They need to be a part of that. The team process is very important.

I think that's why connecting to what they do already is important. They need to adapt the program for them.

You start with the young person and what works with them.

6.2 Young people are doing surprising things in the parish. When given the opportunity to lead, they gain self-esteem, become active in the parish, and develop as religious leaders.

Quotations from interviews:

...across the board in a number of programs in our parish, the youth are not only involved in leadership roles, but we have young catechists and young people.....virtually run day to day by young people themselves. I think part of that is also not just in the doing but in the attitudes that are being formed.

I see it as a way that they're being developed as religious leaders especially through the leadership part of the youth ministry program.

We have young people thinking about technical aspects of it that are traditionally adult type things to decide upon. They are taking part, and there is dialogue going on.

...they pretty much are in charge of, usually, the lectors, and the Eucharistic minister, and cantor, and sometimes the...

They are responsible to keep them in control, on task, participating, and they take a wonderful responsibility for that.

6.3 Youth who are involved in liturgical roles bring a powerful presence and energy to the community and the community takes pride and joy in the youth.

Quotations from interviews:

They acted out the homily. They were an integral part of the Mass itself in being servers and lectors. And they are in the music and in the sharing of their experiences with the community which was very life-giving for everyone.

What I was impressed with was the, her reverence. She spoke clearly and distinctly. She had a good pace, and you could tell that she was putting her heart into what she was doing. That was very meaningful to me.

...the value in their experience is very visible in many ways in liturgy. And their competency and capabilities are acknowledged.

One of the best lectors that we have out of the entire parish community is a seventh grader.

The kids or the young people decided to interpret the Passion in relation to what is going on around us. For me, personally, it was a very powerful medium to convey and reach out to people about what suffering with Jesus Christ meant. The kids wrote the play and it was based on the Stations of the Cross. It was all contemporary vignettes. It was really powerful.

I am also impressed when it comes to liturgy on Sunday morning. This is one parish where we have a tremendous number of high school students involved with service, both girls and boys. The pride they take in that, the confidence with which they are focused, the friendliness that they bring to it, and the respect that they have commanded from... The parish is really proud of them...

6.4 There are many ways youth participate in liturgy.

Quotations from interviews:

They already have them involved. They read.

...Eucharistic ministers...

...the kids carry the cross in procession...

...do lecturing at Sunday mass and Eucharistic ministers...

...(our) youth ministry encourages kids to be involved on the altar, as lectors, as Eucharistic ministers. We have about 15-20 kids involved in music groups...

Effects of Youth Ministry

7. Effective youth ministry has a transforming effect for a lifetime. The ministry plants seeds that help youth grow into great people and leaders who are faith filled, enthusiastic, mature, change agents with a good moral compass, and have the ability to face life's challenges.

Quotations from interviews:

...they can be touched by that truth and see the transformation of them...

I think youth ministry helps people, or the young people, have a greater relationship with God. It makes them stronger in their lives as Christians and just to be able to grow, to be very mature, healthy people.

I think the kids coming out of this program are going to be great people, all of them in one way or another. Some of them might be great leaders.

I know seeds were planted in their hearts.

I feel that we plant the seed. It took 22 years for it to blossom.

I see them as disciples of Christ and that journey will continue because if they're seeking that and they're doing those type of things, they will teach their children, the next generation, to have the same values and continue.

Related Findings:

- 7.1 Young people that participate in parish youth programs have an orientation to stay involved with their parish as young adults. College-age students are coming back to their parish and ministering there. They are "yeast in a culture and a church that needs to be lifted up all of the time."

Quotations from interviews:

The children and young people that have participated in any of the programs so that you, the ministry, would be result-oriented to see how their lives have been changed by the parish. I can see some of the youth that have been changed and what they have been involved in.

I see them as yeast in a culture and a church that needs to be lifted up all of the time.

...go away to school and come back

Belongingness

...I think it's remarkable that our college kids are coming back here to minister.

...is seeing that it doesn't stop when they graduate from high school.

...something touched them in their own confirmation formation, so they are back as team leaders within the confirmation formation program.

... (Young adults are an) example for the young people to see. I see college kids that could be anywhere, you know, who make a point to come to youth group.

7.2 Youth learn values and faith practices from the parish community.

Quotations from interviews:

...I saw teachers going around with a lot of books in their hands, and they went over and asked if they could help. To me, that was a very important thing; a little thing, but still very important.

It's helped my children stay connected with the church and the values that we try to teach them at home to give them another spot to go to.

So the young people are learning from just the culture of the parish.

Effects of Service

8. Service changes young people's lives, sometimes radically, sometimes for life. Service alters youth's self-image and creates empathy.

Quotations from interviews:

...put themselves into other people's places [...] to Mexico last summer, it really has a whole life-long learning effect on those kids. I see that kind of thing having a real long-term effect.

...you can see those boys and the parents being changed through the experience [...] putting themselves in somebody else's shoes; (it's the) empathy aspect

...teaches them compassion and patience and gets them motivated to continue doing service for other people...

It's another chance to empower one another in their numbers, to feel valuable.

Related Findings:

- 8.1 Youth and adults who are rooted in the theological reasons for service understand themselves to be touching the wounded Christ and being the body of Christ in the world.

Quotations from interviews:

...level of service to others really is, it is simply something we want to teach them. It is something that is really necessary to do for a follower of Christ, incorporating that action to work on behalf of others into your life.

...because it's difficult, I think for youth and in practice, e to come to help them find Jesus—to find this invisible God—without some very concrete work.

It is a total mentality of service, taking care of our own in the neighborhood. So the older youth—teens and college students—were now serving the neighborhood and getting involved in projects for the parish. Our social services... (includes) all sorts of things going on for social services dealing with family needs; (it's) a real holistic approach to youth ministry. It is not just being involved in social service. It is social action and... The mission is the ability to serve. That is our baptismal calling. The action is that cutting edge of the gospel, and "How do you establish the kingdom of God?"

...teach the theology of justice...

They're called in to do work and then helped to understand why that was important to the community of the church and the outside community.

...(Service makes) them sensitive to the needs of the poor. To know they are serving a Christ who is there mostly for those who are in need.

8.2 There are a variety of ways that service is incorporated into youth ministry.

Quotations from interviews:

We meet every second and fourth Sunday, and we do service projects throughout the year.

Sometime with the junior high or middle school age kids, service is incorporated in Confirmation. (Within the) development of the requirements, there is a number of hours that the kids commit to the confirmation process. So they do find a need to plug into these hours and to do service activities.

During the summer there is a program (...) where they do community service in the morning, which varies from going to people's houses and mowing their grass or going to a local business and helping them collate papers or anything.

Parent and Family Involvement

9. Effective Youth Ministry insists on and gives real opportunity for parent and family involvement.

Quotations from interviews:

I think the parent involvement is a real vital part. Here the parents are very much—it's a real faith community. The parents are involved.

We use ministry for the youth but that alone won't cut it. It needs to follow the family as well and a relationship with the family.

If you work with just the youth, it just doesn't work. You have to work with the whole family.

Parents have to be open, and the church has to be open to the fact too, that we are living in a real world and not one with our ethics we had forty or fifty years ago. We have to adapt to the child and look at the reality.

I think that's a key too that our current youth minister is absolutely set on the parents being there ...And at the commissioning ceremony she was on the phone until the last minute getting parents there because she was bound and determined to have the parents there for this commissioning ceremony. And so I think that's part of why things work.

...bringing in the parents ...It really helps when they understand what's going on, they're not just dropped off, it enhances the attraction.

Parents encourage their children to join the youth group. It's because they themselves are committed to their faith and to the faith formation of their children.

You trust what is happening. As a parent, that is why you feel better. I trust what is happening. It isn't just well I trust (our youth minister). He isn't going to let anything go wrong, of course, that is here. It is more than that. There is a dynamic among the young people that is extreme, it transforms people. So if my kid brings her creepy friend that is fine.

Related Statement: See statement 5.1

Adults who Work with Youth

10. Youth are open to Adults who:

- go where they are
- are real
- companion youth
- build respectful relationships

Quotations from interviews:

To go where they are before you can get them to come where you want to be. You can't stand on the street and holler that you have something great over here unless you go over to their side of the street and see where they are at. To be present and then that give ideas on how to make them be present on your side of the street.

This is the whole idea of companion is, I think, our young people have sense of being companioned.

...But to drone on and on and on. They're just like, "Okay, okay, ...you can't relate to what I'm going through, to be real." You have to be real.

You can't—you have to be yourself. With all your little, you know flaws, and everything else. And they love your flaws.

So, they really like to see the real person. If you're phony, that's it. You cannot be phony. You have to be who you are.

Supportive Finding:

10.1 To attract and keep volunteers, youth ministry leaders: pray; provide clear job descriptions; match gifts and interest with roles; challenge the community to get involved; provide training and support.

Quotations from interviews:

It is much harder to look at your team and decide what they need, and what their talents are, and how they can work together, and get them to work together as a unit. That is much harder.

But the volunteers are absolutely critical. The quality of the volunteers is really what impresses me also. The volunteers, many of them, are parents. They have an interest, a very important interest in it; their own interests. That's important too.

How do you challenge your church? How do you challenge all these people coming on Sunday...to give back too? You have to challenge these people every year, and ask how many are interested in dealing with these kids. Everyone has a gift to offer. God gave all of us a gift.

I have a prayer that I say over and over again — “Lord, send your workers to the vineyard.” It seems to work. I think we’re just very blessed. We seem to be very blessed here. We have a very active parish. We have people who want to be involved.

I find the more prepared people are in general the more likely that you’ll get them to come back, and you’ll have a fulfilling experience as opposed to when you just throw them in there, they’re like, “What am I doing?” They want to know specifically what is going to be asked of them and then train them to do it.

Balance within Youth Ministry

11. Effective youth ministry balances the social, educational, formational, sacramental, and service dimension. It is “permeable” and there are no boundaries between the dimensions.

Quotations from interviews:

...needs to balance the social, the educational, the formational, the sacramental, the parish life of service. And the really good youth ministry program, I think, will have a lot of very permeable, or no boundaries between them.

I think too having it well-balanced. Having opportunities for fun, opportunities for faith formation, opportunities for outreach. Young kids like to help. They like to serve. We have a nice blend of those opportunities. Then the kids have a well-balanced experience of what it means to be Christian. All those things are part of being Christian.

...(Effectiveness in our youth ministry is credited) to the multifaceted nature of the program. Not only does it make it a holistic program, but also it enables the program to tap into different young people who will respond to different things.

...(We have) a multidimensional, multi-layered approach.

Related Finding:

- 11.1 Faith, fun, friends, and food = the formula for effective youth ministry.

Quotations from interviews:

...faith, fun, friends, you need to have all three of those. Food, you gotta have food.

Try to make it Faith, Food, Fun! These three F's and you'll get kids because that is their world.

... (Youth experience) a sense of community. It's word of mouth. They come, and they have fun as they participate with us. As (one of the leaders) said, “They come back the next year because they enjoyed themselves.” They start telling other people how much fun it was, and then they want to come and help.

(Make youth ministry) fun and energetic. The kids have so much energy, and they just want to have fun. We have to provide that for them in the midst of forming their Christian values.

Responsive Youth Ministry

12. Effective youth ministry doesn't begin with a model, but rather responds to the real lives, needs, and interests of young people in the community. The leadership creates ministry by experimenting, taking risks, and "trying again." They put the pieces together in a way that is responsive to youth.

Quotations from interviews:

You put the pieces together and you create something to put that model together.

So we joke about it, but it is like experiment number 793... We shift if things don't go the way we thought they would go. You have to be flexible. Shifting position and the direction is very important because there is very little, ultimately, that doesn't work out.

...we strive to meet youth where they are at.

...to taking a chance and trying new things that might backfire on you, but you can always go back to your old ways. We always have our old plan to fall back on, but I think it is important to jump out there and try new things.

Some things might work here and might not work someplace else. People say we want to find a model. It is hard. Something might work in this parish, but won't work in another. They want to see this happening and are not willing to take risks.

Other Findings:

Small Groups

13. Being intentional and deliberate about building life-giving relationships means building and nurturing small groups.

Quotations from interviews:

...our staff leadership and our lay leadership have been consciously working and talking over the last three years about the culture of being intentional and deliberate about building relationships. And that's the thing that we really emphasize—is that relationships are intentional and deliberate. And you have to be doing that work of building those small networks of relationships because otherwise you will experience that [...] the people just falling through the cracks and just losing track of them. They do need that small community sense...

...we make it into small, I more intimate groups, if you will. For example, recently we had a home Mass in an individual's house where the neighborhood group comes together with the family and kids. And they start off with an evening Mass and social activities and that brings the bigness issues [...], it makes it small so [...] (you build) relationships then you branch out, but you started with your neighbors. And it's called the neighborhood Mass.

...(the staff) really has to model what they want to build within the youth ministry. I mean I think the leadership here models a small group feeling even though we're probably a very large staff in relation to others, other parishes. We try to model that, taking a big staff and model that smallness and think about, talk about, what it looks like through our staff development. Because if we can't do it as the leadership in the church then we can't envision it and dream it to take them into youth ministry or anything else. So, I think that's a big positive here at (our parish), that we try to model what we're trying to build.

14. Parishes have a variety of small group ideas, including: Super Sundays; trips to the mall; intergenerational ice cream socials; scavenger hunts; bible trivia; bibles and bagels.

Quotations from interviews:

(One idea is) Super Sundays that we're doing. We haven't really evaluated this yet, but the attendance is excellent. It's running about 90%. It is part of the program. I think that kind of, it gets them there. It gives the parents the incentive to get them there. And when they get there, they have a good time. It combines religious education and social and activities and prayer. We do it about six times a year.

One of the most active groups is actually Scouts, very successful; both Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts.

On Saturdays they go on trips. They go to malls, and do all that stuff that nobody likes to do; but he likes to do that.

Everyone participating from the youngest to the oldest... Everybody comes to liturgy or everybody participates here. That would be what I would like to see. We may want to take this out, but I was a bit disappointed with a new group that has gotten together that has gone gangbusters. It deals with the elderly. We came up with what I thought was a beautiful marriage, the third and fourth and fifth graders combined with that group of folks 60+ to come to an ice cream social to converse and talk and get to know one another. It not only fell, but it was a disaster.

We went on a scavenger hunt.

...we were doing Bible trivia and kids were running from the far lanes, "I've got the answer to that question." It just amazes me how much they know.

...Thursday morning bagels and Bibles. Open Bibles at 6:30 in the morning. The youth gather for prayer and bagels.

Retreats and Trips

15. Retreats and trips to Catholic youth events build Catholic identity, connect, empower, and touch even the most difficult teens, energize both adults and teens, and keep them coming back.

Quotations from interviews:

I think the participation in the National Youth Conference has been outstanding. I think it's been very successful with the kids because we have large numbers that go. That experience that they have there is, I think, very important. As you just said, to feel a part of not only the small group here, but the national; the magnitude of the national. To see other Catholic young people living lives just as they are. I think that impacts them. It's been very successful.

...we are nationally involved. We are at the World Youth Day. We have a sense of vision as a whole in the world, in the country, in northern California as well as within this parish. And so a real healthy sense I think of participation, I think, in the larger church and world working for the common good.

I realize that back working with the youth in weekend youth retreats, junior and senior high school, that was the biggest thing that we did—just listened, said, "It's okay"—affirmed the faith.

The retreats, the retreats are huge and successful, and empowering, and connecting, and they grab even the most difficult kids.

The retreats are very effective in that they are—you see that the kids are moved not only on an emotional level, but sometimes there are tears...

You can just see that they have been touched.

Confirmation

16. Other than the common element of comments about the effectiveness of sponsors there were no clear insights into how confirmation is a part of effective youth ministry.

(Quotations from interviews are not available at this time.)

Middle School Ministry

17. It is important youth begin to experience ministry in middle school and throughout the adolescent years. Youth are more available in middle school and they need the church as their foundation during this time.

Quotations from interviews:

We can work at times and give them that. Working with the younger children—we have started a program for the third through fifth grade to capture them while they are young and try to encourage that group more as they grow older so they really want to be here. It is hard to pull the high school kids in because they have gone through this routine. If we get them young, it will help.

...the older they get they start working and [...] things are going on all the time and so unless we are able to begin the formation process in very young children and young adolescents that church, Jesus, is the rock, He's there at the center. And if we're not putting everything else around Him, then we're missing it.

I feel like we probably lose a lot of people between fifth grade and—now even confirmation is not really—a lot of them aren't confirmed. So, you lose a lot of people between grade school and adulthood because there is nothing there for them.

Well, we have already a log of strong programs structured for junior high kids. Junior high kids are looking for stuff to do more than senior high kids.

As kids get older, there are lots of reasons—but as kids get older, they're not as engaged or concerned.