

CREATING VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

South Mountain W.O.R.K.S. Coalition Virtual Future Leaders Town Hall
February 26, 2021 – Online via Zoom

YOUTH STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Youth bring a lot of strengths and assets to their community. They often have the time and energy that can be used to support the community. They have fresh points of view that, when combined with activism, allow them to make positive change. They have passion, faith, and love for everyone. They are open to new ideas which when combined with their creativity can be tapped to find solutions for making our community better.

Youth can best be mobilized and utilized to increase the vibrancy and resiliency of a community by being connected to each other. Involvement in the community also helps—whether its volunteering to clean up the communities, being involved in after school activities, spreading the word to others (with social media or in other ways), or peer-to-peer support.

When you get more kids involved you can make the world more peaceful and a better place. We are here to change the world!



WHAT ARIZONA’S ELECTED LEADERS NEED TO KNOW

There are several messages we would like to share with elected leaders that would make our communities more vibrant.

A 15-minute drive to live in a different community can make a big difference in life expectancy. It shouldn't be this way. Where you live shouldn't determine how long you live or how laws are enforced. We need to address equity in our communities.

The community of South Phoenix is surrounded by fast food and liquor stores that do not support being healthy. To improve our health and wellness, we need to have healthier food alternatives in our community. We also need equity with transportation, air quality, parks, and trees.

The elements of a vibrant community are interconnected: food and resources are important as is the attitude of community members. St. Vincent de Paul is a good example of an organization that makes all feel welcome. Their mindset is a healthy one that more people should have—specifically the willingness to help everyone unconditionally.

North High School is another good example. They create events that bring community onto campus which allows the community to come together.

Finally, leaders should keep their eyes open, driving through and being involved in the communities they serve.

TAKING ACTION

The most important actions that should be taken to make our communities healthier and more vibrant include:

1. Lowering drug misuse in our communities through programs and discussion in schools. This should start at a young age while children are still impressionable. It can include the RX360 and other educational efforts, such as posters and social media posts

2. Creating more events like youth day at the capitol. Writing to our legislators.
3. Creating more opportunities and training for those who don't plan to go to college, such as vocational training, job apprenticeships, and trade school nights.
4. Better healthcare.
5. Laws or zoning that reduce the amount of liquor stores in our communities and the number of advertisements for smoking and alcohol.

The responsibility for taking these actions begins with us. While adults can help us and we should seek their assistance, we are the future adults. We are the ones experiencing these challenges and we have the understanding and passion to begin the change needed. We can also be role models for other youth by exemplifying the change.

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the South Mountain W.O.R.K.S. Coalition Virtual Future Leaders Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Campaign to reduce the number of liquor stores.
- Not go to parties and become involved with drugs.
- Produce a resource hub website for the prevention of distracted driving with Arizona youth.
- As an adult, listen and mentor more with youth.
- Send letters and emails to senators.
- Inform my friends and peers of the dangers of drugs and alcohol.
- Provide resources for the community to attend therapy.
- Volunteer more in my community.
- Ask elected leaders to fund more prevention, mental health, and community-based initiatives.
- Educate youth about issues that are going on and help them to find their voices and to be empowered.
- Educate and inform the younger generations so they do not make the same mistakes we made.
- Ask companies why they make drugs.
- Work with my coalition to put up anti-smoking signage in Peoria parks.
- Create discussion in my own school and present at least one workshop by the end of the year.
- Fund more prevention, mental health, and community-based initiatives.
- Put ads on social media to stop drug abuse.
- Spread the message amongst other youth, including my friends and classmates to get people involved.
- Bring prevention education programs that speak to youth.