

2007 America's Promise Application

Marquette & Alger Counties

SECTION 1:

COMMITMENT, COLLABORATION, AWARENESS, DATA AND ADVOCACY

90 POSSIBLE POINTS

The America's Promise Alliance believes that, as a nation and as communities, we can help more young people get the support and opportunities they need if we do a few things better:

- Engage committed partners and individuals from all sectors, and enable them to collaborate more effectively toward shared goals and plans
- Raise awareness of kids' needs, using relevant data, and drive people to act and advocate to make kids a top priority (90 possible points)

Engaging Committed Partners and Collaborating Effectively Across Sectors

1. Describe the child and youth focused one-on-one or small-group partnerships (e.g. school/business, city-school, public-private, faith-based-nonprofit, school-community) and their results (e.g. resulted in significant new financial investments, new or expanded numbers of volunteers or other human resources, etc.) (250 words max)

A Learning Network that includes the GLCYD, Girl Scouts, the YMCA, Women's Center, Children's Museum, United Way, and Big Brothers/Big Sisters focuses on the needs of adolescent girls. As a result, the Women's Center and YMCA have collaborated to teach self-defense classes, the Girl Scouts have implemented a domestic violence awareness patch, a display at the Children's museum was developed, and youth residing in the domestic violence shelter receive free admission to the Children's Museum.

LSCP, an organization of more than 900 businesses, schools, and nonprofits, works to promote economic development and community vitality. Receiving recognition as a Most Livable Community and an All-American County makes this a great place to raise families and grow businesses. Lake Superior Partners in Education, a committee of the partnership works to "Prepare an upcoming workforce that aligns with the current and future employment needs in Marquette and Alger Counties." The committee uses youth surveys to measure youth's interest in staying in the community and to discover their career interests. Employer needs are monitored and relevant school programs are developed as a result.

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In Alger County the County Commission on Aging, MSU Extension, Alger Regional Foundation, Alger Parks and Recreation, The Mining Journal, and the Munising Alternative High School are housed with the Middle School. Rents from these agencies help support the school and saved the school district the cost of building a new facility. The agencies are able to share resources and work together on a variety of services to the community.

2. Are there one or more standing, community-wide collaborations (e.g. Children's Commission, Taskforce, positive youth development coalition) working on behalf of children and youth in your community? (YES/NO)

a. If so, please describe the group(s), including how long they have existed, the sectors involved (e.g., local elected officials, media partners, schools, nonprofits, faith groups, young people), the leadership for the collaboration(s) and any successes that the group(s) has/have had in serving children and youth in your community. (175 words max)

The HSCB Family Coordinating Councils (FCCs) were established in each county in 1994 to promote community collaboration and to improve services to youth and families. Government agencies, nonprofit organizations, parent representatives, churches, and schools rotate leadership among participating members. Accomplishments have included programs to keep children in their homes to avoid foster care and using data regarding the well-being of youth to strengthen programs for children and families.

Established under the leadership of the Women's Center, the Domestic Violence Coalition includes the Women's Center, the Prosecutor's Office, police, hospital and medical personnel, treatment programs, attorneys, educators, and representatives from local media. The coalition works to increase awareness and has developed a system of seamless services and a coordinated response to victims of domestic violence.

The Homeless Coalition was established in 1997 and includes shelter providers, law enforcement, businesses, housing providers, emergency service personnel, schools and non-profit agencies. Funding for services has increased and a continuum of services to both prevent and respond to homeless individuals and families, including homeless youth has been developed.

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3. Does your community have one or more major forums specifically for public and private funders to develop joint funding priorities to benefit children and youth, such as a regional area grantmakers association, or a public-private coordinating council? (YES/NO)

a. If so, who leads and participates, what is its/their mandate, and what are its/their accomplishments? (175 words max)

Under the leadership of the FCC's additional partners are brought together into smaller work groups that focus on specific developmental areas. Through this process funding priorities are established. As a result, playgroups and prenatal classes have been developed, father involvement in early childhood programs has increased, and school readiness activities have been enhanced. Priorities for adolescents have focused on mentoring, after-school programs, improving access to programs for low-income families, and substance use prevention. Career preparation activities and services for youth transitioning out of foster care have also been enhanced.

The United Way funding allocations' process involves citizen volunteers who review program-funding requests for five key challenge areas which were determined from the results of a comprehensive needs assessment completed in 1994 and updated in 2003. Positive youth development is one of those challenge areas. Donor designation options offer individuals the opportunity to designate their donations to specific organizations priorities.

The Child Abuse and Neglect Council works with the Marquette Community Foundation to establish local priorities and to administer funds to support local prevention programs.

4. Is there an established mechanism to cultivate and support youth leadership and/or to give youth a voice in policy decisions in your community? (YES/NO)

a. If so, please describe these mechanisms, including how long they have been in existence, how they function, what kind of decisions or opportunities young people have access to and specifically how policy decisions have been influenced. (175 words max)

MARESA has facilitated teen leadership activities for 21 years. A Teen Leadership Advisory Committee meets with adult advisors 6-7 times a year to plan offerings at a regional teen leadership conference held annually in Marquette at Northern Michigan University where 350 youth from throughout the region come together to increase knowledge and skills around the topic of substance abuse prevention. Weekend and summer programs are also planned. The committee helps shape the direction of these programs and assists in identifying grant opportunities. Alternatives through Creative Theater was developed out of this initiative. It involves youth using drama to prepare scenes that portray youth issues as a way to educate other youth and to facilitate discussion around specific concerns.

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The LSV Junior and Senior Youth Councils establish policies and provide activities for its Youth & Family Center.

Two youth serving on the Parks and Recreation Board in Alger County have been instrumental in shaping the way services are delivered. These youth guide decisions, help establish priorities and influence how resources are allocated.

5. Does your community follow a comprehensive plan for addressing the needs of children and youth in your community? (YES/NO)

a. If so, please describe the plan, the process to develop the plan, including any needs assessment performed, the partners that were involved, when it was originally created, whether it has been revised to reflect changes in your community and the child population, and how the plan has been used to create better policies and programming. (500 words max)

While there is no formally adopted strategic plan, the community began using data to drive decisions beginning in 1994 with the implementation of the COMPASS needs assessment survey which was updated in 2003. Through a collaborative effort between the MSU Extension Office, United Way, and the FCCs, this community-building initiative involved 421 adults in telephone interviews, personal interviews with 34 community and business sector leaders and mail surveys sent to businesses and service organizations, with 85 responding. Sustained, collaborative, strategic efforts to strengthen and improve living conditions in Marquette and Alger counties are driven by the information provided during the survey process. COMPASS focused on key challenges facing the community which are Basic Needs, Domestic Violence and Addiction Services, Youth Development, Health, and Elderly Citizens and people with disabilities. These focus areas help chart the course for the future while providing critical current data to human service organizations so they may procure funding, plan, and initiate programs, and allocate funds to identified priority areas.

In 1997, the 13 school districts in Marquette and Alger Counties joined together to begin assessing the health of our youth by administering the Search Institute's SM Profiles of Student Life Attitudes & Behaviors survey. This survey focuses on 40 Developmental Assets (20 community-based and 20 individual) that have been shown through research to be associated with a variety of risk-taking behaviors as well as behaviors that are associated with educational success and life achievement. Administered every two years, the 1997, 2000, 2002, and 2004 surveys were summarized in a report released nearly one year ago and introduced six Priority Areas for positive youth development: Maintaining Good Health, Decreasing Risk Behaviors, Increasing Mentoring and Community Identity, Improving Youth's School Experience, Strengthening Family Support and Involvement, and Enhancing Positive Identity and Social Competency.

In addition, the core survey was supplemented in 2004 by a survey of 6th grade students, components of which are included in this report, and a Sidebar Survey addressing local issues of concern such as career pathways, substance use, and

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exercise nutrition. These data provide a rich resource for understanding the state of our youth, providing insight into how families and communities can enhance their healthy development, and help drive programs and services accordingly.

Using survey data, the Alger County FCC established goals to increase family services by coordinating local programs that address specific at-risk behaviors and thriving indicators to increase parental awareness and to enhance parent/school/community partnerships. Recognizing that problems occur when there is a high level of parental absence (or disengagement) and that strong relationships between adults and children are essential to healthy development, the School Success program was started to allow interventions to occur at the first hint of concerns. School Success works with children and families to develop assets.

In Marquette County, data is used by the Health Department to leverage state funding and drive youth prevention programs. Additionally, the YMCA, Big Brothers/Big Sisters, the U.P. Children's Museum, Girl Scouts, and Boy Scouts utilize survey results for planning.

Raising Awareness, Using Data, and Driving Action

1. Has your community created one or more public awareness campaign(s) to promote positive youth development? Do your community's youth efforts receive regular coverage in the local media (i.e. through a regular column in the local newspaper or regular programming on local cable access) (YES/NO)

a. For each campaign, please describe the content of the campaign, when it was conducted, the audience to whom the campaign was directed, and any results you documented from the campaign. For any regular news coverage, please describe the location and length of the coverage, topics covered, and how often this coverage appears. (175 words max)

The 0013 Campaign, an initiative of the Marquette County Substance Abuse and Violence Prevent Coalition, promotes 0 underage drinking, 0 driving under the influence, 1 drink per hour, and 3 drinks per event. As a result of this campaign, Powell Township in Marquette County is the first in the nation to adopt a policy to implement these limits at any township events.

GLCYD encourages every individual to become a youth asset builder with the "Put the You into Youth" Campaign. Posters capturing positive images of youth and adults are distributed. An award recognizes outstanding role models and each month an individual or group is publicly recognized and thanked for "Putting the You into Youth." The campaign has helped to keep youth issues at the top of the community agenda.

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The YMCA holds a Strong Kids Campaign every September that promotes healthy alternatives for kids and raises funds for scholarships so that low income youth can participate as members of the YMCA. Since 2001, over \$300,000 has been raised for this purpose.

2. Does your community collect, analyze and/or report data on the well-being of children and youth in your community? (YES/NO)

a. If so, please describe how long you have collected data, what data you collect and the age range it represents, how you report the data, and who uses the data. (175 words max)

We have tracked data regarding youth development since 1997 using the Profiles of Student Life Attitudes & Behaviors survey from the Search Institute. It gathers information on the perceptions of young people regarding the assets in their lives and their reports on substance use and other at-risk behaviors. Thriving behaviors such as success in school and caring for others provides us with a picture of the health of our youth population. The survey has been administered to 8th, 10th, and 12 graders in all 13 school districts. Aggregate data from the survey is the centerpiece for the web-based SOY (State Of Youth) report which presents an analysis of key issues in youth development (www.soyreport.org). The report is a comprehensive, strategic view of the rural youth development environment and the status of young people in Marquette and Alger Counties. Basic demographic information, asset survey results, local "promising practice" highlights and data assessments and interpretation of the data are presented and made available to help guide actions around youth and services for youth and families.

3. How are children and youth a policy priority for your community? What policies or regulations have been passed or are in place to support children and youth and what time period do they cover? Describe which public leaders are supportive and how they demonstrate their support. (300 words max)

In 2005, Governor Jennifer Granholm awarded a \$24,000 grant to establish an Energy Demonstration Center in Marquette. Northern Options partnered with Marquette High School students who will use biodiesel in school buses and conduct emissions tests to see how clean biodiesel burns compared to regular fuel. Students also have the opportunity to manufacture their own biodiesel using a mobile kit and waste oil from a local restaurant.

City and County officials supported a healthier environment for youth by passing non-smoking ordinances. In the City of Marquette, smoking is banned in all public places. In Alger County, smoking banned in all but bars and casinos.

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When problems arose at the former K.I Sawyer Air Force Base, elected officials and local agencies worked together to improve availability of services. The State Police increased visibility on base and a multi-purpose service center was established to allow greater access to needed services.

The Marquette, the Housing Commission supported the Lake Superior Village Youth and Family Center (YFC) after-school program by providing \$25,000 in matching funds annually since 2003. The YFC helped reduce the juvenile arrest rate in that neighborhood by 52%. Recently, area Rotary Clubs worked to help build program capacity and in 2006, Child and Family Services stepped in to support the program in a collaborative effort that will insure its sustainability.

The Alger Parks and Recreation in the City of Munising sponsors after-school programs, summer day camps, and special activities during school breaks. In the summer, a partnership with the National Park Service provides a Junior Ranger Program. ALTRAN Public Transportation ensures that all students have access to these programs. The community is currently working to develop a movie theater in the Middle School Auditorium (the community has no theater) and to develop a community ice skating rink.

Overcoming Challenges

1. Does your community have any initiatives that help ensure young people in your community graduate from high school and are ready for college or the workforce (e.g. school readiness, academic achievement, youth employment initiatives, dropout prevention, or dropout recovery)? (YES/NO)

a. If so, please describe the initiative(s), any outcomes achieved, the partners involved, and how your community comes together to help your young people succeed? (250 words max)

GLCYD and local major businesses developed the Excellence in Education Program in 1994 that annually recognizes academic excellence in students and teachers. More than \$1 million in scholarships and professional development awards have been granted. During one week each spring, approximately 400 students, parents, teachers, and business leaders gather to honor the top 5% of the graduating seniors in the region, about 45 students. Each student brings the educator who most influenced their success in their education to a community dinner. Parents who also attend are thanked for their hard work in helping to raise these scholars. Another 400 students in grades 9-12 are hosted by local industry with day-long tours of mines, hospitals, and paper mills to learn about local industry and jobs. The hosting business leaders also hold luncheons for the students who are encouraged to continue to do well in school.

The LSCP Partners in Education Committee focuses on linking the business and education communities to help youth prepare for entry into the workforce. As a result of the dialogue between schools and employers, new health care career exploration

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materials were developed, health care career fairs are held, a new job shadowing program was established, and a vocational education program was retooled to serve five school districts and the employment needs of local industry.

Alternative school programs have been established. 149 youth are enrolled in alternative high schools and a charter middle school that provide an applied learning environment for students needing a different environment than the traditional classroom.

2. Provide an example of how your community has overcome another specific challenge or set of challenges affecting its children and youth. What policies and programs have you implemented and what results has your community seen? (250 words max)

Access to funding to provide safe places, caring adults and other programs is often a challenge for us. Our relatively small population is spread over a large geographic area and consists of small towns of 3,000-5,000 people. Marquette is the largest city of 25,000.

To help overcome this challenge, GLCYD works with youth-serving and nonprofit organizations to build fund development capacity. Providing research, consultation, and program development assistance, they help organizations improve their youth programs and strengthen operations. Workshops to increase staff and volunteer skills along with technical assistance and counseling in areas such as fundraising and grant writing help to strengthen many local organizations and citizens. An annual conference begun in 2005 now brings over 100 nonprofit organizations together from throughout the region to access training and for networking.

A foundation research center is being established in cooperation with the local public libraries to provide computer access and other resources to assist non-profit groups in identifying potential new sources of funding. GLCYD will provide workshops on proposal writing and Peter White Public Library will train individuals to utilize the Foundation Center software and collection to research possible funders. This will help increase access to funders not located in our isolated rural area.

Capacity building enabled the U.P. Children's Museum to grow into an organization that serves 51,000 annually. Partnerships and creative funding enabled a small town and surrounding townships to establish Alger Parks and Recreation. The "W" recreation center rose out of a facility once owned by the air force. The community built a facility for the YMCA and established a scholarship fund to ensure that low-income families could participate. A partnership between the Marquette Housing Commission, Rotary Clubs and Child & Family Services ensured the future of after-school programming for high-risk youth.

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SECTION 2: RESOURCES YOUTH RECEIVE 54 POSSIBLE POINTS

Children and youth need a variety of resources in order to thrive. America's Promise calls these the Five Promises. For each of the Promises (listed below), please explain how you are working to ensure that all children and youth receive these resources in your community. Please provide examples of programs, initiatives and/or policies and specifically include indicators or data collected that illustrate how you provide these resources to children and youth and progress made, including trend data. (Trend data could include progress over time or progress as compared to state or national benchmarks.) The examples listed below may or may not exist in your community. You have the freedom to be creative in your responses and report programs and initiatives that may exist only in your community. Please make sure that the data you include reflect the outcomes of young people in the community as was described in Section 1b – for example, if the community applying for this honor is a city, please do not include county data.

- **Caring Adults:** Please provide examples of programs, initiatives and/or policies and specifically include indicators or data collected that illustrate how you provide these resources to children and youth and progress made, including trend data.

Definition: *Every child and youth needs and deserves support and guidance from caring adults in their families, schools, and communities, including ongoing, secure relationships with parents and other family adults, as well as multiple and consistent formal and informal positive relationships with teachers, mentors, coaches, youth volunteers, and neighbors.*

Adults in Marquette and Alger Counties are very connected to youth. The 4-H program sponsored by MSU Extension has 250 adult volunteers in Marquette County and 30 in Alger County. Coaches for youth sports number 300 in Marquette County and 113 in Alger County. Girl Scouts boast 229 adult volunteers and the Boy Scouts 258.

In addition to the traditional matches, a high school mentoring program sponsored by Big Brothers/Big Sisters matches 250 elementary children with teens, a Campus Kids program links 20 college students with "Littles" each year, and a Lunch Buddies program allows adult volunteers to join elementary school kids during lunch/recess breaks to share lunch, chat and provide positive role models.

According to the 2004 Youth Asset Report, 44% of our 8th, 10th, and 12th grade youth report they have positive relationships with three or more caring non-parent adults. Family boundaries (46%) increased significantly from 1997-2007

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• **Safe Places:** Please provide examples of programs, initiatives and/or policies and specifically include indicators or data collected that illustrate how you provide these resources to children and youth and progress made, including trend data.

Definition: *Every child and youth needs and deserves to be physically and emotionally safe everywhere they are – from the actual places of families, schools, neighborhoods and communities to the virtual places of media – and to have an appropriate balance of structured, supervised activities and unstructured, unscheduled time. Answers could include drug-free school zones; number of safe play spaces; programs to reduce overall violence and other crimes in community – particularly toward children and youth; availability of out-of-school time activities or programs; availability of before and after-school care; availability of extracurricular activities; etc. (150 words max)*

64% of 8th, 10th & 12th graders say they feel safe in homes, schools, and neighborhoods (2004 Youth Asset Report). 61% are involved in youth programs.

After-school programs are in elementary schools in each county and three low income communities. The Salvation Army has developed a Youth Center in a former Air Force facility and provides structured activities, recreational programming, holiday parties, and daily snacks. At Messiah Lutheran Church in Marquette, K - 12th grade youth participate in guided study, tutoring, discussions and fellowship.

Summer day camps focus on science and math, nature, the arts and a variety of recreational pursuits. Local churches collaborate on a camp for children who have parents in prison.

Parks and spaces designed for and by teens for ice skating, basketball, and skateboarding are abundant as are bike paths and hiking trails. Large wooden "Kids Kingdoms" built by volunteers are in both counties.

• **A Healthy Start:** Please provide examples of programs, initiatives and/or policies and specifically include indicators or data collected that illustrate how you provide these resources to children and youth and progress made, including trend data.

Definition: *Every child and youth needs and deserves the healthy bodies, healthy minds, and healthful habits and choices resulting from regular well-child/youth health care and needed treatment, good nutrition and exercise, comprehensive health knowledge and skills, and role models of physical and psychological health. Answers could include health insurance rates of children or number enrolled in State Child*

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Health Insurance Plans (SCHIP); immunization rates for infants; physical education or health education classes in schools; availability of healthy, nutritious food in school; and availability of community recreation centers; etc. (150 words max)

The U.P. Diabetes Outreach Network, Michigan State University Extension and GLCYD implemented the Healthy School Action Tool (HSAT) assessment in eight school districts in 2006 that evaluated health and wellness. Schools developed action plans to improve nutrition and fitness. Schools removed soda machines and replaced them with milk, juice, and water. Also, walking programs and "brain breaks" were instituted.

In 2004 an outreach effort increased the number of children enrolled in MI-Child (our SCHIP) while the locally established Medical Care Access Coalition developed to ensure that every citizen has access to health care at a reasonable cost. As of January 2004, 179 children were enrolled in MICHILD in Marquette County, and 850 residents had accesses services through MCAC.

The Marquette County Dental Clinic provides preventive and restorative dental services and preventive dental education outreach services to 2,949 low-income Medicaid eligible youth annually.

• Effective Education: Please provide examples of programs, initiatives and/or policies and specifically include indicators or data collected that illustrate how you provide these resources to children and youth and progress made, including trend data.

Definition: Every child and youth needs and deserves the intellectual development, motivation, and personal, social-emotional, and cultural skills needed for successful work and lifelong learning in a diverse nation, as a result of having quality learning environments, challenging expectations, and consistent formal and informal guidance and mentoring.

Studies indicate 80-85% of the region's high school students aspire to a college degree. Follow-up studies show 65% enrolled in post-secondary training 18 months following graduation. Besides a strong commitment to basic academic skills mastery, area schools offer wide exposure to career planning, exploration, and opportunities to learn skills from first-hand exposure to the workplace.

While the racial makeup of youth is predominately white Caucasian (89%), there are a significant number of Native American students. Federally funded Title IX Indian Education programs emphasize the culture of various tribes in three districts. Exposure to various ethnic groups takes place through the area's mining-related immigrant mix. As an example, the 2005 Grand Finn Fest celebrates the heritage of the Finnish population.

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Area schools employ a cadre of teachers with Michigan teaching certificates, all of whom must complete requirements for the highly qualified designation found in the No Child Left Behind legislation.

• **Opportunities to Help Others:** Please provide examples of programs, initiatives and/or policies and specifically include indicators or data collected that illustrate how you provide these resources to children and youth and progress made, including trend data.

Definition: *Every child and youth needs and deserves the chance to make a difference – in their families, schools, communities, nation and world – through having models of caring behavior, awareness of the needs of others, a sense of personal responsibility to contribute to larger society, and opportunities for volunteering, leadership and service. Answers could include civic and character education; volunteer opportunities geared toward children and youth; service-learning opportunities in school; faith-based organization and community organizations; mandatory service requirements; and leadership opportunities for children and youth in the community; etc. (150 words max)*

According to the 2004 Marquette-Alger Youth Asset report, nearly half of the students surveyed perform some kind of community service weekly 44% of that population reported placing a high value on helping other people.

Service learning activities include students in the Education Program at NMU providing 10 hours of service at local agencies each semester as part of an introductory class for aspiring teachers and a local charter school that requires 400 hours of community service for graduation.

Youth volunteer at the U.P. Children's Museum as Explainers helping visitors, developing educational enhancements, and conducting programs for visitors. 90 - 100 youth are currently active. The Marquette City Commission recognizes one Exemplary explainer youth at a public meeting each quarter.

The Marquette County Youth Advisory Council (YAC) involves youth in funding decisions with most of their funding distributed to projects and programs that deal with youth dependence on illegal substances

• **All Five Promises or Multiple Promise Delivery:** Please provide examples of programs, initiatives and/or policies and specifically include indicators or data collected that illustrate how you provide these resources to children and youth and progress made, including trend data.

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Definition: Research shows that the more Promises children and youth receive, the more likely they are to become productive citizens in their community and the less likely they are to exhibit risky behaviors. Answers could include opportunities for young people to receive comprehensive services at a specific site or a strategy to connect youth/families to the supports/resources they are lacking. (200 words max)

When a dramatic increase in violence levels among the students in the Gwinn School systems was evidenced, SCORE (South County Organization for Restoring Excellence) was established. Township officials, law enforcement, local housing developers, clergy and community agencies worked collaboratively to address the issue and to increase community awareness. The group is also able to identify gaps in service and address specific needs that arise. The School recently received one of 140 Gang Resistance Education and Training (GREAT) grants in the nation. Through this initiative a County Sheriff's Deputy has become a daily part of the school system. The officer helps assure safety within the school and is part of the curriculum. Classes and activities to promote anti-bullying education, increase skills to reduce substance use, and resist gang pressure and other risky behavior are offered. Healthy habits and healthy alternatives are promoted. Positive peer pressure activities and opportunities to learn citizenship and develop leadership are additional components. Parenting training, recreation, and enrichment components are also underway.

The school system also provides summer support by continuing to serve hot lunch in this low income area while the Salvation Army youth center provides a safe place, caring adults, physical activity, and healthy snacks.

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APPLICATION SUMMARY (16 POSSIBLE POINTS)

Please take this opportunity to summarize or reinforce the topics or programs mentioned in your application. You should feel free to also report on anything that we did not ask about but that you feel adds value to your community's application.

- **Based on the questions that you have answered as well as other information that you believe is important for your application, please tell us why your community should be considered one of the 100 Best Communities for Young People. (500-750 words max)**

Since 1987, Marquette and Alger Counties have consciously demonstrated that youth are a priority and a valuable community resource. Given a special opportunity by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, we began a 20-year commitment to make our community the best possible place it could be for children. Through leadership training of youth and adults, investments in new and existing youth programs, and a perspective shift from youth as problems to youth as valued and talented community members, Marquette and Alger Counties have continued to evolve as a great place for young people and their families.

In Grand Marais, an isolated community of 400 on Lake Superior's southern shore, young people helped refurbish an old boat for community display and built an airplane with a local hobbyist. The township government expanded the senior center so the youth would have a place to gather. Almost everyone in town attends basketball games and high school graduation each year.

In Marquette, the region's largest community with 22,000 residents, the Upper Peninsula Children's Museum provides a hands-on learning environment for children that competes hardily with any children's museum for innovation and variety. The 5,000-member YMCA has built a scholarship program so families that cannot afford membership can participate.

Munising, a small tourist town of 3,000 people, was too small for a YMCA, so a creative partnership was forged between the school system, city, and local townships to create Alger Parks and Recreation, a program that provides everything from fitness classes and basketball camps for kids to summer family concerts in the park. Alger County agencies work together to assess needs, break down barriers, and collaborate on special community activities and resources for children, families, and senior citizens.

Marquette County garnered several awards in recent years recognizing its superior quality of life and commitment of citizens to a healthy, progressive community. When K.I. Sawyer Air Force Base closed in 1995, 10,000 people and 5,000 jobs were lost. The community came together to reuse the facilities and build a new future. Today, more than 3,000 people call Sawyer home. They developed community spirit where a ghost town had been created almost overnight. The community attracted new businesses and created employment opportunities in fields like aeronautics, education, and forest

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products. Marquette County was named an "All American County" in 2003 and a Most Livable Community in 2004. In 2004, Marquette was named a Cool City by the State of Michigan for its dynamic, progressive environment for business development and quality of life.

Rural Marquette and Alger Counties recognize the need to provide the jobs that families require to support themselves. The Lake Superior Community Partnership (LSCP) provides leadership and vision across all sectors for healthy community development. Local government, businesses, schools, Northern Michigan University (NMU), agencies, and nonprofits work to promote economic development resulting in a vibrant and healthy region in a time when many rural areas are struggling to maintain their way of life. Marquette and Alger Counties is a great place for children, youth, and families.

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Youth Testimonials

Chelsea Parrish, 15

I have lived in Marquette County my entire life, and I can't imagine living anywhere better. You can walk down a street and feel completely safe, whereas other places you might have to be constantly suspicious of everyone around you.

I'm involved personally in 8-18 Media, a youth journalism organization, with the mission of giving kids a significant voice in the world, and the Teen Advisory Board (TAB) at Peter White Public Library.

At TAB meetings we discuss books that we enjoyed, talk about how to improve the Teen Area in the library, and plan activities for teens in the area to attend. TAB is free and open to all teenagers in the community.

At 8-18 Media, kids ages 8 to 18 produce news stories and commentaries on issues that affect youth. We publish in Marquette Monthly magazine and air on two radio stations that broadcast throughout the Upper Peninsula. 8-18 Media is also free and open to any youth aged 8 to 18.

Being involved with these two groups has helped me tremendously. I've learned better teamwork and social skills. Working with the groups has taught me to compromise so that everyone is happy.

I really love living here, because I feel that my opinion matters and that people are listening to me when I talk. I hope that Marquette is named one of the nation's 100 Best Communities for Young People because I don't think any community supports and listens to its youth as much as this one.

Andrew LaCombe, 16

The youth of the Marquette and Alger County community are extremely lucky to have many programs that value us. 8-18 Media is a journalism and empowerment program for kids ages 8 to 18 that I have been involved with for 8 years. Programs like 8-18 build assets in our communities' youth.

At 8-18, we work in teams to produce stories about issues that affect youth, from a youth perspective, but for an audience of all ages. I am often reminded that my community values 8-18 when I hear from people I don't even know that they enjoy our work. Our stories are distributed in Marquette Monthly magazine throughout the Upper Peninsula of Michigan, and broadcast across the peninsula on two radio stations.

I can't imagine what it would be like if I grew up without being involved in 8-18 Media. I have interviewed hundreds of kids and adults on topics ranging from uninsured kids to the effects of the No Child Left Behind Act. The program has given me the confidence

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and power to ask adults questions that I want answers to. I am proud to have given a voice to so many other kids.

Another great aspect of 8-18 is the leadership roles it offers. I serve on the Senior Team, a group of the most dedicated members. We are responsible for making major decisions that affect our program, working in partnership with our bureau director. At 8-18 Media, youth have the power.

We have a yearly membership of about 65 youth. There is absolutely no cost to join, and anyone 8-18 is accepted into our program. Journalism skills aren't the most important thing at 8-18 Media. Instead, it's the desire to give youth a significant voice in the world. How many other communities have programs that give kids this opportunity? Very few...

I am proud of our supportive, caring community, and I know that we are worthy of being named one of our nation's 100 Best Communities for Young People.

Rachel Ryan, 17

My community has given me many things. I feel I have a voice and my opinion matters. Being involved in Key Club, Student Council, YAC (Youth Advisory Council), and a youth member of the Great Lakes Center for Youth Development board of directors, I feel my community gives me many opportunities to help make it a better place for youth.

In Key Club, we do a lot of community service projects to help benefit many people. We have made Christmas ornaments at the assisted living facility, made trick or treat bags for UNICEF, rang bells for the Salvation Army, helped with Meals on Wheels on Thanksgiving, and raised money for the March of Dimes.

On the Youth Advisory Community, I am able to have a huge impact on how we help our community. There is a board of five or six youth that goes over grant applications to decide where we give our money. We have helped fund many projects in the community such as remodeling a community playground, building a skate park, getting a youth group called PRIDE to do a presentation at our high school, and sprucing up our city park.

I'm proud to live in a community that empowers and values its youth.