



KENOSHA COUNTY YOUTH IN GOVERNANCE ANNUAL REPORT (2019-2020)

BACKGROUND

Youth leadership development is critical in building civic capacity and long-term community sustainability in Kenosha County. Programs that teach useful skills and build the self-confidence of young people ensure capable, effective leaders for the next generation. Data from a 2006 Kenosha County *Search Institute* survey documented that only 23% of youth perceive that their community values youth and only 27% believe that youth are given useful roles in the community. These results were among the lowest of all the assets measured and were lower than similar assets measured at a national level. In direct response to these survey results, the Kenosha County Board of Supervisors created the Kenosha County Youth In Governance (YIG) program in 2007. The purpose of the Youth In Governance program is to create a model of youth empowerment within Kenosha County, through direct participation in local government. The overall goal is to bring the youth voice to community issues and concerns while fostering the development of confident, independent, and motivated youth leaders.

NOMINATION AND SELECTION PROCESS

Nomination forms for the 2019–2020 Youth In Governance program were distributed to all public and private high schools in Kenosha County. A total of 85 youth were nominated to participate in the program. Of the 85 nominees that were mailed an application, 18 completed the application and these applicants were invited to interview. Of the 18 candidates, the names of 14 individuals were forwarded to Kenosha County Board Chairman Esposito for official appointment to a Kenosha County Board Committee. Please see TABLE A for specific nomination and selection statistics.

Name of High School	Nominations	Applications	Invited to Interview	Selected
Bradford High School	0	0	0	0
Burlington High School	2	0	0	0
Christian Life School	5	3	3	2
Harborside Academy	3	0	0	0
Indian Trail Academy	6	0	0	0
Kenosha Military Academy	0	0	0	0
LakeView Technology Academy	14	3	3	3
Reuther Central High School	0	0	0	0
St. Joseph Catholic Academy	2	0	0	0
Shoreland Lutheran High School	1	1	1	1
Tremper High School	21	4	4	4
Westosha Central High School	30	6	6	4
Wilmot Union High School	1	1	1	0
TOTAL	85	18	18	14

TABLE A

Kenosha County Youth In Governance Representatives 2019–2020



Tyler Andrews
Joint Services



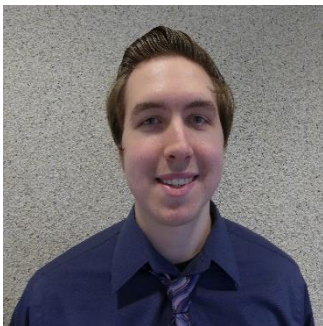
Martin Blagoev
Finance &
Administration



Kasey Cochran
Planning, Development
& Extension Education



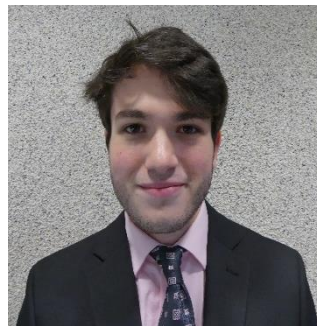
Victoria Desimoni
Legislative



Andrew Hrncar
Legislative



Milica Maricic
Judiciary & Law



Seth Rosen
Planning, Development
& Extension Education



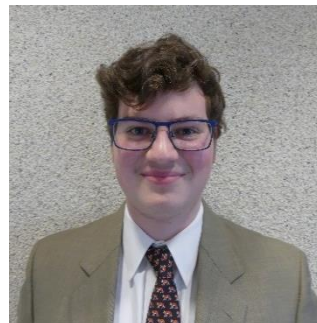
Priscilla Scaccia
Public Works



Olivia Valentine
Finance &
Administration



Gabrielle Wellman
Joint Services



Jackson Wilk
Public Works

EVALUATION AND IMPACT

Near the end of their term, all Youth In Governance members were given the opportunity to complete a retrospective evaluation. The results below, which probed for changes in the civic engagement and leadership skills of the youth, are based on a five-point Likert scale, which ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Quantitative information about civic engagement and leadership skill development are highlighted in TABLE B and TABLE C. Qualitative information is also shared through direct quotes from youth in response to three specific questions.

N = 11 of 11 CIVIC ENGAGEMENT	# of Youth Reporting No Change	# of Youth Reporting 1 Unit of Positive Change	# of Youth Reporting 2 or > Units of Positive Change
I am knowledgeable about Kenosha County Government.	0	0	11
I am aware of local issues that affect Kenosha County.	0	3	8
My opinion can make a difference in the community.	3	6	2
I have a useful role in the community.	2	3	6
I feel a strong connection to Kenosha County.	2	2	7
I am interested in politics.	8	3	0

TABLE B

N = 11 of 11 LEADERSHIP SKILLS	# of Youth Reporting No Change	# of Youth Reporting 1 Unit of Positive Change	# of Youth Reporting 2 or > Units of Positive Change
I can participate in group discussions with adults.	2	6	3
I can share new ideas with others.	6	5	0
I can speak confidently before a group of adults.	1	8	2
I can see issues from multiple perspectives.	4	5	2
I can talk knowledgeably with others about local issues.	0	1	10
I can be a resource to people in Kenosha County.	0	6	5

TABLE C

QUESTION #1

One goal of the Kenosha County Youth In Governance program is to create an environment that is conducive to the positive development of youth voice and youth engagement. Do you feel the Youth In Governance program accomplished this goal?

“I can confidently say that Youth In Governance has successfully accomplished its goal of reaching out to the youth and furthering their inclusion in Kenosha County. The youth are able to be well represented during committee meetings and this program has encouraged the youth of Kenosha County to engage in local matters.”

“I do feel that the Youth In Governance program accomplished this goal. The board members that I served with were very encouraging and were always pushing me to express my voice. They were happy whenever I engaged in a conversation. Before and after every meeting, they would talk to me about the meeting, what was going on in their life, what was going on in my life, etc. Overall, I felt the program did create an environment that encouraged me to speak and engage with everyone.”





“Having completed this program, I feel as if my involvement has served as an integral component in the formation of my understanding of not only the ways in which an individual can create change in their community, but also in the role that I play in my county and country.”

“I consistently felt surrounded by a culture and program that accepts and encourages youth viewpoints.”

QUESTION #2

Another goal of the Kenosha County Youth In Governance program is that the program would provide youth with skills, knowledge, and experiences to prepare them for future leadership opportunities. Do you feel the Youth In Governance program accomplished this goal?

“I can say with full confidence that I am a better and more productive member of my community and, by proxy, any group to which I am a member, by virtue of this program.”

“I believe Youth In Governance has done a great job in helping students develop critical social skills that they will carry with them in other areas of their lives, such as our increased confidence in public speaking and the encouragement to voice our beliefs.”

“Thanks to Youth In Governance, I feel confident in my ability to not only lead, but also follow, responsibly in the future.”

“I now feel more comfortable being professional and talking in groups of adults about issues.”

“Every meeting seemed to get easier in respect to communicating my ideas to the committee. I felt like the Chairman cared about what I had to say and I didn’t feel judged or misunderstood for my ideas and perspectives. Being in Youth In Governance has allowed me to join so many other political opportunities and I am forever grateful for the skills I have built during my time.”



QUESTION #3

What has been the most important thing you have gained from participation in the Kenosha County Youth In Governance program?

“I feel a lot more knowledgeable about the inner workings of our local government and this will definitely help me in choosing my future career.”

“I think the most valuable skill I learned from YIG is perspective. So often people think that the only important parts of government happen at the federal level, but through my year with YIG, I’ve discovered that often the aspects of government that affect us the most come from the local level.”

“Through Youth In Governance, I have gained a greater appreciation for my own political voice. I have learned the importance of advocating for my beliefs and helping to educate others on critical matters in our community. Although I am merely a teenager, I understand the power behind my opinions and the need to vocally express these beliefs to see change in the world.”

“I cite my involvement in Youth In Governance as an integral component in the development of my confidence and social skills.”

“The most important thing I gained from my participation is the confidence I now have when it comes to getting my voice out there, even when it comes to the small things. I am able to feel confident about sharing my opinions with others, especially adults, regarding issues and opportunities within the county.”

“I have learned the importance and value of my voice.”

“I believe the most important thing I gained is the experience of a lifetime as a youth serving in the role of a community leader.”



For more information about Kenosha County Youth In Governance, please contact:

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kenosha.extension.wisc.edu/youth-development/youth-in-governance



Extension
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-MADISON
KENOSHA COUNTY



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