



KENOSHA COUNTY YOUTH IN GOVERNANCE ANNUAL REPORT (2020-2021)

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 2020–2021 Youth In Governance program were distributed to all public and private high schools in Kenosha County. A total of 134 youth were nominated to participate in the program. Of the 134 nominees that were mailed an application, 37 completed the application and 25 applicants were invited to interview. Of the 25 interviewees, the names of 14 individuals were forwarded to Kenosha County Board Chair John O’Day for official appointment to a Kenosha County Board Committee. See TABLE A for specific nomination and selection statistics.

Name of High School	Nominations	Applications	Invited to Interview	Selected
Bradford High School	54	6	3	2
Catholic Central High School	3	1	1	1
Christian Life School	5	1	1	1
Harborside Academy	1	1	1	1
Indian Trail Academy	7	4	3	1
Kenosha Military Academy	0	0	0	0
LakeView Technology Academy	6	5	3	1
Reuther Central High School	0	0	0	0
St. Joseph Catholic Academy	1	1	0	0
Shoreland Lutheran High School	1	1	0	0
Tremper High School	12	7	6	2
Westosha Central High School	34	7	5	4
Wilmot Union High School	9	3	2	1
Other	1	0	0	0
TOTAL	134	37	25	14

TABLE A

Kenosha County Youth In Governance Representatives 2020-2021



Paul Capelli
Public Works



Armon Harris
Human Services



Shelby Jantz
Legislative



Tristin Jantz
Joint Services



Sahar Kherani
Finance & Admin



Kaldan Kopp
Public Works



Milica Maric
Human Services



Calahan Miles
Planning, Development,
& Extension Education



Olivia Nahorniak
Judiciary & Law



Lauren Noble
Planning, Development, &
Extension Education



Caleb Stanford
Finance & Admin



Sara Tyszkowska
Joint Services



Gabrielle Wellman
Judiciary & Law



Audrey Wilk
Legislative

Youth In Governance Mentors

Supervisor Andy Berg | Supervisor David Celebre | Supervisor John Franco | Supervisor Boyd Frederick
Supervisor Daniel Gaschke | Chief of Staff Jennie Tunkieicz | Supervisor Monica Yuhas

EVALUATION AND IMPACT

At 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 questions.

N = 12 of 14 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	2	10
I am aware of local issues that affect Kenosha County.	1	4	7
My opinion can make a difference in the community.	3	5	4
I have a useful role in the community.	3	5	4
I feel a strong connection to Kenosha County.	3	4	5
I am interested in politics.	4	6	2

TABLE B

N = 12 of 14 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.	1	4	7
I can share new ideas with others.	3	6	3
I can speak confidently before a group of adults.	3	4	5
I can see issues from multiple perspectives.	4	4	4
I can talk knowledgeably with others about local issues.	1	5	6
I can be a resource to people in Kenosha County.	1	5	6

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?

“My committee was extremely welcoming, and I could tell that if I ever had input, they truly cared.”

“After Youth In Governance, I find taking the lead in group discussions and sharing new ways to thinking about issues as habits instead of being forced.”

“I learned the importance of sharing individual perspectives in group discussions. Often, I was too afraid to speak up and share my opinions during discussions because of fear of failure or embarrassment. Youth In Governance taught me that every piece of insight is unique and can contribute to a healthy discussion. Now, I am confident in my ability to speak and share ideas during discussions.”

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?

“The amount of resources and learning experiences I was given during my time in the Youth In Governance program was beneficial for preparing for future leadership opportunities.”

“I now feel surer of myself when in professional settings because of the skills I gained while in Youth In Governance. It has also provided me with great connections for my future.”

“With Youth In Governance, I learned many valuable skills on how to communicate, lead, and create change in group discussions. I am far more confident in sharing my own opinions and encouraging social change based on my perspective. Now, in leadership positions, I am more likely to suggest new ideas and push for more community engagement because of my greater confidence.

QUESTION #3

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

“The most valuable thing I learned was that local government plays a larger role in our community than I previously thought.”

“I think the most important thing I gained from participating in the Kenosha County Youth In Governance program is the ability to network with other professionals. It also bettered my social skills which ultimately prepares me for the real world.”

“I am now more engaged in local government than I ever was before.”

“I’d say my knowledge of local government is the most important thing I’ve gained. Before this program, I was completely unaware of all the roles that make Kenosha County run smoothly. The bus tour gave me a great insight into possible career fields I might be interested in and the different types of services the Kenosha government provides.”

“After two years of Youth In Governance, I feel the most empowered I had ever felt. My friends looked to me for resources on how to vote, how to fill out the census, and as an overall guiding figure.”

“I can confidently express my opinion knowing that it may have a positive impact on my community.”



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

Extension Kenosha County | 19600 75th Street, Suite 2, Bristol, WI 53104

(262) 857-1945 | uwextension@kenoshacounty.org

kenosha.extension.wisc.edu/youth/yig



Kenosha County Youth In Governance is a program of Extension Kenosha County in partnership with the Kenosha County Board of Supervisors. University of Wisconsin, U.S. Department of Agriculture and Wisconsin counties cooperating. An EEO/AA employer, University of Wisconsin Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and American with Disabilities (ADA) requirements.