# KENOSHA COUNTY YOUTH IN GOVERNANCE ANNUAL REPORT (2022-2023)

**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 2022–2023 Youth in Governance program were distributed to all public and private high schools in Kenosha County. A total of 156 youth were nominated to participate in the program. Of the 156 nominees that were mailed an application, 27 completed the application and were invited to interview. One withdrew their application. Of the 26 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. Shortly after, Kenosha County Board Chair Gabe Nudo took office and appointed the two youth selected as alternates to the Executive committee bringing the total number of youth serving on Kenosha County Board Committees to 16, plus one youth who served as an alternate to step in as needed. See TABLE A for specific nomination and selection statistics.

| Name of High School | Nominations | Applications | Interviews | Selected |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Bradford High School | 46 | 2 | 1 | 1 |
| Harborside Academy | 20 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Indian Trail High School and Academy | 22 | 3 | 3 | 2 |
| Lakeview Technology Academy | 7 | 4 | 4 | 2 |
| The Prairie School | 4 | 3 | 3 | 1 |
| St. Joseph Catholic Academy | 2 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Shoreland Lutheran High School | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Tremper High School | 3 | 3 | 3 | 3 |
| Westosha Central High School | 33 | 7 | 7 | 4 |
| Wilmot Union High School | 17 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| TOTAL | **156** | **27** | **26** | **16** |

**TABLE A**

# Kenosha County Youth in Governance Representatives 2022-23

Michael Babu
Joint Services

Erica J. Bando
Human Services

Rebecca Ceisel
PDEEC

Alexa Didinsky
Judiciary and Law

Aidan Hawkins
Finance & Admin

Sona Hawkins
Legislative

Kenzie Kuhagen
PDEEC

Eric La Mere
Human Services

Tyler Magnan
Public Works & Facilities

Abigail Nosalik
Legislative

Enze Price
Executive

Benjamin Rothove
Judiciary & Law

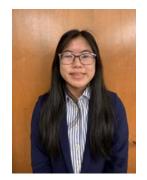Leo Ruffolo
Joint Services

Alec Schires
Executive

Patrick Sterling
Alternate

Madi E. Tongco
Public Works & Facilities

Evan Vazquez
Finance & Admin

## 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 = 10 of 16<br><br>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. | 2 | 5 | 2 |
| I am aware of local issues that affect Kenosha County. | 2 | 4 | 4 |
| My opinion can make a difference in the community. | 5 | 2 | 3 |
| I am interested in politics. | 5 | 2 | 2 |
| I have a useful role in the community. | 5 | 5 | 0 |
| I feel a strong connection to Kenosha County. | 3 | 4 | 3 |

**TABLE B**

| N = 10 of 16<br><br>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. | 3 | 6 | 1 |
| I can speak confidently before a group of adults. | 3 | 5 | 2 |
| I can see issues from multiple perspectives. | 3 | 6 | 1 |
| I can share new ideas with others. | 0 | 8 | 2 |
| I can talk knowledgeably with others about local issues. | 2 | 3 | 5 |
| I can be a resource to people in Kenosha County. | 3 | 2 | 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?**

*"Yes, I truly believe that YIG has greatly improved my confidence in speaking during discussions with adults."*

*"I'm confident that this program provides a unique opportunity to engage youth in the inner workings of the government and serve as a platform to promote voice through civic processes."*

*"Somewhat, I think more opportunities outside of just committee meetings would be helpful in contributing to this! I had a great mentor, though, and the other student in my committee really had a great impact on me."*

*"I think it did. I felt that being able to cast a "vote" and to broadcast my opinions really made me feel a part of our local government."*

**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?**

*"Yes, being pushed into a new and unfamiliar environment helped me develop an ability to lead by example."*

*"YIG definitely accomplished this as I am much more confident speaking publicly and voicing my opinion. I am also much more confident in a professional environment."*

*"My gratitude for YIG goes beyond understanding as it enables young people across the state to recognize the functions of local government. This program is successful at building skills towards conversation in formal settings, as well as harboring experiences to expressing opinions from a youth perspective."*

*"Yes, I do. The experiences I gained through this program were once in a lifetime that I believe I can apply to a future career in politics."*

*"Yes, because the proceedings, while being orderly, showed the human side of these serious meetings where we could have fun and joke a little, preparing me for meetings in the future."*

**QUESTION #3**

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

*"Learning about the government."*

*"Connections"*

*"I prize the YIG program for its ability to empower youth throughout the county. I treasure this program's recognition for youth voice in local government, and its provisions to network with professional and influential adults."*

*"Knowledge on how city/county government works."*

*"Gaining a greater understanding of local government."*

*"This program has taught me how to speak for myself and understand even the most complicated of issues."*

*"Communication skills and the ability to voice my opinion."*

*"The ability and drive to stay involved in local government and local issues."*

*"I think the best thing I learned this year was the local issues and how they're resolved."*

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