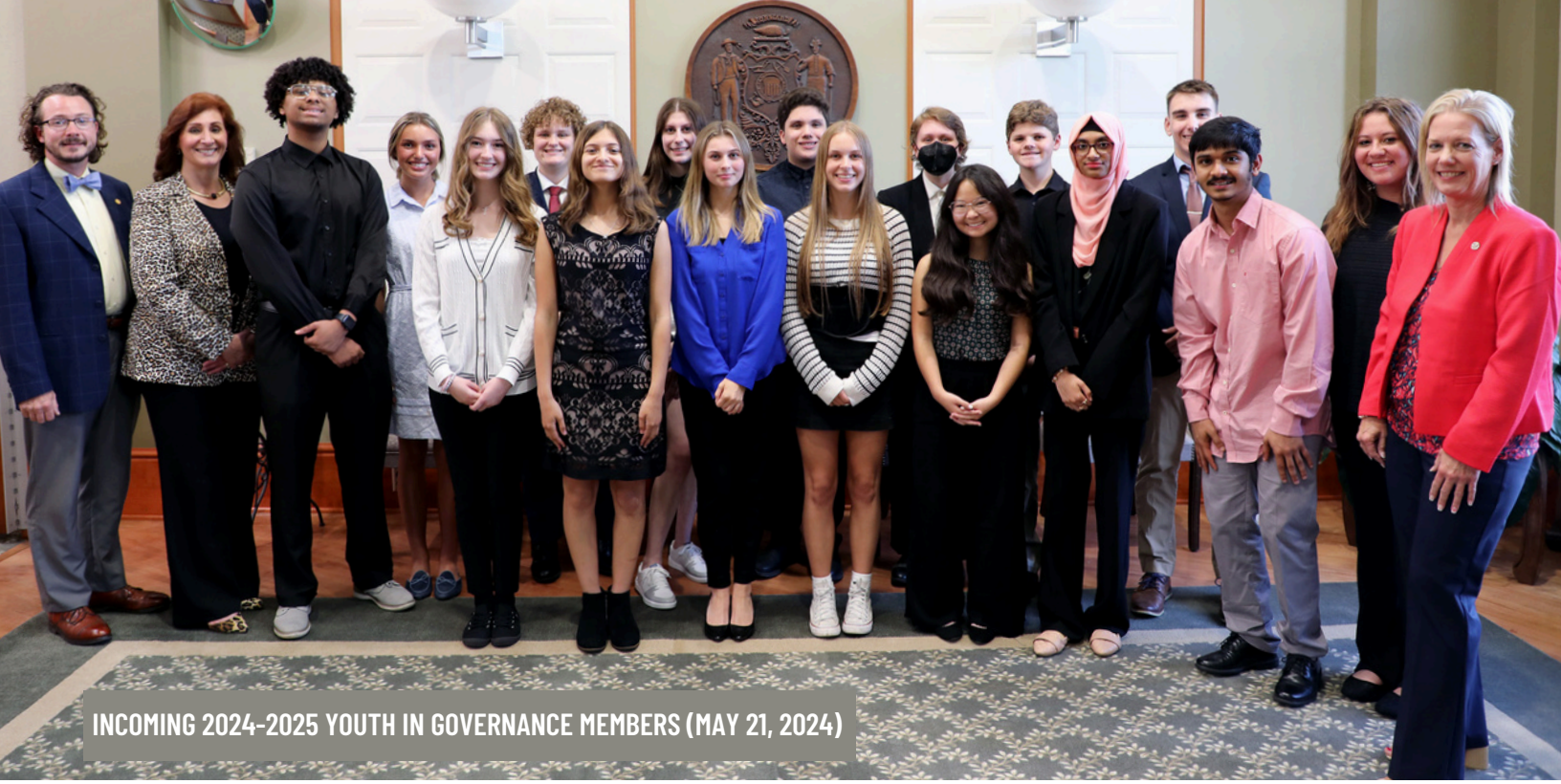


Youth In Governance

ANNUAL REPORT

2024-2025

Youth IN GOVERNANCE Kenosha County



INCOMING 2024-2025 YOUTH IN GOVERNANCE MEMBERS (MAY 21, 2024)

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.

Program Mission

The purpose of the Youth In Governance (YIG) program is to create a model of youth empowerment within Kenosha County through direct participation in local government. The overall goals:

- bring youth voices to community issues & concerns,
- develop confident & collaborative youth leaders, and
- build supportive youth-adult partnerships.

2024-2025 Highlights

Strategic Planning

Developing and executing strategies based in youth empowerment

Promotional Video

Promoting the program through video marketing featuring youth members

Networking

Connecting with elected officials, county staff, community partners, and YIG peers

Handbook Review Project

Updating policy based on youth knowledge and experiences

Skill Building

Strengthening skills for effective communication in committee settings

YIG Curriculum Jam

Leveraging university relationships for existing youth governmental activities and education

Nomination and Selection Process

Nomination forms for the 2024–2025 Youth in Governance program were distributed to all public and private high schools in Kenosha County. A total of sixty-four youth were nominated to participate in the program and were mailed an application. Eighteen youth completed the application and were invited to interview. Seventeen individuals completed an interview, and one withdrew the application. The names of seventeen individuals were forwarded to Kenosha County Board Chair Gabe Nudo for official appointment to a Kenosha County Board Committee. One youth declined the appointment. Newly-elected Kenosha County Board Chair Monica M. Yuhas took office and appointed the youth representative previously serving as an alternate to a committee.

Name of High School	Nominations	Applications	Interviews	Selected
Bradford High School	8	1	1	1
Harborside Academy	12	6	6	6
Indian Trail High School and Academy	3	1	1	1
Kenosha School of Technology Enhanced Curriculum	2	1	1	1
Lakeview Technology Academy	5	3	2	1
Reuther Central High School	1	1	1	1
Shoreland Lutheran High School	2	2	2	2
St. Joseph Catholic Academy	1	0	0	0
Tremper High School	0	0	0	0
Westosha Central High School	15	3	3	3
Wilmot Union High School	14	0	0	0
Undisclosed	1	0	0	0
TOTAL	**64**	**18**	**17**	**16**









Evaluation and Impact

At the end of their term, all Youth In Governance members were given the opportunity to complete a retrospective evaluation. Youth evaluate the development of their civic engagement and leadership skills following participation in the program. Twelve members of the 2024-2025 cohort were recognized for their participation and leadership. The results below 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 shared through direct quotes from youth.

N = 10* of 12 **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	5	5
I am aware of local issues that affect Kenosha County.	0	7	3
My opinion can make a difference in the community.	4	3	3
I am comfortable in group settings with people of mixed ages.	9	0	1
I feel a strong connection to Kenosha County.	4*	0	5
I have a useful role in the community I live in.	3	4	3
I am likely to seek other leadership roles.	5	0	5
I am thinking of a career related to government or public service.	6	3	1

*10 = Two youth did not complete the pre-section to indicate change following participation in YIG.
*4 = One youth left the pre-section criteria blank for “I have a useful role in the community.”

N = 10* of 12 **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 share new ideas with others.	6	4	0
I can participate in group discussions with adults.	4	4	2
I can see issues from multiple perspectives.	5	4	1
I am confident in taking responsibility for my decisions.	5	3	2
I can talk knowledgeably with others about local issues.	2*	6	1

*10 = Two youth did not complete the pre-section to indicate change following participation in YIG.
*2 = One youth reported a decrease in ability to "talk knowledgeably with others about local issues."

Did the Youth In Governance program prepare you for future leadership opportunities?

"The Youth In Governance program provided me with the knowledge and motivation to pursue other passions."

"I believe I grew in my speaking abilities and can be more confident in talking with others - especially adults - about my community and local issues."

"I was able to learn how to comfortably speak with others not my age, and how to ask questions when uncomfortable."

"I have stronger leadership with government officials & am not afraid to speak up on issues that are personalized/underspoken [sic] of."

"Through the YIG program, I have been able to develop strong soft skills that have helped me acquire more leadership skills."

"YIG grew my knowledge of government and helped me with networking skills."

"After doing YIG, I feel far more confident with interviews, which I hadn't had before YIG, and I feel like my voice in meetings and my ability to talk with supervisors has improved a lot and will allow me to be better prepared for future experiences."

"I learned how to dress, how to speak and understand how professionalism as a youth works and even learned how to present myself."

Youth Voice & Participation

How did your participation impact the committee's discussion and decisions?

"My participation hopefully provided the committee with new perspectives."

"I believe my youth perspective had an impact on the education [E]xtension portion and with discussing Youth In Governance."

"My participation impacted the commitee's [sic] discussion because we were able to ask questions to add to a speaker's elaboration and I pre-passed rulings."

"I had a vote and I would vote for what I believed in."

"My participation helped develop multiple perspectives on an issue, and I got to learn so much."

"I helped fuel discussion."

"I will say most votes in PDEEC were unanimous, so dicisions [sic] were not very based on my vote. However, I feel my participation in the handbook meeting during PDEEC gave them more confidence in Claire's pitch."

Additionally, three youth members anonymously shared they were unsure of how their participation impacted the committees they served on.



PHOTOS: YOUTH IN GOVERNANCE SPEAKERS AT RECOGNITION CEREMONY (MAY 20, 2025)



Did the Youth In Governance program create an environment conducive to allowing for youth voice and engagement?

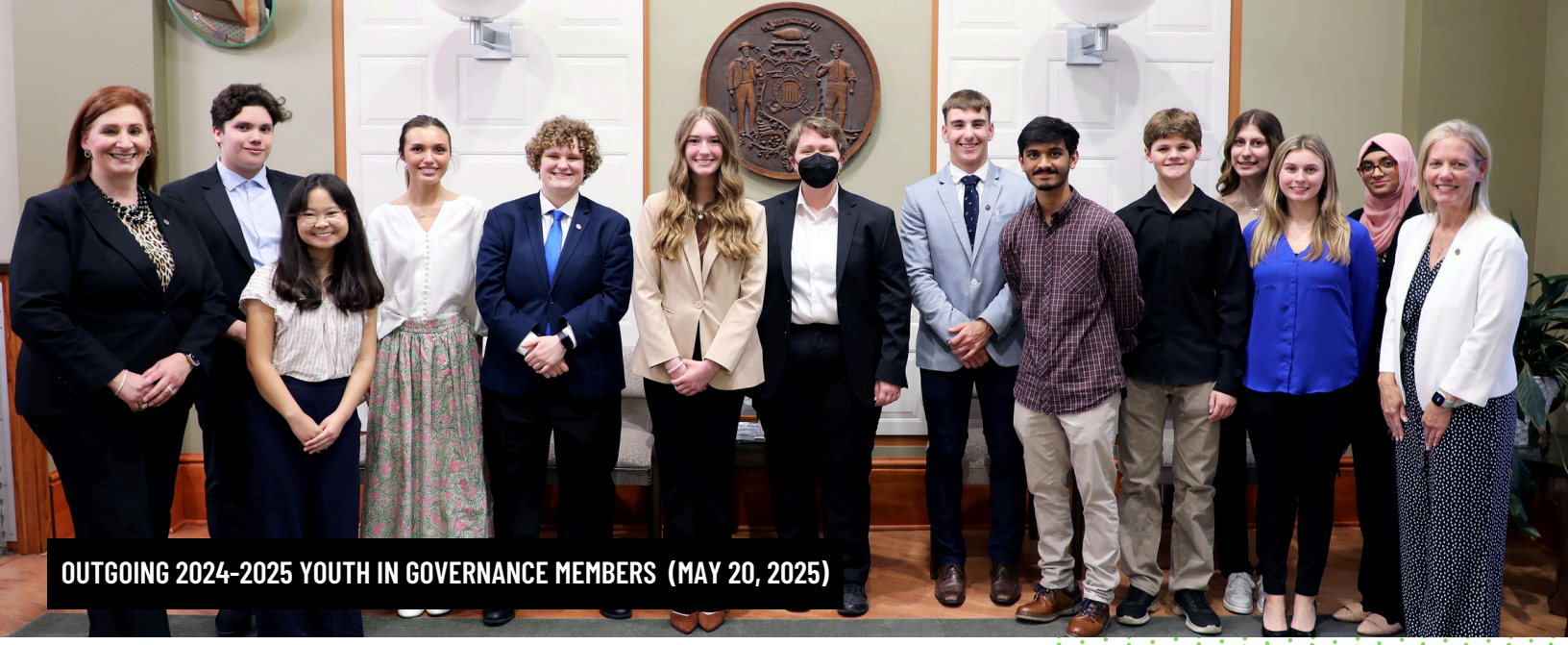
"The YIG Program definitely allowed for such an environment. Giving youth the space to share opinions in committee government settings is spectacular."

"Yes! Many times I was allowed and encouraged to ask question [sic]."

"Yes. This is because everyone allowed us to sit in with the other members of each board (sic) [committee] and we were also able to ask questions without judgement."

"Yes, as [committee] supervisors push for all YIG to ask questions & add input to committee meetings & at County Board Meetings."

"I always felt very welcome to speak, especially by Guida Brown. She encouraged me to give my thoughts about topics early on in my term."



OUTGOING 2024-2025 YOUTH IN GOVERNANCE MEMBERS (MAY 20, 2025)

Mentorship & Supportive Adults

The youth felt supported in their roles and were particularly grateful to their mentors and committee supervisors. Below are several positive comments youth shared about the supportive environment provided for them during their term of service.

SPECIFIC SUPPORTIVE ADULTS

- **Supervisors as Mentors**

"Mr. John Franco supported me most throughout terms I served. This is because he was my advisor for 2 years and was always open for conversation and questions."

"My mentor helped with answering many of my questions about definitions and current local issues."

"Mr. Grady supported me by making sure I was involved in the conversations."

"My mentor Mr. Nordigian and Mr. Morrissey."

"My family, my supervisors, Camille, my teachers, my friends."

"Camille Carlson, Kathy Duberstine, John Franco, Monica Yuhas. I believe that they all helped me by being supportive and listening. Camille was understanding and knowing that my life hit me hard and I had to deal with enough."

"Camille, Supervisor Brown, and Julia Robinson were all very supportive during meetings. They were all very positive and encouraged me to be more out-spoken."

- **Extension Educator**

"Ms. Carlson was my biggest support. I felt she was always incredibly easy to talk to and provided me with great advice. "

"Camille- outreach"

- **Committee Chairperson**

"Guida Brown- she has encouraged me and the other youth in my committee greatly. Everyone in the PDEEC committee were wonderful mentors."

Program Takeaways

Youth shared the most important benefit they gained from participating in the Kenosha County Youth In Governance program.

- "The most important thing I gained from my participation in the Youth In Governance [program] was the insight into how government-related discussion is handled."
- "Learning better skills- speaking, creating insightful questions, and collectively my own opinions."
- "The most important thing I gained was the confidence in the ability to speak with others [different] than me and the ability to understand meetings and meeting etiquette."
- "I gained a great sense of leadership, as I learned how to speak about local issues in front of my peers and use my voice on controversial opinions with more confidence."
- "Not only government knowledge, but skills like teamwork, communication, and leadership; skills that will benefit me for the rest of my life."
- "How government in a local level works & how we can use our voices and minds to create change."
- "I feel far more aware of the important role local government has in everyone's lives."



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

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