

# The Youth Perspective

Bridges to Opportunity

Not Just Getting By. Getting Ahead.





# YOUTH ENGAGEMENT WORKGROUP



# The steps we took...

- An inventory of opportunities for youth in the community was compiled.
- A survey was conducted with all 7th and 9th grade students in Allegany County Public Schools, as well as 3 Private Schools.
- Focus Groups were held throughout the community involving approximately 30 students from each school.
- Town Hall Meeting happening now to share results.



# Inventory of Opportunities

- Volunteer/civic engagement (3)
- Career development (1)
- Life skills/skill development (10 )
- Recreation/sports (25)
- Support (7)



# The Survey

# WHO?

- 1,088 Students enrolled in Public and Private Schools in Allegany County.
- 48% were 7<sup>th</sup> Graders
- 52% were 9<sup>th</sup> Graders
- 49.63% were female
- 50.37% were male

# Why?

- To gain knowledge and understand how our youth feel about the community they live in.
- Give youth a voice in decisions being made as part of the community
- To gain perspective of how youth feel about the community they are a part of now and what their expectations are for the future.

# RESULTS





# What are your plans after Graduation?



- 62% plan to attend a Four Year College/University
- 9% plan to enter the military
- 7% plan to attend a Community College
- 7% plan to enter the work force
- 4% plan to attend a Technical School
- 1% plan to be self employed
- 10% specified “other”

# What career fields are you currently considering?



1. Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics
2. Arts, Broadcasting, Film, Printing or Journalism
3. Health Science or Biotechnology
4. EMS, Firefighter, Police Officer or Military
5. Education or Training

# What careers are you interested in pursuing?

***Architect***

***Physical therapist***

***Nurse***

***Animator***

***Film***

***Lawyer***

***Graphic artist***

***Police Officer***

***Teacher***

***Surgeon***

***Singer***

***Chef***

***Dentist***

***Mechanic***

# Overall rating of the community as a place for youth to live?

- **10% said excellent**
  - **44% said Fair**
  - **10% said Poor**



# What changes would you like to see to make the community a better place to live?

- More entertainment and recreation options
- More local job opportunities for youth
- More local shopping and restaurant options
- Additional opportunities to be involved in community events and projects.



# However, we have not asked!

- 67% of the students stated they have never been asked what would make their community a better place.
- YET, 75% of the students said YES they would become involved in making the community a better place by volunteering IF ASKED!



# What specific ideas do you have on how to make our community better?

- Add more things for youth to enjoy
  - Stores
  - Playgrounds
  - Restaurants
- More jobs, including jobs for youth
- Have more opportunities to help other people and volunteer
- Clean up our community
  - Pick up trash and recycle
  - Fix up houses and streets
- Reduce drugs and crime rates

# How likely are you to live in this area in the future?

- 59% of the students stated they do not picture themselves living in this area in the future, after graduating from high school or college, getting job experience, or starting a family!

## Top 5 Reason why ...

1. Career opportunities elsewhere
2. They can make more money elsewhere
3. Crime, drugs, safety concerns
4. Lack of entertainment
5. The community is too small





# Why did the other students picture themselves living here in the future?

- Good place to raise family
- Family ties in the community
- Job or business opportunity
- Quality school and health care
- (10% cannot afford to move)

# Why are youth not involved in activities that interest them?

- I don't have time for more activities (45%)
- I have not been asked to become involved (40%)
- I don't know who to ask about getting involved (29%)
- I don't have transportation (13%)
- It is too expensive (12%)

# Access to High Speed Internet

- 84% reported having access to high speed Internet at home
- 77% of youth said Internet access was an important or very important factor in deciding where to live in the future



# Focus Groups

# Focus Groups

- A total of 8 Focus Groups were conducted with approximately 250 youth.
- Focus Groups included the following:
  - Middle School 7<sup>th</sup> Graders from Braddock, Mount Savage, Washington and Westmar.
  - High School 9<sup>th</sup> Graders from Allegany, Fort Hill, and Mountain Ridge
  - Private Schools including 7<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> graders from Bishop Walsh, Calvary Christian Academy and Lighthouse Christian Academy.



# First things first....

What are the first three words that come to mind when you think about our community?



# TOP WORDS USED

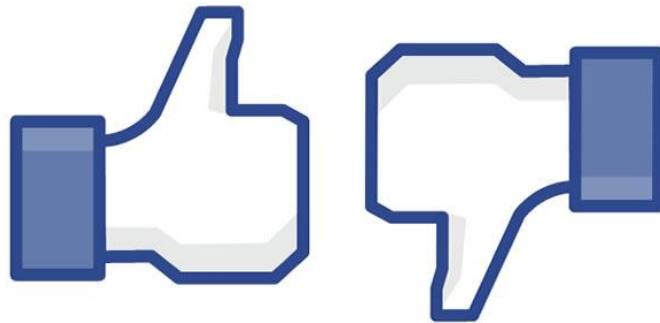
- Small
- Mountains
- Beautiful
- Poor
- Friendly
- Boring
- Old
- Drugs
- Dirty
- Unsafe
- Sports
- Jobless
- Historical
- Cold





# Second, discuss as a group...

What do you like and dislike about our community?



# LIKES

- Development
- Beautiful Mountains
- History
- Relaxing
- Festivals/Events
- Churches
- The canal
- Everyone knows each other
- Near big cities
- Wildlife & trees
- Family & friends
- Bike/hiking trails
- Restaurants
- Schools
- Sports
- Limited traffic
- YMCA

# DISLIKES

- Little recreation & entertainment
- Limited job opportunities
- Run-down neighborhoods
- Small selection of stores
- Violence
- Low population
- Transportation
- Not clean
- Old
- Crime- unsafe areas
- Drugs
- Bullies and bad people causing destruction

# Lastly, show us...

Build us a model of the  
community you want to see in  
20-25 years.



# Community Models made by students





# Town Hall Meeting

# Where do we go from here?

- How do we work together with youth to make our community a better place for our youth?
- What are our next steps based on assets and needs heard tonight?

# Feedback & Discussion