



GUINEVERE E. SMITH
Director

County of Orleans
Youth Bureau
12690 NYS Route 31
Albion, New York 14411
Phone: (585) 798-4265, ext 39
Fax: (585) 589-5191
Email: youthbureau@orleansny.com

Written Testimony on Youth Development
2007 Division of Budget Hearing
Guinevere Smith, Director

I am writing on behalf of the young people in Orleans County and all New York State youth. The Orleans County Youth Bureau is one of 105 Youth Bureaus across the state that plan, coordinate, and supplement the activities of public, private, and religious agencies devoted to the welfare and protection of youth. Established in 1977, the Orleans County Youth Bureau has been promoting positive youth development locally for thirty years. State Aid through the Office of Children and Family Services is for **all** youth and is allocated based on **needs identified locally**. Youth Development Delinquency Prevention Program (YDDP) and Special Delinquency Prevention Program (SDPP) funding help provide programs that better the lives of our children, empower them in making a positive difference now, and prepare them for a future as contributing members of our community.

Please consider the following when preparing the 2008-2009 State Budget:

- Youth Bureaus further the work of the initiatives, “I Live NY” and “Rebuilding the Economy: City by City”
- Orleans County allocated \$114,510 in state aid for 2008, leveraging over **\$475,000** in youth programming **locally**.
- Youth Bureaus help combat the **obesity epidemic**. The Youth Bureau served 120 youth in their Summer Tennis Program increasing their physical activity. 43% had never played before and 94% of responders said they would play or were likely to play after the program ended. Over 15 Youth Bureaus across the state operated tennis programs in 2007.
- Most programs are required to match the state aid by 50%, and continue to do their part by raising the match **locally** every year. These programs serve over 3,000 young people annually in Orleans County.
- The Orleans County Youth Bureau has been able to give programs increased allocations in the past few years **ONLY** because of the **loss of two programs**.

- 107 youth participate in the Just Friends Mentoring Program, but only 25 are matched with a mentor, due in part to a lack of resources. Despite flat funding for many years (the program coordinator makes less than \$18,000 a year), this mentoring program has continued providing services that make a positive difference. With the slight increase in YDDP funding for 2008 we were fortunate to be able to increase their funding by \$1,000. While good, the increase does not go nearly far enough. For a program with a budget of \$63,000; this increase is only 1.5%.

- **Youth Bureaus empower young people.** Each Youth Bureau has a Youth Board, of which at least two member must be youth. In Orleans County, we currently have four youth on the board who share the two votes. They actively participate in planning, decision-making, allocations, and assessment of our local youth programs.

As a lifelong resident of Orleans County and also a “relatively” young Youth Bureau Director who benefited from Youth Bureau programming as a child, I believe in my community. Only a handful of my peers have chosen to return to the county after college and many have moved out of the state. There are numerous contributing factors to this trend, many of which were addressed at the recent, “I Live New York Summit.” Likewise, there are many potential solutions including investing in our youth today to **train and retain** them for tomorrow. Youth Bureaus help do this. I respectfully request your support in funding YDPP and SDPP with at minimum a cost of living increase for 2008-2009.

In an address to Upstate New Yorkers for “Rebuilding the Economy: City by City,” Governor Spitzer stated, “In the past, economic development in New York was characterized by two dynamics: a “one size fits all” approach on the state level; and, on the local level, competing visions among various stakeholders--business leaders, elected officials, economic development agencies--who all worked together and had good ideas but were not united around a strategy for change.” The Youth Bureau system has long recognized that one size does NOT fit all. The collaborative regional structure allows for both local planning and a larger vision for needed changes through regional planning. Your support enables youth bureaus to continue working not only for youth, but *with* youth for a bright today and an even brighter tomorrow, physically, mentally, socially, and economically. Live New York!