



Racine County Youth in Governance 2023-2024 Program Report (Group 10)

The Racine County Board of Supervisors and University of Wisconsin-Madison, Extension Racine County faculty launched the Youth in Governance Program in 2013 with the goal to create a model of youth empowerment through direct participation in local government. Oversight for the Youth in Governance Program rests with the Racine County Government Services Committee.

The main objective of the Youth in Governance Program is to bring youth voice to community issues and concerns while fostering the development of confident, independent, and motivated youth leaders. Teachers, coaches, civic leaders, and youth program staff nominate youth who demonstrate leadership and an interest in civic engagement.

Racine County Youth In Governance

Economic Development and Land Use Planning		Finance and Human Resources	
			
Christopher Naber Burlington High School	Madhura Patil Case High School	Adan Merino-Cabrera Horlick High School	Daysia Ward St. Catherine's High School
Government Services		Health and Human Development	
			
Addison Turek The Prairie School	Shritha Reddy The Prairie School	Jamillah Jallow Walden III High School	William Casterton Union Grove High School
Public Works, Parks, and Facilities		 	
			
Itzeti Flores Walden III High School	Nicholas Blount Racine Lutheran High School		

Youth in Governance Members (2023-2024)

Youth Participants and Mentors by Committee Assignment

Economic Development and Land Use Planning

Youth Participants: Christopher Naber and Madhura Patil
Mentor: Tom Kramer and Olga White

Finance and Human Resources

Youth Participants: Adan Merino-Cabrera and Daysia Ward
Mentors: Robert Miller and Jody Spencer

Government Services

Youth Participants: Addison Turek and Shritha Reddy
Mentors: Tom Rutkowski and Don Trottier

Health and Human Development

Youth Participants: Jamillah Jallow and William Casterton
Mentors: Robert Miller and Scott Maier

Public Works, Parks, and Facilities

Youth Participants: Itzetzl Flores and Nicholas Blount
Mentors: Jessica Lee Malacara and Eric Hopkins

Youth Recruitment

- Information about the Youth in Governance Program was sent to various school contacts during November 2022. County Board members and youth representatives met with school administrators and staff to promote the program and explain the nomination process. Other recruitment efforts included a news release, an article in the Racine Journal Times, and outreach to youth-serving organizations and homeschool contacts.
- Twenty-two community members nominated 52 youth. The distributions included 8 freshman, 22 sophomores, and 22 juniors. Nominators were affiliated with the following organizations: Burlington High School, Jerome I. Case High School, William Horlick High School, Union Grove High School, St. Catherine's High School, Walden III High School, Racine Lutheran High School, The Prairie School, Racine County Board, Racine County, Girl Scouts of Southeast Wisconsin.
- All nominees were asked to submit a written application in order to be considered for interviews. Twenty-seven youth submitted applications and twenty-seven youth were interviewed. Interviewed youth participants included 13 females and 14 males. Ten youth representatives were selected to serve. Of the ten youth selected to serve, five are female and four are male. One alternate was selected to serve as well.

Program Outcomes

Impacts were measured in the areas of *Civic Engagement* and *Leadership*, both quantitatively and qualitatively, through a retrospective survey that was distributed to nine youth representatives via email and in-person. 9 youth completed the full survey in person. One youth completed the full survey electronically and one youth only partially completed the survey. The indicators in which respondents showed the most growth are summarized in this report.

Civic Engagement

Participation in the program positively impacted the youths' perception of their own knowledge of Racine County government. An increase in the average value for all eight questions related to Civic Engagement was experienced. After participation in the program, youth experienced the most growth in the following.

- An increase in knowledge of Racine County government.
- A greater awareness of local issues that affect Racine County.
- An increase in confidence that their opinion will make a difference in the community.

Overall, youth representatives felt welcomed and supported by their mentors, fellow committee members, and the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Extension Racine County Office staff. Additionally, they indicated that they feel comfortable in group settings with mixed ages and are likely to seek other leadership roles.

Leadership

Participation in the program positively impacted the youth's perception of their leadership skills. An increase in the average value for all six questions related to Leadership was experienced because of participation in the Youth in Governance Program. Youth indicated they grew most in the following areas.

- Being a resource to people in Racine County.
- Ability to participate in group discussion with adults.
- Ability to share new ideas with others.

Many of the youth entered their Youth in Governance role with leadership experience and skills. Self-evaluation of their ability to see issues from multiple perspectives, increased confidence in taking responsibility for one's decisions, ability to talk knowledgeably with others about local issues increased slightly.

BEFORE Participating in Youth In Gov.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Average Value
I was knowledgeable about Racine County government.	0	3	3	3	3	3.55
I was aware of local issues that affect Racine County.	0	3	2	2	4	3.64
My opinion could make a difference in the community.	1	0	1	5	4	4
I felt comfortable in group settings with people of mixed ages.	0	1	0	3	7	4.45
I felt a strong connection to Racine County.	0	1	3	3	4	3.91
I had a useful role in the community I live in.	0	0	2	5	4	4.18
I was likely to seek other leadership roles.	0	0	2	1	8	4.55
I was thinking of a career related to government or public service.	0	2	4	1	4	3.64

AFTER Participating in Youth In Gov.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree	Average Value
I am knowledgeable about Racine County government.	0	0	1	6	4	4.27
I am aware of local issues that affect Racine County.	0	0	1	6	4	4.27
My opinion can make a difference in the community.	0	0	1	4	6	4.45
I feel comfortable in group settings with people of mixed ages.	0	0	0	3	8	4.73
I feel a strong connection to Racine County.	0	0	2	4	5	4.27
I have a useful role in the community I live in.	0	0	2	3	6	4.36
I am likely to seek other leadership roles.	0	0	0	1	10	4.91
I am thinking of a career related to government or public service.	0	1	3	2	5	4

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

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

“Yes, the YIG program did do this as Maria always asked us for input and allowed the youth to take on leadership”

“Yes, it did. Everyone was so supportive, and I was able to voice my opinions”

“Yes, supervisor Kaprelian would always ask for our input”

“ Yes, by always allowing me to have an opinion on matters before my committee. I felt that my presence was important and worthy rather than me just being another face in the room.”

“Yes, I felt comfortable speaking with my mentor and asking questions during/after meetings when I had them”

“Yes, everyone I worked with was extremely kind and patient. I'm very grateful to them and any question I had they were willing to answer. Often, I was asked for my opinion and I always felt welcome. I made some great connections and had insightful conversations.”

“Yes, it allowed everyone to have a voice.”

BEFORE Participating in Youth In Governance	Unsure	No Ability	Some Ability	Good Ability	Excellent Ability	Average Value
I could share new ideas with others.	0	0	2	4	4	4.20
I could participate in group discussions with adults.	1	0	2	3	4	3.90
I could see issues from multiple perspectives.	0	0	0	6	4	4.40
I was confident in taking responsibility for my decisions.	0	0	1	4	5	4.40
I could talk knowledgeably with others about local issues.	0	1	1	4	4	4.10
I could be a resource to people in Racine County.	1	1	3	3	3	3.80

AFTER Participating in Youth In Governance	Unsure	No Ability	Some Ability	Good Ability	Excellent Ability	Average Value
I can share new ideas with others.	0	0	0	5	6	4.55
I can participate in group discussions with adults.	1	0	0	3	7	4.36
I can see issues from multiple perspectives.	0	0	0	4	7	4.64
I am confident in taking responsibility for my decisions.	0	0	0	4	7	4.64
I can talk knowledgeably with others about local issues.	0	0	1	5	5	4.36
I can be a resource to people in Racine County.	0	0	1	5	5	4.36

“The YIG program prepared me for future leadership roles by allowing me to hone my public speaking skills and by giving me additional practice with feeling comfortable voicing my opinion in front of adults”

LEADERSHIP

Did the Youth in Governance Program prepare you for future leadership opportunities?

“Yes, YIG taught me how to act in government meetings.”

“I was able to engage with my community and encouraged to ask questions.”

“I have more open mindedness and perspectives on local issues.”

“In the future I will be more prepared mentally and physically for leadership roles. YIG has taught me how to think beyond myself and think for my community as a whole. It has also introduced me to the business world (in regard to what attire to wear and present myself to others).”

“I am looking forward to interning or joining a committee in college.”

“Yes, YIG helped me gain confidence in myself and a much better understanding of how county government works. I was able to learn about new occurrences happening in the county and the youth service project was incredibly fun and helped me make a difference.”

“YIG allowed me to speak in a large crowd and in front of professionals.”

The results below, which probed for change in the civic engagement of the youth, are based on a five-unit scale that included “strongly disagree”, “disagree”, “uncertain”, “agree”, and “strongly agree”.

<i>CIVIC ENGAGEMENT</i>	# OF YOUTH REPORTING NO CHANGE	# OF YOUTH REPORTING 1 UNIT OF POSITIVE CHANGE	# OF YOUTH REPORTING 2+ UNITS OF POSITIVE CHANGE
I am knowledgeable about Racine County government.	4	3	3
I am aware of local issues that affect Racine County.	5	3	2
My opinion can make a difference in the community.	7	3	1
I feel comfortable in group settings with people of mixed ages.	7	1	1
I have a strong connection to Racine County.	5	4	1
I have a useful role in the community that I live in.	7	3	0
I am likely to seek other leadership roles.	9	0	2
I am thinking of a career related to government or public service.	7	3	0

The results below, which probed for the change in leadership skills of the youth, are based on a five-unit scale that included “no ability”, “some ability”, “unsure”, “good ability”, and “excellent ability”.

<i>LEADERSHIP SKILLS</i>	# OF YOUTH REPORTING NO CHANGE	# OF YOUTH REPORTING 1 UNIT OF POSITIVE CHANGE	# OF YOUTH REPORTING 2+ UNITS OF POSITIVE CHANGE
I can share new ideas with others.	4	3	0
I can participate in group discussions with adults.	5	2	1
I can see issues from multiple perspectives.	7	3	0
I am confident in taking responsibility for my decisions.	6	3	0
I can talk knowledgeably with others about local issues.	6	2	0
I can be a resource to people in Racine County.	4	2	2

Supportive Environment

The youth felt supported in their role 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.

“My mentor, Supervisor Maier, was a great help for me to learn more about Racine County government and feel more comfortable.”

“Maria helped remind me of meetings.”

“The County Board supervisor and Maria supported me during my term.”

“Nick and Shritha were supportive because they talked a lot to me, and we were able to share different connections”

“Supervisor Kaprelian and Trottier answered questions and asked for my opinion.”

“My supervisor Jody Spencer always checked on me during meetings and outside of the committee.”

“Robert Miller supported me- he is the chairman, and he was my mentor. So resourceful and kind. Maria Gaytan also supported me- she was our coordinator and provided us with the space and ideas for our service project.”

“My mentor and Supervisor Kaprelian were supportive.”

“My mentor, Supervisor Eckman, was a great mentor and answered any questions I had. Of course, I cannot express how grateful I am to maria for her support and how she led the YIG program. I always felt comfortable around her and she helped me grow. All of the members of both the EDLUP committee and land and water conservation were incredible to me and helped me through the process. I learned so much under them.”

Outreach Beyond Committee Assignments



When challenged to think about a need in Racine County, the Youth in Governance representatives unanimously decided to focus on the topic of youth literacy. During the annual Youth in Governance Bus Tour, youth representatives heard from County Executive Delagrave that one of Racine’s priorities was addressing gaps in literacy rates across the county.

The Youth in Governance representatives met with UW-Extension School Readiness and Family Resiliency Educator, Pam Wedig-Kirsch, to brainstorm ideas for a literacy-focused service project and decided to conduct book drives

at their respective schools. Youth in Governance representatives also decided that they would give these books away to elementary-age youth at an event they hosted at the Racine Public Library. They titled their event “Lit Literacy Bonanza: A Youth-Led Adventure.”

During the event, youth and their families participated in literacy focused activities that the Youth in Governance representatives researched along with UW-Extension’s support. The event was a success and had a total of thirty



plus attendees. The remaining books were donated at a variety of resource fairs across the county. Youth in Governance representatives mentioned that some of their highlights of working on this project were talking and getting to know the youth who attended the literacy event, seeing a spark and growing interest in literacy and education in these youth, and being able to give away books to over 50 youth.



The youth representatives presented to the Racine County Board in May. Supervisors shared with the youth that they were impressed with their efforts and contributions to the community.

Overall Program Recommendations

Youth representatives made a few recommendations to the Racine County Youth Development Extension Educator regarding the current Youth in Governance Program.

- Provide more education on how meetings are run (parliamentary procedure).
- Provide more clarity on committee meeting schedules.
- Tips and strategies for analyzing committee agendas and familiarizing ourselves with new terms related to our committee assignments.



Racine County Youth in Governance is a program of the Racine County Board of Supervisors in partnership with Extension Racine County. An EEO/AA employer, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title VI, Title IX and ADA requirements.