

Press Release

The Mappers are Coming! Alexandria Youth Begin to Map Opportunities and Resources for Youth in the City's West End

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Alexandria, Va. – What resources and opportunities exist for Alexandria youth in the City's West End? Are there any gaps in youth services? What concerns, if any, do West End businesses have about youth substance abuse, teen pregnancy and gangs? From July 6-August 13, teams of trained youth mappers—20 teens, ages 15 to 18, who are supervised by adult team leaders—are undertaking a six-week community mapping project designed to answer these and other questions related to Alexandria's youth.

During Community YouthMapping, as it is called, the teams will visit Alexandria's West End neighborhoods to conduct formal interviews with managers and leaders of businesses, nonprofit organizations, faith-based communities, City sites and City schools. They will ask about existing programs and services as well as explore perceptions about such issues as youth substance abuse, teen pregnancy, and gang activity. After the interviews, the mappers, who were selected by youth services organizations in Alexandria and paid a minimum wage for their work, enter the research data in a database that will be accessible to youth, service providers, community organizations, City and School officials, policymakers, and residents. Mappers will also develop a presentation with the findings of their research, including existing resources and service gaps.

"We anticipate that Community YouthMapping will produce a treasure trove of information about services for youth in the West End," said Allen C. Lomax, chair of the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria. "In addition to gathering this invaluable and useful information, the youth mapping project benefits the youth participants, who will build skills in interviewing, data collection and management, team building, community involvement, and communications. This project is a true win-win for Alexandria and its youth!"

Community YouthMapping is a collaborative effort organized by the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria (SAPCA) with Office on Women and Alexandria Campaign on Adolescent Pregnancy; Alexandria Community Services Board; Alexandria Police Department; Alexandria Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities; Alexandria Sheriff's Department; Community Lodgings; JobLink; Alexandria Youth Council; Northern Virginia Urban League; the Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria; and the Alexandria Libraries. Community YouthMapping has been implemented in more than 130 communities in the United States and around the World. The Academy for Educational Development (AED) Center for Youth Development and Policy Research is assisting with Alexandria's program. For more information, visit www.preventitalalexandria.org.

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