



Press Release

Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria Releases Report Highlighting Need for More Youth Programs in City's West End *Community Youth Mappers Uncover Gaps in Youth Employment, Volunteer Opportunities and Community Programs*

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Alexandria, Va.— Although Alexandria was named one of the 100 Best Communities for Young People in 2010 and the City's schools and youth-oriented organizations work hard to support young people's success, more resources and services for youth in the City's West End are needed, according to a report released today by the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria.

The report describes the findings of the 2010 Community YouthMapping (CYM) project, which was sponsored by a broad partnership involving the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition, City agencies, nonprofit organizations and various City boards and commissions.

From July 6 to August 13, 2010, teams of trained "mappers" – 16 Alexandria teens, ages 15 to 18, supervised by adult team leaders, went door-to-door in the West End of Alexandria to survey and map the programs and services available to youth. CYM project partners chose the West End because of the perception among many that it has fewer resources than other areas of Alexandria.

The mappers surveyed 159 businesses, schools, faith-based and other organizations, interviewing managers, completing questionnaires, and compiling a database of responses. The questionnaires and interviews obtained data on the following:

- Types of goods sold or community programs and services offered
- Current opportunities for youth
- Number of youth employed and/or applying for employment
- Interest in providing opportunities for youth
- Number of youth served
- Perception of at-risk behaviors such as youth substance abuse, teen pregnancy and gangs

The majority of the organizations surveyed (139) were for profit (87 percent), while the remaining 13 percent (20) were nonprofits and City agencies.

The findings show that opportunities for youth in Alexandria's West End are uneven but managers at businesses and organizations are interested in providing opportunities for youth:

- 44 percent of organizations offered part-time employment to youth, while only 19 percent offered full-time and 18 percent offered seasonal employment. Eight percent (12 organizations) offered after-school programs.
- Opportunities for internships, volunteering, scholarships or mentoring were minimal.
- Although survey respondents at businesses and organizations thought employing youth would help reduce substance abuse and gang activity, they said they are unable to provide employment because applicants lack the skills and experience to fulfill job requirements or no youth had applied.
- Fifty-seven percent of respondent organizations employ no youth, while 13 percent employed three to five youth and 10 percent employed one to two youth within the past year. Six percent employed six to 10 youth, 4 percent employed 11 to 15 youth, and 3 percent employed between 16 and 20 youth. Only 3 percent of organizations employed 26 or more youth within the past year.
- Respondents said they see often youth congregate in public places not equipped with youth programs, such as in parking lots of shopping malls, 7-Eleven stores, McDonalds and at bus stops.
- Forty-four percent of respondents said tobacco and drug use are major problems among Alexandria youth in their neighborhood, and close to one-third said teen pregnancy and gangs are a problem.
- When asked what would help reduce youth substance abuse, 57 percent said more parental involvement, 39 percent said more out of school activities, 36 percent identified youth-oriented programs, and 32 percent said jobs for youth.
- Respondents at 36 percent of organizations expressed an interest in providing job training for youth, 35 percent were interested in providing employment, 25 percent in exploring volunteer opportunities and 24 percent in offering internships and mentoring.

The full report, which includes recommendations for expanding job training and employment opportunities, increasing volunteer options, and expanding recreation programs during non-school hours, is available at www.preventitalexandria.org. A list of community resources may be found at <http://www.communityyouthmapping.org/form.asp?Submit=Choose+an+Activity&CITY=Alexandria>.

Community YouthMapping was a special project of the Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition of Alexandria with the following partners: The Office on Women and the Alexandria Campaign on Adolescent Pregnancy; Alexandria Community Services Board; Alexandria Libraries; Alexandria Police Department; Alexandria Department of Recreation, Parks and Cultural Activities; Alexandria Sheriff's Office; Alexandria Youth Council; Community Lodgings; JobLink; Northern Virginia Urban League; and the Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria. The survey tool was developed by the Academy for Educational Development (AED), which served as a consultant to the CYM project. A second CYM project is planned for summer 2011, focusing on another area of Alexandria.

SAPCA is an alliance of more than 80 members representing parents, youth, schools, City of Alexandria health and recreation agencies, media, nonprofits, businesses, faith communities, policymakers and law enforcement whose mission is to engage the entire community in reducing youth substance use and abuse in Alexandria. SAPCA was created in 2007 as part of the Partnership for a Healthier Alexandria (<http://www.alexhealth.org/partnership>). Alexandria Mayor William D. Euille is SAPCA's honorary chair. SAPCA is a member of the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America (CADCA). Information about SAPCA, including membership, is available at www.preventitalexandria.org.

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