



**IN REACH, INC.**  
*helping young people  
reach their potential*

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# REVEALED!

Community-based organizations, educators, county officials and others helping students pursue and achieve academic excellence in Prince George's County, Maryland

## The Potential of Leadership

As magical as leadership, is the potential of leadership.

In this issue, **IN REACH** looks at leadership through a different lens. Instead of focusing on how current leaders succeed or not, we have decided to talk to a student leader and a county official about youth leadership and engagement, and highlight a collaborative project that involves high school students.

As a county challenged by a variety of leadership issues, it is time we begin planning for how we are going to encourage, prepare, support, and nurture future leaders—some who are now in high school. No one entity can

shoulder this responsibility alone! This needs to be a collaborative, community and county-wide effort.

As echoed by our interviewees, we need to create programs for youth with their input, expose youth to more possibilities, and, most importantly, invest the funds and time required to engage youth in the potential of leadership. It's a job for us all.

## Issue to Watch: Youth-Led Initiatives

This past May, the Prince George's Home of Philanthropy (P.G. HOP), a group of young people that helps teens with issues they may be facing, distributed its first Request for Proposals (RFP). The RFP called for youth-led projects that provide programs or services relating to teen health, academic achievement, crime prevention, arts/sports and/or substance abuse with the stipulation that all projects must be youth-led and show strong youth involvement, participation and leadership.

P.G. HOP is an example of a number of youth-led initiatives being created nationwide to spur youth leadership, decision-making and involvement. Youth-led violence prevention, educational, service-learning and media efforts are appearing everywhere giving young people the opportunity to become engaged in identifying solutions and implementing strategies for the issues that affect them.

P.G. HOP is a youth-led grantmaking council of the Greater Washington Youth Philanthropy initiative, an initiative of The Community Foundation for the National Capital Region in partnership with the Prince George's County Community Foundation. For more information on this initiative contact [glen@cfncr.org](mailto:glen@cfncr.org).

For more about the initiatives youth are undertaking visit [www.whatkidscando.org](http://www.whatkidscando.org), the Maryland Student Service Alliance, [www.mssa.sailorsite.net](http://www.mssa.sailorsite.net), and Youth Venture, [www.youthventure.org](http://www.youthventure.org).



# RECOGNIZE THIS!

*Tia Young, new student member  
Prince George's County Board of Education*

A native Prince Georgian, Tia is a student at Suitland High School and a member of the Class of 2004, as well as its Vice President

and Treasurer. She is involved in a number of organizations including the NAACP's Youth Council and the Principals Advisory Board. She serves as a facilitator of the Virtuous Teens Girls Ministry as a member of the Word of God Baptist Church. Recently, Tia became the first female student member of the Prince George's County Board of Education in ten years!

**Q: How did you become the student member of the Prince George's County Board of Education?**

In April, I submitted an application to the Prince George's Regional Association of Student Government. I was one of three students who applied. I was interviewed and participated in a 20 minute debate period where students and adults asked candidates questions. And here I am.

**Q: As a young leader, what are some changes you hope to impact?**

There are two. The most important one is the High School Assessment for 2007. I would like to see prep classes implemented to help students pass the test. Students need to have as many opportunities as possible to prepare for the test.

I will also lobby on behalf of the Thornton Commission's work. [The Commission on Education, Finance, Equity, and Excellence was formed to devise ways to improve the state's education-aid distribution. Dr. Alvin Thornton was the chairman of the Commission] This is important to Prince George's County.

**Q: What are your special interests and what are your plans after graduation next year?**

My special interest is in programs that impact children. I would like to attend the University of Pennsylvania and major in social work and then pursue a joint master's and

JD program in social work. Ultimately, I want to be a child advocate.

**Q: What do you think adults could do to improve the lives of young people?**

The simplest thing adults could do to help improve the lives of young people is to listen to them. Don't always tell them how to run life, but just listen. Also, create for young people a (strong) support system.

**Q: What can adults do to encourage more youth to seek leadership positions in their communities?**

Offer a lot of exposure to what is out there so that youth can get a feel for what they like and what is available to them. This will encourage more involvement. People want to do what they like.

**Q: Who are your role models? Why?**

My mom has made so many sacrifices in her life and has given up so much so that I could have. I have four siblings and she has encouraged and nurtured all of our gifts and talents. Wow! My mother taught me how to accept people and their differences. I want to be able to do the same thing.

My mentor, a Prince George's County teacher, started his own business helping students in the foster care system. I want to be able to do the same to help students everywhere.

**Q: What are your thoughts on working with the new (superintendent) CEO?**

My priority in working with the new CEO is to bridge the gap between the student board member position and the CEO position to encourage understanding and to help the CEO recognize the significance of the student board member's position. I want to emphasize that by working together so much can be accomplished.

# COMMUNITY CONNECTION

## PRINCE GEORGE'S INFORMATION COMMONS

In late June, IN REACH engaged in a telephone interview with Peter Levine, project organizer of the Prince George's Information Commons Project and deputy director, CIR-CLE (Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement) and Margaret Morgan-Hubbard, associate director of the organization that oversees the Prince George's Information Commons Project, the Democracy Collaborative, both at the University of Maryland.

Since May 2002, a team consisting of 11 students from Northwestern High School in Hyattsville, Maryland, plus five adults, two who are Northwestern teachers, have been mapping assets of Prince George's County and produced an innovative web page on the history of school desegregation.

### Where are you moving the Prince George's Information Commons Project forward?

The Prince George's Information Commons Project started in the spring of 2002. Our first step was to do the website and asset mapping. We hired students last summer to do the work (mapping) and attend gateway district meetings. We built the website so that students could understand the communities they live in and that civic engagement is possible. We are continually building consciousness and awareness about this work.

This summer many of the same students are working with us for one month to take a look at new immigrants in the county, where they live, who they are and their stories. In the fall, we will continue tracking, story telling, thinking about new comers, and focus on juvenile justice.

### How do you plan to engage other organizations in the Prince George's Information Commons Project?

We are currently taking on 3 ideas:

- ♣ Arts and Culture
- ♣ Parent, community, and school participation
- ♣ Urban agriculture project—looking at community-based economic development this includes employment and marginally used land

We are looking at how to build on, replicate, move forward

and expand using various partners in a more considered and systematic way.

### How are students recruited at Northwestern High School?

Teachers recommend students--there is no set criteria. We were not trying to recruit students overly involved in activities, but rather students who looked promising and were interested in the program.

Every grade level was included and we visited all history and other classes where students might be interested in the information commons topics. Interested students showed up.

A diverse student group, primarily immigrant, has been recruited.

### Once the strengths and resources are mapped, what will you do with the information?

We would like to

- ♣ include public service information on the website for practical reasons,
- ♣ link groups together so that they can collaborate and build stronger networks,
- ♣ generate a large group so that we can strategically think about the way the Internet is used in the community,
- ♣ foster a positive imaging culture in Prince George's County, and
- ♣ interact, share resources, and dialog.

### What is your greatest wish for the Prince George's Information Commons Project?

Our greatest wish is to stimulate thought about the website in the county. We would like to facilitate the project, but do not want to act as the sole content provider.

**Visit Prince George's Information Commons on the Web at [www.princegeorges.org](http://www.princegeorges.org).**



## OFFICIALLY SPEAKING

with  
**PETER A. SHAPIRO**  
*Council Chair and  
Member, District 2*

### On Leadership and Youth Engagement

Interviewing Council member Shapiro on youth and leadership was informative and inspirational. He cares about youth and their development, particularly as it relates to leadership, and he does the work to prove it.

Shapiro is the founder and former Director of the Community Action School at the University of Maryland, which provides grassroots leadership, organizing, advocacy and electoral skills training to community-based organizations. He has almost 20 years of experience as a political and community organizer, trainer and leader with community and advocacy organizations nationwide. In 1994, Shapiro was awarded the prestigious Harry S. Truman Scholarship for excellence in leadership and public service.

*“If you want to measure the health of a community, an easy way to do it is to count the number of self-described leaders in the community.”*

#### **IR: What initiatives have the County Council undertaken to promote and support youth leadership?**

**PS:** I helped to initiate Shadow Week as a part of the county’s participation in National County Government Week where county residents have an opportunity to see how county government is relevant in their lives and to increase civic participation. During Shadow Week high school student leaders have the opportunity to “shadow” council members.

There has been lots of outreach and connections in schools and communities including a health initiative and council members can utilize their discretionary funds to support organizations that encourage youth involvement and leadership.

#### **IR: How do you see community organizations and schools working together to develop and encourage leadership among youth?**

**PS:** We are most effective when we collaborate. The more we collaborate to develop a common agenda, the more effective we will be.

The work of leadership is really about developing organizations, the more we give youth opportunities to be involved in organizations, the more leaders we will develop.

#### **IR: Within your district, what are some initiatives currently underway to engage youth?**

**PS:** As a Senior Fellow at the Academy of Leadership at the University of Maryland, I have had the pleasure of working with young people across the county to develop leadership skills.

I am on the board of wonderful project, Team Maryland, which connects University of Maryland athletes and other leaders on campus with K-12 students in the community. I am actively engaged in the Prince George’s County Gateway Arts and Entertainment District which is redevelopment infused with youth empowerment and activities for young

people. We are working in schools to bring young people into the decision-making process. Similar work is also being undertaken in the Langley Park area.

#### **IR: How can organizations engage the County Council, and their individual representatives, in helping them engage youth in leadership activities?**

**PS:** The more people make their voice heard, the more they help shape the agenda. Educating yourself, learning the process, making connections. . . ultimately this will lead to you making change. If you want to reshape the county’s agenda more toward youth development, then you need to get out there to push for it.

We struggle with not having enough organizations to do this type of work (leadership). We need to continually find ways to engage young people.

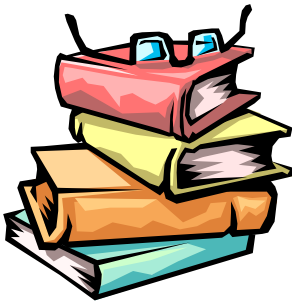
#### **IR: What is your vision for youth leadership in the county?**

**PS:** I would like to see more and stronger organizations throughout the county, not just school-based but also community-based. Young people should, as much as possible, be determining their own destiny which means creating organizations to help decide how resources are allocated. It takes resources to engage young people.

We can not leave out parents. Not to long ago, I read the War on Parents, a powerful book about how society is not structured to support parents. What we can do as a society and county is give parents the opportunity to be parents, to focus on their children. We need to give parents more resources and more time to spend with their kids.

One way we will be better able to do this in Prince George’s County is with the Living Wage Act which requires contractors to pay their workers at least \$10.50 an hour. This victory will undoubtedly benefit parents and their families.

# ON OUR SHELVES



This month we have three excellent resources that provide well-developed strategies to effectively engage youth in opportunities to develop their leadership potential, participate as active citizens in their communities and provide service.

## **Project 540: Students Turn For A Change**

In response to a forty-year decline in civic participation, Project 540, a national high school civic engagement initiative housed at Providence College in Rhode Island, and funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, was created. It is a six-year effort to increase the civic engagement of Americans between the ages of 15 and 22 and brings students, teachers, and administrators together. The Trusts' strategy reaches young people directly and connects them to specific opportunities to act in public life. Organizing for Change: A Guide for Managing Project 540 and the Student Facilitator Guide for leading face-to-face dialogues are among the many tools available to help you get started with the project. If you work with young people and are looking to engage them in actively getting involved in the civic life of their communities, this is an excellent tool to utilize. Download at [www.project540.org](http://www.project540.org).

## **Youth Organizing: An Emerging Model for Working with Youth** *Occasional Paper Series*

Seeking to answer an array of important questions to understand and support youth organizing, the Funders' Collaborative on Youth Organizing began an Occasional Paper Series that provides a comprehensive look at the growing field of youth organizing, presenting the history of the movement, profiles of current groups, and its impacts on youth. The series includes *Occasional Paper No. 1 An Emerging Model for Working with Youth*, *Occasional Paper No. 2 Youth and Community Organizing Today*, *Occasional Paper No. 3 Youth Organizing: Expanding Possibilities for Youth Development*, and *Occasional Paper No. 4 Annotated Bibliography on Youth Organizing*. Papers can be downloaded at [www.whatkidscando.org/whatslearned/YOpapers.html](http://www.whatkidscando.org/whatslearned/YOpapers.html). Definitely worth reading.

## **Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning: A Handbook for Supporting Community Youth Researchers**

A community-university project sponsored by the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities at Stanford University, this resource prepares and supports youth to become knowledgeable and active decision makers in their school and community and guides them through a training process to help them both collect and share relevant data, as well as become partners with adults at the decision making table. Designed to benefit the community as a whole and youth in particular, it provides a useful curriculum for working with youth through sessions that can be modified to fit your specific needs or research questions. The handbook is filled with how-to's, worksheets, session guidelines and samples for preparing young people to engage in the research process. A must if you are thinking about how to work with young people in this manner. Download at <http://gardnercenter.stanford.edu/resources/handbook/>.

## PUBLISHER

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