

“Solutions”

Recommendations of the Attracting & Retaining Young People Task Force

A comprehensive plan to attract and retain Young Adults in the Duluth Superior Area has been developed by a Task Force of the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation.

Building on a variety of research projects, the Attracting & Retaining Young People Task Force worked for a year to develop a series of recommendations with the goal of creating a culture and/or activities that will lead to more young people choosing to reside in the Twin Ports.

The recommendations are short-term, long-term, and ongoing and will engage individual and/or organizational partners to make them a reality.

“The time for action and solutions is here,” said Holly C. Sampson, President of the Duluth Superior Area Community Foundation. “We have a series of concrete steps that our region can and will take to reverse the decline in the number of young adults in this region.”

Recommendations

The solutions proposed by the Task Force include:

1. Give Young Adults a Chance to Lead. The Community Foundation will create a Young Leaders Advisory Committee and Fund that will allow young adults themselves to make decisions about projects to fund while giving them practical leadership experience. Specifically, grants would fund leadership skills, civic engagement endeavors, special events and entrepreneurship. *The Community Foundation will be using its own resources and soliciting additional funds to make this a reality.*

2. Create a Better Way to Share Information. The region needs a “One-Stop Shop” website for

information on living and working in the Twin Ports, geared toward the 18-35-year-old age group (housing, nightlife, restaurants, recreation, etc.). The task force found that difficulty in finding information was consistently cited by young adults as one of their frustrations. However, the task force noted there are many great online resources but not a single comprehensive website. *The Community Foundation is seeking partnerships to make this a reality.*

3. Raise Awareness of Career and Economic Opportunities. While the Task Force acknowledges that there are sometimes few jobs in specific job categories, the tide of economic opportunities is beginning to change. As the Baby Boomers retire, an estimated 75,000 job opportunities will open up in the region. The biggest job issue is going to be matching people with the right jobs and encouraging young adults to get the right training in job categories that will be open in the area. In addition, the Task Force believes that all of the existing workforce and job development programs should be supported. *Visit www.thenorthlandworks.org to see efforts already underway. The Community Foundation’s Young Adults Task Force has committed to supporting efforts like this and creating a community-wide dialogue about the changing economic opportunities coming our way.*

4. Increase Connections between College and University Students and the Community. College students are 23 percent of the population, now its time to connect with them. Internships, mentoring, job shadowing and networking should all be encouraged and supported. Universities, colleges, technical schools, and K-12 institutions should take the young adult issue seriously. Civic Engagement and Service Learning opportunities for college and university students should be

increased. Many of these projects are already underway in both Superior and Duluth with programs ranging from the Duluth Chamber's College Connection program to Leadership Superior/Douglas County Superior Connections program, to the University of Minnesota Duluth's Office of Civic Engagement. *To build on efforts already underway, the Community Foundation will seek to work with higher education institutions to create permanent partnerships to increase coordination and collaboration.*

5. We Love This Place. Now Admit It. In Public. The task force feels that it is important to share all of the positive events, places and activities this region has to offer. *Duluth/Superior: A Cool Place to Live and Work*, would continually emphasize the positive aspects of living in the Duluth/Superior area, using things like "top ten" or "highly recommended" lists, a logo, magnets, bookmarks, billboards, radio public service announcements, and newspaper columns. *The Community Foundation will lead this campaign with the assistance of the Young Leaders Advisory Board and community partners.*

6. Support projects that foster Duluth Superior being a more vibrant place for young adults to live and work. The Community Foundation will emphasize that we want people of all abilities and ages to know that they can come to us as a resource and supporting organization. This involves emphasizing existing services in all areas of grant making (preliminary assistance; navigating Community Foundation grants procedures; and, where appropriate, providing links to other resources). *Through both the Young Leaders Fund and other sources, the Community Foundation commits to investing additional resources towards young adult related projects.*

Background

In 2002, the Community Foundation developed and started convening its Community Leadership Team to review the area's social capital -- the networks of connections that form the backbone

of strong communities. Analysis of the data revealed some alarming results: the region has a shortage of people in the 25-34 year old age group and those that are here are less connected to the rest of the community than other age groups. The data reflects that our percentage of 25-34 year olds lag behind other regional cities like Minneapolis, St. Cloud and Rochester and is below the historical norms for our area. Since 1990, even though the number of college students has grown by 50%, Duluth and Superior has seen roughly a 15% decline in the number of households headed by 25-34 year olds. The trend is happening not just with students who come here for college, but with those that have grown up here as well.

The data indicates that the exodus of this age group is motivated by economic reasons as well as a lack of connection to the community. Economist Richard Florida points out that areas similar to Duluth Superior and surrounding communities are caught in a bind: without a significant young adult population it is difficult to attract businesses and young adults creating economic growth through creative endeavors, yet without those jobs, young adults are likely to leave.

The fewer young adults we have leads to not enough students for our schools, challenges for our businesses, an imbalanced health care system, and a tax base that may not be able to sustain basic services over time.

As a result, the Community Foundation began spearheading an effort to attract and retain young adults. The first step to reversing this trend was to find out what's behind it. The Task Force was created after the Community Foundation conducted extensive research of its own as well as reviewing research of others related to Young Adults in the Duluth Superior region. The Community Foundation's study found that while jobs, or the perception of a lack of jobs, were the reason that many thought young adults had trouble staying in the region, a variety of other issues,

ranging from a sense of a lack of connection to the community, to feelings that social and cultural offerings were limited were also substantial. For more information on the Community Foundation's Key Informant survey, go to: www.dsacommunityfoundation.com/initiatives/young_adults.html

Another recent report from the Community Foundation found that young adults in the Duluth Superior Area are heavily involved in community work – they vote and volunteer at high levels – yet they still feel disconnected from the rest of the community. For additional information on social capital and young adults, go to: www.dsacommunityfoundation.com/initiatives/social_capital_survey.html

The Community Initiatives work of the Community Foundation involves a variety of projects, of which the Young Adult Initiative is just one. Other initiatives include studying and developing practical solutions to the region's social capital strengths and challenges; developing ways to make economic development less contentious; continuing to build on the nationally recognized Speak Your Peace: The Civility Project; and, serving as the Host Organization for the year-long Knight Creative Communities Initiative that will focus around what Richard Florida calls the four T's of a healthy and vibrant community: Technology, Tolerance, Territory, and Talent.

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