



Building Upstream Solutions Through Youth-Led Prevention Efforts

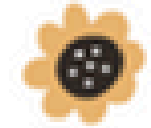
Staci Allmaras

Director of School and Youth Engagement, Lakes Country
Service Cooperative
Program Director, The Youths



Minnesota Prevention Program Sharing
Conference, October 10, 2025

My hope is you leave with:



CASEL 3 Signature Practices



Inclusive Welcome

EXAMPLES

Open each class period, meeting, or professional learning experience with an inclusive welcome.



Engaging Strategies

EXAMPLES

Embed engaging strategies throughout the experience.



Intentional Close

EXAMPLES

Close each experience in an intentional way that builds a bridge to a next step.

All a Part of ME

- BIO and Bonus Mom of 6 ages 16 - 26
- Director of School and youth engagement at Lakes Country service Cooperative
- Facilitator of learning, community college
- School Board Member
- Youth advocate
- Human-centered leader
- Rural MN Educator 25 yrs
- Program director for The Youth's PR
- Board Vice Chair for the Bridge center - a non-profit community center
- #HeartWork



Inclusive Welcome

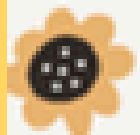
Get To Know Who's In The Room

**“What’s something about your identity
that people don’t see but deeply
shapes who you are?”**

2022 MN Student Survey: Mental Health & Risk Behavior Trends

Mental Health Concerns at Historic Highs:

- Over **135,000 students** surveyed (Jan–June 2022)
- **29%** reported long-term mental health issues (up from 23% in 2019, 18% in 2016)
- **11th Grade Females:** 45% report long-term mental health issues (up from 35% in 2019)
- **11th Grade Males:** 20% report issues (up from 18% in 2019)
- **11%** identified as transgender, nonbinary, genderfluid, etc.
→ **63%** of these students report long-term mental health issues



MN Student Survey 2019/2022

MN Student Survey Data - Key findings

Enrichment Activities - outside the school day

- 80% young people spend 0 days participating in school sponsored activities that are not sports
- Close to an even split % of young people participate in sports/teams 0 days as 3-5 days
- 90% young people spend 0 days in community clubs/activities

Perceptions of Others and Family Caring

- 80% young people say Parents, adult relatives and friends Care About us quite a bit and very much!!
- 60% young people say school adults care quite a bit/very much
- 30% say adults in community care quite a bit/very much

After School

- 80-90% students spend 0 days at community spaces after school

Quality of Youth Activities - outside the school day

- 90% young people say often/very often feel safe outside of the regular school day!!
- 60% young people say often/very often spend time in trusting relationships with adults -

Protective Factors (CDC)

Key elements that enhance youth resilience

- ✓ Safe, Nurturing Family Relationships
- ✓ Positive Peer Friendships
- ✓ Caring non-parent adults(mentors)
- ✓ School Engagement and Success
- ✓ Access to safe, engaging after-school activities

Protective Factors (CDC)

Key elements that enhance youth resilience



Belonging

Fosters inclusion and community connection



Agency

Empowers youth to make choices



Connection

Builds relationships with peers and mentors



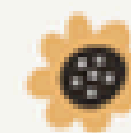
Civic Leadership

Encourages participation in community decision-making

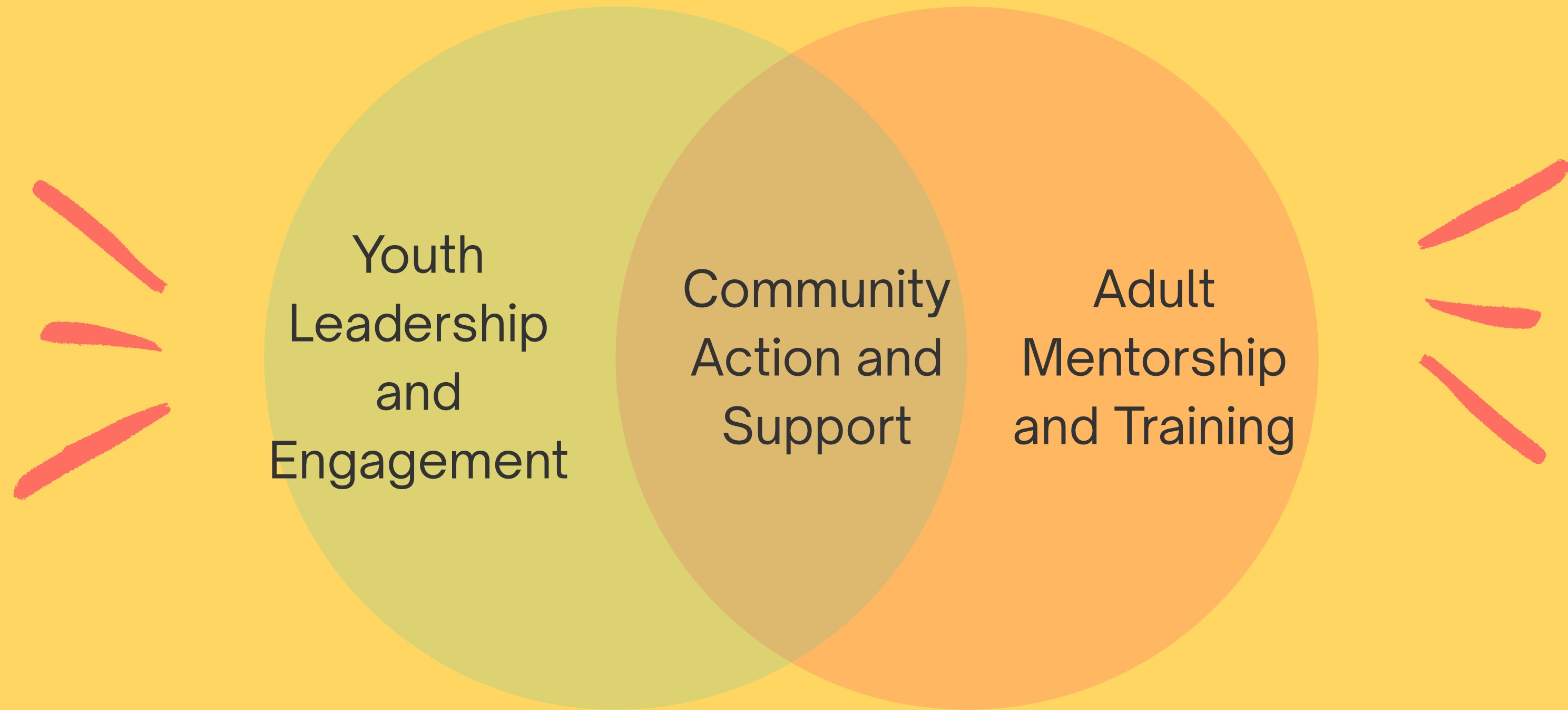
Pelican Rapids

The Youths

NOTHING ABOUT US
WITHOUT US



The Youths Model Components



OTC Opioid Settlement Grant Support

A vibrant illustration of a diverse group of young people, mostly Black and Latinx, gathered outdoors in a garden-like setting. They are engaged in various activities: some are looking at smartphones, one is holding a microphone, and another is holding a book. The background features a cityscape with a prominent church spire. The foreground is filled with colorful flowers and green plants.

This approach encourages civic engagement and Youth Agency to take an active role in shaping their communities through prevention efforts.



The Youth's_PR

Our mission is to lift the Youth voices of Pelican Rapids as valued members of the community. We want to see ourselves in the spaces, activities, and events in Pelican Rapids. To continue amplifying the power of the youth's voice to transform our future in our community.



Youth-Led Initiatives in Action

Young leaders are **shaping prevention efforts** by advising on programming, policies, and space design in local communities.

- 2022
 - young people together
- 2023
 - City Council
 - Youth Activities
- 2024
 - Bridge Center
- 2025
 - OTC Grant





TOP STORIES

THE YOUTHS

Pelican area students
bring voice to city council



Read more at PelicanRapidsPress.com
[@PelicanRapidsPress](https://twitter.com/PelicanRapidsPress)

LOCAL

IAN FAHJE, KELSEY ISAMAN
HONORED FOR ARTS, ATHLETICS,
+ ACADEMICS PERFORMANCE

AREA

LANDFILL, RECYCLING, SOLID
WASTE: PELICAN MAY SELL
LAND TO COUNTY

SPORTS

DANCERS FROM AROUND
THE REGION TAKE TO THE
FLOOR IN PELICAN

"Youth are the
heartbeat
of our
community"



Pelican Rapids Press

January 22, 2023 · 🌐

Young Pelican Rapids activists make their voice heard at recent Pelican Rapids City Council meeting.

Details in the Jan. 19 print edition of the PELICAN RAPIDS PRESS.

Find this stories and more on newsstands today and always online at PelicanRapidsPress.com



Pelican Rapids Press

February 16, 2023 · 🌐

YOUTH are telling their story in the Pelican Rapids area, scheduling events and meetings--with long range goal of a multi-use community and youth center.

in the Feb. 16 print edition of the PELICAN RAPIDS PRESS and online:

pelicanrapidspress.com/.../youth-continue-to.../

Youth Leading Upstream Solutions

Youth in our communities are **actively leading** upstream initiatives. By engaging in advocacy, organizing events, and fostering connections, they are creating positive changes that enhance protective factors and community resilience.

What have the Youths been up to?

We recently connected with [CornerStone: Frazee Community and Youth Project](#) and toured their building! They gave us inspiration and lots of ideas! We are so thankful for them to be willing to talk with us and help us along our journey! They also shared crepes with us, that will be featured in their menu! We are so grateful for this opportunity!

If you ever have a chance to go visit or help volunteer, we definitely would recommend!



Thanks @PelicanPoolHall for providing us space for fun, games, pizza and laughs!
We appreciate you opening your doors for us to hang out!





BEYOND CIVICS FOR TEENS

Beyond Civics is a 10-week enrichment program that trains teens to become Bridgers: community leaders who engage and solve problems across lines of difference.

@civicbridgers

Spotlight on Youth-Led Initiatives

01

Civic
Leadership

02

Youth Agency

03

Mentorship



PREVENTION

Shifting Mindsets for Youth Partnerships

Embracing youth partnership enriches community prevention efforts, fostering innovation and shared responsibility in creating sustainable solutions.



Protective Factors (CDC)

Key elements that enhance youth resilience

- ✓ Safe, Nurturing Family Relationships
- ✓ Positive Peer Friendships
- ✓ Caring non-parent adults(mentors)
- ✓ School Engagement and Success
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Engaging Activity:

Reflecting on your own spaces, Protective Factors, and The Youth's experiences:

- ◆ “Where do I see this in action in my community?”
- ◆ “Where is this missing or underdeveloped?”
- ◆ “What’s one thing / or my organization could do to strengthen this?”

Practical Applications

Strategies for communities to engage youth effectively

- ✓ Youth Advisory Group
- ✓ Leverage Funds
- ✓ Shift Mindsets
- ✓ Embed Youth Voice

What's Next for The Youths -

01

Develop
Community
Mentorship
Program

02

Design and
Develop
Youth Center

03

Continue Learning
and Leading while
engaging more
young people in
community activities





Video unavailable

[Watch on YouTube](#)



Learning Objectives

Key takeaways to enhance youth-led prevention efforts



Protective Factors

Prevention



Youth Agency

Learning, Leadership, Community Connection



Engagement Strategies

Youth Leadership Tools



Real Examples

Youth Led Spaces in Action

Call to Action

Engage youth voices to enhance prevention strategies together



Missing Voices

Identify youth perspectives not yet included



Different Actions

Explore new approaches to collaboration



Programming Shift

Transition to youth-led initiatives and partnerships



Empowering Youth

Foster youth ownership in prevention efforts

Thank You for Your Engagement!



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