

**THE FLAGSTAFF COMMUNITY POLICY TRUST**  
**Flagstaff, Arizona**

**Discussion Topic:**

**Youth: Opportunities & Challenges**



July 25<sup>th</sup> , 2017  
Meeting #3

## INTRODUCTION

**The Flagstaff Community Policy Trust** (the Trust) is a group of former or current elected officials and community leaders who come together on a bi-monthly basis to analyze a community issue or topic. Individuals are selected to participate in Trust meetings based on their knowledge and expertise of the subject matter (topic of interest).

Organized by Mayor Coral Evans, the Trust is designed to build a foundation of expertise and experience for the benefit of present and future leaders in Flagstaff, as well as other similar communities.

The Trust also serves as an opportunity to provide continuity and consistency regarding the history and purpose of long-term policy goals from those no longer in office, and, with each meeting pertaining to a specific topic, it provides valuable insight regarding effective policy solutions to ongoing community issues.

## BACKGROUND

The Trust held its July 25<sup>th</sup>, 2017 meeting at the Flagstaff Unified School District (FUSD) Family Resource Center. An FUSD facility, the Family Resource Center staff works primarily with families, providing important tools to assist students with achieving educational goals. All Family Resource Center services are free. Services include tutoring, parenting skills, community resources information and referrals; computer access, and, checkout children's books and videos. Spanish-speaking Interpreter services are also available.



## COMMUNITY POLICY TRUST PARTICIPANTS

July 25, 2017

**Dan Musselman** is a Deputy Chief for the City of Flagstaff Police Department and has resided in Flagstaff for 30 years. He has served over 20 years with the Police Department.

**Donnie Jones** works with the Sunnyside Neighborhood Association and has lived in Flagstaff for over five years after moving from Phoenix. Through the Northern Arizona PRIDE Association, Donnie works with transgendered youth and with growing the number of resources available for minority youth in Flagstaff.

**Mayor Coral Evans** currently serves as Mayor of Flagstaff, was formerly Vice Mayor, and a former City Council Member. Throughout her time in office, she has advocated for greater opportunities in civic engagement, civil discourse, community revitalization, and sustainability. She is the City's first African-American Mayor and Arizona's first female, African-American Mayor. She is also the founder of the Policy Trust.

**Danny Neal** recently retired from the City of Flagstaff where he served as Director of the Hal Jensen Recreation Center. Danny was born and raised in Flagstaff and, prior to his service at Hal Jensen Center, founded two non-profit organizations. "Flagstaff Hoops" gives youth the opportunity to play basketball with peers in a casual setting and allows them to perform in front of college coaches around the Nation. "Dream Scholarship", the second non-profit, provides scholarships for minority students to help offset higher education costs.

**Stephanie Jefferson** is a volunteer and Board Member for the Sunnyside Neighborhood Association. She moved to Flagstaff in 1993 and has worked with youth for most of her life.

**Peter Van Wyck** is Regional Director for "First Things First", an organization committed to supporting healthy development and learning in children from birth to age five. He is a Flagstaff native and, prior to "First Things First", worked for United Way. Peter has spent most of his life working with young children.

**The Honorable Margaret McCullough** is Presiding Judge of Coconino County Juvenile Court. Judge McCullough was born and raised in Flagstaff and has been with Juvenile Court since 1993. When she can she strives to be active within the community.

**Amanda Kristinat** serves as CEO of the Boys and Girls Club of Flagstaff. She has been in the Flagstaff community for seven years. In addition to serving as CEO for the Boys and Girls Club, she volunteers with “First Things First” and the Flagstaff Youth Chorale. Amanda is actively engaged with local youth, promoting literacy programs and community outreach.

**Supervisor Liz Archuleta**, born and raised in Flagstaff, is the current Chair of the Coconino County Board of Supervisors, representing District Two. Working with youth and families has been a large part of her life’s work. In the past, Supervisor Archuleta has focused her efforts on aiding multicultural youth and young women. She has encouraged them to pursue non-traditional career paths by furthering their education to a post-secondary institution.

**Bryon Matsuda** has resided in flagstaff for 11 years and is currently Director of Coconino County Juvenile Court Services. He has been involved with delinquent youth for over 43 years. Prior to becoming Coconino County Court Services Director, Bryon worked as a probation officer for 20 years and managed a juvenile detention facility in Carbon County, Utah. He is committed to providing diversion resources for at-risk youth in Coconino County.

**PHONE INTERVIEWS:**

**Kara Kelty** serves as Clerk for the Flagstaff Unified School District School Board. Kara has also served as a City of Flagstaff Council Member and as an advisor on the City Council’s Youth Commission. She has always been an advocate for listening to youth voices when it comes to policies that affect them.

**COMMUNITY POLICY TRUST STAFF:**

**Kerry Blume** is the Community Policy Trust Facilitator. Ms. Blume has served as a non-profit leader throughout her work career. From 1998 to 2013, as CEO of United Way of Northern Arizona, she worked to improve the quality of education, income and health for those in need. She currently consults with community and public organizations.

**Kyle Davis** is a senior attending Northern Arizona University and Student State Affairs Director for the Associated Students of NAU. He serves as intern and recorder for the Community Policy Trust.

## Youth: Opportunities & Challenges

### **40 DEVELOPMENTAL ASSETS:**

Created, in 1990, by the Search Institute, the 40 Developmental Assets identify a set of skills, experiences, relationships and behaviors that enable youth to grow into successful, healthy, adults. The Developmental Assets framework is initially divided into two categories, External and Internal. Each category is further divided into more specific assets. This asset framework helps users assess the needs of youth in their respective communities.

The meeting objective was to use the 40 Developmental Assets as a reference to guide Trust participants in evaluating community efforts toward building healthy skills in Flagstaff youth.

### **CHALLENGES FOR YOUTH**

For many Trust participants, the general response was that Flagstaff is doing great work giving youth the tools, programs and attention they need to help them succeed in life. There are many community organizations working for the betterment of youth. For many at risk youth one participant reported that there are fewer juveniles referred to the Juvenile Court system than were referred in the previous five years.

Although Trust participants generally agreed that Flagstaff is doing a great job, they acknowledged more work is needed to ensure all Flagstaff youth are cared for and fully represented in the community.

#### **1. FAMILY EXPERIENCE:**

Trust participants generally agreed that their own family experiences were a major defining factor in childhood. In fact, much of the discussion was focused on the family experience and challenges Flagstaff families currently face. The dynamics of the City of Flagstaff are rapidly changing and many city neighborhoods are also experiencing substantial change.

It was noted that one or both parents may work multiple jobs to provide necessities for their families. This scenario limits parenting time and may leave children unattended. Another member added that parents working multiple jobs can leave youth in potentially dangerous situations when parental supervision is not available. Trust members also touched on the issue of limited support networks for families with parents who work multiple jobs.

One participant explained that Flagstaff youth involved with Juvenile Court frequently come from families experiencing significant internal dysfunction, i.e., one or more parents are incarcerated or parents and/or children are experiencing serious mental illness and/or substance abuse.

Trust participants also addressed issues around foster care. Flagstaff lacking the number of certified foster care homes in Flagstaff and the foster placement of youth in homes outside of the Flagstaff area are two of the issues that were identified. Placement distance impacts case planning and the ability to reunify the children with parents or guardians.

## **2. ECONOMIC CHALLENGES:**

In addition to family experiences and home environments, Flagstaff youth find themselves struggling with additional challenges. Employment opportunity is a primary concern for Flagstaff youth. One participant pointed out that Northern Arizona University students push local youth out of the job market.

For many Flagstaff residents, the 2008 recession hit hard, not only for families but for youth as well. With the City's cost of living rising to new heights, there is an increasing level of poverty among Flagstaff youth. Participants observed that minority parents appear to experience more difficulty in helping their children grow in community connections and experiences than "white-collar" working parents. Trust participants agreed that overcoming this issue will be challenging; however, it is doable and the members felt optimistic on the issue.

## **3. GENERAL INCLUSIVENESS**

On the topic of general inclusiveness, participants viewed Flagstaff as generally doing a good job of maintaining an inclusive culture throughout the City. However, despite City and community efforts to promote inclusivity, it does not always happen. The Trust recognized that it is important to continue efforts to increase inclusive support for youth.

There are youth groups and programs in Flagstaff that are unaffordable for children from lower-income families. Some Trust members believe this as an issue and suggest that groups and programs might consider accommodating children from lower-income families. One member stated that their organization's summer camp their does carry a fee; however, costs can be discounted or waived depending on need.

Trust participants agreed that adult conduct around children, as a group or individually, also has significant impact on the minds and attitudes of Flagstaff's youth. Children closely observe how

adults act and children may mimic that conduct. The Trust recognized this as a generally positive aspect, but requires more focus on adults who work with children.

If an adult acts differently toward one child than toward other children, youth notice these social cues and can be impacted by them. It is possible that children will “mimic” observed adult behaviors and, potentially, create an unhealthy environment for specific children.

The Trust also discussed community acceptance of youth who are HIV positive and the stigma associated with that diagnosis. As one member mentioned, children and teens can be shunned by friends and neighbors due to this diagnosis that cannot be cured. Some children are “kicked out” of their homes for being HIV positive. Homeless youth with an HIV positive diagnosis do not feel welcome in the community.

## **RECOMMENDED SOLUTIONS**

### **1. COMMUNICATION**

Participants agreed that communication is a key element to ensure that the City is thriving, productive and educated. Many Trust participants also agreed that communication about youth events could be significantly improved. Trust participants looked to the City to do more public outreach about City youth events and programs.

Trust participants recommended a Citywide events calendar on the City website or having a Flagstaff events website that contains notice of all events and programs throughout the City. Ideally, community groups and organizations could submit information for inclusion on the site allowing for broader communication.

One additional information resource recommended by Trust participants was a Coalition of Children, like the above-referenced city-wide events calendar. The group agreed that posting all city events to a Coalition of Children website could be challenging.

### **2. POSITIVE COMMUNITY ATTITUDES & INFLUENCE**

Trust participants identified a positive community attitude toward youth as a productive and effective solution for youth across Flagstaff. Many participants expressed being pleased with the high value Flagstaff generally places on youth and education.

Trust participants focused on the importance of teaching youth how to fully respect people around them and how respect can impact lives and views of themselves and others. One member described how Recreation Center staff teaches children “right from wrong” and how to respect others. The Hal Jensen Recreation Center staff also assists youth in seeing police officers as humans and not as an “enemy”.

Trust participants emphasized that “labeling” youth is counter-productive. Acceptance helps youth feel more welcome in their environment and ensures that no child is excluded due to preconceived notions.

The Trust agreed that all children are capable of success. There is no exception to that, but it is up to the City and the community to give them the tools necessary to succeed.

Trust participants agreed there are additional ways for Flagstaff to provide a positive attitudes and influence for youth. The Trust discussed neighborhood-events such as family nights with activities for the whole family to enjoy. Ice cream socials, block parties, and game nights were also other ideas that were brought up by Trust participants.

### **3. EDUCATION**

As previously mentioned, Trust participants believe Flagstaff is doing a good job of educating youth and recommend additional education as an appropriate solution to issues that challenge youth today.

It was noted that full brain development occurs between the ages of 22-26 years old, making early teens a critical point for education. Setting boundaries was also identified as important to early teens.

One participant mentioned “Launch Flagstaff”, an organization that works with people involved in education and provides tools necessary to achieve individual success. This is a good starting point for how more organizations can help improve youth education within the City.

Obtaining quality education is not always affordable. Trust participants agreed that access to good education is a necessity for all Flagstaff youth.

Trust participants also agreed that learning is not just about being enrolled in school. The Trust recommended using symposiums and workshops with speakers who can address a wide range of topics as a learning alternative.

Sex education was identified as an educational priority, specifically HIV education. With pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) becoming increasingly effective in reducing HIV exposure, it is also being more widely used in place of other forms of protection. One participant described this practice as a “dangerous habit that youth are thinking PrEP as a golden pass” when it comes to protection. HIV continues to be a serious public health issue since anyone can contract it and PrEP is still not 100% effective.

Expectant parents have trouble finding information that one should know before and even after the baby/ babies are born. Trust participants recommended providing new parents with a resources list that could include child care options within the community either while in the hospital or at a location that is easily accessible.

#### **4. FAMILY SUPPORT**

Trust participants agreed that providing the right supports for families benefits youth greatly.

When parents work multiple jobs, finding the right support for their children when they are not able to watch them is critical. Childcare in Flagstaff was identified as an important support for families. The Trust also discussed the affordability of child care and how costs need to be affordable for these parents.

Engaging and empowering parents was another important point in the discussion. The Flagstaff community should be encouraged to engage more parents in activities and/or education. Trust participants agreed that when the parents are empowered and engaged in their children’s lives it has a positive effect on their children.

One member noted that probation officers, during home visits, have observed that some parents lack good parenting skills. With education and engagement, Trust participants believe that these parents can gain the knowledge and experience they need to become capable parents.

#### **5. OUTREACH**

Trust participants also focused on how the Flagstaff community can gather data that will inform effective policies that benefit youth.

Finding youth who are struggling within the community was also identified as an important priority. The Trust pointed out that it would be beneficial to seek out youth that do not always speak up about their troubles.

Trust participants also discussed how youth need other opportunities in addition to school to grow and succeed in life. One participant noted that opportunities for youth outside of school should be equally as important.

Re-establishing the City of Flagstaff Youth Council was one of the strongest recommendations brought forward during the discussion. Years ago, the City of Flagstaff established a Youth Commission that is no longer active. Trust participants would like to see the Youth Commission reactivated in a more proactive manner. The Trust agreed that hearing the voices, needs and struggles from youth to youth is extremely important in ensuring that the City is utilizing best practices to provide youth with opportunities and reduce challenges.

**MEETING ADJOURNED**