



February 27, 2014

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Mary Sue Anter Tanis, CFRE

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Dr. Elizabeth A. Stiles
Director
Nonprofit Administration Program
John Carroll University

Dear Dr. Stiles,

Youth Challenge is pleased to submit this proposal to participate in the John Carroll University Nonprofit Administration Program Capstone Project. We would welcome the help of your students with our **Alumni Management Project** in 2014. The goal of this project is to develop a plan for ongoing alumni engagement with our organization.

Youth Challenge provides adapted sports and recreational programs for children with physical disabilities, ages 2-18. All programs are offered with the help of teen volunteers, ages 12-18, that are paired one-on-one with a child for each activity. The partners work together to play team sports, swim, participate in arts activities, and much more. Each year we serve hundreds of participants and teen volunteers that we would like to stay in touch with after their time with us has ended.

We currently have a limited number of alumni who engage with our organization each year, but would like to connect with a greater number. This project will help us establish ways to stay in touch with our participants and volunteers as they move on from Youth Challenge services. Our staff and board of trustees see alumni engagement as an important component in raising awareness of disability issues in our community and in providing a source of guidance and support for the organization. For this reason, building a plan for alumni involvement is an important objective set forth in the agency strategic plan.

We aim to move ahead with the *Alumni Management Project* in the spring and summer of 2014. We know that the input of JCU students would be invaluable. We appreciate you considering Youth Challenge for the Capstone Project and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Mary Sue Tanis
Founder & Executive Director

Angelica Compton
Foundation & Communications Manager

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Youth Challenge
Proposal for the Capstone Project
John Carroll University Nonprofit Administration Program
Spring/Summer 2014



Introduction

Youth Challenge has provided adapted sports and recreational activities for children with physical disabilities to the Greater Cleveland community for 38 years. We have served thousands of participants with physical disabilities and teen volunteers during this time. As we aim to strategically grow our programs into more local neighborhoods and to improve upon the quality and types of activities offered, we have found it valuable to have alumni involvement. It is a current strategic objective of the organization to establish a robust alumni network to help raise awareness of Youth Challenge programming, provide guidance and, over time, financial support for the organization. Youth Challenge would welcome the assistance of John Carroll University's Nonprofit Administration Program students on an **Alumni Management Project**, helping us to form a plan for alumni outreach that would incorporate both alumni participants with physical disabilities and volunteers.

About Youth Challenge

Youth Challenge provides year-round adapted sports and recreational activities for children with physical disabilities. These youth participants, with disabilities such as cerebral palsy, spina bifida and muscular dystrophy, are paired one-on-one with able-bodied teen volunteer peers. Together the partners participate in activities like baseball, swimming, skiing, art, dance, soccer, rock climbing, kayaking, and much more. This unique interaction between participants and volunteers helps to foster friendship, camaraderie and respect among youth of all abilities.

Youth Challenge has office locations in Westlake and Shaker Heights, and utilizes local parks, pools, schools and recreation centers to provide more than 300 programs annually. These activities engage more than 160 participants with physical disabilities and over 450 teen volunteers throughout the Greater Cleveland community.

Alumni Management Project

The goal of the **Alumni Management Project** is to develop a plan for alumni engagement that will help the organization reconnect with older alumni and stay connected with current participants and volunteers as they transition to alumni.

Students from the Nonprofit Administration Program can help us to achieve this goal by providing assistance with the following objectives:

1. Review the current Youth Challenge alumni outreach practices
2. Research alumni outreach efforts of 1 -2 other similar organizations
3. Conduct brief interviews or a focus group with a sampling of Youth Challenge alumni to gain insight into how the organization can best stay connected with alumni

Data gathered by the students will be used to develop a plan for alumni outreach that Youth Challenge can use over the next 1-2 years to take initial steps to building a strong alumni network. This will likely include best practices on communicating with alumni, integrating alumni into current programming, as well as developing targeted alumni events.

The project will be led by Youth Challenge staff members Mary Sue Tanis, CFRE, *Founder & Executive Director*, and Angelica Compton, *Foundation & Communications Manager*. Bios are attached.

Conclusion

Youth Challenge would truly benefit from the assistance of students from the John Carroll University Nonprofit Administration Program on this ***Alumni Management Project***. Our organization is in need of a fresh perspective on alumni engagement while working to achieve our alumni relations objectives as set forth in our strategic plan. The JCU students will benefit too, as involvement will offer the students an important view into how and why a non-profit organization should continue to engage former constituents as a way to build awareness and support for current and future services.

We also believe that alumni engagement can also have an impact on the broader Cleveland community. We hope that our alumni volunteers and participants alike take with them the lessons learned at Youth Challenge and put them to work in cultivating a culture of inclusion in their future schools, workplaces, and neighborhoods. Continuing the relationship between Youth Challenge and our alumni can help to remind alumni of past experiences and of the work that is being done, and still needs to be done, in order for those with disabilities to be fully embraced in all aspects of the community.

Youth Challenge Project Staff

Mary Sue Tanis, CFRE

Founder & Executive Director

For over three decades, Mary Sue (Anter) Tanis has been on a mission to help improve the health and quality of life for children with physical disabilities by providing opportunities for them to have fun through physical and social activity.

Begun as a volunteer, grassroots entity in 1976, Youth Challenge has expanded its activities to service children in six Northeast Ohio counties.

Prior to founding YC, Mary Sue worked for the Golden Age Centers of Cleveland as the Center Director from 1978 to 1983. She was the Assistant Director of Camp Cheerful in 1978 and was a ski instructor in Vermont from 1975 to 1978.

Mary Sue became a Certified Fund Raising Executive (CFRE) in 1985. She received a Bachelor of Science degree with an emphasis on recreation for students and veterans with physical disabilities from the University of Colorado, Boulder, in 1975. Mary Sue has also completed executive education programs at Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland State University and Baldwin Wallace College. She is a 1972 graduate of Magnificat High School in Rocky River.

Angelica Compton

Foundation & Communications Manager

Angelica Compton is the Foundation and Communications Manager for Youth Challenge. She is responsible for grant writing and assists with YC communications. She formerly served as the Development Associate for YC in 2003-2004.

Prior to re-joining YC in 2010, Angelica was the Admissions and Communications Manager for the Communication, Culture and Technology Program at Georgetown University where she also assisted with alumni relations. She has also worked with The Aspen Institute and BBC Washington, and served as an AmeriCorps volunteer with the Franciscan Outreach Association in Chicago, IL.

Angelica received a Master of Arts degree in Communication, Culture and Technology from Georgetown University in 2006 and a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communication and Media Studies from The Catholic University of America in 2002.