

Don't ask me what I want to be .....until I've had a chance to explore the possibilities!!!

## MiConnections of Kent County

*Increasing research-based activities that improve outcomes for youth*

**Cost to youth: \$0.00**

**Cost to schools: \$0.00**

**Kent County Youth Involved: 70**



### Countywide Activities Based on Interests of MiConnections Youth

- ✓ Four day youth leadership development for youth and site coordinators (summer 04)
  - Two days of experiential learning on the challenge course focusing on
    - Team-building
    - Interpersonal communication
    - Leadership development (self-determination)
  - Transported by limousine to
    - Tour of the National Weather Service
    - Lunch and Bocce Ball at Noto's Italian Restaurant
  - Tour of M-TEC
  - Group planning: training by professional group facilitator
  - Presentation to parents, drawing for prizes, gift cards as stipend
- ✓ Youth Entrepreneurship Luncheon (Spring 05)
- ✓ Open house for Summer Exploration and Leadership Opportunities (Spring 05)
- ✓ Tour of Community Media Center, GRTV, and WYCE (Summer 05)
- ✓ Cookout and tour for parents and youth of Michigan Works, Grand Rapids Community College M-TEC, and Applied Technology Center (Summer 05)
- ✓ Volunteer for a making a movie of the ARC of Kent County at the Community Media Center (Summer 05)
- ✓ MiConnections—WE LEAD KENT: Four week, four days per week youth leadership development project (Summer 05)
  - Motivation speakers and hands-on training on careers and disability: disability awareness, self-advocacy, teambuilding.
  - Job shadow in an environmental lab on a lake in Grand Haven
  - Lunch and tour of Grand Valley State University
  - Mobility training on public transit
  - Tour of Michigan Works!
  - Service Project in urban neighborhood including neighborhood beautification work and coordinating a neighborhood cookout (every aspect was planned by youth)
  - Transported by limousine, again!
  - Media coverage of service project on TV 8 & 17
  - Awards ceremony with parents
  - \$150 stipend for participating youth
- ✓ Career Mentoring Day in partnership with General Motors and Michigan Youth Leadership Forum; in recognition of Disability Mentoring Day (Fall 05)
- ✓ Today's Teens, Tomorrow's Leaders: a day of motivational speakers and learning about transition in conjunction with the MI Rehabilitation Conference and the Michigan Association of Centers for Independent Living.

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## Youth-Led Activities in MiConnections Local Sites

- ✓ A group of youth did volunteer work at a homeless shelter and mission in return for a junk car they could work on after school.
- ✓ They then generated income for this project by building outdoor swing sets, doghouses, etc.
- ✓ 8<sup>th</sup> grade mentoring panel: high school students took the initiative to put together a presentation for 8<sup>th</sup> graders to prepare them the high school and to introduce themselves as a support network.
- ✓ Tour of Grand Rapid Community College and the Michigan Technical Education Center (M-TEC)
- ✓ Creation of school logo for the Native American Alternative School Program: a local artist came in every week for four weeks, working with a small group of interested and talented students to create a logo that captured the essence of their program name, Bimaadiziwin.
- ✓ Development of a school-based micro-enterprise beginning with surveying the school to assess needs and the present market, and then creating a business plan.
- ✓ Creation of a website to document past projects, future project plans, and meetings through video and to better communicate with each other through email lists, chat rooms, and instant messaging.
- ✓ Collected donations for Katrina Victims; now exploring the issue of homelessness in Grand Rapids (700 to 800 people per night, mostly families) to see what their next project will be.
- ✓ Wrote a Student Innovation Grant to bring in motivational speakers and career presentations based on interests of students.

## Impact on Schools?

- ✓ Youth are taking ownership of their future by exploring their interests and aspirations . . . and then DOING SOMETHING about it.
- ✓ Schools are becoming part of the overall post-school vision of youth. Their school program is moving them toward their goals.

## Did you know?

- Of students that participate in at least one extracurricular activity, 70-75% graduate.
- Of students that participate in no extracurricular activities, 15% graduate<sup>1</sup>

**MiConnections Clubs:** The core of MiConnections is local sites (school-based or community-based) bringing together youth that are

1. fired up to explore their future,
  2. willing to plan these activities based on their interests, and
  3. willing to involve their classmates in activities. These clubs
- ✓ Are youth initiated and youth directed
  - ✓ Involve youth in extracurricular activities
  - ✓ Expand the network of support for youth through involvement, in a club atmosphere, with other youth and adults within and outside of the school.
  - ✓ Expand the network for youth through community involvement, career exploration, and partnering agencies.

For more information,  
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<sup>1</sup> Larry J. Korterling. Dropout Research. Appalachian State University. 2003. [Korterlingl@appstate.edu](mailto:Korterlingl@appstate.edu)