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FAMILY foundation

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Alaska Youth for Environmental Action

Turning Teen Power into Green Power

The Alaska Youth for Environmental Action (AYEA) develops leaders by bringing together young people from diverse cultures and economic backgrounds in activities designed to preserve and protect Alaska's unique natural heritage. Started by six teenagers in 1998, AYE is now a statewide program of the National Wildlife Federation, with seven regional chapters.

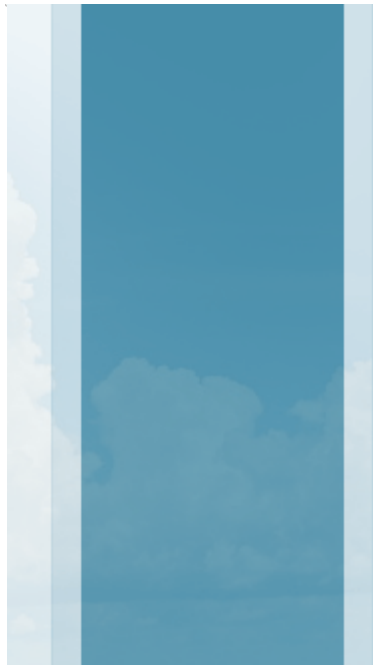
Recognizing its potential to engage and inspire youth, the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation made a three-year \$75,000 grant to help AYE build its infrastructure and expand its reach. AYE used the funds to expand its staff and to develop online resources and technology to support activities in distant locations within the state. The grant also helped AYE reach out to new, diverse youth populations and expand its fundraising activities.

One of the new programs AYE and National Wildlife Federation instituted as a result of the Paul G. Allen Foundation's support was Youth Employment in Parks—an innovative partnership with the municipality of Anchorage that employs teens in area parks while teaching them civic engagement skills and helping them develop an appreciation for the outdoors.

"The support from the Paul G. Allen Family Foundation was key to developing our program capacity," said AYE Program Manager Polly Carr. "They took a risk with us—a small, innovative project—and now we have the tools, the human power, and the financial support to expand our successful model of youth leadership development. Without the grant from the Allen Foundation, I do not think we would be where we are today."

Each year, AYE teens learn how to address health and

*Photo credit: Kalyn Brewer
Courtesy of Alaska Youth for
Environmental Action*



environmental issues, such as recycling and waste management; toxics; climate change and renewable energy. Through AYEА, youth have instituted school pesticide policies, advocated for cruise ship pollution legislation, and started community recycling programs. This past year, AYEА youth organized the "321 Efficiency!" Pledge campaign. Those who sign the pledge commit to replacing three high-use incandescent bulbs in their home with energy-saving Compact Florescent Lamps (CFL); turning the thermostat down two degrees in the winter; and unplugging one electronic home appliance when not in use. AYEА youth set a target of gathering commitments from 5,000 households. If they reach that goal, they estimate that they can reduce carbon emissions in Alaska by 16.5 million pounds annually.

By these efforts, AYEА is turning youth energy and passion into action. Since 1998, AYEА teens have been awarded approximately forty state and national awards for their leadership.

As stated by Lizzie Evans, a graduate of AYEА's Anchorage chapter, "We decided that we wanted to do something about global warming since it's having huge effects in Alaska, "We, the youth of Alaska, are going to be its next generation. We'd like to inherit a healthy planet."

Web sites: www.ayea.org and www.edutopia.org

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