

Winners: 2007 Youth Voice Advocate Awards

Every Voice in Action's Board of Directors honors two community members and two non-profit organizations as this year's outstanding Youth Voice Advocates. The Youth Voice Advocate Awards recognize outstanding individuals and organizations that are actively working towards more youth voice in our community, in two categories: Activist Individuals, who advocate for more youth voice at a systemic level, and Model Organizations, who actively and visibly create significant opportunities for youth voice.

Kathy Wooldridge facilitated the design and creation of Skrappy's Youth Center by youth in 1995. Since that time she has created opportunities for adults and youth to interact and work together in their community. By treating the young people at Skrappy's with respect, guiding them, caring about them, and accepting them as they are, Kathy encourages marginalized young people to take an idea and give it life. Kathy supports youth in attending city council meetings, and actively participating in meetings designed to address the needs of youth in the city and surrounding areas. Through Kathy's example, Skrappy's youth have learned that when you care about something, get involved; go out into the community and help make things better. Kathy believes that as partners with adults, young people can change the community to better meet their own needs and the needs of others.

Courtney Jones is an integral part of what makes the Eon Youth Lounge a successful youth empowerment program. Courtney values youth as experts of their own situation and uses this core belief to support youth in exercising their own power and influence. At staff meetings, community forums and council sessions, Courtney advocates for youth's voices and issues to be acknowledged. Within the Lounge, Courtney ensures that no decision is made without youth input and is often rallying and encouraging youth to attend a wide variety of community events. Through her involvement on the Tucson Planning Council for the Homeless, Courtney has encouraged service providers to embrace a stronger dedication to youth empowerment and involvement, most recently manifesting in a youth-led panel and workshop to address youth homelessness. Courtney is also a respected and commonly sought trainer on issues confronting LGBTQ youth and strategies to utilize empowerment-based programming to support this population.

Matt Matera empowers youth through leadership and educational opportunities at Pima Community College, as well as getting them involved in other agencies that work in the community. He advocates for young people to serve as speakers and leaders on the issues that are important to them. Matt creates opportunities for students to regularly attend public meetings and forums to speak in front of large groups and address issues that affect Tucson and students from immigration to water initiatives. In addition, Matt has encouraged and made room for students to attend and voice their concerns at Pima Community College Board of Governors Meetings. This has resulted in establishing a personal connection between adults in high power and students who are directly affected by their decisions.

Since 2005, the **Women's Foundation of Southern Arizona** has offered 15-20 high-school-aged young women in Tucson the opportunity to participate in community philanthropy through Unidas, a girls' leadership and philanthropy program. Participants of

the Unidas program now serve on the Governor's Youth Commission and the Pima County/Tucson Women's Commission, participate in the Greater Tucson Leadership Program, attend national leadership conferences, write for *Voices 110 in the Shade*, and speak at community events. Three young women also serve on the Women's Foundation Governing Board, and in this capacity play key roles in planning and implementing WFSA's annual fundraising luncheon, serving as youth leaders in Unidas, and participating on the grants allocation committee. Additionally, through its own grant-making process, the Women's Foundation actively seeks and funds programs that give youth a voice and foster their leadership in addressing community issues.

Pan Left Productions actively supports the expression of youth throughout our community by providing them with the tools of video and film production, as well as skill-building workshops and mentorship so that they can creatively tell their stories and make a difference in their lives and their communities. Several partnerships exemplify the role Pan Left plays in facilitating youth voice in our community. Pan Left regularly partners with youth through an educational program at City High School, teaching teens how to use digital video cameras and editing software, guiding students through all aspects of video production. The "As I see It" program – part of City High curriculum since 2005 – allows students to express their own personal stories. Currently, Pan Left is supporting *SnapBack! Youth TV*, a 30-minute television program broadcast on ACCESS Tucson twice a month. This program is "for teens by teens" and is produced by youth from five local high schools.

This is the second year Every Voice in Action has presented Youth Voice Advocate Awards. It is an annual occurrence, so look for the opportunity to nominate an advocate in the community next Fall, and listen for the great things people in Tucson are doing to promote Youth Voice.