



## Youth Vote in Review – Fiscal Year 2017 / 2018

### **Mission**

The purpose of Youth Vote is to provide a non-partisan venue for empowering youth to vote and be involved in the democratic process. Youth Vote is dedicated to providing young people, teachers, educators and the community with relevant tools to achieve this mission. Through Youth Vote, The League of Women Voters of Anchorage, the Youth Vote 2016 Planning Team, and Youth Vote partners worked to meet the following goals:

- Educate youth about the rights and responsibilities of living in a democratic society.
- Provide opportunities for students to discuss political issues with peers, parents, political candidates and elected officials.
- Encourage student involvement in the electoral process thus developing a positive life-long voting habit.

### **Planning Team – Working in a Non-Election Year**

Seven students make up the current planning team: a group of four from around the Anchorage School District and three UAA students who were part of Youth Vote 2014 and 2016. We anticipate this number to swell to 12 – 15 in the fall. This dedicated group worked very hard to keep Youth Vote relevant in a non-election year, and each member took on a high level of responsibility.

### **WAM?! – Wait a Minute?!**

Youth Vote partnered with the Alaska Press Club and the Alaska Teen Media Institute to create WAM?! This series of two events – a panel discussion by local and national journalists, and an interactive game/lecture at UAA for students and community members – was well attended and received glowing reviews. We hope to continue this work in 2018 and look forward to better educating Anchorage youth in media and news literacy.

### **Bullying Prevention Awareness Campaign Grants**

Youth Vote received a grant in the spring of 2017 to create a visual media campaign around civil discourse, inclusion, and idea sharing from Spirit of Youth. With the help of Jontue Hollingsworth of Headron Collider, students created 6 posters that are now featured in all middle and high schools as well as several community organizations around Anchorage.

After completing this grant project, Youth Vote was asked to work with the Story Works leadership team to administer the grants to a new set of grantees! Students revised the grant application and selected grant recipients. They also revised the bullying prevention training, and trained new grantees on safe messaging for bullying prevention. They continue to work with grantees as the new batch of projects near completion.

## **International Bullying Prevention Association Conference**

Through support from Spirit of Youth, two Youth Vote members and one Story Works student were able to travel to Nashville for the IBPA Conference. They were able to take in a lot of new information and apply it to the work with the bullying prevention grants – but the biggest take away from the experience was that they had tremendous knowledge to share. A proposal for Youth Vote and Story Works Alaska to co-present in November 2018 has been submitted. Selections will be made this month.

## **“Power in Numbers” – Anchorage Youth Development Coalition Youth Matter Grant**

Youth Vote received and AYDC Youth Matter Grant this winter to create a multi-faceted campaign to educate peers about Vote by Mail through a video PSA, and to better help all Anchorage residents – especially youth – understand the value of their vote through social media messages. The PSA was completely student created with graphic design help from Jontue Hollingsworth, and video production support from student producers at ATMI. The social media messages featured youth created messages, and used some of the graphics created for the PSA. Both of these projects will be used as templates and inspiration for media projects in the fall.

## **LWVUS – Convention 2018**

Youth Vote has seen significant growth in 2016 and 2017; the Planning Team Members feel it is time to share that growth with other Leagues. An application for a caucus session at the LWVUS Convention in Chicago this June was submitted in March. Selection should be announced by April 10<sup>th</sup>. The focus of the proposal was “Beyond Student Voter Registration – Empowering Generation Z” and our aim is to help local Leagues understand how to engage youth in their communities and to help them make democracy work in a way that makes sense for our newest generation of voters.

## **Partners and Next Steps**

This year Youth Vote has benefitted from the support of generous and collaborative group of partners and sponsors: Anchorage School District, Spirit of Youth, Anchorage Collaborative Coalition, Anchorage Youth Development Coalition, Story Works Alaska, Alaska Press Club, Alaska Teen Media Institute, and Headron Collider. We now share office space with three of our partners, Spirit of Youth, ATMI, and Story Works Alaska – creating a hub of youth activity around a shared vision: that all Alaska youth are included, heard, and empowered.

Youth Vote is also working to complete an in-depth annual report or “Yearbook” as well as a new website to better recruit new members and to communicate to current and potential donors the full scope of this multi-faceted project.

For the first time ever, Youth Vote has remained active throughout an entire non-election year, and has been able to grow the reach of the program. Youth Vote is strong as we move into the 2018 election – we are all looking forward to the possibilities!

On a personal level, I am so proud of the work these students do – I am amazed, as they continue to meet nearly every week, at their enthusiasm, their creativity, and their grit. It is truly an honor to help them on this journey to discover new paths and potential.

