The Way We See It
Can You Hear Us?

“The secret message communicated to most young people today by the society around them is that they are not needed, that the society will run itself quite nicely until they – at some distant point in the future – will take over the reigns. Yet the fact is that the society is not running itself nicely… because the rest of us need all the energy, brains, imagination and talent that young people can bring to bear down on our difficulties. For society to attempt to solve its desperate problems without the full participation of even very young people is imbecile.” – Alvin Toffler

Young people have the power to create change by learning and working together and finding their “voice.” This publication is the result of a learning community comprised of six RIT students and six youths from the North Street Community Center, located in Northeast Rochester.

It began in early March 2008, when the group began the discussion of the youths’ community. During the project that followed, the North Street contingency was challenged to not only increase their vision and understanding of the neighborhood in which they live, but to put their feelings and discoveries into tangible form through a publication that they would create and share with their community. The RIT students were simultaneously guides and learners in this process; they had plenty to share in terms of the logistical considerations of publication development such as research, writing, photography and design. The youths shared their unique observations and insights and guided a collective understanding of the potential for community transformation that can be inspired by young people.

Muras (see p. 6)
Abandoned Houses (see p. 9)
R Pizzeria (see p. 8)
North Street Community Center.

This publication was the result of a partnership between Rochester Institute of Technology and the North Street Community Center.
Brittany Bowman
I am 15 years old. Some of my favorite things to do are play a lot of sports. My favorite sports are softball and soccer. I decided to work on health and nutrition with this publication because one of my dreams is to become a surgeon.

Jazmin Castillo
Hl my name iz Jazmin n I'm 15 years old and I'm also a twin. The reason y I chose 2 participate n this program iz because this magazine iz basically a positive thing 4 the youth 2 read. I also like 2 draw a lot wen I'm bored or frustrated I LOVE 2 play S0CC3R a lot!!

Jamal Fitzgerald
I am a freshman at Monroe. I play varsity soccer. I am in this program because our neighborhood needs to change. I enjoy watching sports games and comedy movies.

José Morales
I am sixteen years old. I go to Monroe High School. I am in the ninth grade. My favorite sports to play are baseball and football. I love to talk to people on Myspace.

Brandon Turner
I am in the eighth grade. One of my favorite things to do is art. I love to draw and create things. My family is one of the most important things in the world to me.

Jordan Williams
Elio, I'm a 15-year-old and I am involved with a great project at RIT. I chose to be in the group that was doing health and nutrition because I want to be a pathologist when I get older.

Melody Rogers
I am in my senior year at RIT pursuing a degree in Biomedical Sciences with plans of later achieving a degree in medicine. I chose to work on this project because I love working with children and young adults.

Casey Moosmann
I am in my 3rd year as a Graphic Design student at RIT. Being from a small town in Maine, I have enjoyed learning that common dreams exist between all geographies. This has been a very rewarding experience that I will never forget.

Kimberly Grabosky
The opportunity to work with the North Street students has been so rewarding.

Lisa Barker
The projects I've been involved in with North Street have been some of the most important aspects of my experience at RIT. I'll be graduating with a degree in photojournalism this year, but what I've been able to do in this community is what will stay with me forever.

Michael Serra
Working with everyone on this project has been a vivid testament to the ability of folks from different backgrounds and cultural orientations to come together and find common goals and common loves. It's been better than good. Onward North Street!

Adam Bonder: I am a 4th year Biomedical Sciences major at RIT who plans to attend Medical school after completing my Graduate degree. I enjoy devoting my time to improving the community by mentoring children in the Rochester area.
North Street & Recreation Centers

By Brittany Bowman

I really like the recreation centers because it's fun to be around friends, and it offers a lot of sports opportunities since it's always a place to go. It's mostly boring for me at home. If I am having personal issues at home, North Street gives me someone to talk to outside of family so I can vent and find a solution. If I'm not at a recreation center I stay home and get on the computer usually on MySpace, listening to music or doing any unfinished schoolwork or homework. I never go outside when I'm at home because of the neighborhood. It's not a bad neighborhood but my parents are very protective so they don't want me outside. When my dad tells me not to go outside it's because he is afraid of me getting shot, even though it's a relatively rare for it to happen near me. When the weather is nice my dad and I ride bikes to Charlotte beach. When I am not at home or at North Street, I'm at school. Sometimes I have issues with schoolwork so I get help from the teachers after school. Most teachers are very good about helping me learn and are usually there for me after school.

There are not enough Recreation Centers for us kids to use; the city really needs more of them. There is not much to say about changes to North Street because it helps me stay very active. The center has open gym hours and when it's nice out the kids will go outside and play football, soccer, baseball, and other sports. I really think that if there were more recreation centers there would be less violence, less kids on the street, more job opportunities for the young adults and places for them to go after school. They should have tutors at every center to help kids with homework after school. North Street does NOT have tutors! At North Street they have programs that help young adults get jobs. They also have reading groups for the kids to encourage reading and learning outside of school hours.

"We live at North Street, we do everything but wash up at North Street. It's our second home!"
- Jordan Williams
In My Mind...

By Brandon Turner

North Street can sometimes be a good time or a bad time. My opinion on the North Street area is that there is too much crime, if you ask me. There is too much fighting, cursing, yelling, and most of all killing. This is influencing young ones to grow up to be in gangs and jail, the cause of death. Another thing I hate is that there are too many abandoned houses. The houses can be a death trap and little kids can get trapped inside. To prevent this, maybe they can be repaired for new neighbors.

On the other hand what I love about this community is that there are one-way streets. Why? Kids can play in them for hours without worrying about cars. Another thing I like about this place is that there's a center for young and old. I think the city needs to do something about the abandoned houses instead of tearing them down.

Above: The girls soccer team celebrates another successful season. Photo supplied by the North Street Community Center.
Why do people think murals are bad?
I think murals are good because they aren’t graffiti, they replace graffiti.

I think it is good because people can look at other artists’ work that they spent their time on. Graffiti is like spray paintings of gangs and that this is their turf so people won’t mess with them. Graffiti also provokes fights. An example is someone from another neighborhood is walking down their street and someone sees him he’ll say ‘Yo he is not from this block get him. So they jump him and he comes back the same day with the rest of his friends and they start to fight. People get hurt, stabbed, some people may get shot because someone brought a gun to the fight. So that person dies, his family suffers because of his death. Murals are better because they don’t provoke fights; they are just there for people to see the non-violent ideas of different artists.
Littering
By Jordan Williams

Outside you can find a wrapper, a bottle, a cigarette butt, anything, there is just garbage everywhere. Period. In school you got people throwing stuff on the ground too. I remember when it was the winter and garbage cans were flying everywhere into the street, people would stop and pick up the cans and put the garbage back in. I would say that some people care about the community, while others don’t. You have the good Samaritans and community cleaners who walk around wearing the orange and green vests cleaning up, they really help to improve the littering problem. However, it doesn’t matter because there will always be so much littering cause people don’t care about their community. The problem definitely starts when we’re young, little kids think it’s okay to do it so they grow up to keep littering. This kids are gunna grow up and teach their kids to do the same thing. It just keeps the cycle going on.

In my mind, to fix the problem, I want the police to actually do something. Enforce the law better than they have. I think the police don’t carry out the law unless it’s something that will make them look heroic, like a shooting. There needs to be a way to get police in our neighborhood looking for the other problems, like littering. It might be hard to get more police out there but people should also take responsibility of cleaning up their stuff. It goes back to the cycle; we need to teach the kids the importance of not littering if we want it to stop. I think we could have a school program going out cleaning up around the neighborhood and maybe giving out informational flyers. Maybe they could do a big mural explaining everything, that way the flyers won’t become trash. Either way, we need to come up with a big program to let people know that it is important to clean up and not litter. We don’t have any of these programs in school, but the rec centers do. I think this really stresses the importance of rec centers for us kids in the community. It all comes down to adults and kids should take responsibility to go to schools and rec centers to start the programs, they can’t always wait for other people to start one.
Nutrition in School and Our Community
By Brittany Bowman

At lunch, when we eat, we have snacks. Only two or three things that we eat during lunch are low in calories and the rest are high in fat. We go to R Pizzeria a lot because it’s close to North Street, even though North Street serves breakfast and dinner that is nutritious. The food has lots of fat and grease at R Pizzeria and everything there is fried. We are constantly eating chips, junk food and candy.

My dad is a physical education teacher and stresses the importance of health to me. He makes sure that I have proteins, carbohydrates, and vegetables; basically everything I would need in one meal. Even if my dad didn’t stress the importance of health, I would still eat well because I am concerned for my own health. I don’t drink enough milk but I like cheese a lot and I get my milk servings through this.

I would like if schools used less grease or have lower fat products for to eat. People could have community health meetings and talk to individuals at restaurants and tell them to use low fat oils etc. To stress nutrition in my school I think that we could have more assemblies devoted to explaining the importance of nutrition. People would have to listen to the speeches and can’t just leave.

I feel that we would learn more if we were given the information in a fun way such as giving out low fat and healthy versions of food and see if they can taste the difference. Also placing a large nutrition facts chart in the cafeteria that includes the foods sold so people can see the difference. The visual should include how much you should eat in a week and compare greasy foods to healthy. If you consume this amount of fat, it will take that many more times to take it off by running on the treadmill or playing soccer.
Examples of bad: women getting raped, drug abuse, more pollution, and murders. All of these problems come from just there being abandoned houses. The pollution issue, for one, starts because people throw their unwanted trash in and around abandoned houses. When no lives in these houses, no one cleans up the trash and the littering just gets worse. The closest abandoned house to me is at the end of the block. This is very close to me and my mom makes sure I stay away from it. While I try to avoid them it gets hard to stay away from those houses, there are just so many of them. I would say, on average, there are 3 or 4 abandoned houses on each neighborhood block. I think there are so many abandoned houses for one main reason. People in neighborhoods don’t want to buy or rent houses in a neighborhood that they don’t think will be good for their children. I think that makes sense, but its definitely the people in the community make it a bad one. It’s the people who walk around doing what they want and cause problems that make it a bad place to live. They try and fit in with the other crowd which becomes a problem because if the neighbors act like savages, so will the other people and that will make more abandoned houses.

What do we need to do to fix the problem? Knock down houses. It’s still not that easy though, because if we knock them down then we’re putting in more abandoned lots. These abandoned lots don’t help because the city doesn’t put anything in their place and then the lots just gain even more garbage from people throwing their stuff there. I think the city should start giving the land to the people next door or something. I’ve seen that some people will actually knock down a fence and spread out their lawns and make the lots part of their own. They work on these lots by cleaning up the garbage and putting some grass feed on there and make it look like a yard. It works great! Most the time it makes a safer and cleaner environment for us to play sports in and just be around. That’s what we do with the lots anyway, hang out and play on them, but if we clean them up we don’t have to worry about being stuck or cut with anything. There are a lot of things that we could get out of working on the lots. I think city could give the schools and rec centers some of the lots and then have us kids get together and fix them up for projects. It would keep us busy and make more areas that we could use such as a sports place or a garden. There is so much that we can get from fixing up the lots I don’t think enough is being done.
We're All Impacted By the Effects of Drugs

By Jammal Fitzpatrick

In the Rochester area, drugs have had a big impact on young teens and their families. I see a lot of people using and selling drugs. I've seen drugs impact my close family and friends. People ask if they want to try drugs and when the person enjoys it, they continue to use it and the parents do not do anything about it. Instead of drugs, my friends and I occupy our time by getting involved with all different sports and youth programs.

I asked my English teacher Ms. Leahy why she thinks young teens start using drugs so young. She said, "It's too easy to get and they see their older siblings doing it. Sometimes they don't have an adult at home enough to tell them to do otherwise." Another English teacher, Ms. Farnung said, "They think it's an easy way of making something out of themselves and it's an easy way of make a quick buck."

I spoke with some teachers and peers at Monroe High School to get their points of views on drugs in our community. Mr. Johnson, my science teacher said "[Using drugs] makes kids do what they want to do such as killing and dropping out of school. These are big problems in the city." He also explained the percentage rate of teens that actually use drugs are 10%.

I think the police are not enforcing the law, arresting drug dealers and patrolling the streets more. I feel it is also up to parents to set a good example. Many of the parents smoke and the kids see them so they think it is okay to do drugs. In my family drugs are all they think about; at least most of them. Some of my family members dislike drugs, including myself. I have a lot of people ask me if I want to smoke or drink. I turn them down and they think I am wrong. But in my mind I believe something that most teens don't realize. I know turning them down is right.
Sports Build Friendships

By Jammal Fitzpatrick

Sports are important to me. Teams help build relationships and keep kids off the streets. Sports also motivate me not to do drugs or act out violently. I started playing sports with my friends. They asked me if I wanted to play soccer. I started playing soccer when I was eight years old which lead to playing basketball. A couple of years later I'm playing sports for North Street Community Center and I have the greatest friends ever. Playing sports made my friends and I so close; now we hang out everyday. I have known one of my friends since I started playing soccer. As time goes by more people join our team and we get closer and closer.

My friend Wito and I became best friends playing sports. He was teaching me how to play goalie. Eventually we started talking a lot off the field. It was a hot summer day. We were in a field between a barber shop and a green house. We were both wearing soccer shorts, long socks and muscle shirts. He was showing me how to take the angle away from the shooter, how to challenge player one on one such as letting them make the first move. I have now been developing my skills as a goalie for five years.

After a few years of playing for the North Street soccer team, our coach built a new co-ed team for a tournament in Fairport. He merged the boys from the North Street team and some girls from different teams in the area. When the girls joined the team I became close friends with the girls too. When the girls joined I was the only guy to talk to them in a nice calm way. One of the girls, Jazmin, wanted to play goalie. In practice I started working with her to teach her what I was taught. As I have trained her, our friendship has grown stronger and stronger.

Playing sports is not big in my community outside of North Street. I think playing sports is important though. Being on a team helps you build relationships, stay focused and keep occupied. Now that I have been playing for North Street for a while I am really close to everyone on my team and I meet new people all the time.

Photos by Lisa Barker (top left and middle) and Jose Morales (top right and bottom)
does it matter what we think?

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Photos by Kimberly Grabosky and Lisa Barker