



HOME
A Program of
Alternatives
in Action

Youth-Initiated Projects: A Youth Development Approach to Promoting Healthy Eating and Physical Activity



Jane Sperling, MSW
HOME After School Program,
Alternatives in Action, Alameda, CA



HOME
A Program of
Alternatives
in Action

Objectives

- To discuss how a community-based nonprofit supports youth-initiated projects which:
 - Promote healthy eating and physical activity among low-income youth
- To share creative strategies for supporting youth-initiated projects



HOME
A Program of
Alternatives
in Action

What is HOME?

- Program of Alternatives in Action
- Nationally-recognized youth development organization
- Started by young people in 1996
- Serves 300 youth per year, ages 12-18
- After School & Summer leadership, service-learning, community impact projects



HOME
A Program of
Alternatives
in Action

HOME Mission



- To develop healthy and effective citizens who know what they think, feel, and believe, and can take action based on their beliefs



HOME
A Program of
Alternatives
in Action

HOME Accomplishments

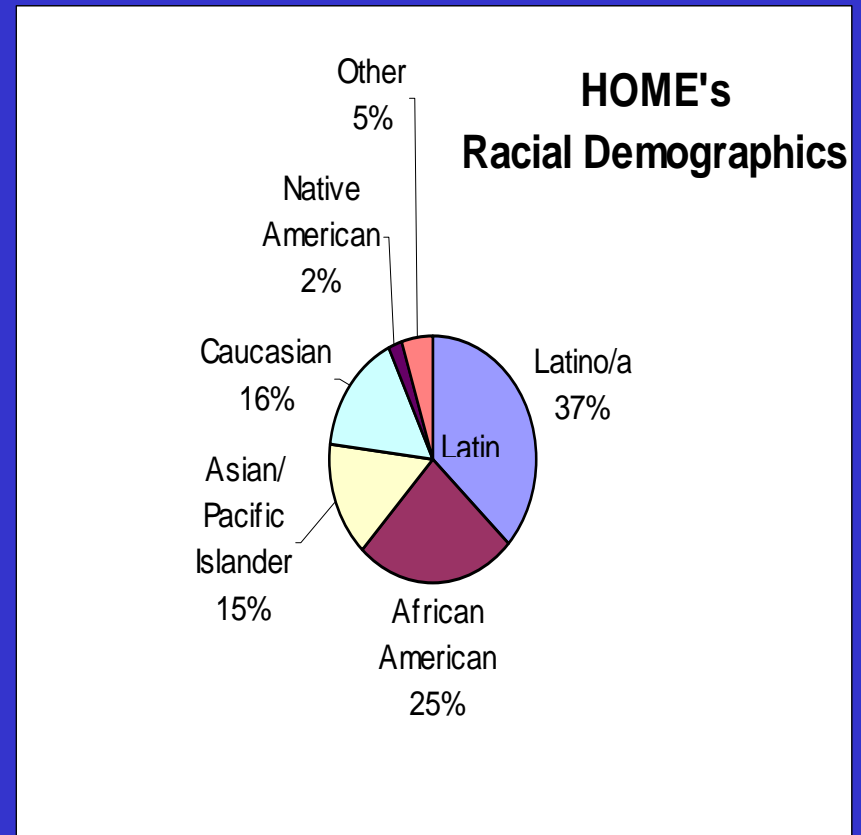
- Created 1st-ever youth-designed charter high school—Bay Area School of Enterprise, now in its 4th year
- Developed HOME Sweet HOME, fully-licensed preschool
- Built largest outdoor skate-park in Northern California
- Opened sound-recording studio for youth



HOME
A Program of
Alternatives
in Action

HOME demographics

- 5 school sites in West Alameda and East Oakland
- 59% female, 41% male
- 70% low income





HOME
A Program of
Alternatives
in Action

Youth Development Approach

- Designed to build youth competencies to become successful adults
- Positive development approach views youth as resources and builds on their strengths and capabilities
- Programs aim to mobilize communities to create positive goals and outcomes for all youth



HOME
A Program of
Alternatives
in Action

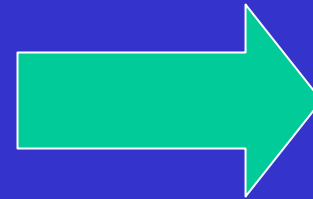
HOME Philosophy

Youth/Adult
Collaboration

Cascading Leadership
Opportunities

Youth Ownership/Voice
And Reflection

Real-world Opportunities
And Impact



Effective youth
development



HOME
A Program of
Alternatives
in Action

HOME Model for Improving Healthy Outcomes

- Youth as organizers
- Youth as leaders (i.e. youth coaches)
- Youth choose larger health-related community impact project
- Youth change behavior and attitudes while working towards community impact project
- Youth & adult collaboration



HOME
A Program of
Alternatives
in Action

Young Women's Fitness Challenge (YWFC)

- Started by high school girls at Encinal High School in West End of Alameda
- 75% of girls—low income
- Goal: to improve healthy eating habits and physical activity of peers
- After school meetings 2 days/wk
- 14-wk session





HOME
A Program of
Alternatives
in Action

YWFC Outcomes

- Community impact project: Completed 24-hr American Cancer Society Relay for LIFE
- Raised \$2400
- Completed Run 4 Lupus & Native American Health Center Run





HOME
A Program of
Alternatives
in Action

YWFC Outcomes (cont)

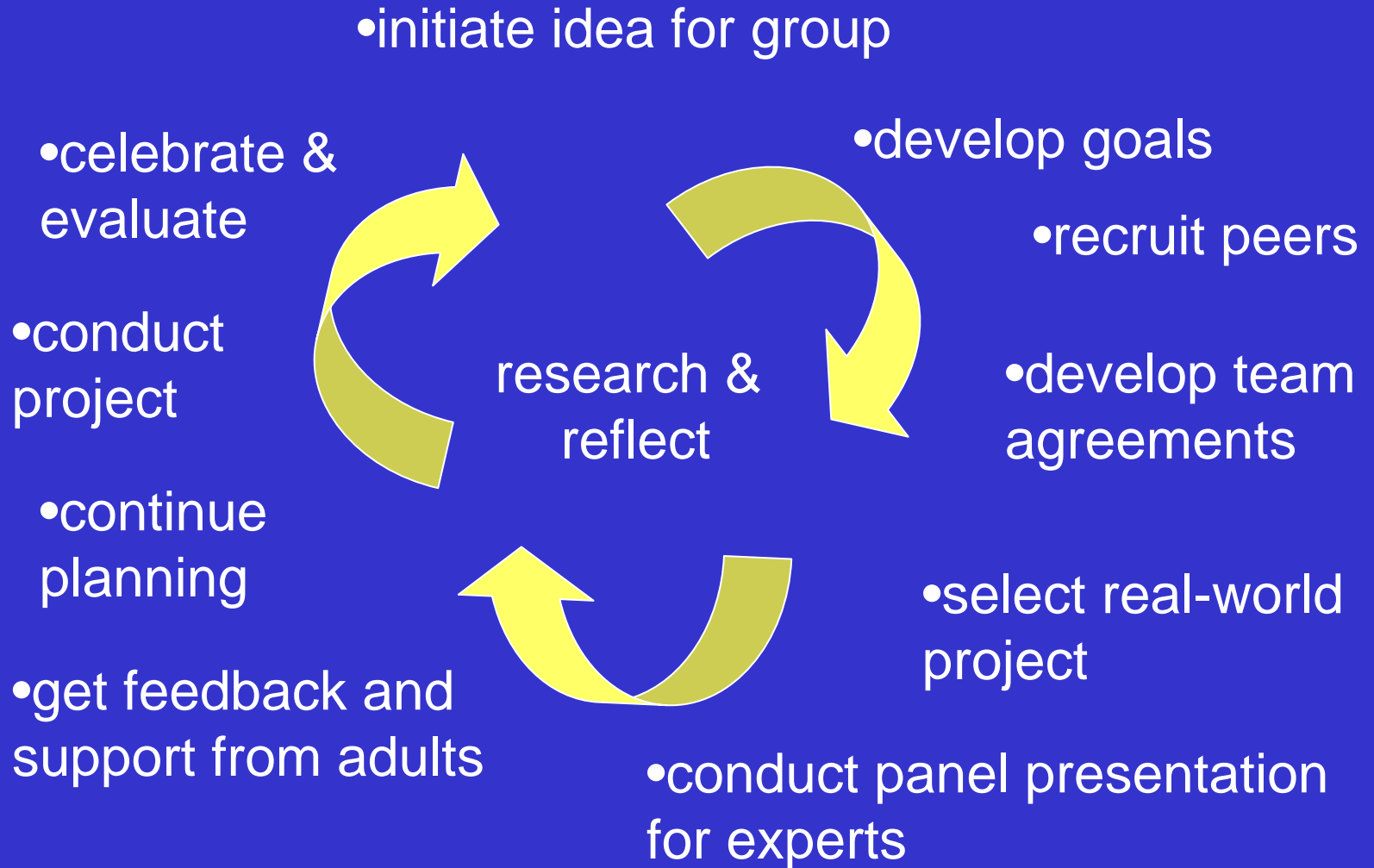
- Developed individual health & fitness goals
- Participated in creative physical activity at least 2X/week
- Met with Community Experts





YWFC Process

HOME
A Program of
Alternatives
in Action





HOME
A Program of
Alternatives
in Action

Panel Presentation

- Youth present goals, objectives, budget, timeline to panel of adult “experts”
- Experts decide whether project moves forward based on criteria
- Experts release “funds” for project



HOME
A Program of
Alternatives
in Action

Panel Benefits

- Youth synthesize information
- Youth practice real-world skills
- Youth feel ownership of project
- Interaction between youth & adults
- Sense of urgency
- Adults hold youth to high standards
- Adults see youth taking action



HOME
A Program of
Alternatives
in Action

YWFC Panel

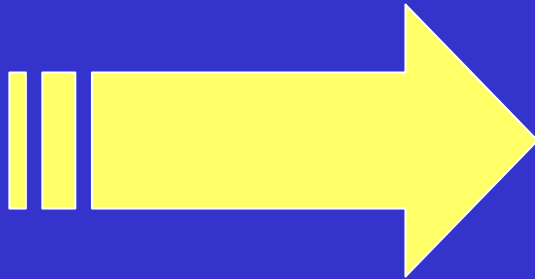
- Experts: Nutritionist, Relay for LIFE Chair, High school Health Teacher, Director of HOME
- Released \$250 towards fitness training, healthy snacks, and fitness materials



HOME
A Program of
Alternatives
in Action

YWFC Expansion

New projects:



- Health and Fitness Mentoring with low-income elementary girls
- “Healthy 4 LIFE” Co-ed program
- Change School Lunch Project



HOME
A Program of
Alternatives
in Action

Mentoring Elementary Girls

- Journals
- Healthy snacks
- Creative physical activities
- Cascading leadership
- Role modeling





HOME
A Program of
Alternatives
in Action

Healthy 4 LIFE Program

- YWFC founders serve as consultants
- Co-ed program at LIFE Academy in East Oakland
- Creative physical activities + community project
- Community project = build basketball court at high school





HOME
A Program of
Alternatives
in Action

Change School Lunch Project

- Survey of high school youth eating habits
- Research of alternatives
- Develop proposal
- Present to panel
- Speak out at School Board, school meetings



HOME
A Program of
Alternatives
in Action

Community Partnerships

- Native American Health Center
- Destiny Arts Nonviolence Dance & Martial Arts
- California Dragon Boat Association
- Cycles for Change
- Curves
- Local personal trainers & nutritionists
- Urban planners
- American Cancer Society, Lupus foundation



HOME
A Program of
Alternatives
in Action

Funding

- Private Foundations
- State: recognized as 1 of 8 sites throughout California for excellence in service-learning
- Individual donors
- Fees from schools





HOME
A Program of
Alternatives
in Action

How to support youth-initiated projects

- Serve as expert to groups of youth
- Present community needs to youth organizations
- Mentor youth groups
- Help access funding opportunities
- Connect youth groups with health professionals

