

Okay so you ready to make some of the [inaudible]?

Sure let me do just one word of introduction, Tara. For folks that are listening, this is the last in the series of webinars that CBO social media grantees have been doing to share what we have tried, what we have learned, some of the challenges so you'll find the rest of the series on the National Service Learning Clearinghouse site and today we are thrilled to be able to hear from the National Network for Youth. So go ahead Tara.

Thank you. So my name is Tara James and I am the Project Director for our Learn and Serve Grant. Kayla Jackson, who's our Vice President of Programs, is also on and she's been working on this project from the very beginning. I've been with the Network for about a year now so I'm a third year person on the one to three year grant and a big piece of what we have done with our sites has been helping to develop social media, competence and knowledge both among the staff and the youth and really trying to promote it as a very youthful inexpensive tool for working with, working on service learning projects. We have, just as a little bit of background, we have had 12 sites in six states over the past three years who have been running service learning programs that are geared towards runaway and homeless youth. Runaway and homeless youth are [inaudible], what I'm referring to. Runaway and homeless youth are a highly transient population. They are one of the highest risks [inaudible] in the country. They're facing a lot of challenges that make service learning projects a little more difficult. It's hard to keep kids engaged for more than maybe a nine month period, which is generally the school year obviously. But our programs have actually had really good experiences keeping youth involved for nine months, some of them all the way up to three years. Then for those populations, that's pretty exceptional. Our main goals in using social media were to foster communication and collaboration, both among the programs themselves, the adults and the youth in the programs and then among the 12 different programs in the six different states. We also wanted to help the [inaudible] more how to use social media to enhance what they were doing on the ground with our youth. So like one of the programs, ShelterKids, in Salt Lake City, Utah, was focused on, all, I'll actually go back and say all of our sub-grantees were focused on health issues that were particularly relevant to their youth and the youth did all of the research, identifying what topics they wanted to address and then decided how they wanted to address it. Salt Lake City, in particular, chose gang violence, dating violence and a third one which is escaping me at the moment.

[Inaudible]

Thank you.

[Inaudible]. So they chose those three topics as their health issues that they wanted to focus on and the youth were going into middle schools to do presentations to their peers and then also working after school doing presentations at different community events and they decided that they wanted to do PSA's. So they teamed up with a local organization that taught the youth how to write, film, direct, act in the PSA's and then they uploaded those to You Tube and started [inaudible] them across the web. This past year, that was year two, and then year three they took it to a whole new level and actually started participating in a short film festival and all of this was using online media. So as far as what we accomplished, we really did support the projects as they expanded through social networking. We've had reports that with this highly transient population they're staying connected with kids using online social media like Face Book, My Space, things like that so that even as the youth are traveling between California or Mexico, Texas, wherever they happen to be, if their site in Oregon has a Face Book page,

they're able to stay connected to that site, to the activities happening there and to their friends there. And that really increases the social connections that these youth have which is a huge protective factor for them. We also created Youth Space, which I had planned to actually go to this site and show it to you guys but the way that my computer is acting, I'm a little afraid to do that so is there a way that I can send out the link to Youth Space to everyone after the presentation, Larry? Is Larry there?

Yes. Sorry I was on Youth. You can type the link into the chat if want to now and people can go to the link and yeah we'll be able to send that out in an e-mail afterwards as well.

Okay. So, except that my, there we go. Okay, so I will type that in there. So we created Youth Space as a specific website to connect youth that are in the Learn and Serve projects and to connect the adults to the youth and to each other so that they can post photos, they can post videos, they can talk about what's happening in their projects. It's both a social networking site and a project specific site and you'll see when you go on there that there is a specific page for them to post about their different projects that they're working on. And then our third accomplishment was getting the sub-grantees in basic [inaudible] connected to one another through Face Book, through Youth Space so that they are providing support to each other in spite of the distances that they're separated by. Okay, so I just put up the, well I just tried to put up, let me try this again.

Aha, Brad's helping you out [inaudible].

Thank Brad.

He is a good man.

He is. Okay.

I'm not telling you [inaudible]. No. I'm not sure I agree with that. We have the right to pursue all participants so maybe one of the panelists or owner needs to do that. I'm not seeing that by, from this end. Can everybody see that?

I think I can [inaudible].

Terry, Joy, Deedee, are any of you guys seeing any Youth Space?

No.

No.

Oh okay.

[inaudible].

There it is. Yeah.

Sorry. The joys of technical glitches.

Yeah but I still don't think it's available to everybody. It's <http://youthspace.nn4youth.org>, youthspace.nn4youth.org. [inaudible].

[inaudible].

Great. Okay, hopefully you can all get there. If not you can go to our, to nn4youth.org and there's a big link to it on our home page. Okay so as far as our biggest lesson or our cause in experimenting with social media, aside from the challenges that everybody's experiencing right now such as, you know, the non-profit sector is experiencing a lot of financial heartache just trying to keep programs going and trying to keep staffing at adequate levels, things like that. That's kind of something that I think everybody has to deal with as they're working on this. We discovered that our youth were really experiencing social media in a completely different way from the adult staff and the organizations themselves specifically. A lot of the organizations were really weary about using social media, afraid of violating privacy of youth, sharing too much information, allowing inappropriate connections to happen, things like that. This is a population of youth that have been victimized many times over and so safety and privacy are huge issues. On the other side of that, youth are already using My Space and Face Book and Twittering and texting each other, texting their friends, keeping up with those things so trying to bring agencies working with runaway and homeless youth sort of inline with what youth are already doing and what they expect to be able to do was a big challenge for us. You know, it wasn't only an issue of do the agencies have the technological ability, resources, in order to use social media but are they philosophically, technologically prepared to use social media. We also needed to kind of explore and work out how social networking, how social media really fit into the on the ground projects. Things like one of our sub-grantees in Texas, the youth were focused on nutrition and obesity and they were building a community garden. And so the youth were not only learning about good nutrition and how to create urban gardens, how to harvest, you know, how to share the food with their community, but they were also learning about the issues of hunger and lack of resources in an urban setting. And so trying to figure out okay, you know, with youth that are really focused on kind of a farming project how does social media fit in? And we actually got to see that in action this past January during the Martin Luther King Jr. Day of Service. They used social media to really promote the community-wide service day, building new gardens, working on existing gardens and things like that so it was a really nice enhancement to what they were doing and that we were actually able to see how social media could fit with what they were doing on the ground. And then the final, final aha for all of us is just how much time it can take to really utilize social media to the greatest extent. This is still a learning process for everyone and trying to figure out who maintains who, how much access and leadership youth can and should have in maintaining and developing social media. It's kind of an ongoing process and, you know, a couple of years from now I think once more of the agencies have been working with us for a longer time and have kind of hit some of the stumbling blocks, it'll be clearer. Okay. Is everybody still awake and with me?

That's great, Tara.

So opportunities for deepening this engagement and service learning, this one actually this took a lot of thought and I kind of had fun thinking about. For where we're planning to go as an organization as well as where our sub-grantees are planning to go, a lot of our sub-grantees because money is so tight right now, are really trying to find more ways that they can use social media to keep their programs going when other resources are disappearing. And as far as both what we're doing with what the sub-grantees are doing, we're looking at ways that we can really engage youth in a leadership roll to advocate for themselves and to create projects that are tied to their local community but coordinated with other projects that are happening nationally and hopefully in the next year we'll be able to get some of those off the ground and really, really start putting them into practice. We're also continuing to

expand our online community because so many of our, we have over 450-500 members? Kayla, help me out here.

500 [inaudible].

Nationwide and they range from really, really tiny agencies up to larger agencies so, you know, a budget of \$125,000 up to \$7 million. So it's a really diverse group of people that's all allies and runaway and homeless youth all focused on the same basic issues that haven't really had the opportunity or the resources to connect other than at, you know, conferences which are fairly expensive to attend so we're really working on using social media as a way to strengthen relationships and increase communication and collaboration among all of the allies. And then we have over the course of this grant and we will continue to in the future continue to share resources and strategies for promoting service learning for runaway and homeless youth. For this population in particular service learning is a really strong model for addressing risk factors as well as building protective factors in the youth, strengthening social networks, increasing their connections to their community, increasing their knowledge about what are risky behaviors or healthy behaviors. All of these are things that are really great for helping youth feel that they're part of their community, that they can stay in school, that they can succeed in school, that they can contribute to their community, that they're a worthwhile member of their community, which are all things that are really important to us because for runaway and homeless youth to really thrive in the future they need to be able to live in their community successfully, they need to be able to get a good education, you know, kind of the basic things that we take for granted when we are working with youth in a K-12 environment generally that have other social supports, you know, like a family, like churches, like a stable school system. So we, you know, is a big part of the reason why we really like service learning for runaway and homeless youth. So we will continue to share materials, to share ideas, to share professional development opportunities with our membership across the country through social media. I guess it's time for the next slide. So where do we imagine taking this experiment? And Kayla I hope you'll jump in on this one too. We're, like I said, we're going to continue to expand and develop Youth Space and our other social media sites. We have a Face Book account and Twitter and Flicker and My Space to continue to enhance our online community for RHY and then we're really going to try and expand opportunities for youth [inaudible] advocacy and leadership. We're exploring some ideas that we think might be kind of fun like trying to come up with flash mobs. We do it a Hill Day in Washington, DC every January and so we're trying to figure out how we can kind of put a flash mob together to demonstrate the number of runaway and homeless youth in the country at the capital during that event. And, you know, coordinating local days of service in, you know, January, September, November, which is National Homeless Month, Youth Homeless Month, things like that. So, you know, the idea is to really take what we've been working with, working on with these 12 projects and expanding it out to our membership as a whole.

Yeah and incorporation it throughout all of our programs, our service learning piece, but also our health piece, our advocacy pieces at the national level but also the state and local level. So any opportunity to develop those communities top down and bottom up is really what we're looking to do at this point. I mean we do, this was a health program. We do have quite a bit of health programs who work very closely with us, the CDC, so using those in that way as well. So to do some prevention work around other health commissions that impact youth.

Yeah. So that's kind of our general overview, where we've been, where we're going. Let's see. Okay, please talk a bit about what a flash mob is and how you might use it. Okay. I'm sorry, Kayla's used to me talking in social media jargon. So a flash mob is a spontaneous gathering of people that's organized

over the internet or through text messaging, through social media and it actually started in Indonesia. It was kind of the first successful utilization of it when the Indonesian people were protesting their government, the government instituted a crack down and nobody was able to gather in groups larger than I think three and so the people responded by text messaging each other telling them where they were going to meet and everybody would converge in a flash mob to protest and then if they saw military police coming, they would text message each other and they would disperse. And it's, you know, so it started as kind of a radical, political protest mode and now it's becoming a way to do creative fun events to really call attention to a particular issue. I don't know if anybody watches Oprah, but on her season premier they did a flash mob dance so that it's, you know, it can be a really fun event.

They used You Tube to teach participants how to do the dance so that when the Black Eyed Peas played, everybody in the audience was then able to do the dance that went along with the video. So that was a huge example. There were like, I don't know, was it 20,000 people in the streets of Chicago in front of the stage? So that's a, you know, an Oprah-sized example of how to do it. We would settle for, I don't know, something less than the Big O but you know we can all shoot for the Big O for that one.

Yeah, yeah, well yeah, I didn't want to give you guys just a dark example so you get the dark example and the light example. Let's see. So how many young people are registered on the site? Right now I think we have about 120 registered on the site. And the monthly usage comes and goes. I mean there are months that we have, you know, I can't tell you the number of hits, we'll say like 15% using it and then other months there are 95% using it and we've noticed that it goes in ebbs and flows according to what projects are happening. Like this summer has been really quiet because a lot of, a lot of the youth are in and out of their summer projects. As the school year picks up we think that, you know, the site usage will pick up also. And up to this point we've really been using the sites for our Learn and Serve projects only. It's been open to everybody but our Learn and Serve youth that we've been focusing on, really marketing the site to, and that's a smaller population of youth and so, you know, kind of from here forward we're going to be marketing it to our entire membership base and looking at ways that we can expand the site, tweak the site, make it responsive to what the youth and the agencies are wanting out of the site. We actually built it in Drupal. I'm not sure if any of you are familiar with it. It's a site management open software, open-source software that allows us to be really flexible in how we use the site and we can literally redesign it from day to day. So our intention with that was because this issue, I know I've said it ten million times, but it's a really transient population. Things change very rapidly and so we wanted to be able to address that need. And this is, you know, this is a first for us. We're learning as we go so, you know, we've kind of taken it a little slow as far as developing the site, figuring out what the glitches were and now we're ready to roll it out to all 500 agencies.

With potential to reach between 1.6 and 2.7 million young people so it could get huge.

Yup. Any other questions?

Hi. You guys did a great job here. Thank you very much.

Yay virtual class. Thank you so much.

[inaudible] virtual class.

Thank you all for listening.