

# Georgia Youth Summit

Sept. 30th - Oct. 2nd 2006  
Rock Eagle 4-H Center

## The Objectives

The Third Biennial Georgia Youth Summit was designed to create an awareness of state/local issues, to enhance youth-adult partnerships on the local level, and to equip youth to become active locally in the betterment of their communities by identifying problems and developing solutions for issues related to economic development, education, health and safety.

Program participants met these objectives through pre-conference assignments, experiential conference curriculum, development of county action plans and interaction with resource specialists.

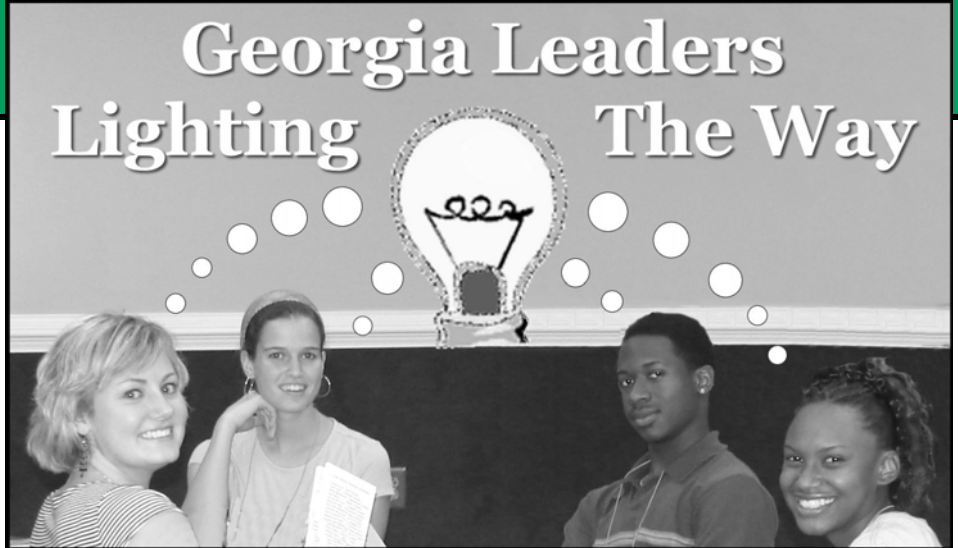
## Program Funding

The Department of Community Affairs (DCA) provided funding for the Summit as a project of the Georgia Rural Development Council's Youth Leadership Initiative. Funding of the program provided each of Georgia's 159 counties with scholarships for four youth and one adult to serve as a county team and attend the Summit.

## Program Issues

Based on the plan of work for the sponsoring agency, four key issues were identified:

1. Economic Development
2. Education
3. Health
4. Safety



## The Georgia Rural Development Council Engages the Voices of Georgia's Youth

The state of Georgia is facing a diverse set of complex challenges related to economic development, education, health and safety. The young people of Georgia are directly affected by these issues but are rarely provided with an opportunity to voice their opinion or offer solutions. Furthermore, they may not be aware of available resources and contacts which can assist them in their efforts to organize effective collaborative efforts.

## The Summit: A Collaborative Effort

The Department of Community Affairs contracted with the University of Georgia, Cooperative Extension and Georgia 4-H to organize a statewide event focused on empowering youth and adults to work together to identify issues in their communities and develop effective solutions.

Cooperative Extension agents in nearly every county in the state worked with other youth groups, service providers, concerned citizens, governmental and non-governmental agencies to organize a team and serve as the local contact for information related to the Summit.

The event was coordinated by Georgia 4-H with additional support from DCA and Georgia EMC staff members.



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## Activities: Discussing Issues & Learning to Make an Impact

Over the course of three days and two nights, Summit participants had the opportunity to work in **cluster groups** comprised of youth and adults from all the regions of Georgia as well as meeting with their **county teams**. In this way attendees had the opportunity to meet and learn about issues and concerns affecting all parts of the state. They left with a plan to make a true impact in their home counties.

1. **Pre-conference Work**—Each county team researched their county and identified major issues, key resources and important contacts prior to the event.
2. **Issues Speakers and Discussions**— Issue specialists on the topics of economic development, education, health and safety spoke directly to the concerns of youth and answered questions from attendees who remained enthusiastically engaged until well after the scheduled time had expired.
3. **County Issue Identification**—County teams reassembled to discuss what they had learned and identify the issue they would address in their own county.
4. **Youth-Adult Partnerships Training**— In this two part session youth and adults met separately to learn tips for working with people from other age groups. A primary focus for the adults was the need to give up control and to empower youth to assume real responsibility in the decision making process.
5. **Local Issue Engagement**— Through activities based on a hypothetical county, cluster groups explored the process of identifying issues, developing action plans and presenting proposals to a budget committee.
6. **Town Hall Meetings**—County teams developed their own plans and presented them to resource specialists from their Service Delivery Region. In the meeting they learned about available resources and opportunities for networking in addition to gaining hands on experience presenting proposals.
7. **Issuing A Challenge**— **Commissioner Mike Beatty**, Department of Community Affairs, issued a challenge statement and encouraged participants to take what they learned back to their communities and to work for positive change.

## Program Participants

A total of **686 participants** from **133 Counties** attended the 2006 Georgia Youth Summit. This included 153 adults and 533 youth.

Attendees represented a variety of youth development and service organizations including 4-H, FFA, Boys and Girls Club, Y-Club, Scouts, church groups and others.

Thirty-two college students from around the state volunteered their time to serve as cluster facilitators.



## Moving Forward Summit Grants Program

County teams who attended the Georgia Youth Summit may apply for mini-grants to help get their projects started and encourage them to stay focused on their goals.

Each county team will submit a Summit Follow-Up Report documenting what they have done and sharing successes and difficulties.

Information gathered from these reports will help program planners assess impact and better prepare future delegates to address specific challenges.

# Georgia Leaders Lighting the Way

## Georgia's Youth Speak Out and People are Listening

After researching major issues affecting their own counties and listening to the concerns of others, Summit delegates identified the most pressing issue in their county and developed plans to address them.



County Action Plans addressed a specific issue in one of the four program categories. The distribution was as follows:

**Education – 35%**

**Health – 32%**

**Economic Development - 18%**

**Safety – 15%**

**A complete list of county action plans was submitted to the DCA and presented at town hall meetings across the state.** A complete list is available online: [www.georgiayouthsummit.org](http://www.georgiayouthsummit.org)

## County Issue and Action Plan Summaries

### Economic Development

#### Major Issues

- Lack of career opportunities
- Need to clean up & revitalize community centers
- Lack of recreational activities for youth
- Loss of farmland & greenspace to development
- Loss of business revenue to bordering counties
- Attracting business through revitalization
- Attracting business by developing a better educated workforce

#### Proposed Solutions

Many teams propose that the first step towards addressing issues is to increase awareness by partnering with other service organizations and developing educational programs.

In an attempt to attract more business to their communities, teams plan to organize campaigns to clean up public areas, tear down decrepit buildings and increase awareness of educational opportunities at local technical colleges.

Gaining support of local government officials and creating an avenue for youth voices to be heard are key in addressing policy issues related to lack of recreational opportunities and excessive development.

### Education

#### Major Issues

- High dropout rates
- Low SAT scores
- Lack of parental involvement in education
- Lack of awareness of opportunities in higher education
- Low reading scores
- Lack of tutoring opportunities
- Lack of AP courses in school system

#### Proposed Solutions

County teams plan to organize educational events for students and parents. Events will provide tips for parents on actively supporting their children's education. Programs focusing on higher education will help students prepare for and apply for college. Other programs will highlight the economic value of a good education.

Teams plan to organize positive after school activities and tutoring opportunities to help increase achievement. Many plans cite the need for teen centers and intend to work towards securing political support and funding.

### Health

#### Major Issues

- Obesity
- Lack of exercise
- Unhealthy eating habits
- Substance abuse
- Teen pregnancy
- Environmental concerns/clean water
- Lack of non-competitive events that promote physical activity

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## Proposed Solutions (Health, continued)

Most of the solutions proposed by county teams involve the organization of programs promoting exercise, healthy eating habits and abstinence. Some teams plan to organize assemblies or after school activities. Others plan to partner with local health or law enforcement agencies and provide in school awareness programs.

Environmental safety issues will be addressed by organizing public awareness campaigns within the community.

## Safety

### Major Issues

- Drunk driving
- Seatbelt use
- Gang violence
- Unsafe teen drivers
- Using cell phones while driving
- Safe places for teens to gather
- Lack of animal control services
- Community unprepared for natural disasters



### Proposed solutions

County teams plan to organize in-school and after-school programs that increase awareness of the dangers of reckless driving, drunk driving and driving while talking on the phone. Many teams will target parents as well and encourage them to talk to their teens about the issues.

Teams that are focusing on a lack of animal control services plan to work towards the creation of registration fees for pets and a poll tax to help generate funds for animal control services. They also plan to organize volunteers and collaborate with surrounding counties to consolidate resources.

Those addressing gang violence and school safety plan to organize in-school awareness seminars and scared straight programs.

For information on the 2008  
Georgia Youth Summit visit  
[www.georgiayouthsummit.org](http://www.georgiayouthsummit.org)

## Planning Committee

Conference coordinator, Jeff Buckley, directed a planning committee consisting of youth and adults from various organizations to assist in the pre-conference planning and final execution of the Summit. The members included:

- **Kim Anderson** – Fanning Institute/UGA
- **Jeff Buckley** – Georgia 4-H Youth/UGA
- **Gale Cutler** – Georgia EMC
- **Candice Gunn** – Georgia DCA
- **Jillian Farley** – UGA
- **Jessie Frye** – Hart County
- **Zach Hall** – Lowndes County
- **Janet Hollingsworth** – Appling County/UGA
- **Melanie Hollingsworth** – UGA
- **Jenny Jordan** – Georgia 4-H Youth/UGA
- **Katie Matthews** – Oglethorpe County
- **April McDaniel** – Burke County
- **Christopher Nowicki** – Armstrong College
- **Jeremy Roberts** – Lumpkin County
- **Dr. Bo Ryles** – Georgia 4-H Youth/UGA
- **Hillary Thornton** – Charlton County
- **Charlie Wurst** – Georgia 4-H Youth/UGA

## Special Guests

In between cluster groups, county meetings and recreational activities, Summit delegates participated in lively discussions and heard inspiring messages from a variety of guest speakers:

- **L.C. “Buster” Evans** - Superintendent, Bleckley County School System
- **Randal Morris** - University of Georgia Fanning Institute
- **Dr. Terry O’Toole** - Center for Disease Control and Prevention
- **Jimmy Williamson** - Chief of Police, University of Georgia
- **Jana Gay** - Miss UGA
- **Garrett Gravesen** - H.E.R.O. for Children
- **Andrew McCrea** - Oscar Winning Broadcaster and Motivational Speaker
- **Dr. Beverly Sparks** - Interim Associate Dean for Extension, UGA, CAES
- **Mike Beatty** - Commissioner, Georgia Department of Community Affairs
- **Dr. Bo Ryles** - State 4-H Leader