

## BEST PRACTICES: REACHING YOUTH AGING OUT OF FOSTER CARE

**Agency:** Workforce Development, Inc.

**Service Area:** Goodhue County

### **Coordination of activities between Employment and Training Staff and Human and Health Services Staff to Improve Services to Youth Aging Out of Foster Care.**

**Overview of Program:** Reality Bites (see attached brochure) is a twelve-week Independent Living Skills Program designed to improve outcomes for youth aging out of foster care. The curriculum is designed for male and female participants ages 16 to 21. The concept and design are collaborations between Workforce Development Inc., Social Services and Corrections. The following partners have funded the project:

- Workforce Development, Inc.,
- Social Services,
- Court Services,
- Family Services Collaborative, and
- Target Stores.

Social Workers, Probation officers, teachers or foster parents refer youth to the program. The program is designed to help youth as they prepare to go out into the real world. Topics address the relevant issues that youth are facing like housing, finding employment, transportation or health and nutrition. Youth become actively engaged in the learning process in ways that help them to not only learn new skills but to develop a relationship with peers and adult mentors while at the same time having lots of fun. Youth willingly attend the weekly meetings; they learn to be open to learning new ideas and to respect the rights of others in the program.

**Outreach to Youth Aging Out Of Care:** Outreach is done through directly contacting Social Services, Court Services and school administration on a regular basis. Brochures and fact sheets are mailed to these agencies prior to the start-up of each new class. WDI youth staff becomes part of the individual youth transition team, which results in a long term mentoring relationship with a caring adult for the youth. Youth view this relationship as separate from the "system" and one that will transcend their time in foster care. This relationship becomes a valued resource to the youth as they seek employment and training to move them into independence and the workforce. Many times youth who have completed the program successfully return to assist staff with new classes of youth.

**Job Seeker Impact:** Reality Bites has significant impact on the youthful job seeker. As mentioned, youth benefit from the relationship with the WDI employment and training staff as they assess their marketable work skills and prepare to offer themselves to employers in the community. The resources available through the WorkForce Centers help to guide them as they prepare for employment. Youth learn of the "Youth Zone" that is located at the WorkForce Center. This career center/library has resources targeted directly to young adults. Participants

are assisted in the use of job banks, resume writing programs, Internet career searches, and typing tutor. In addition, youth have access to numerous career resources and Labor Market Information prepared and made available by the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED).

**Community Impact:** Many foster youth come from families that have not been exposed to the demands of employment or post-secondary training. This new information can benefit other family members as well as themselves. This information helps to shape an initial adult identity that includes necessary resources and the hope for a successful future. As youth participate with partners in the community, they identify and own skills that make them a valued and contributing member of the community. Each youth who transitions successfully into adulthood and the workplace becomes a resource to others in his or her life. It is important for the community to participate in the development of the emerging workforce. The input of business, industry and post-secondary education professionals help to shape the young adult into one who can have success in the ever-changing global workforce.

**Alignment of Resources:** Workforce Development, Inc. (WDI) implements the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and the Minnesota Youth (MYP) programs in the counties served, and provides access to these resources for youth aging out of foster care. Services include a full range of employment and training activities, access to the WorkForce Center and all of its resources and career counseling/case management services to assist in transition to post-secondary education. Training dollars are also made available through WDI resources.

- **Social Services** - provides referrals to the program from Social Workers serving the target population, as well as support staff for specific focus groups and topics covered that are issues for youth in the program. In addition, they provide some funding for focus group activities and mailing of brochures and fact sheets to youth, parents and professionals serving the target population.
- **Court Services** - provides referrals of appropriate youth and offers staff or probation officers as advisors and guest speakers at focus groups. They also contact many families to notify of the availability of the program for appropriate youth.
- **Family Services Collaborative** - provides funding to support the cost of focus groups and activities. These funds have been used for supplies, copying, travel expenses, curriculum materials and resources needed by individual youth.
- **Target Stores** - provides vouchers for individual needs for youth such as clothing needed for job search activities, food and supplies for focus groups and activities.

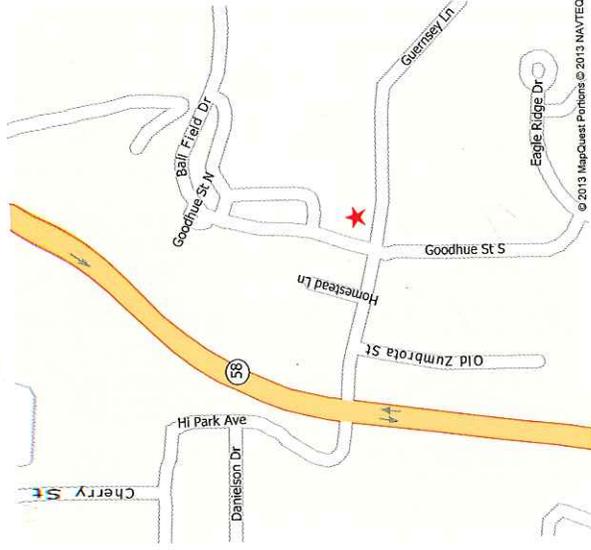
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For additional information, contact:

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Attachment: Reality Bites Brochure

## Directions



From downtown Red Wing (US HWY 61):  
Take MN Highway 58 South approximately 2.6 miles.  
Take a left onto Guernsey Lane. 410 Guernsey Lane will be on the left, right after Goodhue Street.

From the Goodhue Area (MN HWY 58):  
Take MN Highway 58 North to Guernsey Lane. Take a right onto Guernsey Lane. 410 Guernsey Lane will be on the left, right after Goodhue Street.

From the Wabasha/Lake City area:  
Follow US Highway 61 North, turn left onto Flower Valley Road. At the first stoplight, take a right onto MN Highway 58. Take the next right onto Guernsey Lane. 410 Guernsey Lane will be on the left, right after Goodhue Street.

Red Wing Youth Outreach  
is located by Red Wing High School.

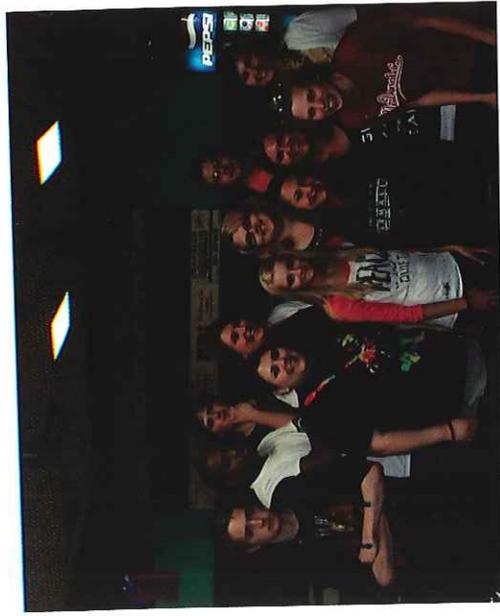
Red Wing Youth Outreach

410 Guernsey Lane

Red Wing, MN 55066

651-388-3371

[www.redwingyouthoutreach.org](http://www.redwingyouthoutreach.org)



## Inspiring Tomorrow's Leaders



**RED WING Youth Outreach**  
Making a difference in the lives of youth.

## Individual Life Coaching

Red Wing Youth Outreach provides an individual support program aimed at providing youth one-on-one life coaching. Our individual life coaching sessions help youth engage in conversations related to increasing motivation levels. The primary goal of individual life coaching is to increase leadership ability, engagement, and personal awareness.

## Big City Mountaineers

Red Wing Youth Outreach has partnered with Big City Mountaineers (BCM) to bring the expedition of a lifetime to at-risk teens. BCM is an agency in Colorado that supports urban teens in successfully navigating a variety of wilderness adventures across the United States.

Teens from the Red Wing area embark on a physically and emotionally demanding wilderness expedition in the Boundary Water Canoe Area. Through the adventure, teens challenge themselves, build self-esteem, learn responsibility, set

and achieve goals and take teamwork to a

## Independent Life Skills

Teaching youth the skills that are necessary to navigate adulthood successfully is a core principal at Red Wing Youth Outreach. We take our time to connect each youth with the appropriate resources to help them gain independence.

Each session covers topics such as:

- \* Nutrition
- \* Transportation
- \* Healthy recreation/wellness
- \* Health insurance
- \* Financial management
- \* Career development
- \* Parenting
- \* Post-secondary education
- \* Housing
- \* Developing healthy pro-social skills.



## Support Groups

Chemical dependency support group is now offered through Red Wing Youth Outreach. This is a peer-to-peer support group for youth experiencing problems associated with alcohol or other drug use.

Red Wing Youth Outreach is partnering with NAMI to offer a youth peer-to-peer support group for any youth experiencing effects of mental illness.

## Volunteering/ Work Experience

Red Wing Youth Outreach has a long history of volunteering in the community with our youth.

We continue to teach our youth about giving back to the community by participating in service projects and volunteering at local organizations and businesses.

Red Wing Youth Outreach has also developed a resale store featuring teen clothing and merchandise. Youth are able

to gain valuable work experience