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HILLSBOROUGH YOUTH TAKE CHARGE IN SHAPING OUR COMMUNITY



February 22, 2007 – Alarmed by a recent publication showing only 20% of youth feel valued by adults, the Children’s Board of Hillsborough County partnered with Community Tampa Bay, community leaders and service providers for a two-day community forum on the rights of children and adolescents and youth participation.

A Youth Summit, welcoming a diverse group of youth leaders from Community Tampa Bay’s Hillsborough Youth Collaborative, TICH (Hispanic American Intercultural Workshop), the Mayor’s Youth Corp, and the Teen Empowerment Council, brought the voice of youth to the

forefront. *“To be effective advocates for the rights of youth and children, first more youth would need to know what these rights are. Sharing that information would be a priority for me,”* said Manuela Munoz who attends Plant High School.

The second day of the forum addressed questions such as: How do we make the best interest of children and youth the guiding principle of our policies and actions? What issues do youth themselves identify as priorities? How do we increase youth participation in adult decision-making processes? How do we foster a sense of community belonging and ownership among our youth?

“A rights-based approach shifts the discourse from children as passive subjects to active right-holders,” advocated Gerrison Lansdown, who works as a consultant for UNICEF and was brought in by the Children’s Board to facilitate the discussions. Together with Somalia, the United States is the last country in the world that has yet to ratify the International Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Community Tampa Bay’s Executive Director, Birgit Van Hout, praised the community forum: *“Too often youth are approached as problems that need to be solved. Often they find themselves at the receiving end of programs that were developed by others for them. Yet, our youth have shown that if we take them seriously they are very capable of providing meaningful input, and assuming responsibilities as well.”*

Community Tampa Bay’s Hillsborough Youth Collaborative (HYC) provides a voice for youth and empowers them to serve children and families through the Children’s Board of Hillsborough County. HYC members engage in service learning activities and leadership training. They mobilize others into action through civic engagement and advocacy. For more information, please contact Josue Hegg, Program Specialist, at Jhegg@communitytampabay.org or 727-568-9333.



Community Tampa Bay promotes dialogue and respect among all cultures, religions and races. We strive for a community free from discrimination, through education, advocacy and conflict mediation.

