



Dedicated to respecting, inspiring, and empowering youth

9425 North Meridian Street, Suite 152, Indianapolis, Indiana 46260-1313  
(317) 875-5815 ● (317) 872-4802/fax ● <http://www.onyourlevel.org>

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## On Your Level Youth Project : Our Mission

**On Your Level Youth Project, Inc.**, (OYLYP) is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit organization dedicating to enhancing the lives of young people and encouraging their active exchange of ideas, attitudes, and feelings. Through media and venues including television, radio, the Internet, live events, and other programming, OYLYP provides interactive experiences designed to promote open and honest communication. Inclusive rather than exclusive, OYLYP embraces and is empowered by diversity and multiculturalism. In conjunction with its partners, OYLYP exposes youth to a variety of experiences, information, and ideas to help them make sense of their world.

## On Your Level Youth Project : About the Founder

**On Your Level Youth Project, Inc.**, was founded by **Blair Karsch**, whose 15 years' experience as a teacher and social activist have proven his ability to build rapport and communicate meaningfully with young people from diverse backgrounds. From 1994-1997, he produced and hosted *On Your Level*, a youth-oriented television program which aired on several cable channels. A published poet and tireless advocate for young people, he is known throughout Central Indiana as a dynamic teacher who communicates directly, fairly, and with compassionate integrity.



Young people face daily challenges to self esteem, progress, personal ethics, and identity. From peer pressure to global events, family dynamics to personal accomplishment, they face obstacles and make choices which shape their lives—and, eventually, the world around them. While adult guidance is essential to their progress, their openness to adult perspectives is enhanced if these insights come from sources which demonstrate respect for youth perspectives and contributions. Blair Karsch's involvement with young people is founded on trust, honesty, and a desire to help young people reach their full potential. His effectiveness in reaching and guiding youth draws from his accessibility, approachableness, and spontaneity. His commitment to individual self worth and the values of communication is matched by his ability to reach genuine common ground with teens. As an organization, OYLYP is an extension of that commitment, both in philosophy and in name.

## On Your Level Youth Project : Founding Beliefs

- We believe young people are intelligent.
- We believe our message and mission have tremendous potential for impact in the lives of youth, parents, and all members of our community.
- We believe in honest interaction and mutual respect.
- We believe in honoring our commitments to one another and ourselves.
- We believe that well-informed parents can help their children make good choices.
- We believe that exposure to diverse people and experiences can promote human understanding.
- We believe youth need guidance to realize their potential.

## On Your Level Youth Project : Action Agenda

**Our pragmatic and philosophical goals center around providing means and opportunities for communication, learning, and growth within media-driven programming designed to reach young people and enable them to reach out to others.**

- Provide a moderated forum through which a culturally diverse group can interact, learn, and share viewpoints.
- Use television, radio, the Internet, and other media to give young people a platform through which to explore, define, and articulate their ideas and feelings, and share lasting, meaningful experiences.
- Use distance-learning tools to make these experiences and this information accessible to all youth, providing them with opportunities to engage in and grow with the resulting dialogue.
- Help dispel myths and misconceptions, enabling young people to see that our similarities outweigh our differences.
- Provide consistent quality, trustworthiness, and fairness in all our activities and endeavors.

## On Your Level Youth Project : Projected One-Year Outcomes

**By the end of our first year, we anticipate a variety of positive, measurable outcomes.**

- A culturally diverse youth audience in the 11-19 age bracket.
- Long-term relationships with partnering organizations to develop ongoing programming and resource sharing.
- Interlocking use of various media (television, radio, the Internet, public events, outreach programs, etc.) to promote interaction, learning, and access to resources.
- Development of a website to assist youth and families in understanding and participating in our programming, act as a portal for our sponsors, and collect feedback and information via surveys and questionnaires.
- Creation of relationships with other groups and organizations (youth, religious, non-profit, neighborhood, school-based) to create outreach programs and live events.
- Statistical measures of our projects' impact through follow-up phone calls, mail, e-mail, surveys, questionnaires, faxes, and face-to-face communication. In turn, these statistics will enable us to refine and expand our delivery methods, activities, and partner relationships.

## On Your Level Youth Project : Long-Term Goals and Objectives

**Our long-term strategic outlook will enhance our programming effectiveness through targeted mandates and activities.**

- Involve and recognize youth in meaningful leadership roles throughout the organization, including Board membership, paid and volunteer positions, planning and production, and follow-through statistical monitoring.
- Quantify our programming impact on participant perspectives and attitudes through pre- and post-show surveys.
- Empower youth to assume community leadership roles, identify resources, and use them effectively.
- Strengthen our distance-learning programs by developing marketable materials including classroom presentations, counseling tools, discussion guides, video presentations, and diversity workshops.
- Reach audiences beyond Central Indiana through our website, additional programming, and partnerships with larger regional, national, and international programs.

## On Your Level Youth Project : Initiatives Toward Self-Sustaining Operations

**Our short- and long-term objectives all support our overarching goal of self-sustaining operations. Within this framework, specific initiatives directly support operational self sufficiency.**

- Development of marketable products for sale to schools, teachers, adults, young people, and the community at large. These will include video and audio products, books, newsletters, discussion guides, and souvenir merchandise.
- Development of broadcast media programming suitable for syndication and commercial sponsorship.
- Development of partnerships with other non-profit organizations whose concerns and missions compliment and enhance our focus on youth and on core issues which concern youth, parents, families, and the community at large. These partnerships will aid our efforts to develop programming and resources which are central to our objectives, benefit from the perspectives and expertise of other groups, and interoperate with entities which will share in both the developmental and the financial aspects of our work.
- Pursuit of private and public grant monies and donations, both of funds and in kind. Sponsor relationships will emerge as a key to this initiative.
- Development of data-gathering services and analytical reports suitable for fee-based provision to other not-for-profit organizations, educational institutions, private research companies, and others for whom OYLYP's direct access to youth can be a path to targeted research insights.

# On Your Level Youth Project : Project Partners and Sponsors

**Our programming and initiatives will be supported by two formalized types of external resources.**

## ● Partners

Our focus is on helping young people communicate, learn, grow, and nurture their self esteem. Numerous community organizations share our focus on this crucial young audience. Partnership with some of these organizations can increase our ability to communicate the diverse messages which are central to our focal efforts, broaden the base of our efforts, and enhance the reach of our programming.

OYLYP Partner agreements will formalize our involvement with those organizations which collaborate in our efforts. These agreements will have a renewable one-year term.

Partners will provide topics for development in the various OYLYP programming initiatives, including television, distributable video and audio programming; live events and seminars; printed material; and website content. Partners will provide background resource information for use in fostering and guiding public discussion of the Partner's topic. Partner identity and contact information will be featured prominently in all programming in which the Partner participates, and Partners will share with OYLYP the vital task of responding to follow-up inquiries requesting information and/or assistance. Partners also will provide volunteer assistance in the production and presentation of programming in which they are involved.

Partners whose involvement with OYLYP extends to financial support of our programming and activities also will be considered Sponsors.

## ● Sponsors

Beyond the Partnership realm, Sponsors will assume a role more nearly analogous to that of a traditional paying advertiser who provides financial support in exchange for being featured in the programming so supported.

Sponsors will be chosen carefully to assure that their core activities are congruent with the missions and objectives of OYLYP, and that featuring their products or services is appropriate within the context of the programming which they support.

## On Your Level Youth Project :Television Programming

*“Television, the nation’s most powerful teacher, should be a conduit for the generational transmission of democratic values and the values of simple decency.”* —Newton H. Minow and Craig L. LaMay, *Abandoned in the Wasteland: Children, Television, and the First Amendment*, New York: Hill and Wang, 1995.

### **OYLYP’s television programming will serve as the centerpiece of its media-driven efforts.**

OYLYP has committed to the production of 26 episodes of a talk-show-format television program, to be called ***On Your Level***. Its format will feature founder Blair Karsch as primary host, with the potential addition of youth co-hosts and subsidiary on-screen participation by Partner representatives.

Across the country, consolidation of media outlets has resulted in the domination of local markets by programming conceived, produced, and distributed by entities outside the markets served. The result is a “franchising” effect, depriving local populations of access to content and viewpoints emanating out of their genuinely local needs and concerns.

In diametric opposition to this trend toward homogenized content, sources, and influences, *On Your Level* will be produced, distributed, and aired within the market it serves, enabling it to address local audiences authentically. Not only will it target a youth audience and involve young people on camera, but the show’s content, effectiveness, and impact will be shaped by input from teens involved at every level of OYLYP’s organizational structure.

Each episode of *On Your Level* will be topic driven, with a central discussion theme sparking dialogue among an on-set panel of youth participants. Additional input into the discussion will come from viewer e-mail messages, telephone calls, mail, and faxes. The format will resemble that of a town meeting or community forum.

Each episode of *On Your Level* will address three learning domains: affective (feelings, attitudes), cognitive (knowledge, reason), and behavioral (skills, action). Thus, each episode has at least three outcomes. An episode may begin with a discussion of group attitudes and perceptions among the on-set discussion panel; proceed to deliver several content messages; then close with suggestions of how the panel and viewers can apply the knowledge and perspective gained from the discussion. This format is grounded in experiential learning theory and is based on the principles of group facilitation.

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# On Your Level Youth Project : Television Programming, cont'd.

Topics for discussion on *On Your Level* will cover a wide range of subject matter selected for its relevance to youth concerns and teen life. A preliminary preselection includes the following:

Abstinence/safe sex	Education	Media literacy	Relationships/intimacy
Art	Environmentalism	Murder	Religion
Capital punishment	Family violence	Music	Sports
Conflict resolution	Gender issues	Peace	Stress
Crime/gangs	Government/politics	Poetry/writing	Suicide
Diet/body image	Grief	Poverty (Urban and rural)	Time management
Divorce/blended families	Illness	Race relations	Tattoos/piercings
Drugs/alcohol	Life planning	Recreation/free time	

## On Your Level Youth Project :Website

**OYLYP's website will provide information, links to resources, and means by which to continue or comment on the dialogue begun in OYLYP's media-driven programming.**

**Discussion forums** will offer opportunities for additional interaction centering around topics discussed on *On Your Level* or at live OYLYP events. Chat areas may be implemented, provided they can be monitored in such a fashion as to screen out inappropriate interactions instigated for purposes which constitute a threat to the safety of youth participants.

An on-line monthly newsletter will include programming schedules; profiles of youth, Partner, and Sponsor participants; youth contributions; discussion of and reflection on issues raised in OYLYP programming; suggestions for interaction at the peer, family, and community level; and other timely considerations of topics of concern.

An **event calendar** will provide details of upcoming OYLYP programming.

**Links to Partners' websites** will enable visitors to obtain additional information about Partner programs, services, and resources, or to communicate with Partners regarding the topics covered in programming they support.

**Links to information and resources** available from local, regional, and national organizations whose concerns and initiatives underscore, support, and reinforce OYLYP's strategic mission and objectives.

**Surveys and questionnaires** will gather feedback about OYLYP programming, provide a venue for conducting community or commissioned research, and prequalify interest in potential programming topics.

**Supplemental and supporting materials** will be available for use by those who work directly with young people, including teachers, counselors, youth group leaders, parents, and other interested parties. These materials may include discussion guides, fact sheets, downloadable newsletters, etc. Long term, e-commerce transaction areas will provide website visitors with the ability to purchase OYLYP products or merchandise on line.

**Sign-up areas** will enable interested parties to volunteer for participation in OYLYP activities and subscribe to e-mail based news updates.

## On Your Level Youth Project :Radio

**In addition to television programming, OYLYP plans to implement radio programming.**

OYLYP is developing an interactive radio talk show targeting youth and adults. Like OYLYP's television programming, this media production also will be called *On Your Level*.

While the radio program will involve, feature, and target teens, its audience target will be broadened to include adults more centrally in the discussion opportunities. As host, Blair Karsch will propose a topic or present a Partner guest and his or her topical concerns. The resulting discussion will involve all ages in an open dialogue.

Each segment of the OYLYP radio show will be designed to coordinate with the issues and concerns addressed in that week's television broadcast. This interconnection will enable OYLYP to provide a multi-faceted exploration of subject matter, attitudes, and viewpoints through programming with the potential to reach across demographic lines and include all levels of society in the exchange of perspectives.

## On Your Level Youth Project :Youth Council

**OYLYP's media programming—and, in fact, the totality of its efforts—will benefit from youth involvement and feedback. Within OYLYP itself, the Youth Council will participate in all aspects of OYLYP's activities.**

Many organizations, programs, and media offerings involve youth at least in a tokenistic fashion. However, truly meaningful opportunities for young people to participate in shaping the programming and events which seek to influence their opinions, actions, and objectives are less than common. OYLYP is committed to offering young people a central role in all aspects of its strategic planning, program offerings, outreach efforts, and philosophical outlook. In keeping with our founding belief in teens' intelligence and resourcefulness, we believe that excluding the very audience we seek to reach from the efforts which guide our approach would constitute a disconnect between our stated objectives and the reality of our work.

# On Your Level Youth Project :The Big Picture

**On Your Level Youth Project, Inc.**, offers programming and initiatives designed to provide community-wide benefit through three strategic imperatives.

- **Targeted programming and initiatives addressing focal needs of the teen demographic**

Teens simultaneously need affirmation of their worth, guidance to aid their growth, and opportunities to hear and be heard. Meaningful communication venues enable them to share perspectives and concerns, obtain information, and gain a clear understanding of the fundamental humanity which unites rather than divides them from other members of a diverse peer group. OYLYP addresses these needs directly through interactive programming guided by honest dialogue, open-minded acceptance of diversity, and respect for young people.

- **Opportunities for involvement by teens, adults, community organizations, and sponsoring companies**

Teens need opportunities to make a productive contribution to their own and their community's progress. Adults want to contribute to efforts which enhance teen quality of life. Organizations seek ways to raise public consciousness about issues which affect teen life and to have a positive impact on teen choices and behavior. Companies want to support programming which offers community benefit. Through OYLYP, all these concerned and affected parties can contribute, lead, and grow.

- **Extension of programming and initiatives to community-based applications**

OYLYP's mission extends beyond its programming lineup. By providing materials ideally suited for use in classrooms, counseling situations, group activities, and family discussion, OYLYP facilitates open dialogue in a virtually limitless array of scenarios and situations. OYLYP's value as a community resource reinforces its commitment to its mission and enhances the opportunities it offers for community involvement.

## On Your Level Youth Project : Praise from the Community

**OYLYP has received enthusiastic support for its objectives, programming, and initiatives from numerous community leaders.**

● **Frances L. Kelly, Chief Deputy Coroner, Marion County**

“...[T]he Coroner’s Office is interested in and committed to the mission of your project. We are available to partner with you regarding topics and ideas for a show or two that would be of interest to the youth of today.”

● **Charlie Wiles, Executive Director, Peace Learning Center**

“The PLC is enthusiastic about partnering with OYLYP to engage youth in meaningful dialogue about how to address the issue of violence. We strongly believe that OYLYP’s creative approach to working with young people and using the medium of television is an effective combination to initiate this critical dialogue.”

● **Kathleen Baldwin, MSW, Vice President of Education and Training, Planned Parenthood of Greater Indiana**

“Planned Parenthood of Greater Indiana is eager to partner with the On Your Level Youth Project to achieve some mutual goals... It is well past time that the media, and television specifically, become part of the solution in terms of encouraging a helpful and healthy dialogue about sexuality. I believe OYLYP has that capacity, and will contribute greatly toward this urgent unmet need.”

● **Ben Strout, Vice President, Nineteenth Star LLC**

“I think this is an extremely worthwhile endeavor and much needed, even more so now given the tragic events that have recently occurred. There is a continuing and compelling need for young people to be able to discuss important issues in a public forum.”