

**Diocese of Buffalo Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministry  
Evaluation and Strategic Planning Report  
By Charlotte McCorquodale, PhD**

## **Introduction**

Over the past several months, the Diocese of Buffalo's Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministry (DYYAM) has engaged in evaluating and assessing services and programs, as part of an overall strategic planning process. The DYYAM staff hopes that through this process they may continue to understand the needs of the youth, young adults, and ministry leaders whom they serve. The DYYAM contracted with Ministry Training Source to facilitate and conduct assessment and evaluation, employing appropriate research rigor throughout the process. This report provides a summary of evaluation and assessment findings with regard to the DYYAM. The report is structured thusly:

- Review of Focus Group Methods and Conclusion
- Explanation of Internet Survey Methods, Sample, and Findings
  - Part One: General Description of Youth and Young Adult Ministry
  - Part Two: Assessment of Four Categories of Services and Programs of the DYYAM
  - Part Three: Identified Needs of Major Stakeholders
- Summary of Major Conclusions and Evaluation and Assessment Findings

The evaluation and assessment elements of this process included a series of various stakeholder focus groups at the Diocesan Youth Convention in February 2010 and an Internet survey completed by parish ministry leadership, including pastors, pastoral associates, catechetical leaders, and youth and young adult ministry leaders in April 2010. In May 2010, a group of advisors that included representatives from stakeholder groups, diocesan agencies, and department staff gathered to strategically review and interpret the evaluation and assessment finding.

## **Focus Group Methods**

### **Purpose**

The needs assessment and evaluation process of the DYYAM began with the focus group interviews. The information gathered in the focus groups aided in developing the Internet survey. All focus groups were held at the 2010 Diocesan Youth Convention.

### **Sample**

Adult youth ministry leaders, young adults who had participated in DYYAM programming as youth, and engaged youth leaders formed the representative stakeholder groups. Parishes in the diocese were placed into one of three groupings of parishes by staff, along a continuum representing most engaged to least engaged in department activities and programs. Focus group invitations were sent to parishes or individuals randomly selected from the three groupings.

## **Focus Group Structure**

Each focus group was presented with a similar set of questions, although they were tailored to address the specific stakeholder group. The focus groups were facilitated by Charlotte McCorquodale and Leigh Sterten of Ministry Training Source.

## **General Conclusions**

Findings from all focus groups revealed consensus around the following issues:

- The Christian Leadership Institute (CLI) and Young Christians at Work (YCAW) are good investments of time and money and are the best programs offered directly for youth.
- There is a need to change elements of the Diocesan Youth Convention (DYC), although the amount of change seems to be in debate. (One area recommended by some was the desire for more diversity in terms of prayer and meeting the needs of different spirituality types.)
- The populations of junior high youth and young adults need more attention from the department.
- Engaging in the activity of listening and strategic planning by the department is timely, needed, and seen as positive.
- Costs and financing of participation in the many programs offered by the DYYAM is a concern for all.

## **Internet Survey Methods**

### **Purpose**

Parish ministry leaders were surveyed via a web-based survey in April 2010 to assist the Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministry in evaluating its current programs and services, as well as its overall mission and purpose, as part of a strategic planning process. The department staff intends to use the findings of this needs assessment and evaluation to plan for the future direction of the department's programs and services.

### **Internet Survey Structure**

The first part of the survey was designed to assist the diocese in understanding the current state of youth and young adult ministry within the diocese. Respondents were asked to describe their current youth and young adult ministry program and efforts within their parish, as well as a description of their experience, education, and responsibilities as parish leaders. The second part of the survey focused upon the programs and services of the department.

Four major categories of the department's programs and services were assessed and evaluated, from two perspectives. First, as an evaluation of the current level of *effectiveness* of programs and services within the category; and second, as an assessment of the overall *strategic value and need* for programs and services within the category. The four assessment categories examined include:

- Category One: Youth Ministry Leader Formation and Training

- Category Two: Consultation Services
- Category Three: Supporting Parish Youth Ministry
- Category Four: Modeling Effective Youth Ministry through Direct Ministry Programming with Youth, Young Adults, and Youth and Young Adult Leaders

The third part of the survey was a general assessment of the needs of youth, young adults, and parish leaders, designed to assist in setting future directions.

### Sample Description

The Internet survey had 139 individual responses, representing pastors, pastoral administrators/associates, catechetical leaders, and youth ministry leaders from 99 parishes, representing all 12 vicariates (see Table 1), for a response rate of 58%. The Northern (15.8%) and Southern (15.1%) Erie vicariates made up one-third of the sample, with Buffalo Northwest adding the next highest at 14.4%. The sample includes:

- 42% (n=58) catechetical leaders (paid or volunteer)
- 24% (n=33) youth ministry leaders (paid or volunteer)
- 7% (n=10) both youth ministry and catechetical leaders
- 25% (n=34) pastors, 3% (n=4) of which are pastoral administrators or associates

Additionally, fifty-five percent (n=77) of youth ministry or catechetical leaders in the sample are paid (part-time or full-time) and 32% of all respondents are male; the remaining 68% are female.

**Table 1. Vicariate Representation in the Sample**

		Frequency	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Buffalo Northwest Central	20	14.4	14.4
	Eastern Niagara/Orleans	5	3.6	18.0
	Eastern Erie	16	11.5	29.5
	Genesee/Wyoming	12	8.6	38.1
	Chautauqua	14	10.1	48.2
	Northern Erie	22	15.8	64.0
	Allegany	8	5.8	69.8
	Buffalo Southeast	7	5.0	74.8
	Western Niagara	8	5.8	80.6
	Tri-County	4	2.9	83.5
	Southern Cattaraugus	2	1.4	84.9
	Southern Erie	21	15.1	100.0
	Total	139	100.0	

## **Internet Survey Part One: Description of Parish Youth Ministry Programs and Description of Youth Ministry or Catechetical Leader Completing the Survey**

### **Participation in DYYAM Youth Programs**

Respondents were asked to indicate all department programs in which their parish participates in most every year. The percentage for all department programs/efforts in the survey is provided after each item. The items are listed from most participation to least.

- Diocesan Youth Convention (59%)
- Bishop McNulty Award Dinner Dance (35%)
- Retreats (32%)
- Christian Leadership Institute (31%)
- Lights for the World (30%)
- Midsummer Charity Ball (25%)
- Young Christians at Work (23%)
- Buffalo Bisons' Games (18%)
- DaBounce (9%)

### **Colleagues Meetings**

Respondents reported the following regarding their regular attendance at the department's Colleagues in Youth Ministry meetings:

- Overall participation (including pastors and pastoral admin/assoc), Yes: 15%
- Paid Youth Ministry Leaders and Catechetical Ministry Leaders, Yes: 21%
- Volunteer YMLs and CMLs, Yes: 21%
- All YMLs, Yes: 39.5%

### **Training Programs**

Regarding their participation in training programs sponsored by the DYYAM, respondents reported:

- Overall (including pastors and pastoral admin/assoc), Yes: 52%
- Paid YMLs and CMLs, Yes: 64%
- Volunteer YMLs and CMLs, Yes: 63%
- All YMLs, Yes: 78%

### **Years Experience**

Respondents reported the following with regard to years of experience working directly in youth ministry:

- Overall years: Mean 16.5 years; Median 15 years
- Pastors & Pastoral Administrators or Associates: Mean 29 years; Median 26.5 years
- Catechetical Leaders: Mean 16 years; Median 15 years
- Full—time Paid CMLs and YMLs: Mean 13 years; Median 12 years
- Youth Ministry Leaders: Mean 11 years; Median 9.5 years
- Full—time: Mean 18 years; Median 15 years

- Part—time: Mean 7 years; Median 3 years
- Volunteer: Mean 11 years; Median 8 years

### **Education**

Forty-two percent of paid Youth Ministry or Catechetical Leaders report possessing a master’s degree. Seventy-four percent of all YMLs have at least obtained a bachelor’s degree.

### **Formal Ministry Formation and/or Ministry Education**

The majority of both paid (35.6%) and volunteer (68.4%) leaders have not completed any formal ministry formation, nor are they currently studying in a formal program. Paid leaders have a higher level of overall education, with 30% having completed a diocesan program and 22% having at least a bachelor’s degree in theology or pastoral ministry. Only five percent of all YMLs have a master’s degree in pastoral ministry or theology.

### **Salary or Stipend for Paid Leaders**

Annual salary or stipend reported by respondent groupings:

- Full-time YML: Mean = \$26,583; Median = \$30,000
- Part-time YML: Mean = \$9,625; Median = \$10,000
- Full-time CML: Mean = \$26,583; Median = \$30,000
- Part-time CML: Mean = \$7,963; Median = \$8,000

### **Internet Survey Part Two: Evaluation and Assessment of Department Programs and Services**

Respondents were asked to assess a list of potential tasks for diocesan offices. First, how effectively is the diocese currently providing for this service or task? Secondly, how strategic or important is this task for the development of parish ministry? The two rating scales utilized are provided here:

**Effectiveness Rating:** How well is the Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministry providing this service or program? How effective is this area of ministry support? Possible responses:

**Not Available** indicates that this program or service is not currently provided by the department.

**Unknown** indicates that my parish or does not participate in the program or utilize the service.

**Not Effective** indicates that this program or service does not effectively support parish or youth ministry.

**Somewhat Effective** indicates that this program or service is not as effective as it could be and needs to be changed or updated in order to better support parish youth ministry.

**Effective** indicates that the program or service is provided in an effective manner that supports parish youth ministry.

**Very Effective** indicates a program or service is exceeds expectation and provides outstanding support for parish youth ministry.

**Strategic Value Rating:** In this diocese, how important is this program or service to the development and support of parish youth ministry? Possible responses:

**Not Sure** indicates that you do not know if this program or service would contribute to the development or support of parish youth ministry

**Not Necessary** indicates that this program or service is counter-productive in developing or supporting parish youth ministry.

**Minimally Important** means that this task has a neutral or minimal impact on developing and supporting parish youth ministry.

**Important** indicates that this program or service makes a substantial impact in the development or support of parish youth ministry.

**Essential** indicates that this program or service is central to the mission of developing and supporting parish youth ministry.

Please note, all responses that included “not available,” “unknown,” or “not sure” were treated as missing variables, so that the rating and assessment is composed only of respondents who felt competent or able to provide the requested assessment. All percentages in the following Assessment Categories reflect responses from Youth Ministry and Catechetical Leaders only, as they utilize the programs and services with the most frequency. Ratings for each item, along with an assessment of both the strategic value and effectiveness, are reported in the tables that follow. An interpretive scale was designed to assist in understanding the overall rating of an item by examining the means for each scale. The scale was designed based upon evaluating the overall standard deviation and variances of the items and means.

**Assessment Category One: Youth Ministry Leader Formation and Training**

This category includes training and formation for paid and volunteer parish youth ministry leaders coordinating youth ministry efforts, volunteer adult youth ministry team members, and youth leaders. (See Table 2 for the ratings.) The items in this category that received the highest percentage of “very effective” responses included: Youth Ministers’ Retreat (36%), Colleagues in Ministry (29%), Formation and Training in YM Theories/Models (28%), and Leadership Formation and Training (27%). All items in Category One were rated overall as “effective.” Training and formation in all areas (theological, youth ministry, and leadership) were rated as essential, with regard to strategic value. The largest gap in this category between strategic value and effectiveness is theological formation; leadership and youth ministry also have larger gaps than the rest of the items.

**Table 2. Assessment Category One**

Items Assessed	Strategic Value Rating	Effectiveness Rating
Providing the Retreat Ministry Training program that trains youth and adults to design effective retreat models and facilitate peer ministry retreats at the parish.	3.0 Important	2.8 Effective

Providing the Youth Ministers' Retreat program, a one-day (optional overnight) opportunity for adult youth ministry leaders to renew their relationship with God; held biennially.	2.9 Important	2.9 Effective
Providing other spiritual formation and training for Youth Ministry Leaders besides the youth ministry leader retreats, such as opportunities for prayer and reflection within meetings and programs, spiritual direction opportunities, and personal prayer resources.	3.1 Important	2.8 Effective
Providing theological formation for Youth Ministry Leaders.	3.2 Essential	2.6 Effective
Providing formation and training for Youth Ministry Leaders in the theories and models of ministry with adolescents and youth ministry skills.	3.2 Essential	2.8 Effective
Providing leadership formation and training for Youth Ministry Leaders, including communication skills, organizational skills, working with volunteers, and group development and facilitation.	3.3 Essential	2.8 Effective
Providing the Colleagues in Youth Ministry gatherings for networking, faith-sharing, and peer support for adults in youth ministry.	3.1 Important	2.8 Effective
Providing information and support for youth ministry leaders attending the National Conference on Catholic Youth Ministry (NCCYM.)	2.7 Important	2.7 Effective

**Assessment Category Two: Consultation Services**

This assessment includes on-site consultation for parishes. (See Table 3 for the ratings.) There were no items rated either “essential” or “very effective” in this category but all items rated as important. Items receiving the most “not effective” responses are: Hiring YML consultation (38.5%), providing guidance and support or resources for parish YMLs dealing with special situations (36%), consultation for adolescent catechesis (19%), and assisting parishes with implementing diocesan policies (17%). The largest gap between the strategic value and effectiveness rating is in providing consultation for hiring, which was rated as “important” and “somewhat effective.” However, it is important to note that one-third of the sample rated this item “minimally important” (16%) or “not necessary” (16%).

**Table 3. Assessment Category Two**

Items Assessed	Strategic Value Rating	Effectiveness Rating
Providing department staff to meet with your parish to help you evaluate current efforts, conduct needs assessments, set goals, recruit leaders, and design effective strategies for ministry with adolescents or young adults.	2.9 Important	2.6 Effective
Providing consultation for pastors and parish leaders in selecting or hiring a parish youth ministry leader.	2.7 Important	2.1 Somewhat Effective
Providing guidance and support or resources for parish youth ministry leaders dealing with special situations, such as the death of a young person, change of pastoral leadership, national or world-wide tragedies, etc.	3.0 Important	1.9 Somewhat Effective
Providing consultation for parishes in developing adolescent catechesis and confirmation.	2.9 Important	2.3 Effective
Assisting parishes in implementing diocesan policies for youth ministry programs, insurance, travel and other matters.	2.9 Important	2.5 Effective

**Assessment Category Three: Supporting Parish Youth Ministry**

This category includes various programs, resources, and services that help support youth ministry and youth ministry leaders. (See Table 4 for the ratings.) The items in this category that received the highest percentage of “very effective” responses include: staff assistance with YM questions (33%), DYYAM website (25%), and identification of YM resources (24%). On the other end of the scale, the items receiving the highest percentages of “not effective” ratings include: collaboration with other diocesan offices (24%), providing support for cluster or multiple parish youth ministry (19%), communicating a vision of YM to parish leaders (17%), and networking with other religious leaders/agencies (16%). The areas with the greatest gap between strategic value and effectiveness are: providing education on the vision and practice of YM, which had essential and effective ratings, as well as collaborating with other diocesan offices that interact with youth ministry, which was rated “important” and “somewhat effective.” Communicating a vision for youth ministry to pastors and parish staff members had a large gap, being rated as “important,” but only “somewhat effective.” This item also had 28% responding that it was either “minimally important” (25%) or “not necessary” (3%). Promoting ministry with youth from the cultures and ethnicities that comprise the local church also had a higher percentage (37%) of “minimally important” (32%) or “not necessary” (5%) responses.

**Table 4. Assessment Category Three**

Items Assessed	Strategic Value Rating	Effectiveness Rating
Providing education on the vision and practice of youth ministry to youth ministry leaders and volunteers.	3.2 Essential	2.6 Effective

Providing a department website that has complete information about all department programs as well as resources for youth and young adult ministry leaders.	2.9 Important	2.7 Effective
Providing staff members who are readily available to answer youth and young adult ministry questions and provide resources (phone, email, and/or personal visit).	2.9 Important	2.9 Effective
Providing support in the development of cluster programming or collaborative projects that involve multiple parishes.	2.6 Important	2.4 Effective
Identifying and recommending quality, strategic, and timely resources for youth ministry leaders to use (print, Internet, technology, media, speakers, retreat leaders, etc.).	2.9 Important	2.8 Effective
Collaborating with other diocesan offices that interact with youth ministry.	3.0 Important	2.4 Somewhat Effective
Networking with other religious leaders and youth-serving agencies.	2.8 Important	2.4 Effective
Communicating a vision for youth ministry to pastors and parish staff members.	3.0 Important	2.3 Effective
Promoting ministry with youth from the cultures and ethnicities that comprise the local church.	2.8 Important	2.5 Effective

**Category Four: Modeling Effective Youth Ministry through Direct Ministry Programming with Youth, Young Adults, and Youth and Young Adult Leaders**

This includes a variety of direct programming and services to youth and young adults. (See Table 5 for the ratings.) Three programs have “very effective responses” above 50%: CLI (60.5%), YCAW (57.5%), and Diocesan Youth Convention (53%). The Diocesan Youth Convention (50.5%) and CLI (45%) are rated most essential. In the area of Young Adult Ministry the highest percentage of essential responses were the College Connection (33%) and the Young Adult Committee (27%). It is clear that these programs are the most effective and needed based upon having essential and very effective ratings. Buffalo Bisons’ games and DaBounce had the highest percentage of “not effective responses” at 18% and 17%, respectively, and “minimally effective” at 47% and 45%, respectively. This means that over 60% have a negative view of the effectiveness of these programs. Both of these programs were rated “somewhat effective” overall, with DaBounce considered “important,” so this is an area for improvement. However, the Buffalo Bisons’ games had the only “minimally important” rating, indicating this may not be a necessary program. Other programs that should be examined in terms of need, with at least one-third of responses being “minimally important” or “not necessary” are:

- Diocesan One Day Retreats (34%), minimally important (24%), not necessary (10%)
- DaBounce (40%), minimally important (25%), not necessary (15%)
- Bishop McNulty Award Dinner (44%), minimally important (25%), not necessary (18%)
- Midsummer Charity Ball (55%), minimally important (34%), not necessary (21%)
- Buffalo Bisons’ Games (63%), minimally important (43%), not necessary (20%)

**Table 5. Assessment Category Four**

Items Assessed	Strategic Value Rating	Effectiveness Rating
<b>Diocesan Youth Convention:</b> Weekend conference in February for senior high youth and adult chaperones. Liturgy, reconciliation, keynote speakers, breakouts, award presentations, and formal dance.	3.4 Essential	3.3 Very Effective
<b>Lights for the World:</b> One-day event in September for senior high youth and chaperones. Liturgy, prayer, keynote speaker, and breakout sessions.	2.9 Important	2.8 Effective
<b>National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC):</b> Weekend conference for senior high youth, held every two years; participants from Western New York travel to join thousands of youth from around the country.	2.8 Important	3.0 Effective
<b>DaBounce:</b> An evening urban Catholic youth rally held each spring. Speakers, local talent showcase, prayer, and a dance.	2.6 Important	2.2 Somewhat Effective
<b>Christian Leadership Institute:</b> Week-long youth leadership training program for senior high youth held at the end of June.	3.3 Essential	3.3 Very Effective
<b>Young Christians at Work:</b> Five-day program in which senior high youth serve in the community, learn about social justice, and pray the liturgies of Holy Week.	3.2 Essential	3.3 Very Effective
<b>Bishop McNulty Award Dinner Dance:</b> Dinner, award presentations and a dance; held in the fall.	2.7 Important	2.7 Effective
<b>Diocesan Retreats:</b> One-day retreats in fall and spring for junior and senior high youth.	2.6 Important	2.7 Effective
<b>Midsummer Charity Ball:</b> Semi-formal dance for senior high youth held in August; proceeds of which support the Youth Convention Scholarship Fund.	2.2 Minimally Important	2.5 Effective
<b>Buffalo Bisons Games:</b> Parish groups purchase discount tickets from the diocesan office and enjoy the game.	2.2 Minimally Important	2.2 Somewhat Effective
<b>Diocesan Youth Board:</b> Youth board members assist in planning youth ministry activities for the diocese. Each parish may nominate one young person for the board.	3.0 Important	3.0 Effective
<b>Diocesan Youth Retreat Team (DYRT):</b> Youth who want to share their faith can apply for this team that facilitates peer retreats throughout the year.	2.9 Important	3.0 Effective

<b>Catholic Leadership Training:</b> One-day leadership training for young adults ages 18-22 from parishes and college campus ministry centers.	3.0 Important	3.3 Very Effective
<b>Young Adult Ministry Committee:</b> Committee members assist in developing and implementing the diocesan pastoral plan for young adult ministry in the diocese.	2.9 Important	2.8 Effective
<b>Buffalo Young Adult Catholics Facebook Group:</b> Social networking opportunity for young adult Catholics.	2.6 Important	3.0 Effective
<b>College Connection Initiative:</b> comprehensive offering of materials and ways to keep college students connected to their faith during their college years, including collecting contact information of college freshmen and sharing it with college campus ministry sites.	3.0 Important	2.9 Effective

### Open-Ended Survey Questions

Each category had a place to provide additional comments. Two final questions were asked in order to assess the most and least effective programs or services:

*1. What are the two most effective programs or services the diocese currently provides to support the development of parish youth ministry?* One person said, “The Diocesan Youth Convention and Young Christians at Work seem to be the most popular programs with the youth in our parish.” Another said, “CLI has an excellent curriculum with holistic training, it inspires and equips youth for service in their parishes.” The responses repeated the most often included:

- CLI
- Staff trainings
- Staff availability
- Convention
- YCAW

*2. What are the least effective programs or services that need to be re-envisioned or eliminated?* It was clearly difficult for some respondents to eliminate anything. One person summed it up by saying, “I can’t think of anything that should be eliminated just better advertisement by Parishes would be great!” However, another person gave this criterion for elimination, “Lack of participation in any program dictates the need to examine or eliminate it.” The responses repeated most often included:

- Bisons’ Games
- McNulty Dinner
- DaBounce
- Midsummer Charity Ball
- Lights for the World
- Retreats/DYRT

A listing of all open-ended responses was provided to the department staff in a separate report.

### **Part Three: General Needs Assessment Department Stakeholder Prioritization**

Respondents were asked to rank order the department's stakeholder groups from 1 (those most important to its mission) to 8 (those least important to its mission). The results are presented in prioritized order:

1. Youth Ministry Leaders and Catechetical Leaders (most important)
2. Leaders in Young Adult Ministry (tied for second)
3. Pastors (tied for second)
4. Senior High Youth
5. Volunteers and catechists who assist with youth ministry in the parish
6. Junior High Youth
7. Young Adults
8. Parents of youth (least important)

### **Most Important Needs of Youth.**

Given an extensive list of potential needs, respondents were asked to select **the five** most important **needs of youth** (junior and senior high) that should be considered in developing a strategic plan and departmental mission or purpose. The most important needs included:

- 45%—To participate in life and ministry of the church
- 42%—To develop Christian values and Catholic identity
- 39%—To engage in service and social justice
- 37%—To foster a relationship with Jesus
- 32%—To develop leadership skills, life skills and social competencies
- 25%—To experience the larger church

Needs identified by the youth focus groups include:

- Broaden programs to cater to younger (junior high) and older (young adult) audiences.
- Something to follow up to CLI.
- Get the word out better about what is going on and about youth ministry in general.
- Help churches and priests be more interactive with youth and get youth more involved in Mass; one youth said, "Not just priests put effort in to understand us, but us as youth we need to show our interest in Mass. We have a youth Mass once a month, we do readings, music, and it shows our priests that we want to be in the Mass as much as the generation before us."

### **Most Important Needs of Parish Youth Ministry and Youth Ministry Leaders**

Respondents were asked to select **the five** most important needs of **parish youth ministry and youth ministry leaders** that should be considered in developing a strategic plan and departmental mission or purpose. The most important needs included:

- 36%—To develop ministry skills
- 30%—To develop leadership skills (e.g., planning, working with and recruiting volunteers)
- 29.5%—To enhance the connections among youth, families, and parish
- 29%—To have access to youth ministry resources

- 29%—To network with other youth ministry leaders
- 26%—To be trained on the vision of youth ministry

The identified needs from the Youth Ministry Leader Focus Groups included:

- Advocacy to the bishop so that he is clearer about his vision and goals for ministry with youth, including confirmation.
- More focus on the needs of urban youth (DaBounce needs an overhaul) and there needs to be more than one program.
- More focus on the needs of junior high youth.
- Additional networking and support of youth ministry leaders, gathered such as YML retreat, and using of technology to connect youth ministry leaders and youth.

### **Most Important Needs of Young Adults**

Respondents were asked to select **the five** most important **needs of young adults** (ages 18-35) that should be considered in developing a diocesan young adult ministry strategic plan and departmental mission or purpose. The most important needs included:

- 52%—To feel a bigger part of the parish community
- 46%—To become more spiritual or grow in faith
- 39%—To keep connected with faith at college
- 32%—To do service and reflect on issues of social justice
- 29%—To acquire healthy strategies for dealing with life difficulties

The identified needs from the Young Adult Focus Group included:

- General concern about what is next for them as young adults (strong consensus).
- More focus on this age group from the department, including direct programming, maybe even at DYC, such as a young adult track.
- Regarding their role at DYC, they do not feel like they have a place because they are not youth but not treated as adults fully either. They seem like a rather empowered group of leaders with nothing concrete to do with their experience and skills. They suggested that they run workshops at DYC.
- Enable youth for life at college, maybe a workshop or two at conference run by college youth for high school seniors.

### **Major Conclusions and Findings**

The Department of Youth and Young Adult Ministry is like many diocesan offices throughout the country, given a broad mission with finite resources and staff to accomplish the mission. Good stewardship requires that periodically our leaders evaluate their current efforts and develop strategic plans that enable them to more effectively achieve their mission. In this vein, the DYYAM engaged faithfully in evaluating itself and the needs of its stakeholders, utilizing a process guided by the principles of research to ensure objectivity and reduce bias. Based upon the high response rate of 58%, meaning at least one leader from more than half of all diocesan parishes completed this evaluation and assessment, one can conclude that these findings may

be generalized to the broader population of ministry leaders serving or overseeing youth and young adult ministry in the diocese. What follows are conclusions drawn from the data.

### **Parish Youth Ministry Leadership**

Generally, parish youth ministry leaders are experienced, with an average of 11 years. The most experienced group of YMLs is paid full-time. However, continued ministry formation is needed, as the majority of both paid (35.6%) and volunteer (68.4%) leaders have not completed any formal ministry formation, and are not currently in any formal program. It is important to note that the need for additional training was identified in various places throughout this research.

### **Participation in DYYAM Programs**

Training programs are the highest level of contact with all youth ministry leaders, reaching 52% of all those responding to the survey and 78% of leaders involved in youth ministry. The Diocesan Youth Convention represents the highest level of contact with youth, with 59% of the respondents indicating parish participation. Other major youth programs reach between a quarter to one-third of all parishes, with the exception of two programs, which had the lowest percentage of participation from parishes: the Buffalo Bisons' Games (18%) and DaBounce (9%).

### **Gap Analysis between Strategic Value and Effectiveness of DYYAM Services and Programs**

Within Category One, all training and formation items were considered essential and all were rated as effective; this indicates a possible need for improvement in this area, if one goes from the premise that what is essential should also be very effective. The largest gap between the strategic value and effectiveness rating in Category Two came in the area of providing consultation for hiring, which was rated as important and somewhat effective. However, it is important to note that one-third of the sample rated it "minimally important" (16%) or "not necessary" (16%). It is not clear from this data if there is a need for the office to do more to assist parishes and pastors in hiring. Within Category Three, it seems the areas of communicating a vision of youth ministry with parishes and educating parish youth ministry leaders need improvement. Category Four indicates that the programs with the largest gaps are the Buffalo Bisons' Games and DaBounce. However, it is important to note that Buffalo Bisons' Games were rated "minimally important."

### **Direct vs. Indirect Services**

Based upon the gaps identified, it seems that the DYYAM has a common dilemma that many diocesan departments have, which is the struggle between providing direct services to constituents (in this case youth and young adults) and indirect services to parish leaders serving these constituents. The data indicate the need for more indirect services, including training and consultation, and less direct services, including programs for youth. The evidence for this shift can be seen in the priority listings of the stakeholders that the DYYAM serves, with parish leaders being in the top three positions.

### **Elimination of Programs**

If the department is to increase services and programs in one area it must make the difficult choice of what to eliminate or cut back. The most telling data in this research about what to eliminate might very well be in the programs in Category Four that were rated “minimally important” or “not necessary;” they included:

- Diocesan One Day Retreats (34%), minimally important (24%), not necessary (10%)
- DaBounce (40%), minimally important (25%), not necessary (15%)
- Bishop McNulty Award Dinner (44%), minimally important (25%), not necessary (18%)
- Midsummer Charity Ball (55%), minimally important (34%), not necessary (21%)
- Buffalo Bisons’ Games (63%), minimally important (43%), not necessary (20%)

### **Collaboration Between Youth/Young Adult Ministry and Catechesis**

Collaboration with other offices was an area rated “somewhat effective,” indicating that respondents are not aware of the extent of current collaboration, especially with Catechesis. The overlap between the roles of catechetical leaders and youth ministry leaders is evident in the need to include both in the sample in order to get the best picture of the DYYAM; seven percent describe themselves as both and only 13% consider themselves solely youth ministry leaders. It seems that continued collaboration and networking between these two groups or roles and the diocesan department serving them would benefit ministry to youth and young adults in the diocese.

### **Needs of Stakeholders**

The prioritized needs of youth indicate the need for youth to participate and experience the life and mission of the church at the local and diocesan levels. The top three youth programs seem to be well-fitted to meet the identified needs of youth. The focus groups seem to point to the need for expanding ministry to junior high youth, but this was not confirmed by any other source of data, with Junior High Youth being number 6 of 8 on the prioritized stakeholder listing. The high priority for youth ministry leaders suggests attention be given to development of ministry skills and networking. The need for additional training has been well documented by this research. The similarly high priority for young adults indicates a need for better connection to the parish community and programs that encourage spiritual development, pastoral care, and social justice experiences. Again, the indicated need to expand ministry in this area from the focus groups is not supported by rank ordering of stakeholders of the DYYAM, which put young adults at 7 of 8. Due to the recent development of programs and services in this area, further evaluation and research directly with young adults is needed to get a better idea of how the DYYAM should respond in its strategic planning in this area.

### **Overall Effectiveness Rating**

The DYYAM received “effective” or “very effective” ratings in all items evaluated, except for five items, which received a “somewhat effective” rating; nothing was rated “not effective.” Clearly, the three major youth programs, DYC, CLI, and YCAW are utilized by the majority of parishes and considered to be highly effective.