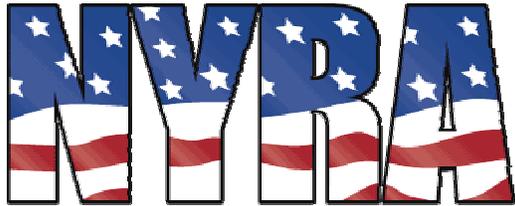




National Youth Rights Association

2004-2005 Annual Report

2005 NYRA General Meeting
12:00 PM Eastern August 6, 2005
Fiorello H LaGuardia High School for
the Performing Arts
100 Amsterdam Avenue
New York City, NY



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2004-2005 Annual Report

Submitted by Alex Koroknay-Palicz

August 1, 2005

2004-2005 has been, without question, the most remarkable, successful year I have yet experienced. The stagnant crumbling organization I wrote about last year is gone. Things have been turned around in a big way. The last year saw great leaps forward with internal cohesiveness and activity and more campaigns, exposure and real world action than I have ever seen.

After several years of gloomy reports it's about time we have some real optimism. This year, at last, has provided us with a definite reason to be optimistic. Three years ago I identified four main problems that plague the organization: lack of member activity, lack of internal education, lack of internal organization, and lack of funding. I knew these were serious problems back in 2002, and they remained problems in 2003, and 2004. This year, at last, we have begun to address them.

While it may be impossible to track all the factors that led to this successful year, I think one factor is clear, our new web forums. While seemingly a small part of our overall organization and website, much of the activity over the last year can be traced back in some way to our active forum community. The forums served as a gateway to increasing member activity, cohesiveness, and education.

With the forums as a jumping off point, the membership worked harder than ever before on setting up chapters (and keeping them active), fundraising, publicity, and making real world progress for the cause of youth rights. With members finally taking the organization seriously, and keeping it in their mind every day, they stepped up and raised the most money the organization has ever seen in single a year. Perhaps more than it's raised in its entire existence till now.

Better harnessing new technology such as our forums and the wiki software allowed NYRA to reshape how we do business and decentralize ourselves into a more fluid, responsive, and active grassroots organization. Most of the new ideas and progress of this year came from the bottom up, not top down.

2004-2005 marks the year NYRA stepped boldly into its proper historical role as an organization where young people from around the country come together and organize themselves into powerful, informed activists ready to challenge ageism and fight for the civil rights and civil liberties they've so long been denied.

Year in Review

Technology — — — — — — — — — — .

This has been a fantastic year of progress on the tech front. Indeed in many ways our tech progress has made the rest of our success possible. With that being said we still have quite a lot of projects that were identified as pressing needs last year and remain as pressing needs this year. With no dedicated web staff, we are still very limited in the amount of projects and upgrades we can complete. The impressive breakthroughs made this year were all done by our limited, and overstretched group of semi-tech savvy staff. Everyone should be commended for the time they put in and the great accomplishments we saw that led to many more accomplishments this year.

Forums

Undoubtedly the largest breakthrough this year involves our upgrade of the NYRA forums to the newest version of vBulletin. We have struggled with our ubb version 3.x that wasn't even top of the line when we first started using them 5 years ago. After 5 years, they were hopelessly outdated, and worse yet, not on the NYRA server, so we had no real backend control over them. With an increasingly active forum community, it was decided we should do what was needed to get a top of the line forum software.

On August 24, 2004 NYRA purchased vBulletin for \$160. Widely used, quite modable, with extensive support and features, vBulletin is the best we found after an extensive search. After promoting the new forums the change was dramatic.



In the year before the upgrade the forums averaged 446 posts a month (in the 4 years before that the forums averaged 23 posts a month), in the year after the upgrade they averaged 6562 posts a month. This

year's *average monthly* post count is higher than the *total number* of posts in the *5 years prior*. That difference is incredibly significant and shows an explosive growth in member activity. In the first half of this year 30 registered users visited the forums every single day. In the second half, after an arcade was installed on the forum, between 50 and 60 NYRA members visited the forum *every single day*, this figure doesn't include countless guests.

For the first time, NYRA members had a common place to gather and talk. To feel personal attachment to the organization and to each other. For once NYRA was not a far away organization that sent out an e-mail once or twice a month, but a living, breathing entity that our members involved themselves with every single day. Getting activists to feel a part of the organization is a critical step every group needs to make. Having this forum with active, daily participation

made that step for NYRA and produced all the good things of this year. Member participation had always been a problem for NYRA, the forums solved this.

Another problem NYRA had faced is one of internal education. Members would join and not fully understand what youth rights was or what we fought for. As educating the public about youth rights is one of our prime duties as an organization, it had been a constant source of discouragement to know that our own members, and indeed even our own board members didn't properly understand or accept youth rights. By providing daily discussion about youth rights, the forums have surpassed all expectations in educating the membership. For once there is common agreement on "youth rights", refined ability to articulate our positions, and a broader and deeper understanding of our issues and new developments in the field. With this as a base camp, NYRA members are more eager and able to go forth and discuss youth rights with others.

Due to a daily investment in the organization, and a better understanding of the issues (two things long identified as dire needs for the organization), the membership not only grew, but became far more inclined to contribute both time and money to the organization. Thus both chapters and fundraising (two other problems long identified as dire needs for the organization) received more attention and experienced more success than in any year past.

With a common area to meet and talk, the membership no longer needed to pass every campaign and idea through an organizational bureaucracy, and no longer depended on that old structure to get things done. While still feeling loyalty to the organization, the membership was far more likely to take initiative themselves, start their own campaigns, recruit others, and accomplish things on their own. Many projects and campaigns this year began with members on the forums, and were then adopted and supported by NYRA leadership. This increasing decentralization and bottom-up organizing has also contributed to our outstanding success over this last year, much of it due to the web forums.

It cannot be understated how critical NYRA's forums are to the organization and our success over the last year.

Youth Rights Network

The new decentralized structure sparked by the forums led to new and further decentralized tech projects such as the Youth Rights Network (YRN). The YRN (youthrights.net) makes use of the community editing wiki technology popularized by Wikipedia.org, and utilizes this powerful technology for purely youth rights purposes. Any person, no matter who they are, can edit the YRN page. They can create new pages, edit old pages, and reorganize the page instantly without need for approval or editorial oversight.

The Youth Rights Network has several purposes, none fully realized yet. First is a youth rights law library. The NYRA website's most popular page is our listing of drinking age laws around the country. Despite the fact that everyone knows the drinking age in every state is 21, there are many finer points of the law that individuals need to know for research or for personal (practical) knowledge of the law. With the success of this page, it has long been an idea to expand the project to other areas of law that youth need to know such as voting age, curfew laws, driving age, boating age, emancipation laws, and every other state and federal law that affects the rights of youth. Being a huge and daunting task has meant that NYRA staff have had little time to do the project justice, but putting it on a site where anyone and everyone can contribute seemed like the most reasonable way to see progress with it.

Secondly, the Youth Rights Network is meant to be a living history of the Youth Rights Movement. All the events, activists, and organizations that make up the movement both now and in the past should be recorded and not lost to time. The YRN is an encyclopedia of youth rights history. It is also a resource for youth rights information and issue research. Finally it is meant to house practical guides for activists seeking to change our nation's anti-youth laws and for youth who can't wait till the laws change and want to best make use of the limited freedom currently allotted to them.



Instead of all this ambitious content being forced through a small bottleneck of NYRA leadership and web staff, the wiki technology allows any member, or even non-member to contribute to the project. This has helped a lot in getting the project off the ground, however contributions to the page have declined since it started, and much of its potential hasn't yet been reached. It is clear that the project hasn't yet received the critical mass to continue independently. However every bit helps, and is more than this project would have had were it put in a more static format.

NYRA leadership has put some concerted effort into development of the page which, while spotty, has helped. A legal intern was hired in the spring who nearly finished the YRN section on state boating age laws. More such interns are needed. In addition the organization should better promote the YRN both to NYRA members and to other organizations and individuals in the wider youth rights movement who would have an interest in developing the page.

The page was created in November of 2004, today there are **1157** total pages in the database. This includes "talk" pages, pages about NYRA Wiki, minimal "stub" pages, redirects, and others that probably don't qualify as content pages. Excluding those, there are **187** pages that are probably legitimate content pages.

There have been a total of **30701** page views, and **1748** page edits since the wiki was setup. That comes to **1.51** average edits per page, and **17.56** views per edit. YRN has 42 registered users, but the page can be edited without registration.

Sandbox

After using wiki technology for side projects of the Youth Rights Network, and the Student Bill of Rights (see Action section), the Vermont Campaign (also see Action section) prompted NYRA to install a wiki just for use by NYRA staff and core volunteers. As a private, action-oriented resource, the sandbox allowed direct coordination on specific campaigns, and a method for staff to keep track of their own duties, interact with others, and have a central place to store and coordinate staff activity. E-mails can be lost, phone calls can be missed, IMs can be forgotten. The sandbox provides a central place for timesheets, to do lists, contact info, chapter formation checklists, media contacts and other essential information to go. Without a real world office and real world staff, the sandbox has been the best virtual approximation the organization can muster, and it has been used quite successfully so far.

Mailing Lists

All NYRA mailing lists since 2001 have been handled through Yahoo groups. While a great service, and free, our expansion has really required us to upgrade for some time now. Several list programs and services, some free and some pay were researched this year. Much time was spent assessing the features of various lists. In October 2004, NYRA attempted to use PHPlist for our national announce list. After 2 or 3 months it became apparent that many members were not receiving our e-mails who should have, and we had no way to track who had and had not received them. We returned to Yahoo groups for a time, and then Mailman was installed and run. After working out the bugs, the new Mailman list fully replaced our yahoo groups announce list in early June. The new list has been integrated with the join form and database. The list is easy to use and in the year ahead we will move all our discussion lists to Mailman and begin creating lists for each chapter to use.

Server Switch

For the third year in a row, NYRA switched servers. This time moving from Milescape to UN Site Solutions. While being a reasonable price and having all of the features we needed, Milescape provided extremely poor support, and any problem we experienced was amplified by the incompetent and unresponsive support staff. Plus frequent downtime caused the organization to decide to again search for a new server. After more extensive research than what led us to mistakenly pick the last two servers, NYRA chose UN Site Solutions. Despite costing a bit more and providing less space and transfer speed, the support was easily reachable, responsive, and very helpful. Having this allowed us to learn

month contract, this is a huge step forward for the organization and an indication of the organizations newly serious commitment to fundraising.

Despite this success, NYRA still is far behind in the method of fundraising that will have most bearing on its future and current success and sustainability – grants. Yet another year passes with no grants received from foundations. While there is no excuse for allowing yet another year to slip by on this most important of fundraising goals, there is hope. More energy is being devoted now to grant writing, and within the month another grant application is expected to be completed and sent.

A budget was never written for this year, but had we set any realistic expectations months ago we would have surely blown past them. From August 2004 through July 2005 NYRA has raised a total of \$6430.50. To put this in perspective, for the year prior, August 2003 to July 2004, NYRA raised a total of \$1,860.51. Income has more than tripled. The difference between these two figures is considerable for a small organization such as ours. This year we have had \$5414.64 in expenses. Half of our expenses were two paychecks to the Executive Director and our purchase of 1,000 youth rights wristbands. More details are attached in the cash flow report.

Membership has increased from 64 this time last year to 147 today. Much of this increase is due to efforts by local chapters and active members during the NYRAthon. One third of our paid membership (49 people) are members of just three chapters – Berkeley, Vermont, and Olympia. The Board of Directors were also active in recruiting and sponsoring paid members this year, especially Robert Reynolds, Scott Davidson, Keith Mandell & Alex Koroknay-Palicz.

NYRAthon 2005

In February, the Board approved a plan for a fundraising contest that was proposed by Robert Reynolds and Keith Mandell. The contest, later named “NYRAthon 2005” would have two parallel and complementary competitions. First is an individual competition which would award 1st, 2nd, and 3rd prizes to the individuals who donated or raised the most money during the period of the contest. Prizes would be donated or purchased, and would be the equivalent of \$100, \$50, and \$25 respectively. The second part is a chapter competition where the chapter that raised the most money for the organization would be awarded \$100 worth of NYRA merchandise. The contest began immediately and ran until June 1.

The contest was a tremendous success. The membership was energized and made a great effort to raise money for the organization. Much of this year’s money raised was done as part of the NYRAthon. \$3,000 was raised in April and May alone. In total the contest raised \$3,732.90 for NYRA - almost 60% of the total money raised for the year.

in California, the events were still some of the best protests organized in NYRA's disappointing protest history.

Berkeley

The start of last year saw the tail end of the bill in the California legislature to lower the voting age to 14 (and later to 16) statewide. Ultimately that bill failed, but NYRA's chapter in Berkeley was energized and was determined to continue the fight. They began 2005 with a letter writing campaign to convince California Senate Majority Leader Don Perata, and former co-sponsor of Sen. John Vasconcellos' bill to lower the voting age, to reintroduce a bill to lower the voting age this term, as Sen. Vasconcellos was term limited out of office. The campaign generated over 850 letters of support and greatly raised public awareness of the issue. Ultimately though, Sen. Perata declined to reintroduce the bill.

The Berkeley chapter continued on, and targeted California Representative Loni Hancock, before focusing most of their energy on attempting to lower the voting age in the city of Berkeley itself. First step was bringing the proposal to the Berkeley Youth Commission. Fortunately chapter member Rio Bauce was a member of the Commission. The Youth



Commission, an advisory body to the Berkeley City Council made up of local youth, was asked to support two things. First that the city council pass a resolution asking the state to give local choice to cities and counties wishing to lower their local voting ages, and secondly to amend the Berkeley city charter to lower the voting age to 16. Both measures passed the youth commission with a resounding 10-1 vote with one abstention.

Having passed the youth commission, the proposals were placed on the city council's agenda. The Berkeley chapter arranged dozens of meetings with city council members and the mayor. They received significant support and were optimistic going into the city council meeting on May 24. Unfortunately the measure did not pass. The vote, for the first measure to call upon the state to support local choice, failed with a vote of 4 in favor, 2 against, and 3 abstentions. It was originally predicted that Berkeley Mayor, Tom Bates, would vote in favor, but instead he chose to abstain, and that tipped the balance out of NYRA's favor. Because the first measure failed, the second one didn't receive a vote.

The Berkeley chapter was disappointed but undaunted and continued to press the fight. They took the fight to San Francisco, and met with many members of the Board of Supervisors. After passing the San Francisco youth commission, it was put on the agenda for the Board of Supervisor's meeting on July 12. Berkeley members, having seen this through from the beginning, were pleased to see the measure pass in San Francisco with a vote of 8 to 2.

On that same day, July 12, NYRA Berkeley attended a committee hearing and testified in favor of ACA 17, a bill in the California Senate to allow 17-year-olds to vote in primaries if they would turn 18 in time for the general election. Similar legislation has already passed in several other states. The bill passed committee with a vote of 4 to 2.

After receiving great amounts of local coverage for their successes (and failures) with their fight to lower the voting age in California, Berkeley continued on yet again. After losing in the Berkeley City Council vote to lower the voting age outright to 16, the chapter is now adjusting its proposal to seek a voting age of 17 in school board elections only. The hope is that with a less ambitious proposal, they may find more Councilmembers willing to take this moderate first step. This new proposal hasn't yet come up for a vote.



The Berkeley voting age campaign has been an amazing achievement. Resilient and hardworking, the chapter has worked on more levels, spoken with more politicians, generated more press coverage, and seen more successful passage of bills than any chapter in NYRA history. They have met with officials and staff from the Berkeley City Council, San Francisco Board of Supervisors, California State Senate, California State House, US Senate, US House, and the California Governor's office. The chapter is in this for the long haul and has no intention of giving up anytime soon. Berkeley's tiresome campaign is a model for chapters everywhere.

Washington State

NYRA's new chapter based out of Olympia, Washington has been active with a campaign to lower the voting age statewide in Washington. The chapter, led by Jason Puz, was approved in March, but had been working on getting a bill introduced in the state for several months earlier under the name of the Washington Youth Voting Rights Society (WAYVRS). The bill was successfully introduced and came up for a committee hearing on April 8th. NYRA-Olympia/WAYVRS were out in force and gave excellent testimony on behalf of the bill. The committee did not vote on the bill, but seemed quite impressed with the testimony. Currently the Washington legislature is in recess, but will take the bill up again next session. The campaign received great coverage throughout the region.

New York City

The largest city in the country is now considering whether to lower the voting age to 16 for municipal elections. NYRA-New York City is actively involved in the campaign to get this passed. The bill though was first proposed and worked on by the Future Voters of America Party (FVA). At a youth conference of the organization, participants voted in favor of beginning a campaign to lower the voting age in the city. Inspired by NYRA's work elsewhere in the country, FVA got in touch with Councilwoman Gale Brewer and convinced her to introduce a bill in New York City to lower the voting age.

While absent during this initial phase, NYRA was brought into the campaign in time for the bill's formal introduction, at a press conference on June 8th on the steps of City Hall. NYRA members throughout the area, and from as far away as



Vermont and Maryland attended the press conference and the later City Council meeting where the bill was introduced. In total 10 NYRA members (and many FVA members and other supporters) attended the press conference and City Council meeting. NYRA President Alex Koroknay-Palicz, NYRA-NYC President Ana Hevesi, and NYRA-Vermont President Jay Leff all spoke at the press conference.

Later that afternoon the measure was formally introduced by Councilwoman Brewer. The bill won't come up for a vote in committee until the fall. The NYC chapter is optimistic about this campaign and has been working closely with FVA and Councilwoman Brewer's office to make this campaign a success. Plans are being made for an intensive two-week campaign in New York like the successful Vermont Campaign earlier this year.

Vermont Drinking Age Campaign

While always one of our most popular issues, NYRA really hadn't worked on any campaigns to lower the drinking age before. This year the organization got into the issue in a big way. In late January, Vermont House member Dick Marron introduced a bill to lower the drinking age to 18 in the state. Though not involved in its introduction, the recently formed Vermont chapter immediately set to work in support of this bill.

It was decided that additional, out of state help was needed to get this campaign off to a successful start. During the next two months, Vermont leadership and other NYRA leaders worked on meticulously planning and preparing for an intensive two-week campaign in Vermont from March 28 to April 10. The newly installed Wiki software (see tech section) was utilized to create a comprehensive, well detailed campaign site. Many different people, both in Vermont and outside, contributed to the planning and research stage of this campaign. This campaign is remarkable, as a NYRA campaign, for the degree to which it was planned and thought out ahead of time.

In total, 6 out-of-state members traveled to Vermont to assist with the campaign and were nicknamed the “invading horde”. The Horde consisted of Matt Malone from Boston, Jonathan Galinsky from New York, and Alex Koroknay-Palicz, Dave Varney, Alexis Grant & Rio Samsie from Washington, DC. This “invading horde” worked closely with Vermont members, especially Hardy Machia, Jay Leff, Ken Boring and Heavenly Ryan.



The two week campaign was as intensive, productive and successful as any NYRA campaign to date. The chief strategy of the campaign was to travel to colleges across the state and ask students to fill out postcards expressing their support for Rep. Marron’s bill to lower the drinking age. This would demonstrate to the Vermont legislature extensive support for the bill, and build a large list of supporters for the Vermont chapter. This strategy was tremendously successful.

NYRA visited most of the colleges in the state during those two weeks and 2000 individuals filled out postcards in support of lowering the drinking age. The campaign generated serious media coverage in the state through newspapers, radio and television. The campaign even prompted editorials in states such as Maine and Indiana, TV coverage in Massachusetts and a huge article in the New York Times. Being a small state, a large number of people heard about the organization and the drinking age issue due to NYRA’s very active campaign. Several students at schools across the state have begun forming subchapters of NYRA-Vermont in response to our campaign.

Despite this phenomenal early success, the bill has not yet been even brought up for a committee hearing. The chapter is very well connected to state politics and intends to continue the fight next year. Either with the current bill or a compromise bill.

Student Bill of Rights & Student Rights

In November NYRA began work on a collaborative project to write a Student Bill of Rights. Despite being a common term, there was no credible, student written student bill of rights. Not wanting to simply make this a NYRA-only project, it was decided to form a coalition of organizations with an interest in student rights to come together and write the SBR jointly. Groups like SSDP, the Freechild Project, the ACLU, and Advocates for Youth were obvious choices. It was hoped that the SBR would not only bring more attention to student rights, have a common, universal set of goals for students to strive toward, and create greater unity and cooperation between coalition members.

When initially proposed the SBR caught fire in the NYRA forums, and there was much interest and momentum. A domain was purchased, a wiki-based site was set up, and the coalition began to be assembled. Things then got bogged down. Initial members of the organizing committee were sluggish in deciding the appropriate process to actually draft the Student Bill of Rights. The process dragged on and the project lost the momentum it once had. In May, attempts were made to expand the coalition. Key prospects like the ACLU and Advocates for Youth pledged only lukewarm support and declined to participate in the actual drafting of the SBR. Other groups never responded to appeals to join. Nothing has been done with the project since then.

NYRA experienced some concrete student rights victories this year after the appointment of Chris Batchelor to the position of Student Defense Coordinator. Students who felt their rights were violated in school contacted NYRA, and Chris took on their cases individually. He wrote letters to several schools, and because of NYRA action in this area several schools apologized to the students in question and agreed to clean the record of the students. While small scale, this project has some real victories in its name and it is hoped this project will continue to expand in the year ahead.

Promotion - - - - -

Even in our darker times, NYRA has excelled with promotion. Now with the organization finally working the way it should, our publicity success has only increased. The efforts of our active chapters in Berkeley, Vermont and Olympia generated a great deal of press attention proactively, long a weakness for the organization. We still aren't where we want to be with proactively attracting press, but we have certainly taken a stride forward this year. While media hits have increased, we have seen a decline in speaking appearances. We have made inroads into new issues as well, such as the driving age, and there is increasing recognition that NYRA is the group to come to for youth rights. Additionally, NYRA now has a cell phone at it's' disposal that greatly helps with the timely return of media inquiries. In late 2004 NYRA hired a new

Communications Director. He showed much potential, but early in 2005 he left the position due to personal issues. His time spent in the position was brief, and little effort has been made to fill the spot.

Media

We have set a new record for TV coverage this year, with four spots on Fox News, and much more on local news stations in San Francisco, Boston, Vermont and Washington, DC. One with former Publicity Director Brad White, and three with me. These four appearances, one on the voting age, one on the drinking age, and two on driving restrictions, aren't the whole story however. NYRA was contacted several more times for TV spots that due to the unpredictable and ever changing news cycle, many spots were planned but never happened. The Larry Elders Show called twice, both fell through, CBS' The Early Show called twice, both fell through, and Fox News called another two or three times about segments that either fell through or I had to decline as they weren't strictly about NYRA issues. Taken together it is quite easy to see a definite uptick in NYRA's stature in the eyes of the mainstream media.



One of the most exciting print media success over the last year was our spot in a New York Times article that covered our campaign to lower the drinking age in Vermont. The article even carried a picture from one of our petition drives. While the newspaper with the highest circulation, the Times is perhaps the most influential paper in the country, and is read by many policy makers and other media sources.

That being said, NYRA did score an appearance, and a substantial one at that, in the nation's most read daily newspaper – USA Today. The article came out on June 3, but its seeds were planted back on December 16. At a suburban Washington, DC area high school, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, NHTSA, lawmakers and many other groups held a town hall discussion on teen driving. For all intents and purposes this was an anti-teen witch trial, where adults railed against our “irresponsible generation of youth” and all called for tighter restrictions on teen drivers. Unsurprisingly, no actual teens were invited to speak at the event. NYRA-DC caught wind of this and came out in force. Five members attended, and both Alexis Grant and I spoke during the public question and answer period.

We both rightfully called out the anti-teen hysteria we were witnessing and briefly made all in attendance hear the other side. We received rounds of applause

from the students present and had many reporters clamor to speak with Alexis and I. One of these reporters was from USA Today, and was putting together a round table discussion on the driving age. On June 1, the discussion finally happened. Alexis, the only teen invited, held her ground well against adult experts calling for increased restrictions, penalties, and in some cases a higher driving age for teens. The article, which came out on June 3, was substantial. Featuring a large two page spread on the inside, with a very large picture of Alexis, plus a picture of her (and another article) on the front page of the business section. This article prompted the two Fox News segments on teen driving restrictions, and several other articles and radio spots.

NYRA has now appeared in 3 of the top 5 largest daily newspapers in the country: USA Today, (circulation: 2,154,539), the New York Times (circulation: 1,118,565), and the LA Times (circulation: 914,584). Blowing all these circulation figures away however was our appearance in Parade Magazine (circulation: 35,507,036), one day after last year's Annual Meeting on August 15, 2004. Laura Finstad, former NYRA-DC President, was featured in Parade's "Fresh Voices" section with something she wrote about lowering the voting age.



The campaigns in Berkeley and Vermont both brought in plenty of ongoing coverage. Each campaign has generated at least a dozen media hits each. Often in smaller markets, but sometimes spilling into larger publications. Olympia and New York City have a few articles to their name as well, though not as many as Berkeley and Vermont.

A mostly complete list of our media spots throughout the year include:

Parade Magazine

Contra Costa Times

Detroit Free Press

WVLK News talk 590 in Kentucky

The Pitt News

Teen Newsweek

Queens Chronicle; NY

The State; SC

Associated Press (twice)

Fox News (Four Times!!!)

Oakland Tribune

Germantown, MD Gazette

The Pitt News; University of Pittsburgh

Teen Vogue

WCAX-TV Burlington, VT

Montpelier Times Argus (Vermont)

Morning Sentinel (Maine)

The Ball State Daily News, Indiana

Seattle Post-Intelligencer

The Olympian, Washington

New York Times

Gainesville Sun (Florida)

The Middlebury Campus

San Francisco Chronicle

OpinionEditorials.com

Valley News Dispatch, PA

Oakland Tribune

Daily Californian

Berkeley Daily Planet

Berkeley Voice

San Jose Mercury News

Contra Costa Times

The Beaumont Enterprise (Texas)

Bennington Banner (Vermont)

USA Today

KFOR radio in Lincoln, Nebraska

Daily Herald (Chicago)

Spectrum (NYU)

Boca Raton News

Children's PressLine – Connect for Kids

Because of the two articles written by the Associated Press, no doubt NYRA was featured in more newspapers than the above list. Papers in Vermont and Berkeley ran several articles on our campaigns there in ongoing coverage over the last few months.

Letters to the Editor

NYRA has gotten much better over the last year with writing (and getting published) letters to the editor and op-eds. Several of the above media hits in fact fall under this category. The Berkeley chapter especially has focused time on writing op-eds. Because of everything going on with their voting age campaign, they have a definite amount of buzz in their area and have found getting their letters printed quite easy. Other letters have been printed in Chicago, Berkeley, San Francisco, Maine, New York, Gainesville and more. This is a great, and easy tactic that has been under-utilized in past years.

Speaking Appearances

This year wasn't quite up to par with speaking appearances. No leadership conferences, debates or panel discussions like in past years. Since we were blacklisted from the National Youth Leadership Conference, no other leadership conferences have come to take its place. I spoke for the second year at the National Conference on Organized Resistance, leading a workshop on youth liberation on February 5, 2005. Once again people were packed into the room to hear it, however it went less successfully than in 2004. Whereas last year the main point of agreement and discussion was education reform, this time it was quite the opposite. Teachers were in the audience who vigorously disagreed with education reform and the workshop ended bitterly.

I was invited by Aaron Biterman to speak to a class at Montgomery Blair High School in suburban Maryland on March 24. It went very well and several students were interested in getting involved in the DC chapter. Soon after were several public appearances in Vermont as part of the intensive two week drinking age campaign there. I spoke to over 500 students at an assembly at Burlington High School about youth rights and lowering the drinking age. While the audience seemed skeptical, my speech did make an impression on them, and the school is now forming a NYRA chapter.



Other successful speaking appearances in Vermont included a small workshop at Bennington College, and another at the University of Vermont, speaking at a meeting of Democracy for America, and a debate in the Vermont state house well about lowering the drinking age. While not as well attended as planned, it got some media coverage and was a great success for the organization and the campaign.

Chapters and Recruiting — — — — —

Chapters

This was a great year for chapter formation, with many new chapters formed and lots of renewed focus of the organization on chapter formation. A chapter formation structure was reformed for the first time since early 2003, and has added several new active volunteers to NYRA's volunteer corps. The chapter formation process, created last year, became a central feature of the new Regional Chapter Formation Captain's position. Utilizing the new Sandbox site (see tech section) the chapter captains made checklists to track their progress with each intent received, creating a more transparent, accountable system to make sure each person forming a chapter was assisted properly.

New chapter formation has seen its most active year ever. Eight total chapters were approved, more than in any earlier year. While most haven't become active, the others more than compensate, forming the backbone of NYRA's action and growth throughout this year. Undoubtedly Olympia and Vermont are the most active of this year's new crop, founded in early 2005 they've mounted successful campaigns to lower the voting age and drinking age respectively. Together with already formed chapters such as Berkeley and New York City, most of our action this year (and most of our fundraising as well) has come from NYRA's local chapters. Other chapters approved this year were Orange County, CA; Patterson,

NJ; Cleveland, OH; Gainesville, FL; Santa Fe, NM; and NYRA-SSDS in Essex Union in New Jersey. Gainesville, Santa Fe, SSDS, and Cleveland all began with impressive potential. Some small things were accomplished – Gainesville succeeded in publishing a letter to the editor, Santa Fe recruited and organized most of a high school, created a great website and began work on a campaign to lower the voting age, and SSDS and Cleveland recruited a good number of new members. However none of these chapters has yet lived up to the potential they all had when founded. More effort needs to be made by national staff to ensure formed chapters stay connected, involved, and active organs of NYRA.

Orange County and Patterson are both recently approved chapters, so its too early to give much of a progress report so far, but both look really promising. Orange County seems to be a chapter with good political connections in the state, and intends to work on lowering the voting age in the state. Together with a reformed Los Angeles chapter, an amazingly active Berkeley chapter, and a possible new chapter around Sacramento we could see a serious statewide voting age effort next year. Patterson has already been engaged in a struggle against a proposed curfew law in the city, and has gained the support (i.e. the opposition to the law) of several City Council members.

Older chapters were mixed this year. Berkeley followed up a strong year with an even stronger year. DC has had sporadic success, most notably the appearance at the teen driving panel and its heavy participation in the Vermont Campaign Horde. Though the chapter hasn't built a strong, sustainable chapter organization, and has been weakened by the loss of a key member this summer. New York, long a fairly dormant chapter with unrealized potential has been sparked into action by the introduction of a bill to lower the municipal voting age and one can expect great things over the next year from New York. Other older chapters that were largely dormant last year, can be declared entirely dead this year. American University, NYRA's oldest chapter, fell apart this year despite a last minute attempt to save it. Hope remains for a renewed effort in the fall.

This has been a good year for chapters, but those chapters that go through the process and turn in their application are just a small percentage of the total number of chapter intents filed this year, as with any past year. The number that go on to become active, vital chapters is smaller yet. Much more needs to be done to assist these chapters through to formation, and more to keep them active after formation. Currently NYRA has Regional Captains in the South, West, and Northeast regions. Goals for the year ahead are to find Captains for the Central and Midwest regions as well, and find additional help for existing regions.

Recruiting

Recruiting though suffered, or more accurately changed focus. In past years NYRA has focused a great deal of attention, especially in the DC area, on recruiting at concerts, conferences, and protests. While important for building our mailing list and exposing more people to youth rights, if only in a superficial way, this tactic has been de-prioritized over 2004-2005 due to it being time consuming, expensive, and often of limited real use to the organization. The vast majority of members recruited in such a fashion never participate in the organization and often have bad or illegible e-mails. Large events, with 200-300 members recruited also required large amounts of time to enter all the contact info into the NYRA database. When maybe half actually had valid e-mail addresses, massive recruiting events seemed more of a drain to the organization than a benefit. Despite this, recruiting is still important, and will always remain a part of NYRA activity.



Instead of NYRA's traditional focus on recruiting supporters at large events, the organization, on a national level, put more energy into building our supply of dues paying full members. Driven by chapter such as Berkeley, Olympia, and Vermont, and the NYRA Board of Directors, this new focus on dues paying

members paid off. Dues paying members more than doubled in the last year. As opposed to simply names on a list, these members are more active, contributing members willing to invest a small amount of funds toward NYRA's future and are worth far more than supporters who sign their name on a list and forget about it.

That all being said, recruiting in the traditional sense did still continue. The year began with the tail end of last year's Warped Tour effort. While having some very nice success in New York, New Jersey, DC and Chicago, the other stops were quite disappointing. The costs and time to make significant amounts of NYRA materials and ship them several times across country were not at all worth the gains in membership and exposure from the tour. The losses were made more costly when one box of materials, sent to Florida, was in fact stolen. NYRA lost lots of money on buttons, t-shirts, flyers, and indeed a \$125 dollar banner because of this theft. The four successful stops did not out weigh the disappointments and losses elsewhere on the tour. This year, NYRA was once again invited to Warped Tour, but is planning a more limited engagement, just hitting New York, New Jersey and DC, areas where recruiters with proven records of success live.

For its third year in a row NYRA-DC recruited at the National Conference on Organized Resistance in early February. Unlike the wonderful successes of last years, this was a disappointment. NYRA's table was in a very poor location that experienced little foot traffic. Another DC recruiting event at a Hemp Coalition event in the spring was also disappointingly unproductive. Two moderate successes included recruiting attempts at Youth Pride Day was the annual conference for Students for Sensible Drug policy. In February, NYRA-NYC members tabled at a gaming convention named Ubercon. The event was a failure.

Looking Ahead to 2006 — — — — — — — — — —

Last year I forecast that 2005 would be our breakout year, for once my predictive powers proved to be perfect. 2004-2005 can definitely be considered a breakout year. NYRA raised more money, got more media, and saw more member activity than at any point in our history. Chapters are stronger and more numerous, staff is better trained and more dedicated, our tech needs are closer to being met, and in every possible area this year has seen significant gains.

This is something to be proud of. Compared to all of NYRA history there is no doubt, this is the best year we have ever seen. However comparing to often stagnant years in the past should not be our only yardstick by which to measure ourselves. Compared to other peer organizations, and worse yet, our opposition, NYRA still has a very long way to go. NYRA is a big fish in the small pond of youth rights, and a small fish in the big sea (or swamp) of politics we wish to influence. Member activity is great, but not great enough. Chapter formation is

great, but not great enough. Fundraising is great, but still very far from where we need to be a credible, powerful organization we see ourselves becoming.

The biggest disappointment of this last year is most certainly the lack of foundation grants, and indeed the lack of serious effort to obtain foundation grants. Having a permanent fulltime staff (of more than one person), and an office are *essential* to NYRA's long range success. Despite our great efforts this year in fundraising it is difficult to imagine being able to meet these needs without support from rich donors or foundations. What our great fundraising effort has done however is given us a temporary fulltime staff of one. One person with more time to devote to seeking foundation grants like never before. It is my hope that next year this bold step will be recognized as the critical catalyst that finally brought to NYRA the foundation support we've so long needed.

Our technological advances have driven our rebirth this year – the forums have served as a life preserver earning us a renewed lease on life and new source of strength. Four main problems that have plagued the organization for years – member activity, internal education, fundraising and structural strength – have seen more done to address them than at any other point. Still issues we must confront, they are no where near as daunting or crippling as in past years.

No longer treading water, the organization has won itself a life preserver and is now rapidly swimming toward shore. The waters remain treacherous and any thing is possible. But we aren't standing still, we are moving forward confidently and skillfully.

This is a moment to hold our heads up high, pat ourselves on the backs, bask in a feeling of empowerment and accomplishment, wait 10 seconds and start preparing for next year.

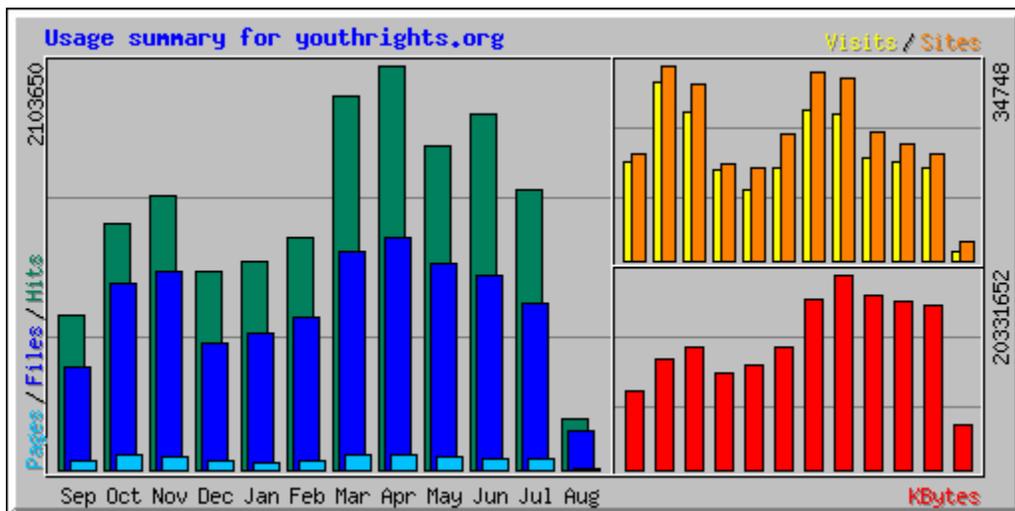
National Youth Rights Association Cash Flow Report 2004-2005

Income	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	TOTAL
Chapter Fees			30.00		30.00		90.00	30.00				60.00	240.00
Chapter Fundraisers									893.00	684.40	127.00		1,704.40
Merchandise Sales	261.27		151.00				50.00	6.00	75.00	62.00	47.00	235.83	888.10
Dues/Donations	340.00	35.00	260.00		410.00	190.00	180.00	135.00	315.00	975.00	275.00	508.00	3,623.00
TOTAL	601.27	35.00	441.00	0.00	440.00	190.00	320.00	171.00	1,283.00	1,721.40	449.00	803.83	6,455.50
Operational Costs													
Executive Director Salary											925.00	925.00	1,850.00
Stipends (2004)					440.00								440.00
Phone, Internet & Fax		12.95	12.95	12.95	412.95	12.95	12.95						477.70
Paypal & Account Fees	8.72	7.54	9.88		8.46	3.09	1.91	5.44	21.01	25.42	21.91	15.51	128.89
Postage	28.00		22.39					12.70			106.57	9.01	178.67
Tech	141.18	119.40	25.50	67.50			60.00			60.00			473.58
Merchandise				73.00					852.00				925.00
Conference/Tabling Fees				299.00			25.00						324.00
Copies							6.51	66.49			53.83		126.83
Travel									125.28				125.28
Misc		25.00							23.00		50.00	126.00	224.00
Office Supplies											119.71	20.98	140.69
TOTAL	177.90	164.89	70.72	452.45	861.41	16.04	106.37	84.63	1,021.29	85.42	1,277.02	1,096.50	5,414.64
Operating Income	423.37	-129.89	370.28	-452.45	-421.41	173.96	213.63	86.37	261.71	1,635.98	-828.02	-292.67	
Cash Balance	1,019.53	889.64	1,259.92	807.47	386.06	560.02	773.65	860.02	1,121.73	2,757.71	1,929.69	1,637.02	

Web Statistics Report

A full web statistics report has not been done since the 2003 Annual Report, due to the fact that switching servers last year resulted in NYRA losing much its statistics for that year. All comparisons here will be made to the 2003 report, though so much has happened since then it may be more difficult to chart a steady change.

Raw stats from 2004-2005:



Summary by Month										
Month	Daily Avg				Monthly Totals					
	Hits	Files	Pages	Visits	Sites	KBytes	Visits	Pages	Files	Hits
Aug 2005	65544	50776	2284	426	3193	4727122	1704	9139	203105	262176
Jul 2005	47013	27753	1908	534	18838	17214452	16559	59177	860353	1457425
Jun 2005	61762	33646	2038	588	20621	17527677	17647	61146	1009403	1852876
May 2005	54173	34739	2190	592	22719	18233516	18355	67918	1076927	1679376
Apr 2005	70121	40123	2667	870	32578	20331652	26107	80029	1203701	2103650
Mar 2005	62522	36757	2451	858	33389	17656978	26625	75990	1139487	1938194
Feb 2005	43128	28475	1774	588	22414	12836313	16472	49688	797326	1207610
Jan 2005	35052	22747	1316	411	16502	10944418	12753	40802	705172	1086631
Dec 2004	33198	21289	1443	518	17278	10131961	16075	44738	659961	1029155
Nov 2004	47452	34504	2193	878	31203	12796584	26364	65815	1035145	1423560
Oct 2004	41118	31094	2384	1028	34748	11525362	31870	73923	963931	1274664
Sep 2004	26742	17644	1448	590	19126	8236638	17727	43458	529328	802276
Totals						162162673	228258	671823	10183839	16117593

Website traffic has been impressive this year. For the 5 full months we had statistics for in 2003, the average number of hits per month was 137,352 and the average number of visits was 9312 per month. For 2004-2005, the average

number of hits per month was 1,441,401 and the average number of visits per month was 20,596. In the last two years hits increased by over 10 times, and visits more than doubled.

Visits is the better indicator of actual people visiting the website, so we can safely say twice as many people visit the website today as 2 years ago. The hits increase may be a result of the addition of the highly used and highly popular NYRA forums to the youthrights.org server. One user may count for one "visit" but count as many different "hits"; the gap only becomes wider between visits and hits in the NYRA forum. It may also be harder to make direct comparisons as different servers we have been on during these 2 years may record web statistics differently.

One example of how hits and visits differ is comparing October/November and March/April. All four months had comparable visit levels, but March/April's hits were far higher. I am unsure the cause of this difference or why it is so pronounced. Seeing peaks in October/November and March/April is entirely normal and consistent with other years we have (or had) records for. Students are the main patrons of our site, and find their way onto our page far more when class is in session, either as research for homework assignments or distractions from homework assignments. During summer or winter break traffic always declines.

Overall I think we should be pleased with the increase in web traffic over the last two years, and the more moderate increase throughout the course of this year.

Search Engine Placement

Most new members and visitors to the NYRA website arrive there from Internet searches. Our webalizer program tracks search terms that people use to find our site in common search engines such as Yahoo, Google, MSN, Ask Jeeves and others. The top 5 search terms for the last 11 months (September to July) are enclosed in this report. The biggest noticeable trend over the last year in search terms is that in the first half of the year people primarily found YouthRights.org by searching for our key issues like the voting age or drinking age, and in the second half, most people who came to our site via search engines were actually searching for NYRA.

This is a significant and important change. It hints at two things, one good and one bad. First that NYRA is becoming more well known through word of mouth and media exposure, and thus people are actively seeking us out, not just happening upon the page while doing something else. It also may be possible that for whatever reason people are searching based on our key issues less, and those terms are simply dropping in the rankings. There may be a third possibility that the way webalizer records search terms may have changed, but we have no way of checking that.

Top 5 Search Terms Used to Find YouthRights.org per Month

September 2005

- 1 voting age
- 2 in re gault
- 3 lowering the drinking age
- 4 youth rights
- 5 nyra

October 2005

- 1 voting age
- 2 lowering the drinking age
- 3 in re gault
- 4 youth rights
- 5 curfew laws

November 2004

- 1 voting age
- 2 lowering the drinking age
- 3 nyra
- 4 in re gault
- 5 curfew laws

December 2004

- 1 in re gault
- 2 voting age
- 3 nyra
- 4 youth rights
- 5 curfew laws

January 2005

- 1 nyra
- 2 youth rights
- 3 national youth rights association
- 4 curfew laws
- 5 florida drinking age

February 2005

- 1 nyra
- 2 youth rights
- 3 voting age
- 4 national youth rights association
- 5 curfew laws

March 2005

- 1 nyra
- 2 youth rights
- 3 national youth rights association
- 4 florida drinking age
- 5 voting age

April 2005

- 1 nyra
- 2 youth rights
- 3 national youth rights association
- 4 www.youthrights.org
- 5 eagle point christian academy

May 2005

- 1 nyra
- 2 www.youthrights.org
- 3 youth rights
- 4 voting age
- 5 fox news

June 2005

- 1 nyra
- 2 www.youthrights.org
- 3 youth rights
- 4 national youth rights association
- 5 voting age

July 2005

- 1 nyra
- 2 www.youthrights.org
- 3 youth rights
- 4 national youth rights association
- 5 florida drinking age

Also, in the 2003 web stats report Google, the most popular search engine, was used to see where NYRA ranked when certain search terms were entered. Here is an updated report with a comparison to the 2003 report:

Search	Ranking in 2005	Ranking in 2003
youth rights	1 st	1 st
Voting age	1 st	1 st and 2 nd
Lowering the voting age	2 nd	1 st and 2 nd
Gulag school	7 th and 8 th	1 st and 2 nd
Drinking age in Hawaii	17 th	3 rd and 4 th
Lowering the drinking age	1 st	6 th
In re Gault	7 th	6 th
Drinking age	24 th	12 th
Youth Liberation	21 st	44 th
Youth curfew	8 th	45 th
Youth emancipation	110 th	66 th
Adulthood	5 th	55 th
Ageism	Not in top 140	Not in top 140
Curfew	25 th	Not in top 140
Lower driving age	21 st (but related to lowering drinking age)	Not in top 140
Student rights	Not in top 140	Not in top 140
Youth empowerment	Not in top 140	Not in top 140
Youth activism	Not in top 140	Not in top 140
Zero tolerance	Not in top 140	Not in top 140
Drinking age Colorado	4 th	New search