



National Youth Rights Association

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2008-2009 Annual Report

Submitted by Alex Koroknay-Palicz

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This time of year is always special for NYRA members and supporters. Now is the opportunity to gather together face-to-face at our Annual Meeting, renewing old friendships and making new ones. It is also a time to reflect upon the year NYRA just finished and take stock in the many opportunities and challenges that we have faced over the year. It is through understanding where we've been that we can fully understand where we are going.

This year NYRA has been through a lot; like all years we've faced our share of ups and downs, yet no amount of delays or setbacks can dampen the excitement generated this year. Our supporters are in awe of how much we've been able to accomplish this year: a youth-created voting age ad aired on prime time television, great progress in our ongoing struggle against age-based segregation in business, an increasingly high profile presence in the national debate over lowering the drinking age, lowering the voting age and other youth rights issues, a youth-led lawsuit against a local curfew law, involvement in US Supreme Court cases, successful campaigns for student rights around the country, and significant progress in energizing and mobilizing this movement's grassroots base.

Yet even in our darkest years NYRA has excelled at making change and progress for the rights of youth. As the vanguard of youth rights, NYRA has no choice but to continue to fight, continue to strive, and continue to achieve regardless of the odds. While we never stop winning battles for youth rights, it is those long odds that hinder the long term impact and potential for this movement. This year we made an important step forward toward evening those odds.

As this year wound down NYRA began the most ambitious and most successful fundraiser in our history and raised nearly \$9,000 in a month's time. Members and supporters gave generously for the same goal – putting NYRA on a secure financial footing for the long term. Thanks to this effort NYRA was able to do the unthinkable and hire a professional development & operations director for the organization. This new position brings NYRA the kind of dedicated fundraising focus it needs to ensure our incredible activism this year, and each of the last eleven years, continues to grow in impact and potency.

Last year this report set out a goal of hiring experienced, professional staff, and this year we've done it. Last year we sought to increase our professionalism, and with the ad, the lawsuit, and our numerous local and national campaigns this year we've reached a level of professionalism and sophistication that was unthinkable a short time ago. Things are far from easy and though we continue to struggle against the current, no longer do we swim alone.

Year in Review

Finance — — — — —

Like all organizations this year, our budget took a hit from the poor economy. Due to an absence of grant funding this year the overall NYRA budget declined to \$18,654.34 this year, a 7% decline from last year's record of \$19,975.67. While disappointing, this decline masks a very important achievement for the organization this year. Despite being in a country going through what some say is the worst recession in 80 years where near 10% of the population is unemployed, NYRA actually had an increase in donations. Not just an increase, but the largest increase in dues & donations in our organization's history, nearly 70% more than last year.

The loss of our grant funding hurt this year, and our membership, board members, and supporters responded in a big way to make sure this organization stays healthy. Altogether NYRA brought in \$15,233.53 from dues & donations this year. Our board alone, led by the amazing generosity of Justin Graham and Katrina Moncure, raised \$6,870 this year.

Once again, despite the poor economy, we have actually seen an increase in paid membership this year. Last year's unprecedented membership growth from 108 members to 191 was maintained this year. In fact we grew to 197. Thanks to the Double Dollar Days for Development Director campaign in June & July of this year, life membership saw a significant increase this year as well, rising from 21 last year to 37 this year.

Ad revenue was down, as the economy caused our online advertisers to suspend their ads on our site. We also saw a decline in merchandise sales and an increase in publishing rights & royalties. The biggest new source of money came from fiscal sponsorship arrangements with NYRA's two projects, the Community Alliance for the Ethical Treatment of Youth (CAFETY) and yCivics. CAFETY has been with us since last year, but this year, after a contract was signed, CAFETY began compensating NYRA for the effort and privilege of fiscal sponsorship. yCivics, a new project of NYRA-New York City, was created this fall through a grant from Mobilize.org. Fiscal sponsorship fees from the two projects added \$1,404.25 to NYRA's organizational budget. For 2008-2009 CAFETY raised a

total of \$16,180 and yCivics raised a total of \$1,300. Adding this project revenue to NYRA's overall revenue gives the organization a grand total of \$34,834.34 raised this year, a 12% increase over last year.

Grants

This was not a terribly active year in terms of grant seeking. In the spring NYRA again sought funding from the Susan A. & Donald P. Babson Foundation, the foundation that has generously funded us in the past. We made it to the final stage of consideration this summer and are hopeful we will receive a grant from them this November. While NYRA did not receive a grant from them, or any other foundation, this past year, our chances look good for another Babson grant this fall.

We saw more success from less traditional grant opportunities this year. NYRA, and our chapters, participated in two Democracy 2.0 grant summits hosted by Mobilize.org. The first took place September 18-21, 2008 in Washington, DC. The theme was "Money in Politics" and in partnership with The Sunlight Foundation and Common Cause, Mobilize.org gave away \$3,000-\$5,000 to winners of this weekend-long summit. Board member Katrina Moncure went on NYRA's behalf and sought funding to help air our voting age television ad.



While there weren't many teams competing for the funds, the weekend was still high intensity and high pressure as the entire project had to be created from the ground up in one weekend. A letter of inquiry was written, power points were made, and presentations were delivered to various

panels meant to refine NYRA's proposal. Despite some very positive early responses, NYRA's proposal finished last out of the competing teams.

Early panels were supportive and helpful, but the final panel expressed a great deal of skepticism that lowering the voting age was a wise idea and doubted young people even wanted to vote. Katrina had to not only defend the particulars of the project, but also defend the concept of expanding suffrage. In the end, NYRA did not leave empty handed. Mobilize.org granted NYRA four FlipCams (four pocket sized digital video cameras valued at \$800) with the purpose of

starting a Voting Age Video project aimed to interview young people and ask whether they actually want the right to vote. Three of the cameras were distributed to NYRA-Southeast Florida, NYRA-NYC, and the Zionsville Student Rights Union.



The second Mobilize.org grant summit, Constitutional Convention: Building Democracy 2.0, took place January 9-11, 2009 in Philadelphia. NYRA-NYC liked the FlipCam they received from the last summit so much they decided to craft a new project around FlipCams initially called Youth Civics 2.0, now named yCivics. This project will give away

FlipCams as an incentive to young people who participate in a variety of youth civic engagement projects or tasks. Like before it was another sleepless, whirlwind of a weekend involving lots of work and lots of networking to put together a proposal and a project. NYRA-NYC described it as a very exciting and worthwhile time, and ended up winning a \$2,500 grant for the project.

Double Dollar Days for Development Director

The biggest finance related news this year involves the hiring of our new Director of Development and Operations, Charles Ambrus. Charles joined our team on July 6 and is in charge of fundraising for the organization, with a focus on grant seeking. Charles has twenty years of experience with non-profits, political campaigns, government and industry and has put his expertise to NYRA's use. Funding has always been NYRA's greatest weakness. Last year we vowed to make a step forward in seeking the proper funding to turn NYRA into a professional, growing organization. Hiring a development director with extensive fundraising experience is the step needed to move NYRA to the next level.

For too long NYRA has faced a chicken & the egg problem: we need professional staff to raise money, but need money to pay for those professional staff. This summer we embarked upon an ambitious plan to solve both problems. Professional staff would be brought in, part-time, and money would be raised with the intention of giving this new staff member the chance to succeed. The chance to invest in a viable plan to move this organization forward excited the members like few initiatives in the past. While support wasn't broader than the popular "money bombs" from last year, it was far deeper. In just one month's time, from late June to late July, NYRA raised a total of \$8,920 in donations. Over half of the money this organization raised in the last year was done in just one month. This is a truly remarkable achievement.

A big part of this success is owed to a generous anonymous donor who pledged to match donations, dollar for dollar, through July 15. This fundraiser, dubbed the Double Dollar Days for Development Director campaign, not only matched donations but also offered members an opportunity to sign up for life membership

The Manhattanville debate was just the first of four debates NYRA would have a formal role in this year. The next came on March 9 at the Advocacy in Action Conference, a conference in Washington, DC hosted by NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals and the National Association of Addiction Treatment Providers. This debate was undoubtedly the most hostile environment NYRA entered this year. NYRA however is unafraid to take this cause and this issue into any environment, and while most minds were not changed everyone came away from the debate with a new appreciation for and understanding of some reasons why the drinking age is causing more harm than it prevents.



Next, NYRA took the debate back into academia with a debate at Harvard University on April 14, 2009. Harvard freshman and NYRA Vice-President Stefan Muller participated in a friendly debate about lowering the drinking age with Ryan Travia, director of Alcohol & Other Drug Services, and Economics Department Director of Undergraduate Studies Jeffrey A. Miron.

Muller stressed that education was more important than law enforcement in dealing with alcohol abuse. The debate raised the profile of the issue on campus and introduced many to the National Youth Rights Association.

The following week, on April 23, NYRA's Executive Director debated Donald Zeigler, a representative from Mothers Against Drunk Driving, and the American Medical Association in suburban Chicago. The debate, hosted by the League of Women Voters and the Family Awareness Network, was friendly but pointed. The audience of students, parents and community members were polled following the debate to see what their thoughts were about lowering the drinking age and 39% said not sure, 33% said lower it to 18 and 28% said keep it at 21. NYRA is having an impact.



Voting Age Advertising Campaigns

NYRA ventured into new territory this year by airing the first ever youth rights television ad. The campaign began in August 2008 as the “Make NYRA Famous” contest, and called upon NYRA members to create an ad to be run on cable TV in Washington, DC in the fall. Several ads were created by NYRA members, but the most impressive of the bunch was the ad produced by NYRA-Southeast Florida.

With the country focused on one of the most historic elections in a generation, the ad, which ran the week of October 20, highlights the fact that young people want to vote, but can't. NYRA doesn't just fight for the right of youth to be heard; NYRA provides opportunities for young people to speak out on their own behalf, and this ad is a prime example of this. NYRA-Southeast Florida entirely wrote, produced, filmed and starred in the ad.



I am 16
I have a job and pay taxes.
I'll be affected by today's decisions for many years to come.
I care about the environment...and social security.
I don't have representation - a voice - a say.
The federal government says I have sufficient knowledge and literacy to vote in any election but we can't vote.
I want to make a difference; we want the right to vote; we're asking for your support.
Visit youthrights.org.

The ad was a huge public awareness success for the organization even before it hit the airwaves. The professional, passionate ad was distributed widely online and was picked up by numerous blogs, websites and student newspapers. Many

people and groups who had never heard of the National Youth Rights Association and the campaign to lower the voting age were introduced to it this fall. Since it was first put up on YouTube the ad has attracted over 4,400 views. Thanks to the buzz about the ad, NYRA scored its most impressive media appearance of the year with both NYRA Executive Director Alex Koroknay-Palicz and NYRA-Southeast Florida President Jeffrey Nadel quoted in USA Today.

Finally, in late October the ad aired 14 times on Comedy Central during the Daily Show and the Colbert Report. These shows captured NYRA's prime audience – politically savvy young people. NYRA received a great deal of positive attention from the ad and raised its profile greatly among youth and organizations in Washington, DC.

In addition to the wildly successful voting age television ad, NYRA put a small amount of money into advertising on Facebook this spring, also to promote our campaign to lower the voting age. Targeted to politically active young people, the Facebook ads earned 407,146 impressions during late March & early April.

CAFETY's Information Campaign Against Residential Treatment Abuse

Mahatma Gandhi is credited with the quote, "First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then you win." Perhaps the quote should go, "First they ignore you, then they laugh at you, then they fight you, then they try to co-opt you, and then you win." 2009 may be remembered as the year the troubled teen industry stopped ignoring CAFETY, and progressively went from laughing, to fighting, to trying to co-opt us, all in the span of a few months.

2008-2009 was a big year for CAFETY in terms of professional outreach and appearances. Early in the year CAFETY organized a presentation for a local audience at the New York City bookstore Bluestockings, where Kathryn Whitehead, Siobhan Lynch, Nick Gaglia (Director - Over the GW) & Brian Lombrowski presented on various aspects of the Troubled Teen Industry (TTI), with a particular focus on WWASP programs as well as Kids of North Jersey.

CAFETY presented their case to a diverse set of audiences this year, from symposiums of psychiatrists, to the Foster Care Alumni of America to the Independent Educational Consultants Association. CAFETY intends to continue to venture outside of the choir and begin to address audiences that are ambivalent or outwardly hostile to our organization and/or the concept of youth rights. Future plans include presentations at the American Association of Children's Residential Centers, the Independent Educational Consultants Association Conference, and the National Association of Regulatory Administration Licensing Seminar.

Finally, in June of this year CAFETY went live with a refurbished website - www.cafety.org, where you can find a new logo that was graciously donated by CAFETY member Chelsea Flier.

Recruiting Events & News Hits

While quieter overall this year on the recruiting front, NYRA was back at the table at Warped Tour again this year. Our recruiting event at the DC Warped Tour was our largest single-day recruiting event in NYRA history.

New Kids on the Block - DC (10/2/08) – 18 members
SSDP Conference (11/22/08) – 55 members
Activist Fair at WJHS (12/23/08) – 20 members
Junior State of America (2/7/09) – 96 members
Junior State of America (2/14/09) – 83 members
Junior State of America (2/21/09) – 70 members
Warped Tour DC (7/14/09) – 261 members

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

Palm Beach Post 8/2 Curfew
Associated Press 8/7 Driving Age
Palm Beach Post Blog 8/18 Voting Age
Palm Beach Post 8/20 Voting Age
Waukesha Freeman (WI) 8/22
Drinking Age
Pajamasmedia.com 8/26 Drinking Age
Worcester Telegram & Gazette (MA) 8/26 Drinking Age
Jurist 8/26 Free Speech/Student
Newsday 8/24 Drinking Age
The Cavalier Daily 8/26 Driving Age
Virginia Pilot 9/12 Curfew
Daily Kos 9/13 Voting Age
Wiretap Magazine 9/15 Voting Age
South Florida Sun-Sentinel 9/23
Voting Age
WPBF Channel 25 News - ABC - 10/8 Voting Age
UMD Diamondback 10/14 Voting Age
American Observer 10/16 Voting Age
The Daily Iowan 10/24 Voting Age
WPLG Local 10 10/28 Voting Age
Wiretap Magazine 10/28 Voting Age
SexEtc.com 10/31 Voting Age
USA Today 11/5 Voting Age

Montreal Hour 12/11
Hudson Valley Journal News 12/29
Voting Age
Boca Raton Magazine 2/09 Voting Age
The Massachusetts Daily Collegian 2/26 Voting Age
WPBF Channel 5 News, NBC 3/9
Voting Age
Palm Beach Post 3/9 Curfew
MSNBC.com 3/31 Curfew
MSNBC.com 4/1 Curfew
Palm Beach Post 3/31 Curfew
OnlineCasinos.us 3/29 Gambling
Broward-Palm Beach New Times,
The Juice – 4/7 Curfew
Time Magazine 4/17 Gulags
The Harvard Crimson 4/15 Drinking Age
Makeitbetter.net 4/28 Drinking Age
Zionsville Times Central 5/13
Student Sights
The Suncoast News 6/15 Curfew
Palm Beach Post 6/23 Curfew
WPBF ABC 20 6/24 Curfew
WPTV NBC 5 6/24 Curfew
Miami Herald 7/6 Curfew



On September 8, a NYRA member in Michigan reported a Clark Oil gas station in Fenton, MI that posted a policy saying no more than three students were allowed inside at any one time. Michigan, like Maryland, has a civil rights law making such policies illegal. Phone calls were made and on September 18 the store took down their sign.

On September 16, NYRA located another party store, Party America, in Germantown,

Maryland which posted a policy stating no one under 14 was allowed inside without supervision. After speaking to several NYRA representatives the store took down the sign by September 18.

On September 17, NYRA contacted the Comfort Inn hotel in College Park, Maryland, the hotel that Oren Balaban identified during the annual meeting. The hotel manager said parents complained their kids (albeit legal adults) were allowed to rent rooms at the hotel and thus the hotel enacted their 21 and up policy in response. The law however is very clear on the matter and by October 1 NYRA was informed the policy was taken down.

Age discrimination campaign – Still Pending

Most cases NYRA has taken on involving age discrimination are easily handled with a phone call or a visit from a NYRA staff member. When the business is informed of the law they typically comply without a fight. However, things become more challenging for us when the business ignores us or is otherwise prepared to fight to uphold their policy. Sadly, what NYRA lacks most in these situations is actual young people who have been victims of discrimination willing to stand up in defense of their legal rights. Lacking this, NYRA's ability to file formal complaints with state civil rights departments is severely limited. Any ability to generate media attention and public sympathy is also limited. Complaints brought by individuals in their late twenties are understandably less effective than ones brought by those who have personally faced discrimination.

One of this year's slowest moving projects began on October 7. A chain of junkyards in and around Baltimore, Maryland called Crazy Ray's had a policy requiring individuals to be 18 or over to enter the yard, whether or not they were accompanied by a parent. A NYRA member in the state reported them to us after being denied entry when with his father. From October through January many calls were made and were largely ignored by Crazy Ray's. With no other

option, on February 5, 2009 a formal complaint was filed with the Maryland Commission on Human Rights. The commission felt we would have a stronger case if an individual who was a victim of the discrimination filed the complaint instead of the organization as a whole. As the original victim of discrimination was difficult to get a hold of to fill out the paperwork, NYRA member and intern Conor Nugent visited several locations of Crazy Ray's to test whether they enforced the policy.

On February 25, Conor was denied entry to the Crazy Ray's location in Jessup, Maryland because he was 17. His experience was reported to the commission



and the wheels of government began to slowly turn. On May 14 NYRA received notice from the commission that this matter was being referred to mediation, which hopefully would result in NYRA and Crazy Ray's sitting down to find an agreeable resolution to this matter. Just as NYRA was ignored, so too was the human rights commission, and on July 22, NYRA was informed that this matter was now being referred to the commission's investigation stage. While this process is horrendously slow, NYRA is giving Crazy Ray's every

opportunity to comply with the law and they are behaving poorly every step of the way. When this matter, as we expect, goes before a judge we feel this will help our case.

On January 29 a broader effort was begun to look into hotels in College Park, Maryland. Being the location of the University of Maryland, it was assumed that the Comfort Inn wasn't the only hotel in the area to discriminate against guests under 21. The Holiday Inn, Days Inn, Clarion Inn, Ramada Inn, Hampton Inn, Econo Lodge, Howard Johnson and Super 8 motels in College Park were each contacted to ascertain whether they had age discriminatory policies in place.

Finding out this information was trickier than imagined. After calling the front desk of several hotels, NYRA was told, in many cases, guests must be 21 to rent a room. Then, after speaking to a manager, the manager maintained that the front desk person was incorrect and that they rent to anyone over 18 (or 16 in one case). It is unclear whether the managers were telling us what they thought we wanted to hear to get rid of us, or whether there truly was a miscommunication within the hotel's staffs. Without traveling there in person and either seeing a sign or being denied a room for being too young it is very difficult to determine what the policies of these hotels are.

Our ability to physically track down and verify these policies was hampered by a lack of available 18-20 year old volunteers. While the Maryland civil rights law

does apply to individuals under 18, and has been used by NYRA in other cases of public accommodation, it was felt that with the conflicting issues of contract law and other legal issues involved in renting a hotel room (as opposed to entering a dollar store or junk yard) that 18 would be a more suitable age to seek. Several years ago in Michigan a case charging age discrimination against a hotel was met with legislation introduced to re-write the civil rights law to include an exception for hotels altogether. Pushing our luck with hotels in Maryland might result in the same outcome, so NYRA decided to play it safe and push these hotels only to begin renting to individuals 18-20. However with our only intern, Conor, being 17 this hampered our ability to follow up with these hotels. NYRA is hopeful that this fall a partnership can be found between NYRA and student groups at the University of Maryland to further push this campaign against the hotels.

The final two cases NYRA looked into this year are unique due to the outspoken defiance of the businesses. First was an FYE store located in a mall in Gaithersburg, Maryland. This music store had a posted policy stating: "All fye customers under the age of 15 MUST be accompanied by an adult at all times in the store." This was discovered on December 20, 2008. The Maryland Commission on Human Rights flyer was dropped off on January 2 and a phone call was made on February 5. The store manager yelled angrily about the need for the sign to stop kids from causing a disturbance and refused to take it down without a fight. No further action has been taken yet, but NYRA intends to pursue this case actively in the next year. We will not shy away from a fight.

Finally, on January 24 a mother in Muskegon, Michigan contacted NYRA about an incident the previous week at a Chuck E. Cheese's location in the area. She had dropped off her 12-year-old daughter and some friends at a local Chuck E. Cheese's restaurant, but they were thrown out for not having a parent with them. The policy, as stated, prohibits individuals under 18 from entering without a parent or guardian. It soon became clear this was a national policy. Altogether Chuck E. Cheese's had 70 locations in Michigan, Maryland, Montana, Delaware, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Oklahoma and Virginia – all states with anti-age discrimination laws. Apparently kids really can't be kids at Chuck E. Cheese's.



NYRA contacted Chuck E. Cheese's corporate legal department on January 29. They took our complaint seriously but believed their policy was justified under the law in Michigan – and elsewhere. The Chuck E. Cheese representative maintained that youth are "less capable of reason," and

that they “aren’t in the business of supervising kids,” that there are insurance concerns and if they had unsupervised youth they are worried daycare licensing laws would apply to them. NYRA argued against all those points, but ultimately what mattered was the law, not our personal opinions and justifications. Chuck E. Cheese cited two Michigan cases dealing with age discrimination in places of public accommodations that they felt justified their policy.

NYRA investigated those cases, which turned out to be Department of Civil Rights v. Beznos Corp., 365 N.W.2d 82 (Mich. 1984) and Cheeseman v American Multi-Cinema, Inc, 108 Mich App 428, 441; 310 NW2d 408 (1981). Neither case, in our opinion, justifies the Chuck E. Cheese policy. The Beznos case dealt with whether an apartment complex could be reserved for adults only, and not allow families with children to rent there. Since the Michigan civil rights law prohibits discrimination based on chronological age, not family status, the apartment won the case. The Chuck E. Cheese policy does however refer to chronological age.

The second case, with the ironic name of Cheeseman, involved whether the anti-age discrimination law applied to movie theater ratings. The case rested primarily on the fact that the civil rights law had an exception that stopped the anti-age discrimination law from superseding other age-based laws. There are other age-based laws related to obscenity for minors and in the spirit of upholding those laws, the ruling supported the movie theater. In the case of Chuck E. Cheese there are no other laws that would grant an exception.

On February 23, NYRA called Chuck E. Cheese back to inform them we had reviewed the cases and found them insufficient to protect their policy from the law. NYRA resolved to file a complaint against Chuck E. Cheese, but once again had trouble finding individuals to file the complaint. The Michigan mother who initially reported the case to us did not respond to e-mails, so we attempted to find our own plaintiff. Conor Nugent, 17, visited several Chuck E. Cheese locations in Maryland on February 25, 2009. Each business had a policy posted out front: “No minor admitted without parent or guardian.” However none of those locations denied Conor entry. NYRA intends to pursue this case more aggressively in the next year and hopes to find additional plaintiffs to file complaints against the business.

Do It Yourself Youth Rights Activism

Our commitment to grassroots-led initiatives for youth rights was strengthened this year by several projects and tech applications. NYRA's Vice-President, Stefan Muller, worked hard last summer developing an official NYRA Facebook Application. The application is a brilliant way to coordinate and incentivise grassroots youth rights action. Users of the application may create youth rights projects, anything from helping to research the laws in a state, to letter writing projects, to helping support chapter activities. New projects have a base amount of points they are worth based on the difficulty of the task. If other users agree the project is useful and helpful, they can rate the project. Higher ratings give the project more points. Activists can then participate in completing the projects. Sometimes projects can be finished by one person doing one action; other times they are larger, ongoing projects that many people can help out with. Users who contribute toward completing a project are awarded the point value for the project. Earned points can be spent on things such as NYRA merchandise or a NYRA membership. User points are also kept track of in a leader board on Facebook, to further encourage users to participate in additional projects. Since the Facebook application was launched in October 112 activists have joined the application and 13 projects were launched.

Even with the fantastic new energy, new ideas and new technological innovation NYRA had to mobilize the grassroots membership, we felt we needed to reach more of our members and encourage more to participate. On November 25, NYRA asked the membership to respond to a survey about the organization and about their involvement in it. Various questions were asked seeking to find out what barriers existed to greater participation from the membership. Did members feel they were too old to help? Too young? Did they have a problem with NYRA's mission or positions? Did they think they could have a bigger impact in other organizations? By and large the members who

A blue rounded rectangular badge with a yellow and orange rainbow arc at the bottom right. The text "Fundraising Team" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font.A blue rounded rectangular badge with a yellow and orange rainbow arc at the bottom right. The text "Blog Team" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font.A blue rounded rectangular badge with a yellow and orange rainbow arc at the bottom right. The text "Video Team" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font.A blue rounded rectangular badge with a yellow and orange rainbow arc at the bottom right. The text "Recruiting Team" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font.A blue rounded rectangular badge with a yellow and orange rainbow arc at the bottom right. The text "Research Team" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font.A blue rounded rectangular badge with a yellow and orange rainbow arc at the bottom right. The text "Letter Writing Team" is written in white, bold, sans-serif font.

filled out the survey spoke with one voice – they wanted more opportunities to get involved and have more information on how to help.

While the Facebook application provided ample opportunities to help out, NYRA launched a new, interrelated project on January 5 – Action Teams. One thought was that previous calls for help or grassroots projects simply hadn't been explained enough or promoted enough. Action teams, working together with the NYRA forums and the NYRA Facebook App, would make it absolutely clear what needed to be done, and how to do it.

The goal was to compartmentalize projects and tasks into small chunks that anyone could easily do. The plan was for members of each team to contribute a minimum level of participation to their team or teams each month. Six teams were created: the Research Team, the Recruiting Team, the Blog Team, the Letter Writing Team, the Video Team and the Fundraising Team. Each month team members are expected to make three edits to the Youth Rights Network, recruit two new NYRA supporters, write one entry to the NYRA blog, write one letter to a public official or company on a youth rights issue, submit one video to NYRA's YouTube channel, or raise \$10, respectively. Each team's monthly activity was roughly comparable in terms of effort to the other tasks, and thus a leader board was created for members of each team to compete against each other and against themselves. Completed tasks would be submitted via the Facebook application for points on there as well. There has been lots of activity on all the teams this year, but we're hoping to see all our grassroots (netroots?) projects truly take off in 2009-2010!

Our grassroots information sharing resource introduced last year, the download section, also had a good year in 2008-2009. In the last year the section has gained 22 new files, bringing the total to 166, and attracted over 24,509 new downloads. Since the section launched over 42,670 files have been downloaded.

NYRA Heads to the Supreme Court – Safford v. Redding

This year is significant as it is the first year NYRA pursued a legal strategy for our various issues. Our anti-age discrimination campaign began a process that could end up in court one day. Our chapter in Southeast Florida filed a lawsuit against the curfew law in West Palm Beach. And the national organization involved itself in cases at the US Supreme Court.

The first such case to catch our eye was Safford v. Redding. This case involved a middle school student in Arizona who was strip searched on the suspicion she had ibuprofen. Even casual observers were shocked at the violation of this young girl's rights. On January 16 it was announced the US Supreme Court was taking up the case. NYRA had its eye on this case for some time as it made its

way through the lower courts. When it was announced the US Supreme Court was taking it on, NYRA immediately leapt into action and looked into the possibility of filing an Amicus Curiae (friend of the court) brief with the court, or joining with others in brief.

The main lawyers defending Savana Redding were with the ACLU's Drug Law Reform Project. NYRA contacted them about how we could get involved and help the case. Initially NYRA was interested in filing our own brief, as many of the current ones being considered did not make an ambitious enough legal



argument in defense of Redding. With limited time, money, and people we were unable to write our own brief however but instead joined onto an existing brief with the Urban Justice Center, Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund and Advocates for Children of New York.

The brief argues, in part, that the common law tradition, and more recent Fourth Amendment jurisprudence since the 1985 landmark Supreme Court decision in *New Jersey v. T.L.O.*, restricts teacher and administrator conduct, including searches and discipline, to that which is reasonable under the circumstances, and that, for a variety of reasons, the school's strip search of Ms. Redding was unreasonable, and therefore unconstitutional.

This is the first amicus brief NYRA had ever been a part of at any court level, and it was a momentous achievement just to be part of this historic case. Oral arguments were heard in the case on April 21, and the decision was handed down on June 25. While the facts and the law seemed firmly on Savana Redding's side, the questioning during oral arguments and the drift away from protecting student rights in recent years caused many to fear the Court would rule against us. Happily, the US Supreme Court sided with Redding, and with student rights, in an 8 to 1 decision. NYRA was proud to have played a part in winning this historic case for student rights.

NYRA Heads to the Supreme Court – Forest Grove School District v. T.A.

While researching the *Safford v. Redding* case, NYRA came across another case that was granted certiorari by the Supreme Court the same day as the Redding case: *Forest Grove School District v. T.A.* The case centered on whether school districts were required to pay for private treatment/schooling in cases where the public school system was unable to properly educate or treat a student. This

surface issue was fairly unremarkable to NYRA and other youth rights advocates and thus no one had paid any attention to this case. However NYRA's executive director, Alex Koroknay-Palicz, uncovered an overlooked detail in this case. The private program T.A. was sent to, and the program his parents wanted the school district to reimburse them for, was actually Mount Bachelor Academy (MBA), an abusive behavior modification camp for teens.

NYRA immediately got the word out to its partners and allies about this, especially to NYRA's project, the Community Alliance for the Ethical Treatment of Youth (CAFETY), an organization specifically devoted to combating the abusive treatment of young people in therapeutic boarding schools. CAFETY outreach teams quickly went into action and identified a number of young adults who had attended MBA at the same time that T.A. would have been there.



NYRA and CAFETY contacted the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law about filing a joint Amicus Curiae brief in this case. The Bazelon Center is a legal advocacy organization concerned with mental health issues and abusive teen residential treatment centers, and also happens to be based in the same office building as NYRA. Intense discussions and research began from all involved as to what legal position we should take on this case – or whether to take one at all.

On February 19, CAFETY co-sponsored a CAFETY/ASTART briefing on Capitol Hill. Organizations representing mental health, child welfare, residential treatment and youth rights from throughout the country had the chance to listen to members from CAFETY speak about their experiences in residential care, and to learn a little bit about the organization. Part of the outreach was devoted to the circumstances surrounding the T.A. case. After the Capitol Hill briefing, CAFETY and NYRA were invited to attend a reception at NYRA's co-tenant The Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law.

Because Mount Bachelor Academy wasn't specifically on trial in this case and none of the main concerns we wanted addressed would have any place in this case it was decided that an amicus brief wasn't the best way to have an impact on this case. The three organizations agreed to work on addressing the circumstances around the T.A. case by helping to draft a press release that expressed our concerns about the impact the ruling might have on expanding the troubled teen industry inadvertently.

Shortly thereafter an MBA staff person contacted a member of ASTART, who directed her to call in an abuse report, which led to a Department of Human

Services (DHS) investigation of the school. During this investigation CAFETY organized former students of MBA to counter program propaganda through the media, and to share their stories of abusive treatment with DHS. At this time MBA is still under investigation.

As part of that story, CAFETY Executive Director Kathryn Whitehead was interviewed by Maia Szalavitz for a Time magazine news story on the situation. CAFETY also conducted a presentation in Portland, Oregon that focused on how the organization was able to expose Mount Bachelor Academy.

Fighting Gang Injunctions in DC

In June, NYRA once again stepped into the fray of Washington, DC politics. This year NYRA joined with organizations such as the ACLU, NAACP, Flex Your Rights and other groups to oppose a gang injunction bill introduced into the DC City Council. The bill, similar to ones tried in Texas and California, would give the DC Attorney General the ability to list individuals as gang members and enact a potentially life-time ban on associating with others alleged to be gang members. As these penalties could apply to individuals who merely associate with suspected gang members (even family members) and not just individuals who have committed actual crimes, NYRA and others saw this as an unconstitutional violation of civil liberties. Undoubtedly the prime victims of such a law would be young people, so NYRA participated in a lobby day on June 11 speaking out against the bill. Thanks to the pressure put on the city council by the coalition, the bill was defeated.

Defending Student Rights

In early September NYRA got a call from a high school student in Virginia who wasn't able to enroll for her senior year in high school because her parents were overseas on a mission trip and she was living with her aunt, who isn't her legal guardian. The girl and her aunt had been working on getting her enrolled since July, but the school wouldn't let her register for classes until her aunt was given legal guardianship over her and that progress was fraught with delays and bureaucracy. She had already missed the first two weeks of school while waiting for the school and the courts, and was frantic she would continue to miss more time in school, so she called NYRA for help.

It makes little sense that the school would enact such barriers to stop her from going to school; ideally NYRA would like to see students enroll for school with or without a guardian. However, helping this one student was NYRA's more immediate concern. NYRA staff called the school's principal and acted as a go between for the girl, the school, and the court, passing on valuable information to everyone involved. In response to NYRA's calls and prodding, within two days the principal had set up a meeting with the school board to allow the student back into school.

Chapters — — — — —

Quantitatively our year was even more successful than last year: two more chapter intents (215) and one more chapter formed (6) than last year. NYRA still lacks the resources, staff and training to properly nurture new chapters and help the large number of chapter intents become fully active and functioning chapters. Like previous years, however the demand is clearly there. Perhaps if additional funding can be found this year allowing NYRA to expand its staff, this high demand will translate into high output.

One more chapter was formed this year than last; in all six chapters were officially formed this year. NYRA saw the creation of chapters in Cibolo, TX; Irvine, CA; Miami, FL; Nanuet, NY; Zionsville, IN and a chapter at the University of Texas: San Antonio. This year NYRA re-introduced monthly online meetings for chapter heads; this is a great way for chapter leaders, and those seeking to become them, to connect and share best practices and collaborate. All participants benefited greatly from the meetings and we hope to continue and expand the meetings in the year to come.

The story of this year is not one of quantity however, but of quality. Two new chapters this year, the Zionsville Student Rights Union and NYRA-Nanuet: Teen Suffrage Organization both hit the ground running and made a great deal of progress. Together with established chapters like NYRA-Southeast Florida, NYRA-Orange County, NYRA-New York City and others, this year was remarkable in terms of activity and chapter sophistication.

The Zionsville Student Rights Union

The most impressive new chapter to come on the scene in 2008-2009 is the Zionsville Student Rights Union (ZSRU). The organization, based at Zionsville Community High School in Zionsville, Indiana, formed independently in the spring of 2008 in response to a new school policy banning iPods. The student rights union was formed because of, and then helped organize, the student backlash to the new policy. Thanks to the group's efforts the iPod policy was soon overturned.

With the impetus for its founding now gone, the group did not fade away but instead grew to become an organization dedicated to defending and advancing the rights of students at Zionsville Community High School (ZCHS). During the summer of 2008 the group, led by its founder and Chairman, Steve Ross, sought to expand its role within the school and link up with a larger national structure, becoming an official local affiliate of the National Youth Rights Association on October 10, 2008.

The ZSRU took on three main campaigns during the 2008-2009 school year, the Final Exam Reform Initiative, the Knowledge Beats Fear/ Zionsville C.A.R.E.S. Campaign, and the Sleep to Succeed Project.

The Final Exam Reform Initiative

The first campaign the chapter took on was to restructure the final exams for seniors at the school. The ZSRU met with the school's principal in the summer of 2008 and began a long series of negotiations with the school administration



and faculty toward a goal of granting seniors who maintained a certain grade in the class an exemption from final exams. In the fall the chapter administered a survey of the school's teachers to get their feedback on the current exam structure and found that a majority of them favored change.

With the teachers on their side the ZSRU and the school administration formed a nine member teacher committee to discuss changes to the school's exams. In the end the committee endorsed ZSRU's proposal and recommended that seniors with a 90% or above in any given class be exempt from that class's spring final exam. This plan was put into place in the spring of 2009 and is a great victory of the chapter. Students were glad to be rid of the burden of studying for final exams whilst preparing to graduate and teachers were glad to provide extra incentive for students to stay focused on school during senior year. This campaign demonstrates how essential student led change is to improving schools.

The Knowledge Beats Fear/ Zionsville C.A.R.E.S. Campaign

In January 2009, the ZCHS SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) chapter began discussing a proposal for random student drug testing at the school. The ZSRU got wind of these discussions quickly, and developed two strategies for combating this dangerous idea. The first strategy involved proposing a partnership between SADD and the ZSRU to find alternative methods of drug abuse deterrence; the second strategy was a full-blown offensive—a plan for a massive and crushing public opinion campaign aimed at fighting any attempts to implement random student drug testing.

After some discussion (and internal strife in the SADD chapter) a partnership between the organizations was formed to seek open, honest and comprehensive drug education instead of drug testing. The ZCHS Assistant Principal offered SADD & the ZSRU an opportunity to speak at a Town Hall Community Conversation.

On April 30, 2009, the ZSRU and SADD presented the material to a group of over 150 students and Zionsville residents. Steve Ross opened the “Community Conversation” with a ten minute presentation explaining why drug testing is ineffective, citing a University of Michigan study on the subject. Ross also gave an overview of the cost inefficiency of random drug testing, providing the average prices per student for different types of drug tests. Finally, Ross presented what the ZSRU and SADD agreed would be the ideal educational plan to combat dangerous drug abuse while keeping the fourth amendment safe too.

The meeting was then opened into a discussion, in which ZSRU & SADD leadership fielded questions and addressed concerns. The meeting was an enormous success, and won the ZSRU a great deal of public praise and support. Public opinion seemed to be staggeringly *against* random drug testing in the community’s schools. The meeting also garnered a bit of publicity after an article in the Zionsville Times-Sentinel.



On May 12, 2009, ZSRU leadership met with Zionsville Chief of Police Rick Dowden, who at the meeting suggested using federal grant money to create a voluntary counseling/treatment program coupled with education for both students and parents. The meeting went very well, and the group left with a plan to implement a two-pronged program, based on education and rehabilitation, that will promote responsibility in decision-making with regard to substance abuse. The campaign has since been renamed “Zionsville C.A.R.E.S.” (Community Action for Responsibility and Education against Substance-abuse) to reflect the fact that random drug testing is no longer regarded as even a viable possibility in the Zionsville community.

The Sleep to Succeed Project

The Sleep to Succeed Project (hereafter “STS”) is an initiative to rearrange school start times between primary and secondary schools in the Zionsville Community School (ZCS) district.

The project originated in an AP English class, in which ZCHS senior Erica Park presented compelling information regarding the effects of school start time on student academic performance and student health—both physical and psychological. In her research, Park concluded that starting school later for adolescents, and in exchange earlier for elementary students, would be beneficial to all parties involved. The Zionsville Student Rights Union recognized the importance of this change and adopted Park’s proposal as an official campaign.

Throughout the spring the chapter held meetings with various officials from the school administration, the Superintendent of Schools, the Parent-Teacher Organization, the School Board, and athletic directors from the high school and both middle schools in the district. With the valuable advice and insight of many school and community officials the chapter drafted and refined a formal proposal to shift the school schedule to be more responsive to the natural body rhythms of the students.

Most officials were quite supportive of the proposed change; the largest stumbling block proved to be coordinating the schedules of sports practices and competitions, especially when sports teams needed to travel to other school districts for games. The ZSRU has done extensive research on how such a change could be accomplished with



minimal disruption to the athletics schedule and has received strong support from student athletes in the school.

Currently the ZSRU plans to introduce a resolution to the School Board for a 9-week pilot program to be conducted the last quarter of the 2009-10 school year. The new Chairman of the ZSRU, Abby Llorico, plans to make the Sleep to Succeed project a top priority in the coming school year and has kept the pressure on during the summer.

Other Projects and the Future

In addition to the chapter's three main campaigns, many additional victories and actions were taken over the last year. The Zionsville Student Rights Union:

- Succeeded in stopping school officials from reading private text messages on confiscated cell phones.
- Ended arbitrary and unfair restrictions on restroom use.
- Reformed parking lot policy (the school overbooked the student lot, so the ZSRU negotiated with the school to acquire additional parking spaces for student use).
- Advised LGBT students in another Indiana school on a discriminatory school policy about public affection.
- Worked on establishing additional NYRA chapters in the state.
- Worked with members of the Democratic Education Consortium and the Student Alliance for Education (in Indianapolis Public Schools) towards a movement to reform Indiana Department of Education policy to reflect a more student-driven educational system.
- Held a successful outreach event on July 4, 2009.

Most importantly the Zionsville Student Rights Union achieved a first for a NYRA chapter: they successfully transitioned to a new crop of leadership. The chapter founders and leadership all graduated in 2009, but instead of shutting down, the chapter successfully transitioned to a new board of directors who hope to have an even more successful year in 2009-2010. The chapter passed the torch formally in a small ceremony on May 28, 2009 attended by the Zionsville Chief of Police, a School Board Member and several parents of Directors old and new. As of July 17 the chapter boasts 560 members and expects to have another strong year fighting for student rights.

NYRA-Nanuet: Teen Suffrage Organization

Another new chapter that is off to a very successful start is based in Nanuet, New York. Initially founded on December 1, the organization became a NYRA chapter on December 6, becoming NYRA's first local chapter based at a middle school. The group's mission is to lower the voting age to 16 in the state of New York (initially they sought 15). The chapter has enjoyed some impressive and positive media coverage.

On December 29th, 2008, NYRA-Nanuet: TSO was featured in the Journal News, a newspaper available throughout the Hudson Valley. This article sparked a news segment on the local Hudson Valley News Channel 12. The news coverage sparked discussion throughout the region, even attracting the interest of state Assembly members.

On January 9th, 2009, NYRA-Nanuet: TSO was featured on the Regional News Network (RNN) which broadcasts in Connecticut, New York, and New Jersey.

The RNN poll of the day also featured teen suffrage, asking viewers whether they believe the voting age should be 15, 18, or 21 (this was before the age focus changed to 16).

On February 24th, 2009, the NYRA-Nanuet: TSO chapter president, Jackie Ferro, served on a panel for a Future Voters of America event at Martin Luther King High School in New York, New York. A decent sized audience was informed about the existence of NYRA and the audience discussed the impact and goals of the organization.

The chapter has been active in writing letters to the state assembly seeking sponsors for legislation to lower the voting age to 16. Working with youth suffrage allies in the state including Future Voters of America and NYRA-New York City, the chapter is hopeful to see progress with their voting age campaign in the next year.

NYRA Southeast Florida

NYRA's chapter in Southeast Florida had only two months to prove themselves at the time of last year's annual report and already had distinguished themselves as a top chapter. This year they have shown what they can do with a full twelve months of action. Thanks to the great progress the chapter has made this year



and a concerted outreach effort, the chapter membership has grown to over 200. The chapter took on two main campaigns this year: their ongoing work to lower the voting age to 16 in the state of Florida and a new campaign to repeal the curfew in the city of West Palm Beach.

Voting Age Campaign

The first major action the chapter took on the voting age this year was the creation of NYRA's voting age television ad. As mentioned earlier this ad was a stunning success and attracted a great deal of attention for NYRA's campaign to lower the voting age. This ad was useful for all NYRA-SEFL work this year and became an important and professional way to get the word out.

In November the chapter joined a longstanding NYRA tradition and held rallies on Election Day to highlight their disenfranchisement. NYRA chapters have held

similar events every election since the organization was founded in 1998. This election was perhaps the most historic election in years, so it is fitting that NYRA-SEFL held the largest Election Day event in NYRA's history.

The event took months of planning and was executed flawlessly. After attending a presentation from Youth Venture during the 2008 NYRA Annual Meeting, the chapter applied for funding from Youth Venture to help cover the costs of the November rallies. While other NYRA chapters had received funding from Youth Venture in the past, NYRA-SEFL received the largest grant to date, a full \$1,000. The funds were used to purchase signs, brochures and t-shirts for the Election Day rally.

In preparation for the event, founding President Jeffrey Nadel and Vice President Zachary Goodman spoke to students in the "Pre-Law" program at Jeaga Middle School in West Palm Beach on November 3rd, 2008. They conducted a mock



election for the forty students and spoke about NYRA-SEFL's efforts to lower the voting age to sixteen and about the importance of youth rights in general. Students were involved and the speech made the connection between the Boston Tea Party and taxation without representation being the impetus behind the revolutionary war and the modern day plight that youth face.

On November 4th, 2008, after months of planning, 50 members of NYRA-SEFL rallied at five different polling places in the area. They disseminated information, answered questions and solicited signatures for a voting age petition. Precinct captains were appointed to manage each group of members. Members distributed over 1,500 brochures, held up signs and answered questions from the public. Not only were many voters reached through this effort, but several lawmakers as well. The overall response was extremely positive. The rally was covered by local and university press (Palm Beach Post and Florida Atlantic University).

On November 29th, 2008, President Jeffrey Nadel spoke at the meeting of the Palm Beach Legislative Delegation, which is comprised of state representatives and senators whose districts include parts of Palm Beach County. There, he explained NYRA-SEFL's effort to lower the voting age in Florida and encountered

a very positive reception. In December, Nadel spoke to the Board of Trustees of Saint Andrew's School along with the leaders of the Republican Club and the Young Democrats about youth empowerment and the importance of lowering Florida's voting age.

Over the course of the year, the chapter met with dozens of Florida state representatives and senators in their district offices. Then, on March 25th, 2008, chapter members used their Spring Break to travel to the State Capitol in Tallahassee, Florida for an intensive week of lobbying on the issue. They met with eighteen legislators in three days, securing commitments of sponsorship for NYRA-SEFL's effort to lower the voting age in Florida to sixteen. While students across the state, and across the country, were enjoying their week of freedom from school, NYRA-Southeast Florida was working hard to secure the freedoms and rights that all youth are denied year-round.

Each year, the League of Women Voters of Palm Beach County holds an essay contest. The winner receives the Eckler Award, a college scholarship. NYRA-SEFL President Jeffrey Nadel was invited to speak at the League's annual luncheon at which the award is presented. Because of NYRA-SEFL's efforts, this year's topic was about lowering the voting age to sixteen. On June 22nd, 2009, the contest's winner read his essay and then Nadel presented his speech. Following that, each answered questions from the audience, which included State Representative Mark Pafford and Palm Beach County Clerk and Comptroller Sharon Bock. The reception was extremely positive and many attendees were convinced. The League has expressed its desire to further an alliance with NYRA-SEFL. The chapter also spoke about the voting age and curfew campaigns at a meeting of the Libertarian Party of Palm Beach County.



Curfew Campaign

In September of 2008, NYRA-Southeast Florida took on a second campaign, and one that would make history by the summer of 2009. The chapter targeted the local curfew law of West Palm Beach, a law enacted in 2007 that bans everyone under 18 from the downtown district from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. on weekdays and 11 p.m. to 6 a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. NYRA-SEFL began researching case law in September and began building a solid legal case against the law. Their research demonstrated the unconstitutionality of the law and they began negotiating with city attorneys to convince the city to repeal the curfew law voluntarily.

A number of meetings were held between the chapter and the city over the next few months before it became obvious that a direct appeal to the West Palm Beach's City Commission was necessary. On March 11th, 2009, NYRA-SEFL's President and Vice President attended a City Commission meeting. They were accompanied by a camera crew and reporter from WPTV, the local NBC affiliate. During the Public Comments portion of the meeting, both Nadel and Goodman spoke to the Commission, explaining NYRA-SEFL's position on the illegally-enforced curfew and citing relevant case law.



It soon became clear that the city was not going to budge, so NYRA-SEFL retained well-known civil rights attorney Barry Silver who had recently won a high-profile case against the city of West Palm Beach

defending the rights of the homeless. On March 30th the chapter attracted additional press coverage from the Palm Beach Post and the local ABC affiliate.

May 1st is recognized as "Law Day," a holiday meant to reflect on the role of law in the foundation of the United States and to recognize its importance for society. On May 1, 2009, NYRA-SEFL held a protest march through downtown West Palm Beach during the restricted curfew hours. Initially, downtown police and City Attorneys confronted members. They were discouraged from staying in the downtown area. After consulting with the chapter's attorney, Barry Silver, and being advised that there was no legitimate reason for being barred from downtown during a protest, President Jeffrey Nadel gave the members authorization to return to the downtown area. They did so and, in the process, garnered the support of passersby and were interviewed by CBS-12 and WPTV. Nadel gave a speech downtown and received support from people of all walks of life present in the curfew area.

On June 23rd, 2009, NYRA-SEFL filed its lawsuit against the City of West Palm Beach, marking the first lawsuit filed by a youth-led civil rights group against a youth curfew. After the lawsuit, National Youth Rights Association of Southeast Florida, Inc., et al. vs. City of West Palm Beach, was filed, NYRA-SEFL held a press conference. The press conference occurred at 10:01 PM, a minute after curfew enforcement begins on weekdays. The filing was covered by WPTV (NBC affiliate), WPBF (ABC affiliate), CBS-12 (CBS affiliate), and WFLX (FOX affiliate). Just two weeks earlier the New York Court of Appeals struck down the youth curfew law in Rochester, NY in a 5 to 2 decision saying it violated the



constitutional rights of teenagers and parents, providing an excellent backdrop against which to introduce NYRA's first anti-curfew lawsuit. The curfew lawsuit is an exciting step forward for youth rights in Florida and nationally. Youth rights supporters across the country will be following this story closely as it develops in this year to come.

NYRA-New York City

NYRA's oldest continuously maintained chapter, NYRA-New York City, rallied on the steps of City Hall for increased youth civic participation and youth voting on Election Day. Not only did the City Hall rally draw a decent turnout, but they also got some great video of pro-youth speeches and interviews that they will be able to use in the future. As a follow up, the chapter participated in a youth vote discussion on November 22 at Hunter College with Future Voters of America. As covered earlier, NYRA-NYC began a new project this year called yCivics with the support and funding of Mobilize.org to promote and inspire youth civic engagement and youth rights.

NYRA-Orange County

NYRA's chapter in Orange County, California, another long standing and active chapter, continued to build on their impressive record this year. As with past years the chapter focused its advocacy efforts inside the California Democratic Party. This year the chapter pushed for a resolution officially endorsing H.R. 911, the bill introduced by California Congressman George Miller and passed by the US House of Representatives last year that would regulate abusive behavior modification camps for teens. While fighting emotional and physical abuse of young people seems like an issue no one could oppose, especially when the bill is championed by a California Democrat, the California Democratic Party was quite reluctant to get behind it.

On May 1 of 2009 the chapter called for legislation to protect college students from "deadbeat parents." Under financial aid rules, an amount for family contribution, based on family income, is withheld from college aid under the assumption that families will pay that amount. Too often, parents are unwilling to pay that contribution and students are unable to afford college. In other words,

students are being punished for income to which they don't have access and the punishment is severely restricting their ability to pay for college. The chapter issued a strongly worded statement seeking a solution to this problem.

Looking Ahead to 2010— — — — —

The youth rights movement exists because ageism is a serious problem that disrupts, degrades and destroys the lives of millions of young people. Our goal is nothing less than the liberation of each of those millions who suffer today, whether they know it or not, and all those future generations yet to be born.

Yet measuring ourselves against such ambitious goals can sometimes be discouraging. Why are our war veterans still being arrested for being too young to have a beer? Why are the thoughts, hopes and aspirations of our youth still cast aside on Election Day? Why do we still live in a nation where it is illegal to simply walk down the street at night? Why do students still have to attend schools that resemble prisons more than institutions of learning? Why haven't we put a stop to this?

We must always have our eyes on our ultimate objective, but we must never lose sight of the fact that every day we are presented choices and opportunities to make this world a little bit better. An impassioned letter, a kind word, a silent protest or a helping hand all can make some positive change in the lives of real people.

This was an amazing year full of concrete action in defense of the rights of youth. Real impacts were made on the lives of real people, and that must always remain foremost in our minds as the purpose of our struggle. This isn't a war where we will win a decisive battle and then go home the victors. This is a process of slow, uneven change in the hearts, minds and laws of this nation.

Speaking in Capetown in 1966, Robert F. Kennedy said, "It is from numberless diverse acts of courage and belief that human history is shaped. Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope, and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current which can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."

In the year to come we must ever be mindful of the people affected by age discrimination, and ever mindful of the small ways we can lessen that burden. Every time we speak out in the press we open people's minds and give people hope. Every business we desegregate we give just a bit more dignity to the lives of youth. Every school policy or law we change we loosen the yoke of oppression.

We must also remember that “we” is you. This organization is you. Your efforts, your actions, your advocacy is what makes this organization and this movement strong. We must all look at ourselves critically this year and ask ourselves “How can I help fight ageism? What have I done lately? What more can I do?”

NYRA has created impressive tools to harness your energy and your passion. Tools to ensure that your ripple of hope carries as far as possible. Use these tools this year. Get active and stay active, because not only do your actions help this organization grow and help this nation move closer to a brighter future, your actions help bring a brighter present to real people today.

Together we can fight the ill of ageism. Together we can move this country forward. Together our actions will create ripples through the ocean and build to a great current sweeping aside all the barriers to our successful journey.

National Youth Rights Association Cash Flow Report 2008-2009

Income

	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	TOTAL
Chapter Fees	30.00	30.00				30.00							90.00
Advertising	50.00	50.00	50.00	50.00	50.00								250.00
In-Kind Publishing	24.95		800.00								26.86	120.26	972.07
Rights/Royalties			413.17										413.17
Merchandise Sales	10.00	9.08		53.50			128.00					90.74	291.32
Fiscal Sponsorship Fees							698.25		581.00	50.00		75.00	1,404.25
Dues/Donations	597.00	1,855.00	665.00	36.00	491.00	240.00	29.00	1,240.00	383.95	313.32	3,613.00	5,770.26	15,233.53
CAFETY - Income	300.00	925.00	2,110.00			25.00		11,570.00	1,000.00		250.00		16,180.00
Y Civics - Income								50.00			1,250.00		1,300.00

TOTAL	1,011.95	2,869.08	4,038.17	139.50	541.00	295.00	855.25	12,860.00	1,964.95	363.32	5,139.86	6,056.26	34,834.34
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Operational Costs

Executive Director Salary		925.00	925.00	925.00	925.00	925.00	925.00	925.00	925.00		220.65		7,620.65
Operations Director Salary												1,600.00	1,600.00
Paypal & Account Fees	19.37	59.36	25.07	4.31	16.58	6.14	1.37	6.13	35.00	7.00	19.11		199.44
Postage									130.20		26.86	28.94	186.00
Tech	114.95	75.97	815.97	15.97		90.00	90.00		14.99	90.00	15.97		1,323.82
Rent	627.00	448.00	448.00	448.00	448.00	448.00	448.00	448.00	448.00	448.00	448.00	448.00	5,555.00
Advertising		2,278.00							89.19				2,367.19
Food	227.62											209.03	436.65
Merchandise Conference/Tabling Fees	50.00			100.00		50.00						50.00	250.00
Office Supplies	37.62								23.78		64.50	20.26	146.16
CAFETY - Travel	130.60	350.00	750.00	1,502.00					482.06	1,548.00		699.14	5,461.80
CAFETY - Merchandise					630.00								630.00
CAFETY - Misc											238.02	65.65	303.67
CAFETY - Sponsor Fee							698.25		578.50	50.00		12.50	1,339.25
CAFETY - Incorporation			10.00		780.00								790.00
CAFETY - Tech												1,036.49	1,036.49
CAFETY - ED Salary					1,100.00		1,000.00			1,500.00			3,600.00
CAFETY - Advertising		2,000.00											2,000.00
CAFETY - Events		121.45			158.84		130.00	1,976.82	600.00				2,987.11
Y Civics - Tech												782.99	782.99
Y Civics - Transportation												53.50	53.50
Y Civics - Sponsor Fee									2.50			65.50	68.00

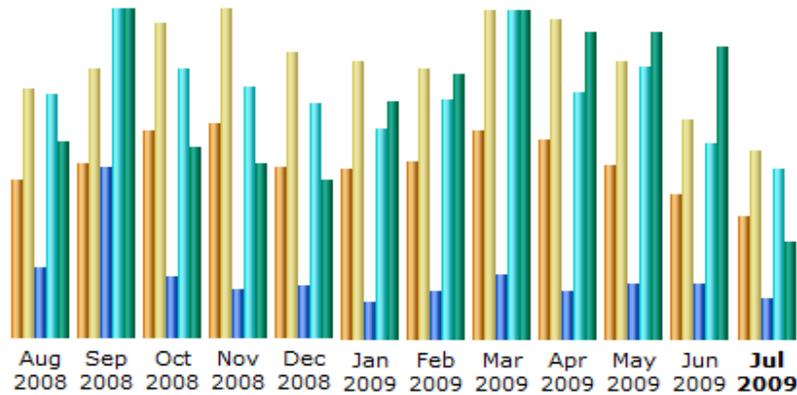
TOTAL	1,207.16	6,257.78	2,974.04	3,009.64	4,058.42	1,519.14	3,292.62	3,355.95	3,329.22	3,643.00	1,033.11	5,102.00	37,877.59
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Operating Income	-195.21	-3,388.70	1,064.13	-2,870.14	-3,517.42	1,224.14	2,437.37	9,504.05	-1,364.27	-3,279.68	4,106.75	954.26	
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Cash Balance	19,781.30	16,392.60	17,456.73	14,586.59	11,069.17	9,845.03	7,407.66	16,911.71	15,547.44	12,267.76	16,374.51	17,328.77	
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Web Statistics Report

Every year, we collect information from our web server on the traffic to the NYRA website. Because this information is included in the Annual Report every year, we can generally compare our web traffic to previous years.



Month	Unique visitors	Number of visits	Pages	Hits	Bandwidth
Aug 2008	26577	41851	373879	1284451	16.15 GB
Sep 2008	29256	45130	900132	1730513	27.10 GB
Oct 2008	34920	52732	325774	1419494	15.69 GB
Nov 2008	36118	55146	258978	1320702	14.42 GB
Dec 2008	28686	47817	271147	1233239	12.98 GB
Jan 2009	26547	43100	177618	997117	12.21 GB
Feb 2009	27438	42011	231211	1132856	13.69 GB
Mar 2009	32282	50904	307649	1547567	16.88 GB
Apr 2009	31050	49590	227602	1162004	15.84 GB
May 2009	27118	43146	263218	1281611	15.84 GB
Jun 2009	22415	33942	260469	922441	15.02 GB
Jul 2009	19135	29303	195380	799725	5.03 GB

In the past year, our website averaged 28,461 visitors a month, up from 26,822 last year. Also, the average number of hits per month (1,235,976) is up from last year (1,107,403). Visitors is the more important of these stats, and it is encouraging to see it increase. This number has been steadily climbing over the last few years; YouthRights.org averaged 24,828 visitors per month in 06-07. Nearly 350,000 people visited NYRA's website this last year; that is an achievement to be proud of.

Search Engine Placement

Google, one of the most popular search engines and the search engine most often used to find NYRA, was used to determine where NYRA ranks on the list of results for a variety of search terms. The same search terms have been run every year to allow for comparisons of our standings between years.

	Ranking in 2009	Ranking in 2008	Ranking in 2007
Youth rights	1 st and 2 nd	1 st	1 st
Voting age	5 th and 6 th	4 th	2 nd
Lowering the voting age	1 st and 2 nd	1 st	1 st and 2 nd
Gulag school	7 th and 8 th	4 th	5 th and 6 th
Drinking age in Hawaii	38 th / 20 th	49 th	6 th
Lowering the drinking age	157 th	18 th	3 rd
In re Gault	Not in top 150	94 th	4 th
Drinking age	17 th	30 th	22 nd
Youth liberation	5 th	7 th	14 th
Youth curfew	1 st	1 st	1 st
Youth emancipation	58 th / 9 th	40 th	48 th and 49 th
Adulthood	58 th / 18 th	3 rd	8 th
Ageism	Not in 150 / 13 th	Not in top 150	142 nd
Curfew	9 th	37 th	28 th
Lower driving age	126 th	5 th	5 th
Student rights	40 th	Not in top 150	Not in top 150
Youth empowerment	Not in 150 / 65 th	Not in top 150	Not in top 150
Youth activism	Not in 150 / 99 th	Not in top 150	Not in top 150
Zero tolerance	Not in top 150	Not in top 150	Not in top 150
Drinking age Colorado	1 st	1 st	1 st

Some of our standings have remained the same or improved. While some of our standings have gotten worse, this is encouraging in some cases. For example, on the issue of the drinking age, many of the websites that have overtaken us were news sites reporting on the many prominent proposals to lower the drinking age this year. The good news is that much is occurring in the world of youth rights. However, NYRA would still like to be among the first search engine results on these issues so that interested searchers find NYRA before they find a website presenting an opposing viewpoint. While NYRA's website has dropped significantly for users searching for "Lowering the drinking age," NYRA's drinking age Facebook Cause is the 24th result.

In cases with a split listing, the first rank is YouthRights.org, NYRA's main website, and the second rank is YouthRights.net, NYRA's project the Youth Rights Network.