



# ULSTER COUNTY NEWS

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## **Historical Walk Through The Lives Of Youth**

The year was 1945 and it was the end of World War II. The first nuclear bomb was built and tested. Rationing had an impact on the food, the clothes, and the toys that were available. Youth across the country had to reconfigure their lives as their mothers returned to the home as the fathers returned to the worksites. Youth had answered President Wilson's challenge of 1917; in which he asked "Is not this perhaps the chance for which you have been looking to give your time and efforts in some measure to meet our national needs . . . ?" For three decades, their role and responsibilities in their community was clear.

Now, with the country in a transition phase, the youth role was not so clear. Following World War II, youth sought out meaningful activities needed in peacetime. Many youth groups, such as the Boy and Girl Scouts, Boys Clubs, and the YMCA, became more pronounced. For those youth seeking services, opportunities and supports, these resources stepped up and prospered. The funding for these resources also flourished.

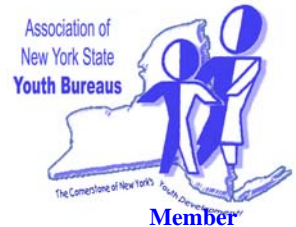
The New York State Legislature created the Temporary New York State Youth Commission in order to dispense aid and assistance to municipalities through Youth Bureaus to deal with juvenile delinquency and youth development. The purpose of Youth Bureaus was to coordinate and supplement the activities of public and private agencies devoted in whole or in part to the care and protection of youth. Programs were intended to provide services for the personal development of youth and to prevent, detect, and treat delinquency.

Funding was provided to local governments based on a per capita formula of twenty-five cents per youth residing in the community. Over the years, the per capita formula gradually increased until in 1974, New York State made a giant step forward by giving permanency to the New York State Youth Commission through the passage of New York State Executive Law – Article 19-A. This is the original Youth Bureau Comprehensive Planning Legislation and it passed both the Senate and the Assembly unanimously and was signed into law by Governor Malcolm Wilson.

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Families during this time boomed. With the United States Education Department reporting the proportion of working mothers in two-parent households rising from 41% in 1975 to 64% in 1991. "This increase in women working outside the home caused a significant transformation of families with children."

The year was 1974, it was widely believed, as reported by Wikipedia, the free online encyclopedia, "that the nuclear family, religion and trust in the government" were eroding. People Magazine begins and the Brady Bunch ends. "The Super Outbreak, the largest series of tornadoes in history, hits 13 U.S. states and one Canadian province. By the time the last of 149 tornadoes hit early the following morning, 315 die and over 5,000 are injured. Ronald DeFeo, Jr. murders his parents and his four siblings in what would later become known as "The Amityville Horror House". Richard Nixon becomes the first President of the United States to resign from office. Vice President Gerald Ford, becomes the 38th President, taking the oath of office in the East Room of the White House. Hank Aaron of the Atlanta Braves breaks Babe Ruth's home run record by hitting his 715th career home-run off Los Angeles Dodgers pitcher Al Downing at Atlanta-Fulton County Stadium."



It was this Act of 1974 in which New York State stepped to the plate for positive youth development. It was at this point, New York State leaders determined \$4.50 per youth would be available for counties that work with their cities, towns and villages in developing a common plan of action in addressing youth needs. It was unanimously agreed that in 1974 \$4.50 should be the standard per capita rate across New York State. Regardless of community type: rural, suburban, or urban, youth across New York State would receive the same level of support. In addition, the local input provided by an informed citizen's review and evaluation of the youth programs in the county would ensure the success and integration of a comprehensive plan for youth.

This was done in spite of the fact that the family income in the 1970's showed little to no gain and the nation was in the mist of two oil crises. From 1970's to 1990, the correlation between hours watching television and academic achievement starts to be researched. Into the 1980's and 90's youth became much less likely to volunteer for their community than older adults. The lessons instilled from generations of individuals pulling together during times of war and Depression did not resonate in an era of unprecedented juvenile delinquency of the 1950's and the Free Speech and Civil Liberties Movements of the 1960's. In response, the New York State Legislature maintains a consistent push forward with funding for YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION. From 1985 to 1990, this funding receives its highest amounts ever, \$6.50 per capita. In the midst of an era of conservatism, it is recognized that structured youth programs offer future economic development through the strong, skilled, responsible youth able to meet the demands of an emerging global economy.

A giant leap backward occurs in 1991. We have the end of the Cold War with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the start of the Gulf War: Operation Desert Storm with air strikes against Iraq. The internet and dot com culture booms. The first Nicktoon, Doug, is aired. The Super Nintendo Entertainment System is released in the United States. Seventy tornadoes break out in the central United States, killing 17. And the New York State Legislature accepts a budget that cuts by more than one third, 35%, the per capita community matching funds for YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION.

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Youth are again thrown into a state of confusion seeking roles and responsibilities within their community. Culturally, 1991 is recognized for its revisit of social issues through TV and Internet outlets. All In The Family and The Cosby Show programs of the 1970's and 80's has lead to the Seinfeld and Simpson phenomenon of the 1990's. Grunge and Punk music speak to a common Generation X cynicism for their communities. In general, a reciprocal feeling of malaise between the generations leads to reverting back to the "Me Generation" of the 1970's.

The year is now 2007. New York State has maintained a similar per capita allocation for the past decade as the \$4.50 of 1974. The Consumer Price Index lists \$4.50 in 1974 has the same buying power at \$18.57 in 2007. The over five (5) million youth served today, in New York State, have not seen a cost of living increase in their entire lifetime. But the feelings have changed.

Terrorism has landed on New York State soil. Communication and connection to each other has never been more important. The recognition that ripples from our behaviors affect someone else, if not here, then globally. Economic growth becomes the buzzwords as everyone looks to the future. The question becomes do we continue to make choices based on the solutions for today or do we prepare and develop the solutions for tomorrow?

Throughout history, we have documented the successes and failure of our nation as a whole. We recognize that it is when we are at our most troubled times that we look to protect and serve the children. When we recoup from war, recover from Depressions, and look to improve our future, it is then that we find the solution in the support and development of our youth.

It is time to ensure that consistent support of locally developed youth programs is no longer dependent on a nation in crisis. It is time to recognize the strength in locally driven and locally produced resources meet the needs of the youth of tomorrow. The wide array of services offered through the YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND DELINQUENCY PREVENTION funding source complement and supplements the efforts of our schools, communities, and families. Comprehensive planning and program provision comes at a cost - a cost of \$6.50 per child in New York State for 2008. This is an increase in the current New York State Budget of \$1.98 per child or less than \$.04 per week per child.

Please support New York State's youth with a message of consistency over the years rather than Band-Aid solutions in time of crisis.