

2011 APPLICATION

Greater Midland, Michigan

Section 1: Community Demographics

1.1 Total community population

What is the total population of your community?

82,548

1.2 Community Youth Population

What is the number of 0-18 year olds in your community?

22,752

1.3 Community Ethnicity

Please provide the ethnic breakdown of your community by providing percentages for each ethnicity.

White: 94.5

Black or African American: 1

American Indian and Alaska Native: 1

Asian: 2

Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander: 1

Some other race: 1

Hispanic or Latino (of any race): 1

Section 2: Overview

This section is worth 25 points. A total of 500 points are available for the application.

In our search for America’s 100 Best Communities for Young People, we are looking for communities that work across sectors to address the local dropout issue, reduce challenges young people face, and better prepare young people for college and the 21st century workforce. We understand the inherent challenges involved in significantly curbing the dropout rate, and therefore “Best” does not mean perfect, but committed.

2.1 Your Community as a 100 Best Communities for Young People

Why is your community one of America’s 100 Best Communities for Young People?

(300 word maximum – SAME AS 2010)

Midland’s young people are our shining glory. We offer countless programs that encourage children to embrace volunteerism, educational excellence, positive behaviors, and personal values so they’ll grow into happy, healthy adults.

Youth develop healthy bodies and outlooks through recreational outlets, including a volunteer-run soccer complex; community centers offering financial assistance to low-income children; faith-based centers; 25+ free, family-oriented Downtown Midland events; and more.

Many safe, welcoming environments are available. Camp Fire, the ROCK Youth Center, and other before and afterschool programs, plus summer activities specially geared for the disabled, help our area’s disadvantaged.

Youth learn to value education with the help of caring adults. Job shadowing and co-op jobs are prevalent. Also, career exploration opportunities and life-changing mentors motivate students to excel at learning.

When participating in this application process, 18 organizational representatives noted several key things about Midland’s youth focus. First, we are quick to develop new programs to combat current problems. For example, with a rise in dating violence across the nation, Midland’s Shelterhouse has successfully initiated Safe Dates, which promotes healthy relationship behaviors among high schoolers. Training has been well-received, with participating youth encouraging its extension to all area teens.

Second, while new initiatives are created, outstanding existing programs continue. For instance, ongoing programs aimed at rehabilitating court system youth has resulted in a recent dramatic decrease in re-offenses (76% of youth re-offended between 1997-2007, with that number reduced to 17% between 2008-2010).

Lastly, youth-oriented partnerships are widespread, creating opportunities for children regardless of background. Additionally, citizens rise to the challenge of funding needed programs, as evidenced by 11 local foundations that annually donate millions to youth-centered initiatives. For instance, Midland's minor league baseball foundation grants \$100,000+ each year to local nonprofits.

These are just a few examples of why we're a 100 Best Community for youth.

2.2 Your Community's Biggest Challenge

What do you consider to be the biggest challenge your community faces in ensuring that all young people graduate?

Note: This question is for research purposes only and will not count toward your total score.

Other priorities taking precedence

Section 3: Collaboration, Partnerships and Youth as a Community Priority

This section is worth 125 points.

In our search for the nation's 100 Best Communities for Young People, we are looking for communities that have made a special commitment to focusing on youth and including young people in decision-making. That commitment should incorporate all sectors of the community, from local schools and youth service providers to businesses, charitable organizations and local government. And most importantly, that commitment should be carried out through concerted community efforts. The following questions will help us determine what your community is doing to make youth a priority.

3.1 Prioritizing Youth

How does your community make youth a priority in budgeting, policymaking, services, or other ways?

(400 word maximum – 100 MORE WORDS THAN 2010)

During 2010, youth-serving agencies, government, education, labor, faith-based organizations, medical/mental health practitioners, funders, and interested youth and adults came together to develop a Youth Master Plan (YMP) for Midland County.

The YMP development process, facilitated by Midland's Legacy Center for Student Success, began by reviewing all outcome data on youth matters ranging from "pre-birth" to adulthood. Resulting data were segmented into what's working and what issues need further attention. 200+ participants identified gaps and developed goals, strategies, and action plans to address targeted opportunities. Four areas of concern were identified: Physical Health; Social, Emotional, and Spiritual Health; Education; and Basic Needs and Safety. Specific goals were agreed upon relating to Improved Parenting, Program Access, Agency Collaboration, Community Engagement, and Developmental Assets.

A community-wide summit is planned for summer 2011 to track progress and identify where additional efforts might be beneficial.

Youth-serving organizations are using the YMP to plan their programs and activities, and funders are utilizing it to guide financing for youth-oriented programs. Five broad metrics are being tracked to assure progress in achieving YMP goals.

One stellar YMP application is seen in developmental asset-building programs through Midland County's Juvenile Courts. These programs' outcomes are stunning, including a 35% reduction in delinquency, 56% reduction in recidivism/re-arrests, and a cost savings to the courts of approximately \$1.5 million over the past three years.

Commitment to reaching goals in plans such as the YMP is noticeable in other ways:

-Despite difficult economic times, Midlanders showed their strong support for youth education by voting in a \$4.7 million education enhancement millage in 2009. Of Michigan's 57 intermediate districts, only two others have passed such a millage.

-Local government supports youth-centered programs that help keep kids healthy and happy. In 2009-2010, our City government-funded public library devoted 21% of its \$539,000 materials and programming budget to youth literacy and leadership development. Midland Parks and Recreation budgeted \$3.5 million in 2010 to maintain recreational programs and Midland's 72 parks, which offer safe places and family-oriented activity. City Council supports recreation subsidies so children from all socioeconomic backgrounds can enjoy healthy activities at little/no cost.

-Since 2009, Midland Police have budgeted for two full-time officers at our two public high schools. The young policemen are viewed by teens as a non-threatening safe haven and positive additions to the hallways. They effectively anticipate and stop potential problems and encourage wavering students to stay in school.

3.2 Youth Leadership

How does your community support youth leadership or involve youth in local policy and/or budgeting decisions?

(400 word maximum – 100 MORE WORDS THAN 2010)

Midland's young people have countless opportunities for leadership and policymaking in Greater Midland:

-Midland Community Center and Midland Area Partnership for Drug-Free Youth coordinate LEAD, a group of high school youth who meet weekly to plan healthy activities, attend conferences/camps, volunteer, create radio PSA's on advocacy issues, and mentor peers with the goal of keeping kids off drugs and alcohol. With the aid of such student-led programs, State Police data show that alcohol-related crashes among 16-20-year olds have decreased 77% countywide since 2006.

-Northwood University's Midland County Youth Leadership (MCYL) program – an annual conference – has graduated 855 high school freshmen since it began in 1992. The conference is planned and implemented by MCYL alums (with adult assistance), and teaches team-building, diversity, decision-making, goal-setting, and the importance of helping others. Through MCYL, students learn more about their role in and value to the community. Surveyed teens said the program taught them practical problem-solving tools, built self-esteem, and influenced their choices, as evidenced by an impressive 78% volunteerism rate among alums surveyed.

-The Youth Action Council (through the Midland Area Community Foundation) is comprised of 6-12 graders whose primary purpose is to review and award grants (\$40,000 annually) to local nonprofits. Its 20-30 members also collectively volunteer 60 hours a month and attend trainings to enhance leadership skills.

-The Grace A. Dow Memorial Library's Teen Advisory Board meets monthly, giving youth the chance to influence teen services by developing impactful library programming.

-Midland County high schools encourage membership in national organizations such as Distributive Education Clubs of America (DECA) and Business Professionals of America (BPA). These two organizations offer students the opportunity to advance in leadership, citizenship, and academic skills through activities and healthy competition. In addition, youth are encouraged to join Key Clubs, which actively focus on student volunteerism and its importance toward building and sustaining healthy communities. Over 700 members strong, National Honor Societies at area high schools promote community service and leadership and the importance of developing characteristics essential to providing society with strong, civic-minded future leaders.

-To allow students to experience the importance of volunteering and its impact to the community, a new charity program sponsored by The Dow Chemical Company invites area students to "pay it forward" in exchange for grants of up to \$1,000. Through the program, K-12 student groups, teams, and community service clubs participate in volunteer work, which promotes regionalism and volunteerism.

3.3 Support for the Most Vulnerable Young People

How does your community work to ensure the well-being of the most vulnerable young people, including youth in foster care, GLBT youth, and others?

(400 word maximum – 100 MORE WORDS THAN 2010)

Midland County continues to utilize its many outstanding established programs for the betterment of our most vulnerable youth:

-The Midland Department of Human Services (DHS) enjoys the positive results of a board that is comprised of 18-21-year-old foster kids who ensure there are people and resources available for youth who are transitioning from foster care to adulthood.

-The Baby Court Program incorporates a team approach across multiple agencies and continues providing intensive intervention services to families who have come into the abuse/neglect court system. The program continues to keep families together when they otherwise would have ended up with parental rights terminated.

-The Multi-Systemic Therapy program for juvenile delinquents and their families has resulted in impressive outcomes. Of the 42 youth and families that have completed the program during the past two years, only 2% have re-offended. 100% have remained in their own schools, and 95% have remained in their own homes.

-Brief Strategic Family Therapy is a recent addition to the system of support for our youth involved with Midland County's Probate Court. This evidence-based program focuses on strengthening families by giving them the tools they need to reduce behavior problems while building positive relationships in their homes, schools, and community. Typically, the program lasts for a total of 12-16 family sessions.

A combination of these programs aimed at rehabilitating youth, in conjunction with services and programs at the Juvenile Care Center (JCC) where a unique population of students are served and a Probate Court-run foster care program, have created dramatic results since the start of coordinated efforts three years ago. Between 1997 and 2007, the percentage of youth who completed the JCC's Day Treatment program who re-offended was 76%. For the years 2008-2010, since the rehabilitative programs were implemented, the re-offend rate dropped to an astonishing 17%. In addition, the average length of stay at the JCC has decreased 36%. Keeping Midland youth in-county at local foster homes rather than in out-of-county placements has proven to be more effective in treating and rehabilitating our youth, and it is done at a substantial cost savings for the county.

3.4 Community Collaboration

Please describe the ways in which your community collaborates across sectors to ensure positive outcomes for young people. In your response, please identify the sectors (i.e. nonprofit, government, education, business, etc.) involved in these collaborations and

address the outcomes that have resulted from these partnerships.

This may include public/private, multi-sector, school/community or other partnerships on the large or small scale.

(500 word maximum – 200 MORE WORDS THAN 2010)

The official collaborative entity for Greater Midland is the Health and Human Services Council (HHSC), a network of representatives from local nonprofits, courts, foundations, health and human services organizations, government, schools, churches, and others working to promote Midland's welfare. It's evolved over 20 years through the commitment of agencies that share common challenges and concerns. In 2010 HHSC helped develop a community-wide Youth Master Plan, which will result in understanding what's working, where gaps are, and what organizations can do to ensure that youth have access to needed services. A 2011 Summit will help us move forward with and ensure implementation of the plan.

Additional collaborations are noteworthy:

-Midland County Educational Service Agency's Great Start Collaborative brings 25 agencies/businesses/parental groups together to ensure a system of coordinated resources and supports to nurture and care for kids ages 0-5.

-Since 1990, Early On has targeted developmentally delayed or disabled children ages 0-3, involving Early Head Start, Community Mental Health (CMH), Family and Children's Services, Department of Human Services, and community centers. This collaborative has proven successful: the percentage of Midland children identified as needing special services is twice the State average, meaning more children are reached early and identified for programs geared for future school success.

-Midland's Preschool Partnership, comprised of state- and federally-funded preschool programs, provides a centralized registration process (phone or web) for families. This collaboration ensures that available slots are full and all eligible children receive service.

-Researching children's non-school-related learning and thriving issues, The Legacy Center for Student Success collaborates with multiple agencies and community groups to assess programming that promotes success-enabling developmental assets in children.

-The Midland Area Partnership for Drug-Free Youth Coalition (MAP) board advises on assessment of community youth needs and programming, helps increase collaborations and community partnerships, and assists with organizational and community policy development. Coalition members includes representatives from education, law enforcement, nonprofits, community centers, mental health, faith-based groups, parents, County commissioners, the hospital, our local university, the Courts, and youth recreation.

-With youth prescription drug abuse on the rise nationally, MAP, plus Midland's Police and Sheriff's departments, have partnered since 2009 to collect and eliminate 2,000+ pounds of unused/outdated drugs, keeping them out of children's hands. Similarly, Midland Rotary Club

(over 160 members from diverse organizations) has formed a substance abuse prevention committee that works with community partners to reduce drug and alcohol abuse locally.

-Quality services to young people depend on our community's ability to maintain a workforce that is highly trained and qualified to provide those services. Midland Area Non-Profit Training Consortium provides area nonprofits the means to have their training needs met in a sustainable way. Community partners work together to reduce or eliminate duplication of training services. Partners include nonprofits, educators, CMH, the hospital, and faith-based organizations.

-Children need safe homes to reach their full potential. Midland County Continuum of Care, comprised of representatives from 28 public and private agencies and businesses, works to provide housing-related services to the homeless or those living in substandard housing.

Section 4: The Five Promises

This section is worth 250 points.

Research and experience demonstrate that children's chances of success in life greatly increase when they experience the key supports – or “Five Promises” – they need to be successful. The Five Promises include Caring Adults, Safe Places, A Healthy Start, An Effective Education, and Opportunities to Help Others. According to Every Child, Every Promise (2006), more than two-thirds of America's young people experience too few of the Five Promises to have a reasonable chance of success. In this section you will be asked to provide examples of how your community helps bring the Five Promises into the lives of youth.

4.1 Caring Adults

Every child needs support and guidance from caring adults in their families, schools, and communities. These include positive relationships with teachers, mentors, neighbors, coaches, and youth volunteers.

What are your community's most significant challenges in ensuring that youth have access to and support from caring adults? What innovative solutions or evidence-based practices have been implemented to address these challenges?

In your response, please consider specific programs or services in place, the agencies or organizations involved, the populations served, and the outcomes observed.

(400 word maximum – 100 MORE WORDS THAN 2010)

Greater Midland's most significant challenge in ensuring that youth have access to and support from caring adults is creating awareness of the need for mentors and recruiting and retaining volunteers. Many people are involved in coaching, school, and other community activities and

consequently see their time for volunteerism as already stretched. Holding a summit on the implementation of a new, community-wide Youth Master Plan will bring awareness of the needs to many citizens.

Although our youth generally have strong family and community support, another challenge in Midland is meeting the needs of children who could easily slip through the cracks. Midland provides many ways to bring caring adults into children's lives:

-Midland's Big Brothers Big Sisters has 300+ adult volunteers who serve as positive role models to children. To address the challenge of losing youth over summer breaks, BBBS implemented School Plus, resulting in obtaining fully-screened, long-term volunteers.

-Creative 360's Facing Forward program pairs female mentors with teen girls through a facilitated arts curriculum. Relationships encourage trust, mutual support, and personal growth. Data shows that teens gain self-esteem, a willingness to try new things, and greater awareness of choices.

-West Midland Family Center has trouble keeping long-term mentors, partly due to its location. Recruiting college-aged mentors, training youth staffers mentoring skills, and giving volunteers gas cards have been effective solutions.

-Family and Children's Services' free Doula program matches pregnant women (generally teens) with a trained volunteer for the duration of their pregnancy and their child's first year.

-The Council on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (Shelterhouse) annually sponsors Girls on the Run, a 12-week national program that culminates in a 5K run. Started locally in 2007 with three area schools, the program now boasts 13 participating schools. A self-esteem-enhancing, character-building curriculum, along with exercise (running), prepares 3rd through 5th grade girls for a lifetime of self-respect and healthy living. Since the program's start in Midland, female volunteers have mentored/coached 750 girls with outcomes including improved body image, physical activity, and self-esteem.

-Midland Mentors serves at-risk youth at Midland's Juvenile Care Center. Over its six-year history, 75 adult mentors have been matched with 98 teens. Statistics from local sources (Legacy Center, Big Brothers Big Sisters) prove that mentored youth are 46% less likely to use drugs, 27% less likely to drink alcohol, and 33% less likely to hit. Additionally, they have higher achievement in school and better parent and peer relationships.

4.2 Safe Places

Every child needs and deserves to be physically and emotionally safe in their homes, schools, neighborhoods, communities, and on the Internet. You may have "Promise Places," in your community, or structured, supervised activities for out-of-school time.

What are your community's most significant challenges in providing safe places for all

young people to participate in out-of-school activities and programs? What innovative solutions or evidence-based practices have been implemented to address the challenges?

In your response, please consider specific programs or services in place, the agencies or organizations involved, the populations served, and the outcomes observed.

(400 word maximum – 100 MORE WORDS THAN 2010)

Communities that strive for a healthy citizenry recognize the importance of youth-focused support systems that emphasize academic, psychological, social, and physical well-being. Midland's creation of safe places for young people is challenged by financial and educational barriers for families that might otherwise benefit from the diverse opportunities available. Some families, particularly those headed by single or low-income parents, cannot afford supervised youth programs. Because these families face other priorities, awareness about opportunities available is poor.

As a result, outreach remains a top focus of many area organizations such as Midland's Community Center, North Midland Family Center, Camp Fire USA, Shelterhouse, and Coleman Railway Family Center. These organizations, along with Salvation Army, Junior Achievement, and many schools, offer free and scholarship-based services specifically for youth from low-income households. Through collaborative efforts, youth participate in before and afterschool programs, summer day camps, and counseling support groups that provide safe, structured, and nurturing environments.

Wraparound programs through the Chippewa Nature Center (CNC) are educational and therapeutic as studies suggest children exposed to nature can experience improved peer relationships, behavior management, and mental and physical health. CNC serves 20,000+ children annually. Its summertime Nature Day Camp offers 30+ supervised programs for youth ages 3-16. For low-income families, financial assistance helps meet the need.

Local Parent-Teacher Organizations and Midland Police partner on a free Block Parent program, whereby specific homes along school routes function as "safe houses" for children walking to and from school.

Shelterhouse provides free and safe housing for domestic violence victims. Support and prevention programs are offered with children and teens in mind, and address building healthy relationships and safe communities. Three research-based programs - Safe Dates, SITCAP (Structured Intervention for Traumatized Children, Adolescents, and Parents), and Mom's Club/Kids Club - improve relationship skills and facilitate healing. In 2010, prevention efforts reached nearly 20,000 people, including school-aged youth.

Collaboration among faith-based organizations results in safe environments for kids. For example, the ROCK Youth Center equips youth with coping skills through free programs for middle and high schoolers such as afterschool martial arts, cooking, crafts, tutoring, and recreation. Relationships with the West Midland Family Center and Partnership for Drug-Free Youth result in adult-involved youth activities and field trips. For five+ decades, Midland's

Young Life chapter has provided Christian-oriented fellowship and friendship opportunities for teens.

A variety of positive, diverse alternatives such as these have helped many youth remain safe and avoid negative choices.

4.3 A Healthy Start

All children need healthy bodies, healthy minds, and healthful habits. These result from access to health care, regular health checkups and needed treatment, good nutrition and exercise, health education, and positive role models who demonstrate good physical and psychological health.

What are your community's most significant challenges in providing access to health care for all young people? What innovative solutions or evidence-based practices have been implemented to address the challenges?

In your response, please consider specific programs or services in place, the agencies or organizations involved, the populations served, and the outcomes observed.

(400 word maximum – 100 MORE WORDS THAN 2010)

Midland's healthcare challenges are intimately tied to the fact that Michigan is in year nine of a recession. Companies struggle to stay afloat and offer fewer high-paying jobs. Health insurance is more difficult for employers to provide, leaving many without coverage. Moreover, Michigan's unemployment continues to be one of the nation's highest. Conditions are somewhat better locally, but Michigan's financial struggles affect Greater Midland as well.

Despite challenges, many highly effective initiatives are available for Midland's young:

-Michigan's Department of Community Health program, MICHild, insures children to 200% of poverty with a small monthly deductible.

-There is State Medicaid for children at 150% of poverty, pregnant women at 185% of poverty, and adults at 100% of poverty.

-Through Children's Special Health Care Services, an RN coordinates family support and care to qualifying children with chronic special health needs. Diagnosis and treatment is free, and there are no income limitations.

-Midland County's Health Department offers childhood immunizations including flu vaccines, vision and hearing screening, and nursing services for developmentally delayed or disabled children, regardless of ability to pay. The department also provides a health promotion program for pregnant mothers and babies, focusing on good habits pre-natal and thereafter. A public

health nurse, social worker, physician, and hospital nutritionist collaborate to promote healthy birthing outcomes and a great start on life.

-Midland is also increasing emphasis on healthy lifestyles through tobacco-free environments, diet, and exercise. Schools have removed unhealthy vending machine products, and Health Department programs encourage healthy choices.

-Church and nonprofit funding aids are available for those not eligible for most programs, and local medical care facilities and providers donate care to needy children and families. For instance, Adopt-A-Child's Smile (through Safe and Sound Children Protection and Advocacy) has provided 1,044 low-income children with much-needed dental services over its 23-year history. During that time, every one of our community's dentists (approximately 50 in total) has offered their services for free and without fanfare.

-Safe behaviors are closely connected to children's health. Through one particular program, Safe and Sound plus Midland's Police and Sheriff's departments partner to offer free car seats to low-income families. In 2010, 50 people received car seat inspections and installation training, and 48 seats were given away.

-Midland groups also show their care through fundraisers benefiting children. For instance, since 1996, Downtown Midland's Cruise'n Car Show has donated 60% of its profits annually towards youth health initiatives.

4.4 Effective Education

We believe it is critical that all young people 1) receive an effective education; 2) graduate from high school on time; and 3) graduate ready to pursue post-secondary education. What are your community's most significant challenges in meeting these three goals, and in achieving or maintaining a high graduation rate? What innovative solutions or evidence-based practices have been implemented to address the challenges?

In your response, please be sure to highlight how your community is working to end the national dropout crisis, either through reducing its dropout rate or ensuring that graduation rates remain high, whichever is most applicable. Where appropriate, identify specific programs or services in place, the agencies or organizations involved, the populations served, and the outcomes observed.

This question relates to five of the 10 Grad Nation indicators, 4TH GRADE READING SCORES; 8TH GRADE SCIENCE AND MATH SCORES, HIGH-SCHOOL GRADUATION, MINIMUM TWO YEARS POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION and ADOPTION OF COMMON CORE STANDARDS FOR COLLEGE AND CAREER READINESS.

(400 word maximum – 100 MORE WORDS THAN 2010)

Midland is a community of high education per capita, two career families, and high expectations for advanced education. When this brings students academic pressure, our schools offer relief with E2020, an online learning opportunity providing struggling students with a self-paced, flexible environment for credit recovery. This program, in its second year, has already proven to be beneficial to students and graduation and dropout rates for our school district. Any student may participate through initial credit earning not just for credit recovery, but also as a way to earn extra credits to satisfy increasing graduation requirements from the State of Michigan.

In elementary schools, professional learning communities provide targeted intervention based on assessments. Teachers and administrators collaborate to problem-solve. Tutors, adult- and peer-led reading programs plus early intervention result in Midland schools consistently scoring above average in state and national assessments.

Middle schools use various innovative teaching styles and offer students real-world projects and hands-on experiences. For instance, eighth graders participate in a career interest assessment. Students research then choose careers; project themselves to age 25; and make lifestyle decisions as “adults” that affect their “checkbooks”.

Students participate in interscholastic sports and extracurricular clubs. Students also get involved in community service, fostering civic involvement in and out of school. For instance, 150+ students volunteer one Saturday each spring to plant flowers along our main entrance into Midland, promoting community pride and beautification.

An interconnected, globalized world requires critical thinking and an international focus, something that International Baccalaureate students come to learn. Diploma holders debate real world issues from an international perspective and learn to provide leadership and support locally and globally. Students can study in-depth while maintaining a broad perspective of different subject areas. Similarly, several nonprofits and local government sponsor student exchange programs around the world to broaden cultural awareness and enhance learning skills.

42% of Midland Public School (MPS) students (Class of 2010) were college-ready in all four subject areas (English 74%, Math 63%, Reading 61%, Science 49%). This corresponds to 19% statewide and 24% nationally. Additionally, MPS ranks 18th among public school districts in college readiness based on the Spring 2010 MME (ACT) test.

Outside of formalized education, the community also encourages learning through countless programs. For example, 514 fourth and fifth graders formed 70 teams to compete in the public library’s 2011 Battle of the Books program. Students read 20 different books selected by youth librarians.

4.5 Opportunities to Help Others

What are your community’s most significant challenges in providing young people with opportunities to serve others through community service or service-learning programs? What innovative solutions or evidence-based practices have been implemented to address the challenges?

In your response, please consider specific programs or services in place, the agencies or organizations involved, the populations served, and the outcomes observed.

(400 word maximum – 100 MORE WORDS THAN 2010)

Over the last decade, Midland's economy has suffered greatly. High unemployment, lower housing values, businesses leaving the area or cutting staff, and reduced government funding have affected our at one time financially-thriving community. Service organizations need volunteers now more than ever. With so many demands on time and pocketbooks, many citizens are choosing to devote their energies to one service organization rather than several, causing some groups to have an even greater need for volunteers than usual.

This is where Midland youth come in. Young Midlanders are taught the importance of volunteering and are provided countless opportunities to give back, such as through tutoring of younger students, clothing and food drives, American Red Cross programs, Big Brothers Big Sisters, community cleanup days, and homebound senior visits.

One agency in particular, United Way's Volunteer Center, connects young volunteers with 138 area schools and agencies that help them develop leadership skills and a sense of personal responsibility for their community. This year alone, 300+ teens participated in United Way's Volunteer program.

Through one specific United Way program, Lunch Box Learners, volunteers meet with elementary students one lunch hour per week to work on reading skills. Many volunteers are older students who are further along in their reading abilities. Together, elementary students and volunteers read books, work on homework, or play educational games with the goal of improving skills and building confidence. During 2010-2011, 53 volunteer/student matches were made through eight schools, with 500+ books read.

To promote community service among youth, The Dow Chemical Company (Midland's largest employer) recently launched "Community Gives," through which local elementary, middle, and high school groups, sports teams, and service clubs can earn funding for priority projects through volunteerism.

Midland's two Kiwanis Clubs sponsor high school student-led Key Clubs, offering youth opportunities to help others.

Midland County's Youth Action Council recommends grants to youth serving nonprofits, and requires that each student member perform community service.

In 2010, an impressive 96% of Northwood University's students volunteered locally through EXCEL, a college credit-earning program. Also at the Midland-based university, Circle K volunteers have logged 1,000+ hours of community service locally. 200+ students participate each year, raising thousands of dollars for charity while making a difference.

This is just a smattering of the programs that give youth the chance to help their neighbors and contribute to bridging the gap between community needs and lower volunteer numbers.

Section 5: Data and Outcomes

This section is worth 75 points.

As communities across the country mobilize to end the dropout crisis, we must gauge our success along the way. In consultation with the U.S. Department of Education, we will track several highly reliable national indicators that influence graduation rates. We understand that these indicators may not be tracked locally in the same manner as the aggregate data. However, the following questions will help us get a sense of where your community stands in usage and tracking of these and similar indicators. We will score these responses alongside your programmatic initiatives to gauge how your community is addressing its challenges, so “low” scores or non-responses due to a lack of community-level data in this section will not disqualify your community. Please be as complete as possible in your responses.

In order to be eligible for full credit on this section of the application, you must respond to at least 12 of 20 questions. You may answer additional questions, however, scores will be calculated based on the 12 questions on which your community has scored highest.

5.1 Adequate Yearly Progress Rate

Please enter the percentage of local schools meeting AYP in the most recent year for which data is available.

This information may be obtained by contacting local school districts. You may include trend data in the large box below if available.

(200 word maximum – 100 MORE WORDS THAN 2010)

100 % Trend Data: All buildings met AYP in 2009-2010

5.2 Graduation Rates

Please report the high school graduation rate for your community, and indicate if you are using the Editorial Projects in Education rate or a school district reported rate.

You may report this data in one of two ways. The preferred option is to use data located via the Editorial Projects in Education graduation rates map at <http://www.edweek.org/apps/gmap/>. You may also use district-reported data, but you must include some explanation about how that data is calculated in the large box below. You may also include trend data in the large box in either case, if available.

NOTE: This question may not be skipped. You must answer this question as one of the 12 required responses in this section.

This question relates to one of the 10 Grad Nation indicators, HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION.

Current data as reported to the State of Michigan for 2009 District Graduation rate:

Midland Public Schools used current graduation and dropout rate as reported.

District Graduation Rate = 90.97%.

5.3 NAEP – Fourth Grade Reading

Please enter the average scores for the school district(s) in your community on NAEP fourth grade reading assessments.

NAEP scores are reported on specific scale, with a maximum score of 500 for reading. This data may be available by contacting local school districts. If local school districts do not test this subject at this grade level, or do not use this specific assessment, do not submit scores from other subjects, grades or tests in this box. You may submit scores from other assessments, such as state-based standardized tests (e.g. Iowa's ITBS, Florida's FCAT, etc.) or privately-produced tests such as TerraNova, at the end of section 5. For information about the NAEP assessment, visit <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>.

This question relates to one of the 10 Grad Nation indicators, 4TH GRADE READING SCORES.

As reported to MEAP (Michigan Educational Assessment Program)

Elementary Reading (Midland Public Schools) vs State Average:

Grade 4 Reading Results were 93%. State of Michigan Grade 4 Reading Results were 84%.

85-95% of all students are meeting or exceeding state standards.

5.4 NAEP – Eighth Grade Math & Science

Please enter the average scores for the school district(s) in your community on NAEP eighth grade math and science assessments.

NAEP scores are reported on specific scale, with a maximum score of 500 for mathematics and 300 for science. This data may be available by contacting local school districts. If local school districts do not test these subject at this grade level, or do not use this specific assessment, do not submit scores from other subjects, grades or tests in these boxes. You may submit scores from other assessments, such as state-based standardized tests (e.g. Iowa's ITBS, Florida's FCAT, etc.) or privately-produced tests such as TerraNova, at the end of section 5. For information about the NAEP assessment, visit <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>.

This question relates to one of the 10 Grad Nation indicators, 8TH GRADE MATH & SCIENCE SCORES.

Grade 8 Mathematics Results were 89%. State of Michigan Grade 8 Mathematics Results were 78%.

Grade 8 Science Results were 89%. State of Michigan Grade 8 Science Results were 78%.

85-95% of all students are meeting or exceeding state standards.

5.5 Preschool Enrollment

Please report the number of young people enrolled in preschool programs in your community.

Available at the U.S. Census Bureau's American FactFinder online at <http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?lang=en>. Please report data from the 2006-8 American Community Survey. This data may also be located by contacting local school districts and/or private local preschool providers.

Population 3 and 4 years enrolled in school: Number = 870

5.6 Ninth Grade Promotion

Please report the percentage of students promoted from 9th grade to 10th grade in community high schools in the most recent year for which data is available.

This data may be located by contacting local school districts.

This question relates to one of the 10 Grad Nation indicators, 9TH GRADE PROMOTION.

99%

5.7 Chronic Absentee Rates

Please report the percentage of local high school students with 10 or more unexcused absences during the most recent full school year for which data is available.

This data may be located by contacting local school districts.

19 students were referred for truancy from Midland Public Schools. 2,959 students attend local high schools (.006%).

5.8 Violent Crime

Please report the number of violent crimes committed in your community.

Input your answer as recorded in the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Crime in the United States 2009 report online. County-level data may be found at http://www2.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2009/data/table_10.html, and city-level data may be found at http://www2.fbi.gov/ucr/cius2009/data/table_08.html.

County Level Data = 62

City Level Data = 62

5.9 Out-of-School Time Enrollment

Please report either 1) the number of hours of out-of-school time enrollment or 2) number of youth enrolled in out-of-school programs, and indicate which measure is used.

Out-of-school time includes any structured and supervised activity occurring outside school hours, whether on school property or at another location. Weekend and evening activities may also be included in this measure. This data may be obtained by contacting local school districts and/or local out-of-school program providers. A comprehensive measurement may be difficult, depending on the number of programs in your community, so a reasonable estimate based on a sampling of information from major programs is acceptable.

This question relates to one of the 10 Grad Nation indicators, OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME PARTICIPATION.

9,525 (youth enrolled)

5.10 Uninsured Children

Please report the number of uninsured children in your community. If applying as a county, please report county-level data if available. Otherwise, you may report data for a large community within your county. Indicate which data type (city or county) you are reporting.

Available for select cities and counties through the Kids Count Data Center online at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/bystate/Default.aspx>. You may also be able to locate this data by contacting your local public health commission or state health department.

This question relates to one of the 10 Grad Nation indicators, HEALTH CARE ACCESS.

Midland County: 6.5% or 1,343 (as of 2007; likely higher now)

5.11 CHIP/Medicaid Enrollment

Please report the number of youth enrolled in these programs in your community. If applying as a city or town, please report city-level data if available. Otherwise, you may report county-level data. If applying as a county, please report county-level data if available. Otherwise, you may report data for a large community within your county. Indicate which data type (city or county) you are reporting.

Available for select cities and counties through the Kids Count Data Center online at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/bystate/Default.aspx>. You may also be able to locate this data by contacting your local public health commission or state health department.

This question relates to one of the 10 Grad Nation indicators, HEALTH CARE ACCESS.

Midland County: 5,939 for Medicaid; 235 for MICHild – total of 6174

5.12 Immunization Rate

Please express as the number of youth receiving immunizations. If applying as a county, please report county-level data if available. Otherwise, you may report data for a large community within your county. Indicate which data type (city or county) you are reporting.

Available for select cities and counties through the Kids Count Data Center online at <http://datacenter.kidscount.org/data/bystate/Default.aspx>. You may also be able to locate this data by contacting your local public health commission or state health department.

This question relates to one of the 10 Grad Nation indicators, HEALTH CARE ACCESS.

Midland County: 832

5.13 Volunteering Rate

Please report your community's volunteering rate as a percentage of the total population.

Volunteering rates for 125 large- and mid-size communities are available through the Corporation for National and Community Service at <http://www.volunteeringinamerica.gov/rankings.cfm>. Additional data may be available by contacting a local United Way, Points of Light/Hands On Network affiliate, or other local service agency.

This question relates to one of the 10 Grad Nation indicators, YOUTH SERVICE PARTICIPATION.

52.9%, per the United Way of Midland County

5.14 Individuals Below Poverty Level

Please report the percentage of your community's population that is below the federal poverty level.

Please express as reported in the U.S. Census Bureau's American FactFinder online at <http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?lang=en>. Please report data from the 2006-8 American Community Survey.

10.3 percent

5.15 Child Poverty Rate

Please report the percentage of your community's youth that is below the federal poverty level.

Please express as reported in the U.S. Census Bureau's American FactFinder online at <http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?lang=en>. Please report data from the 2006-8 American Community Survey.

10.5 percent

5.16 Unemployment Rate

Please report the percentage of your community's workforce that is currently unemployed.

Please express as reported in the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, found online at <http://www.bls.gov/lau/tables.htm>.

10.6 percent (March 2011)

5.17 Post-Secondary Education Rate

Please report the percentage of your community's population age 25 or higher with a B.A./B.S. degree or higher.

Please express as reported in the U.S. Census Bureau's American FactFinder online at <http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?lang=en>. Please report data from the 2006-8 American Community Survey.

Number = 7,343

Percent = 35.1

US = 24/4%

5.18 Additional Data Point #1

Input an additional data point you wish to report. Give this metric a name, describe it, and report the data itself.

Please input any data you wish to have considered in addition to, or in lieu of, the data requested in this section. This may include non-traditional data that may not be available in student information systems. You may report additional or alternative metrics from the Kids Count Data Center. You may also present data that relates to “out of school time”, extended day services, youth recreational services, health and human services, or other items. As part of your response, please explain how this data connects youth services to outcomes in your community. Each data point submitted must be quantitative, measurable, and relevant to one or more of the Five Promises or 10 Grad Nation indicators. Narrative submissions, general facts, and irrelevant data will not be considered.

Name: Fourth Grade Reading and Eighth Grade Math & Science Test Results

Description: In terms of Fourth Grade reading and Eighth Grade math and science tests, Midland Public Schools reported to Michigan Educational Assessment Program (MEAP) that our results are nine percentage points higher than State of Michigan reading averages, and 11 percentage points higher than State averages for both math and science.

Data Point: Midland Public Schools’ (MPS) Fourth Grade reading results were 93%; the State of Michigan’s were 84%. Eighth Grade math and science results for MPS were 89% for both; the State’s average is 78% for both. Additionally, 85-95% of all students meet or exceed State standards in reading, math, and science.

5.19 Additional Data Point #2

Input an additional data point you wish to report. Give this metric a name, describe it, and report the data itself.

Please input any data you wish to have considered in addition to, or in lieu of, the data requested in this section. This may include non-traditional data that may not be available in student information systems. You may report additional or alternative metrics from the Kids Count Data Center. You may also present data that relates to “out of school time”, extended day services, youth recreational services, health and human services, or other items. As part of your response, please explain how this data connects youth services to outcomes in your community. Each data point submitted must be quantitative, measurable, and relevant to one or more of the Five Promises or 10 Grad Nation indicators. Narrative submissions, general facts, and irrelevant data will not be considered.

Name: Kids Against Hunger – Student-led Volunteer Program

Description: High school student council representatives and students plus middle school youth have participated in Kids Against Hunger, a national program to reduce hunger globally. Hundreds of students have raised money through bake sales, concerts/dances, and youth donations to buy and package food kits that are shipped to Third World countries.

Data Point: Hundreds of students participate from both public high schools and several middle schools. In 2010, 120 students from Midland High School alone helped package food. Also last year, Midland student volunteers packaged a total of 52,000 bags of nutritious food, each with the capacity to feed a family of six.

5.20 Additional Data Point #3

Input an additional data point you wish to report. Give this metric a name, describe it, and report the data itself.

Please input any data you wish to have considered in addition to, or in lieu of, the data requested in this section. This may include non-traditional data that may not be available in student information systems. You may report additional or alternative metrics from the Kids Count Data Center. You may also present data that relates to “out of school time”, extended day services, youth recreational services, health and human services, or other items. As part of your response, please explain how this data connects youth services to outcomes in your community. Each data point submitted must be quantitative, measurable, and relevant to one or more of the Five Promises or 10 Grad Nation indicators. Narrative submissions, general facts, and irrelevant data will not be considered.

Name: Volunteerism and Literacy Encouraged through Summer Reading Program

Description: Teens volunteer through public library (Grace A. Dow Memorial Library) summer programs aimed at encouraging and developing literacy in youth. The Summer Reading Program in particular not only rewards youth for reading, but helps them maintain their skills throughout the summer months.

Data Point: During Summer 2010, 179 teens volunteered 1,350 hours assisting with the Summer Reading Program, summer activities, and special events at the library. More than 4,630 children and teens were registered in the 2010 Summer Reading Program.

Section 6: Youth Testimonials and Success Stories

This section is worth 25 points.

An essential component of your work in communities should be youth voice and leadership. Please have four youth from your community submit written testimonials of 200-300 words supporting your application. Each testimonial should include the young person’s name, age and affiliation within the community. These testimonials may not be written or edited by adults.

Each testimonial should explain why the young people believe their community is one of America's 100 Best Communities for Young People, citing examples of key programs or initiatives that have helped young people stay on a course to success.

6.1 Youth Testimonial #1

Enter your first youth-written testimonial. This testimonial should explain why the young people believe their community is one of America's 100 Best Communities for Young People, citing examples of key programs or initiatives that have helped young people stay on a course to success

(400 word maximum – 100 MORE WORDS THAN IN 2010)

Brooke Wagner, 18, Midland Community Center Co-op

Midland is different than many other communities. Not only are there many programs for young people, but there is a variety of things to do during your free time also.

Staying active as a child or teen is one of the most important things you can do for yourself. In my community, it's something that can easily be done. For one, we have the Midland Soccer Complex, one of the nicest in the Tri Cities. In Midland, soccer is very popular. There are teams ranging from kindergarteners to high school seniors. They also have great trainers that work with every team, and camps going on in the summer to help kids improve skills and stay active in the off season. Soccer is so easy to get involved and stick with until teens head off to college.

Just recently, Midland was voted "The Best Tennis Town in America." We have a great Tennis Center that kids of all ages can take lessons at, or just go play on their free time. At the Tennis Center or at school, there are also many teams to be involved in and many people willing to help you achieve your goals.

The Midland Community Center (MCC) is the perfect place for youth to come to and hang out at, or get involved in many different activities. MCC is home to the Midland Basketball Academy which includes a number of teams and training camps. There are also open gym hours that you can come to and play with friends or practice on your own. Many young people, including myself, also attend the Wellness Center which is a great workout facility with great staff to help with questions. From my personal experience, the staff is so kind and willing to get to know everyone personally. There is also a pool for lap swim and a leisure swimming pool, an art department, a dance department, and kids camps that run all summer.

The examples I shared are only a few, but there are so many more activities that we can get involved in if we tried. To have an active lifestyle is to have a healthy lifestyle, and that is exactly what kids and teens in Midland can have. To me, it makes Midland qualified to be in the "Top 100 Communities for Young People."

6.2 Youth Testimonial #2

Enter your first youth-written testimonial. This testimonial should explain why the young people believe their community is one of America's 100 Best Communities for Young People, citing examples of key programs or initiatives that have helped young people stay on a course to success.

(400 word maximum – 100 MORE WORDS THAN IN 2010)

Adam Matzke, 20, Northwood University Student

Upon graduating from Midland High School in 2008, many of my friends planned to attend different colleges across Michigan, and some were moving to exciting new places in other states. When I told my friends I'd be staying in Midland for another four years, many laughed and called me crazy.

When starting at Midland's Northwood University, many of my new friends who were new to Midland agreed with my high school friends saying, "There's nothing to do here!" While it may not have an exciting night life comparable to Grand Rapids or East Lansing, Midland has much more to offer than these other cities. Actually, some of my fondest memories are because of Midland's unique opportunities and community.

When I think of summer one of my first memories is going down to Tunes by the Tridge with my friends on Thursday nights. On many occasions we would ride our bikes downtown, get ice cream at Pizza Sam's, then make our way to the Tridge, our three-sided walking bridge, to enjoy free music concerts. These are memories I hold very dear.

Last summer, a fellow Northwood student and I were able to volunteer at Midland's annual Riverdays festival which featured a Mud Volleyball Tournament. We were so inspired by this event that we wanted to recreate it for Northwood students. With the generous help of several Midland city workers, we were able to do so, and our Circle K of Northwood volunteer club hosted a Mud Volleyball Tournament, raising \$240 for UNICEF.

While these events stick out in my memory, Midland's real value doesn't come from these events alone; in fact, it primarily comes from the everyday little things that make Midland such a great place to live. It's being able to go for a walk at any hour of the night and feel completely safe. It's being able to choose from exploring Dow Gardens, visiting Midland Center for the Arts or attending a Great Lakes Loons game almost any night of the week at a cost college students can afford. It's the sense of community and feeling of pride shared by Midlanders. These are the things that make Midland such a special place and make me glad to live here.

It is for these reasons that I believe Midland is deserving of being named one of the 100 Best Communities for Young People.

6.3 Success Story

Please tell us about a Hometown Hero in your community. This story could highlight a young person whose life has been extraordinarily impacted by community efforts or a Caring Adult that goes above and beyond to improve the lives of children and help them graduate. The story need not be written by this individual, but should describe why this person is an outstanding example of your community's efforts to help youth.

(300 word maximum – 100 MORE WORDS THAN IN 2010)

Midland boasts countless caring adults who make a difference in kids' lives every day, but one in particular stands out as a tireless advocate for our youth. At 83 years young, Dr. Dick Skochdopole has spent years giving his time and talents to our community's young. A former Dow Chemical scientist and father of four, Dick is a significant supporter of policies that protect youth:

-Dick is a charter member of Midland's Partnership for Drug-Free Youth, which promotes alcohol- and drug-free strategies and policies that decrease youth risk factors.

-Dick started Midland's Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice, which promotes peace and non-violence among faiths, particularly in relation to children.

-A lifelong Boy Scout, Dick has served as a scoutmaster, teaching young children the importance of integrity, education, a solid work ethic, and giving back.

-His heart for youth is also seen in his role as a Big Brother to many children over the years and his support of countless local Kiwassee Kiwanis Club youth programs such as Junior Youth, which works to develop programs that assist children 5-13 years old.

-Dick takes Aldersgate Methodist Church's youth group skiing each winter, taking a turn or two on the slopes himself! Dick's youthful and caring outlook helps him to "connect with youth in a unique and authentic way," per Aldersgate's Rev. Mark Miller.

-Dick has been a faithful, energetic board member of FACE (Facing Alcohol Concerns through Education).

Summing up, current FACE CEO Penny Norton said it best: "Dick inspires others through his positive and genuinely caring nature. Beyond the committees and projects he's been involved with, it's who Dick is that is the golden egg... his absolute core belief in the power and importance of motivating kids to strive and succeed is what makes Dick one of Midland's hometown heroes."