



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT®  
FOR HEALTHY LIVING  
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

# SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL STUDENT AMBASSADOR PROGRAM

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April 2021



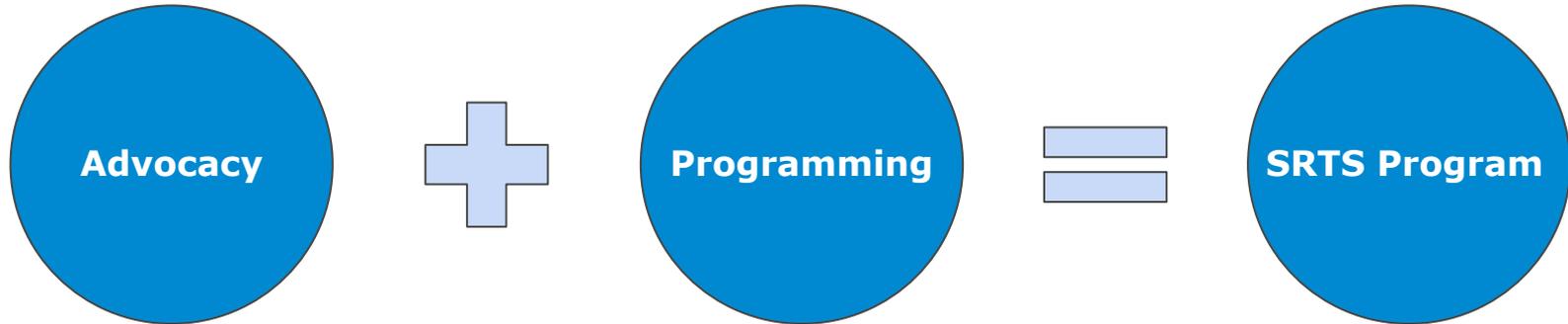
# ABOUT THE ALLIANCE OF NYS YMCAS

- Advocacy and public policy arm of the YMCA
- Represent the interests of all 37 independently incorporated YMCAs in the state of New York
- Also provide direct service support to YMCAs, such as board governance, strategic planning, fundraising, etc.



# PROGRAM BACKGROUND

In 2019 the Alliance received a grant from YMCA of the USA and the CDC to identify strategies to create healthy and active communities. The Alliance chose to focus on Safe Routes to Schools; but the approach is broadly applicable to CDC's Active People Healthy Nation goal: **Active Routes to Everyday Destinations**



# PROGRAM GOALS

1. Learn fundamental principles of healthy community design that support safe walking and bicycling, as well as low cost approaches to applying these principles
2. Conduct a community walk audit
3. Summarize walk audit findings and develop specific recommendations for action to present to community leaders and elected officials
4. Effectively advocate to community leaders and elected officials the need for safer, more walkable routes to schools and community destinations
5. Enhance public speaking, critical thinking, and analysis skills

# ROLE OF YOUTH ADVOCACY



# What Is Advocacy?

**Advocacy** is speaking up and on behalf of a cause one feels strongly about. There are causes, of course, that driven by interactions. What are considered important as an advocate?

→ **Fully Formed Ideas**

It is important to have an actual foundation for what you want to speak on, including the root of the problem.

→ **Solutions**

Rather than spouting what is wrong, it is important to bring in the idea that things can get better and how.

→ **Platform**

Lastly, you must have a place to speak on these ideas in order to reach the people necessary.

# Who Should Be An Important Contact When Advocating?



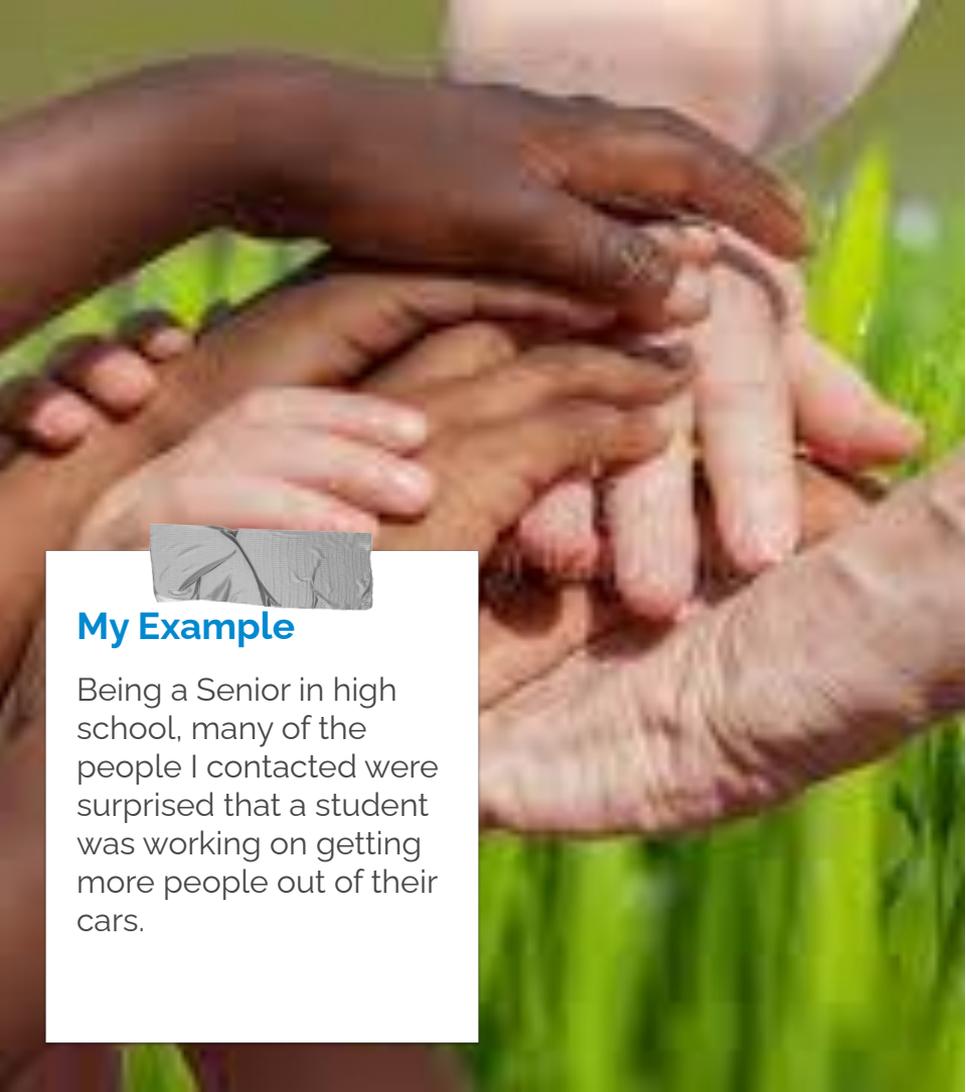
The most important people to get into contact with for advocacy are local leaders. This would include people like you mayor, members of the school board, and even business owners. As pillars of the community, they can provide insight to the problem as well as the necessary connections to bring in those in even higher positions to help.



### My Example

I contacted my mayor, his board, firefighter chiefs, police officers, teachers, the school board, and my principal.

Depending on the cause, you may want to target specific people.



### My Example

Being a Senior in high school, many of the people I contacted were surprised that a student was working on getting more people out of their cars.

## Why Are Youth Voices Important?

Getting youth advocates involved is incredibly important to any cause. This is because youth voices serves as a beacon of hope. When younger advocates are involved with an issue, its importance seems to skyrocket.



## How To Get Them Involved

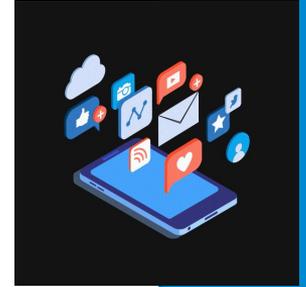
The youth may seem unattainable but there are two large ways to reach out to them.

→ **Social Media**

There is no easier way to get kids involved than with social media. TikTok, Instagram, even Facebook. These can all be utilized in order to gain traction with the younger generation.

→ **School**

Through school, children are able to meet new people and experience new things. Even if people are able to get an assembly, you would be able to pique their interest of students.



# [My Walk Audit \(CLICK HERE!!\)](#)



**No Curb  
Extensions or  
Road Verge**

# WALK AUDITS AS AN ADVOCACY TOOL



# What is a Walk Audit?

**A Walk Audit** is a report completed of a property and adjacent neighborhoods to look for routes that can be safely used. What are the fundamental elements to consider on a Walk Audit?

- **Network**  
How you get from one place to another, e.g. bike lanes, sidewalks
- **Land Use**  
How the area around the network is used; Destinations
- **Safety and Access**  
Are networks safe and usable for all pedestrians
- **Site Design**  
Encourages pedestrians: benches, bike racks, direction signs

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# Conducting a Walk Audit

(It's easier than you think)

# Build Your Own Walk Audit

- Identify a location
- Solo or Group
- In person or Virtual
- Take note of the four elements
- Include what is good and what can be improved

## RULES FOR ANY WALK AUDIT:

Consider all possible users; all disabilities, ages, incomes, races, backgrounds . . .

Score on a 0-10 scale of "activity-friendliness."

**Shared discovery;** not experts telling the participants the "problems."

**Shared problem solving;** not experts defining "right answers."



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# Advocating with a Walk Audit

# Advocating with a Walk Audit

- Invite community leaders to the Walk Audit
- Demonstrate the community's care
- Present results to appropriate stakeholders
  - Applaud the good and make recommendations
- Find out what you can do
- Keep in touch!



# An Example, Please

- I met with the Assistant Superintendent and the Town Supervisor
- Meeting with the school led me to join the COVID Task Force and start a club
- Meeting with the town led to crosswalks being repainted and yield signs being placed around the school





# THANK YOU

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