



**YOUTH  
LEADERSHIP  
DEVELOPMENT**

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[www.dvuli.org](http://www.dvuli.org)



# After the Music Stops!

## INVESTING IN NEXT GENERATION LEADERS

By Denise Fase

After the show, after the set, after the music stops what's next?" These are the lyrics from Christian rapper Lecrae's song, 'After the Music Stops'. As we lead our young people, are we asking these questions with regards to sustaining our kids for the long haul – as followers of Christ, as leaders, as the next generation adults?



Three years ago, our group of Grand Rapids DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative (DVULI) grads felt challenged to take empowerment to a new level by growing teens as leaders. I have had the privilege of working alongside them in GRIL (Grand Rapids Initiative for Leaders), our version of the DVULI. GRIL is walking with DVULI and GRIL adult graduates in West Michigan to invest not only in the future, but also our current leaders – our teens.

In doing this work with teens, we've come up with four common areas that we use to

sustain our young people; Identifying their Assets, Growing their strengths, Setting high expectations and Accountability.

### Identifying their Assets

Recently I was talking to an administrator of one of our local schools. He began to ask questions about what it meant to do teen leadership development in a school where there was, in his opinion, no leaders. I told him it was very doable because the school is full of leaders! Unfortunately, many of these leaders were simply teens who were making poor choices or leading in the wrong direction. Maybe it's because of a lack of guidance or lack of people in their lives who view them as potential positive leaders? Maybe the leadership vacuum was a result of adults who failed to encourage and support teens to lead properly. Every day, all throughout the school, there are potential leaders who are waiting

to be sustained or invested in.

How do you see the youth you are leading? Do you see them as people to fix or do you see them as potential partners in ministry? Do you see their assets or their needs? Have you completed an asset mapping 'walk'

**"IT'S OKAY TO PUSH AND EXPECT OUR  
YOUNG PEOPLE TO HOLD TO HIGH  
STANDARDS"**

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# HERE'S MY TAKE

## DIMONDS IN THE ROUGH

**B**eyond the hoodie covered head, the gang logo tattooed on their upper-neck and the random texting during Bible study, you discern there is a future leader visiting your youth program. For neutrality, let's say this visitor goes by the name of Jazz. After youth service is over just outside the door you make eye contact with Jazz who turns and walks headed for home (so you hope). You choose not to engage or offer Jazz transportation. But you spot a spiral bound notebook rolled up in Jazz's back pocket. A month later Jazz makes a return visit accompanied by three other teens. And you somehow conclude, "the writing on the wall couldn't be more clear...this kid has all the goods for leadership."

Youth leadership development is a very deep investment that can come with a wealth of rewards. And while it isn't for every youth who participates in your program, there are some whose potential is on a ticking clock. And if you don't attract them to your strategies and structure for development the wrong mentor will. A few DVULI grads understand this race against time all too well. Here's their take...



**C.J. Neal**  
(Indianapolis, 2007)  
Campus Director of Student Venture

As a minister to junior and senior high school students, I deal with youth who carry a lot of apathy. They are apathetic toward the church when they see adult lives that don't align with the truth, apathetic about life in general when there are no success stories in their neighborhood (failed family relationships and marriages) or they don't feel safe at home. I believe in intensive discipleship. The kind of discipleship that leads to youth seeing their relationship with God lived out at school, home, family and everyday life. Our youth leadership core team is responsible for

figuring out how to reach the campus, what the school needs and addressing those needs. We provide the basic framework and the youth put the meat on the bones with outreaches, performances, games and classroom talks about abstinence or conflict resolution. One of the best things that we have done in ministry is to decide to go deep with a few. That's what Jesus did, and we're seeing the fruit. The high school graduation rates of students who really get involved in our program is about 80%, at least 75% go on to college and many have gotten married. Families are being changed as students are taking the gospel home and living it out. Even though they may have some tension with being accepted by peers, our students are making healthier decisions about life because God has given them hope.



**Florence Anang**  
(Los Angeles, 2005)  
Associate Director of Harambee

Our youth come from fractured and unstructured backgrounds, an "anything goes" way of life. The barriers I see in developing at risk youth are culture and family generational lifestyles. And the biggest is the church. The church is a place where youth can hide their dirt. If they are with their parents or with their youth group they are not challenged to discover where they truly are. A child could be hurting and experience no change because they are hiding among the larger group at church. I have three components to raising indigenous leaders among the youth; the first is to make the Word of God active in their culture. We help them unpack how what seemed right was wrong. It wasn't good to see guns or drugs at home, or that their parents ended up in rehab. Soon they understand that they have a deficit such as their broken home and begin to form a new way of thinking. The second thing is to help them understand the power of the Holy Spirit. When they can see the end of the matter through vision, they will

start to believe they can be a leader in their family and community. And thirdly, make the first two become an influence without changing who they are. They don't look any different on the outside, they just think differently. They can become what I call "environment changers." So now when they walk in a room they can change the environment because of the Word of God in them.



**Michael Trout**  
(Chicago, 2007)  
Director, Young Men's Educational Net.

Because most of our youth come from fatherless homes, they are not used to being called on the carpet, being challenged in areas of weakness and being held to higher levels of accountability. We focus on developing indigenous youth leadership. Our mentors walk with them for 5-7 years, requiring that they serve others, grow themselves and commit to our "ladder of leadership". Fifty out of the 300 kids we serve each year go on to participate in our internal leadership development. There are specific criteria they must meet such as: have a minimum 2.5 GPA and if not be committed to a tutor to raise it, attend the church of their choice, do community service projects twice a month, read required books, do job shadowing and most importantly their parents must be interviewed. In addition, if they are in the sixth grade they must complete applications to apply for high school and show respect to our staff mentors. We have a group of mentors for our male to male program which is called YMEN and our female to female program which is called EVE. Having a group of mentors enables our youth to have several different people attending to their lives at once. If there's a fall out with one mentor, there are still other relationships that keep them on track in the program. Discipleship of urban youth is costly and requires a lot of effort and energy - but God has the last word.

By Gerald Bell



# BRIEF NEWS AND BREAKTHROUGHS

**Natividad Mendoza (Phoenix, 2008)** was married to Jennifer on May 20, 2009 at the home of a friend where about 120 relatives and close friends gathered to celebrate their marriage. The newlyweds exchanged nuptials before a local Judge last March, the ceremony according to Natividad made their new life together extra special. "My beautiful wife was radiant...she was really happy," he said. "God gave us perfect weather at the last minute. It had been 109 degrees all week and it was 90 with overcast skies that day." Mr. & Mrs. Mendoza honeymooned for seven days in Orlando, FL.



**Dr. Larry Lloyd (Memphis, 2002)** Returns to the Memphis Leadership Foundation as Founder/Director after his four years of service to Crichton College. "I resigned from Crichton at the end of January 2009 when the board of directors decided, due to economic difficulties, to sell the college to for profit investors," explained Larry in an email statement. In this reassumed role Larry's duties include, resource development of all kinds (funds, volunteers and networks), guiding and implementing new projects for the foundation and leadership training with the Urban Youth Initiative. "One of my real joys is working with leaders and training them," said Larry. "I also look forward to figuring out ways to increase building bridges between urban and suburban churches."



**Luvirt & Kelly Parker (Cleveland, 2007)** are the delightful parents of a new baby boy, Luvirt Marcus Parker, Jr., who was born June 9, 2009 at 4:28pm. Weighing in at 8 lbs 10 oz and measuring 20 inches long, his proud father said, "He looks just like his daddy." Luvirt Sr., now a father of two admits he is amazed at how God does this. "This time it gave me a grater appreciation for my wife going through the labor process with no epidural and a bigger baby," he said. "She was a soldier."



**Scott & Jennifer Grzesiak (Chicago, 2007)** proudly welcomed Elia Grace Grzesiak into the world on Friday, May 8, 2009 approximately 10:00am. Elia weighed an even 7lbs and stretched 20.25 inches. According to Scott, Elia means "Jehovah is my God."



She is number three to the Grzesiak clan and Scott says now that he and wife are out numbered, "We're learning how to play zone defense. But we're having a lot of fun too."

**Beverly Beard (Kansas City, 2001)** is a new Caring Communities Site Coordinator for LINC (Local Investment Commission). Beverly has been assigned to Border Star Elementary School where she'll be responsible for the Before and After School Care Program, outreach to local businesses, lead a parent community and guiding the process for LINC to be a support system for the school. "It's all stuff I love doing," asserts Beverly. "I am still a young chick and I better be with this job!...I just want to really pour into these children."

**Marge Bermann (Grand Rapids, 1998)** is the new Director of Religious Education for the St. Gabriel Mission. In this position Marge is responsible for grades K-8 where she'll educate on how to prepare for baptism and communion as well as educating the community on two of the seven sacraments. Her start date was July 1, 2009 and Marge says this will give her a chance to get back into ministry, to work with youth, be in the education field and it will give her the opportunity to use much of her masters education. "It's right up my alley!," she said.



photo: charlieoccarthy/detroit



# CAUGHT ON CAMERA

## 2009 NATIONAL HISPANIC PRAYER BREAKFAST

In the company of such dignitaries as President Barak Obama and Hispanic leaders of faith from across the nation, DeVos alumni filled a table at this year's National Hispanic Prayer Breakfast. The annual gathering attracted more than 700 pastors and leaders and provided networking opportunities, visits to Capitol Hill to meet with State Representatives and a host of informative keynote speakers.

"We know there is much more work to be done to extend the promise of a better life to all our children and grandchildren," Obama said in his address. "In all that we do, we must be guided by that simple command that binds all great religions together: Love thy neighbor as thyself."

Following the President's speech, attendees were afforded introductions, hand shakes and photo ops with him. Many in attendance considered this year an opportunity of a life time and the experience an "adrenaline rush."

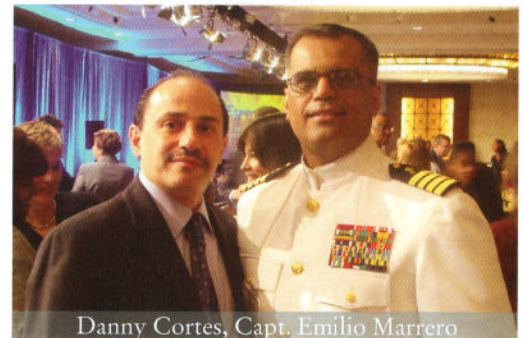
### The DeVos Urban Leadership alumni delegation included:

(from left to right)

José Sanchez (Kansas City, 2008)  
Ron Carter (Birmingham, 1999)  
Johnny Fine (Cleveland, 2007)  
Pete Contreras (San Diego, 2008)  
Ray Maldonado (Chicago, 2007)  
Felipe and Pricilla Valdéz (San Diego, 1999)  
Bill Preston (San Diego, 2001)  
Mickey Nuñez (Phoenix, 2008)  
Rick Diaz (San Antonio, 1999)



Jose Sanchez, Fernando Arau



Danny Cortes, Capt. Emilio Marrero





## TAKING THE VOW OF COMMUNITY

dvuli grads aspire to remain connected

In the spring of 2005 June Williams Smith graduated with the DeVos Pittsburgh class of 2004. She remembers the ceremony and the sad emotions that accompanied what felt like the end of a family bond formed among new friends. The support system brought tremendous value to her work in youth ministry. Discovering that she was not all alone and that others could relate to what she faced in the plight for developing urban youth was comforting. Still graduation day was a happy time for June because she believed the future looked bright for this group of Pittsburgh based urban youth workers who had become so close.

“I was wondering how we would all be able to stay connected,” said June who also built relationships with participants from Albuquerque, Detroit, Memphis and Philadelphia at the national conferences that year. There is so much to be gained and so much more support, especially in your own city, that could be of benefit to each other and the youth.”

Five years later, June hasn't given up on staying in touch with her Pittsburgh DeVos fellows. Via email she regularly sends updates, circulates prayer requests and local gathering announcements to the alumni. When possible June will attend youth events conducted by other alumni and local network meetings. She's also hosted cookouts for alumni and their families at her home. “I see the connections and how supporting one another is so helpful,” said June.

### “Bar-raising” expectations for graduates

DVULI graduations are very special events that each cohort independently plans and presents. Some have formal dinners, with entertainment and special honors for mentors, family and more. Others host a more casual affair but they are all about recognizing each graduate's accomplishment and those who have supported them along the way.

Read the complete article online at [dvuli.org/blog](http://dvuli.org/blog)

## Class of 2008 Graduations



Phoenix (not pictured)



# COVER STORY CONT.

of the teens around you lately where you've asked: What are their strengths? What do they bring to your ministry? When you talk to people about your teens, how do you describe them so that others begin to see them in that way? Often is just as simple as adjusting our eyes so that we first see them as assets rather than as deficits.

## Growing Their Strengths

When we start to look at youth through the lens of assets, we are free to stop trying to fix them. In the youth component of GRIL, called GRIL U, we spend the first six weeks of their 40-week program walking through various assessments to discover their spiritual gifts, unique abilities, learning modes and character strengths and weaknesses. In empowering our youth, we place them in a ministry where they put their gifts to use and then challenge them to identify assets in their peers, family and friends. As the young leaders' strengths grow their weaknesses and needs seem to decrease.

Over time we've seen how this empowerment is working with our youth. In one of the GRIL U churches, our young adult graduates are leading all aspects of the church's teen summer programs, they are planning, organizing, and leading bible studies for their peers and leading neighborhood outreach wiffle ball games.

## Setting High Expectations

Sometimes it is easy to see urban teens as poor inner city children who come from broken homes and that mentality prevents us from challenging them to move beyond the standards of this world. When our young people know that someone believes in them, they want to step it up. Without someone who sets a different standard, they often times default into the world's expectations that they will continue the cycle of poverty. Through Christ, we have the power to change that by holding them to higher standards of excellence as they go to the next level.

As an adult, one thing I know to be true is that my greatest life lessons have been the direct result of my greatest failures.

So as we set high standards for our youth, we must remember and recognize that they will not always be successful. It is our job to create safe environments where they can fail. In these environments, they can experience grace, mercy and unconditional love. In creating these environments, teens will learn and sustain as well. They will also learn not to fear failure, but to learn from it. Therefore, as leaders it's okay to push and expect our young people to hold to high standards.



## Accountability

Most of us have experienced the value of accountability. It is essential that our young people have mentors in their lives that can hold them accountable to whatever standards are set for them. They need people who will love them, even when they have not upheld the high standards they have committed to. However, accountability goes beyond one on one mentoring. It can be achieved through helping them develop a personal relationship with God, their greatest accountability partner – or through other means such as journaling and relationships with their parents/guardians.

Some may believe that these are four great ideas but don't see them working for the kids in your organization or ministry. Others may think that GRIL only works with the cream of the crop teens. The truth is that all young people have assets and leadership potential. They are ready to step up NOW. Are you willing to be the person who walks with them and sustains them for the long haul? Consider seeing young people with new eyes, growing their strengths, holding them to higher standards and holding them accountable.

With this kind of investment in youth, their entire generation could be effected and ultimately transform families, schools and cities for Christ. Who knows, they may even change the content of certain music before it starts up again!

*Denise Fase is a 1998 graduate of the DeVos Urban Leadership Initiative. She is the program director for the Grand Rapids Initiative for Leaders (GRIL) and is a consultant in the field of youth program development for an array of Grand Rapids based ministries and churches.*

[www.grileadership.org](http://www.grileadership.org)  
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# *From The Heart of Ginny Vander Hart*

Dear friends,

Over the years, I have heard others' testimony to the way the prayers of God's people hold us up in difficult times. I have never felt it myself so completely as I have since the death of Doug, our son. Al and I felt the prayers of so many as almost a physical feeling of God's grace; protecting us, comforting us, giving us strength and courage to walk through this very difficult time. Thank you to everyone who prayed for our family and offered expressions of care for us. It is overwhelming – and deeply appreciated. I can honestly say it is carrying us through. We don't understand – but we do walk by faith, not by sight. (II Corinthians 5:7)

The visitation and service were a testimony to the many lives Doug touched in his years with us. While we will continue to grieve our huge loss for some time, we also celebrate in the absolute assurance that Doug is now with Jesus!

Our whole family, Rachel his wife, Jeff & Mike his brothers and their families, are deeply grateful for your support –  
Thank you.

Al & Ginny Vander Hart



June 22, 2009

Richard and Helen DeVos Foundation  
PO Box 230257  
Grand Rapids, MI 490503

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Richard DeVos,

I, Mickey Nuñez a DeVos Initiative graduate, want to express my gratitude for allowing me the opportunity of a lifetime to visit Capitol Hill. The experience was truly enlightening. I was educated on immigration reform, and it has created in me the awareness of truly loving our neighbor. I will continue learning. The networking efforts were amazing in Washington D.C. I was able to network with additional faith based organizations in my local city that have the same vision of building a vital community. I am deeply humbled that a kid from the "barrio" like me had the privilege to shake the hand of Mr. Barak Obama the President of the United States of America. The week served as a personal confirmation to me not to be discouraged and continue in my community efforts. It was an honor to represent the DeVos Family at Esperanza's National Hispanic Prayer Breakfast, and it was obvious that Esperanza's Staff has a deep respect for the DeVos Family. Due to the stewardship and integrity of your family the Lord is using the Initiative as a power tool to reach the lost for Christ in a big way.

Congratulations on the success of the Orlando Magic, but I know the title is coming. I pray that the Lord continues blessing you and keeps favor upon you, your family, and everything you partake of. Thank you again for your precious time in this matter.

Sincerely,

Mickey Nuñez



# BEFORE You Go



## New Community Capacity Instructors

This year DVULI introduced two new instructors for the Community Capacity Building workshops. The workshop has been updated with current material from the field of youth development. Both of the new instructors, Lina Thompson and Ruben Ortiz, have many years of experience with the real world practice of youth development and with the concepts of community development.

Ruben serves as Pastor of Iglesia Del Barrio, a bi-lingual church in the West-Kensington section of Philadelphia which he helped plant in 1999. He is also Project Director at Esperanza, directly responsible for helping build the capacity of over 40 faith and community based organizations in Pennsylvania. He provides training, funding, and technical assistance to these non-profits. Prior to joining Esperanza, he worked with Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southeastern Pennsylvania helping to design and implement AMACHI, a national mentoring program for children of prisoners. Philadelphia is his hometown and he has a deep love for its neighborhoods and the youth that he has spent the last 25 years working with there.



Lina is from Seattle and works for World Vision as the national director for training and capacity development for World Vision's domestic ministries. She provides oversight to World Vision's training and capacity development for staff and community partners. In addition to her work with World Vision, she serves as adjunct faculty member for the Center for Youth and Family Ministries at Fuller Seminary in the urban youth certificate program. She also teaches for the Center for Transforming Mission, an organization committed to the theological development and training of urban ministry practitioners and is a lay pastor for Mt. View Presbyterian Church, located in White Center.



DeVos has a rigorous selection process for its 2-day workshop instructors that has been developed over the last twelve years. It requires a heavy time commitment up front to learn the material, become familiar with the curriculum format, present it to an audience in practice feedback sessions, observe the workshop in an actual city setting and then finally present the workshop on their own. We are very grateful that Lina and Ruben were able to commit to the required preparation this year and are excited to welcome them to our excellent team of workshop instructors.

-Eileen Kooreman

## YOUTH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT TOOLKIT

Design effective youth leadership development programs that emphasize both skills and character for urban youth with this toolkit assembled by FASTEN (The Faith and Service Technical Education Network).

## FASTEN

This resource provides information to help urban youth workers get oriented to the topic of youth leadership development, offers a taste of some of the leading curricula, and includes helpful forms that can be used in program evaluation. FASTEN offers informational resources and networking opportunities to faith-based practitioners, private philanthropies, and public administrators who seek to collaborate effectively to renew urban communities. FASTEN actively identifies best practices in faith-based services and multi-sector collaboration, and produces and disseminates educational materials for practitioners in the public and private sectors.

Toolkit accessible at:  
[dvuli.org/yldt](http://dvuli.org/yldt)



## MESSAGE BOARD

*These people have updated contact info:*

### Address:

Anna Scott (Orlando 2000)  
Kristen Batten (Cleveland 2009)  
Lemar Tabb (Detroit 2004)  
Roz Childs (Detroit 2004)  
Jennifer Andrews (Cleveland 2009)  
Rodney (Al) Williams (San Diego 1999)  
Robin Jenkins (Orlando 1998)  
Richard Franklin (Atlanta 2008)  
Elizabeth Hickman (Indianapolis 2007)  
Jerami Lewis (Dallas 2009)  
Tina Hidy-Marlin (San Antonio 1999)  
Anika Smith (Grand Rapids, MI 2006)  
Eunice (Bello) Childress (Miami, FL 2007)  
Eric Dowley (Atlanta, GA 2008)  
Bryndan Crawford Lorritts (Chicago South, IL 07)  
Vanessa Davis (Cleveland 2009)  
Billy Evans (Chicago, IL (South) 2007)  
Ingrid Broadnax (Boston, MA 1998)

### Email:

Carolyn Bibbs (Memphis 2004)  
Annette Bittner (Minneapolis 2008)  
Altricia Black (Cleveland 2007)

*If you are interested in contacting any of these people, please visit the DeVos Urban Leadership website for updated contact information. [dvuli.org/members](http://dvuli.org/members)*

### THIRD LOCAL WORKSHOP SCENARIO PLANNING

**AUGUST**  
6-8 Cleveland  
13-15 Dallas  
13-15 Miami  
20-22 New York  
27-29 Washington, DC  
25-27 Youth for Christ

### SECOND NATIONAL CONFERENCE

**October 12-16**

**HOLLAND, MI**



### SAVE THE DATE

Reunion 2010  
Denver, Colorado  
September 29 - October 2, 2010



*Special note from  
Ginny Vander Hart*

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