

YCA Year in Review

This past year has been an exciting one for YCA. YCA has increased the number of students served by our programs, specifically our core Saturday Writing Program. This fall we enrolled 67 students! YCA has accomplished this by focusing on recruitment strategies to ensure we are serving a diverse population. Also, the size and accessibility of YCA's new writing center enables us to serve more youth. As a result, WordPlay, YCA's teen open mic night is increasing in popularity; it attracts 40-50 teens every week. WordPlay is an important way for teenagers not associated with YCA's programs to become familiar and comfortable in the writing center and with our teaching artists, and to hopefully become more involved in our programs as a result.

YCA continues to distribute "Through Their Words," the white paper published by EmcArts about the Saturday Writing Program. The white paper describes the core values and practices of YCA as a replicable model and has been distributed nationwide. They found: "Thanks to its well-designed programming and its history of success, YCA itself has the potential to become a model for organizational learning in the field of youth arts. The organization's approach to fulfilling its mission includes both risk-taking and self-reflection, as well as ongoing documentation, evaluation, research, and planning."

YCA has created some important new collaborative relationships such as its link with the First Wave

Spoken Word and Urban Arts Learning Community on the University of Wisconsin at Madison campus. Three of YCA's graduates are currently enrolled in the program. In October 2007, we took six YCA students on a field trip to Madison where they participated in a First Wave open mic and performance.

YCA is also excited to have launched two new initiatives that we hope to continue in the coming year. On November 2nd, 2007, YCA offered Intersections, its first annual youth literary conference that took place in downtown Chicago at Columbia College. Our keynote speaker was Audrey Niffenegger, author of *The Time Traveler's Wife*. The conference was a smashing success; 200 students attended a variety of workshops delving into authors such as Sonia Sanchez, Octavia Butler, Dorothy Allison and John Sayles.

In Summer 2007, YCA also launched Men As Allies, a program that serves young men of color. Men As Allies is a space for young men to come together in a safe place to talk about and deconstruct gender oppression, sexism and violence against women. The young men involved in the program wrote and published the Swagger webzine, which is linked from our Girlspeak webzine.

In addition, Girlspeak #3, YCA's pro-woman webzine was published this summer. We received more than 400 submissions from young women around the world! You can read their poetry and creative writing, and view their artwork at www.girlspeak.org.

YCA has taken to the airwaves and soon to the movie screen to promote our programs and our students' amazing work. Siskel/Jakob Productions is filming a feature documentary about our Louder Than a Bomb Teen Poetry Slam this year. Audio recordings of our Louder Than a Bomb participants done by WBEZ have been picked up and aired on over 23 radio stations across the country. YCA teaching artists Idris Goodwin and Kevin Covale hosted an hour-long 4th of July special on WBEZ featuring YCA student readings.

Louder Than A Bomb 2008 was a great success, where 46 teams from community organizations and schools around Chicagoland battled it out for first place, thereby representing Chicago at Brave New Voices, the national youth poetry slam in Washington DC. This year's winner was the team from Kuumba Lynx, an urban arts organization that's been sending a team to LTAB for each of its eight years of existence. Also competing as the Chicago All-Star team at nationals are the top scoring individual poets: Nate Marshall (Whitney Young), Esther Ikoro (Morgan Park), Demetrius Amparan (Morgan Park), Melanie Decelles (WordPlay), Deja Taylor (Chicago 7), and Dianna Harris (TF North)

Last but not least, YCA is proud to announce the publication of *Say What* magazine, Issue 7! This year's *Say What* Editorial Board, comprised of 8 diverse teens, worked diligently to write, edit and produce this issue.