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AMERICA WALKS

YOUTH LEADING THE WAY:
INSPIRING STORIES OF YOUTH CREATING SAFE, ACCESSIBLE
NEIGHBORHOODS

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Youth Leading the Ways: Inspiring Stories of Youth Creating Safe, Accessible Neighborhoods

[The broadcast is now starting. All attendees are in "listen-only" mode mode]

>> Hello, everyone. Welcome to Youth Leading the Ways: Inspiring Stories of Youth Creating Safe, Accessible Neighborhoods. My name is Nicole Smith and I'm the operations manager and I'm joined today by Kelsey Card who is communication and development manager and she's running tech this afternoon.

Before we get started, we like to thank our sponsors. And give you a quick how to for sending question and comments during the presentation. On the right-hand side of your screen, you will see a chat box where you can enter your question and comments. We will try to answer as many as we can at the end of the webinar. Also, if you would prefer to use closed-captioning, the link is also available in the chat box for you. So today's webinar focuses on inspiring stories from youth leaders. Youth of the future of our communities and we will hear from 4 students who are working to create meaningful and inclusive and lasting change in their innovate community from YMCA.

First we'll hear from David Fu and Jack Kelly, which is a virtual summer program available to all high school students.

Just to share a little bit about David. David lives in short falls New Jersey and he lived in Shanghai, China. And David's most active is to help initiatives helping his community from safe sidewalks to crosswalks for schools in his community.

And he will tell you more about himself when we get into his presentation.

Jack Kelly is a senior at Shenandoah high school. And he's involved in his high school serving as President of the student senate and debate team working on the leadership team for his local youth and government district.

And the state Director of Operations for hemoglobin advocating for LGBTQ healthcare and education policies as well as equivalency. And Jack has established a youth walkability in his community and we'll hear more about him during his presentation.

So then we will hear from Benaja Richardson and Jessika Crockett who participated in the YMCA youth and government program and developed active and healthy communities project as part of a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention YMCA grant.

And to just share a little bit about them, Benaja lives in Winston Salem North Carolina and she's majoring in political science with a minor in legal studies and member of Charlotte pre-law society. Benaja is a graduate of Parkland high school and former international baccalaureate diploma student. Last year she participated in the YMCA walk ability audit grant to access walkable areas in school zones which resulted in her delegation of reaching out to the local councilmembers. She's passionate about advocating for and elevating the walkability solution for her local area and beyond.

And Jessika graduated from March Field high school this past year. And is now a freshman studying political science at Stonehill College. She's extremely involved in college already. Taking part in first-generation and LGBTQ dialogue groups. As well as recently being elected class President. Through youth and government, she drafted a mock policy targeted towards the active communities program which sought to open all public schools in Massachusetts to be even more of a community asset by allowing towns to use the facilities during non-school hours.

And then we have two other special guests. We're also joined by Derrick Somerville national youth and engagement director and Stephanie Tepperberg with YMCA of the USA government and health policy department who will give us overview of the YMCA programs we will discuss today.

So we are going to start out with Derrick today with a brief overview of the youth and government program. And 2020 changemakers institute.

So Derrick, take it away.

>> Thank you so much. And good afternoon, everyone. My name is Derrick Somerville. And we're a coalition. We are 43 state programs all around the country, each having their own governance structure and leadership much like your state governments do. But we work with the YMCA youth moment and we wanted to do a better job of not just starting programs that kept youth safe and engaged but also gave them a voice in their community and help them create change. So we've been doing that for a long time. We have 43 programs around the country that do this. Students today are from 4 of them. We have 55 students nationwide that take part in youth and government. Those are from middle school, high school, and even in college.

And these students focus mostly on state government, but they work on model government programs at the local, state, federal, and even international level. During our state government program, which are kind of our focus, our premiere segment of the experience, about 10,000 student bills are written every single year. These are bills written by the student, researched, debated and oftentimes advocated for after our conference. So you'll hear about students talking about a Bill they wrote and those were written and debated amongst their peers when we go back and look over the course of any state legislative history, a lot of the ideas our students were debating were about 3 to 5 years ahead of their official counterparts.

In addition to those state government programs, we also have about 245 conferences and events we run throughout the year. These work on youth advocacy, service learning, civic engagement, leadership development and we do a lot of work around Get-Out-The-Vote and youth voting which we're very excited about in about 34 days. But youth and government has been a key part of the Y's youth development area focused for a long time now.

But when the whole world hit pause as we all addressed COVID-19 in the spring, youth and government much like any other program that brings together a lot of students in one place from all over the state quickly realized we were going to have to pivot. That our model of how we empower young people and how we give them a voice was not going to be sustainable in a space where we had to keep people socially distant, keep them safe and make sure we weren't putting anyone's safety at-risk. So what we came up with our changemaker institute. And the changemaker institute, if you want to go to the next slide, was basically our response to how we wanted to engage young people during the COVID-19 pandemic. It was a virtual platform for high school students to make an impact in their local communities. We had 10 week curriculum that ran from about early June all the way through the end of August.

And it asked students to focus on one of our areas of impact. We have three. Youth development, healthy living and social responsibility. And combine that with an interest or issue within one of UN-17 sustainable development goals or SDG and what each student did was find a way to merge those two, wherever that intersection was. For some people it was intersection of social justice and school safety. It was saying, we want to reform how we have police presence in our schools. For others, it was ensuring their community was socially responsible, but also had clean water that their economic activity didn't contribute to poor community health.

For others, like where you're going to hear from today, it was making their community safer about making those community more walkable, about making them more accessible for not just young people, but for all members of their community in ways that maybe we weren't thinking about pre-COVID.

We were lucky to have 4 in 2 students join us. That resulted in 185 what we call initiative presentations and eventually certification. These are students who you can see in the background of the slide, joined the zoom call, much like we have for the past 6 months. To present their ideas to YMCA leaders from all over the country. We had students like Jack or David who would get on a panel and be talking to YMCA leaders in South Dakota in Cheyenne reservation to Honolulu, Hawaii and Upstate New York. So we wanted to make this a locally focused program to expose them to variety of leaders and communities all across the country who themselves were responding to a lot of the same problems the students were working in their communities.

So, today, we are very excited for you to hear from these four students who all who did the government and changemaker institute and what I want to stress is that anyone who is looking to engage with young people on these issues, the most common thing that we find whenever we start these programs is our job as community leaders and as adults, as grownups or whatever you want to call us to continually remind them this is something they can do, that they have this skill and we can give them the confidence to do that. This is not something that is beyond them. That any small piece of change they can take a part of is meaningful. And it's going to take time.

So, we're very proud of all the work they've done over the last few months in some cases and years in other cases. And I'm excited to introduce our first youth leader, and that is David Fu.

>> DAVID FU: Hello. My name is David Fu. I'm a sophomore in Millburn high school and I live in Shore hills New Jersey and I participated in the youth and government changemaker institute. I found out about the institute from my parents who proposed to join since my summer camp was canceled due to COVID. We were charged with developing initiative to foster meaningful change in my community. My initiative is to help create a safer environment for people who walk in my community. I wanted to do this because when I was living in China, there were many sidewalks around the area that I live in. Allowing me to freely and safely walk in my community in China.

This made me happy since I could reach various locations by foot, such as the nearby convenience store. Thus, I would also like to experience this in my community here. My initial goal was to try to get sidewalks on some of the main streets connecting my community. Because these are the streets with the most cars and they can allow people in the suburbs like me to access downtown more safely by foot. So, I decided to start a survey asking about the prospect of building sidewalks on some of the main streets in my community. And I shared it through social media and to friends asking whether they would support it or not.

In total, 50 people completed the survey. Simultaneously, I did research and found out about the safe routes to school and the pedestrians safety Advisory Board. SRTS initiative is to encourage students by foot or bicycle. And it gives grants for sidewalk projects. The pedestrians advisory safety board organizes to make the town safer for walking and biking.

After several emails, I managed to get in contact with the chair of the board. Jennifer Duckworth. I talked to her about my initiative and asked her for feedback. To summarize, she believes the mish active to build sidewalks on the Main Street in our community is challenging for a few reasons. One, because revamping the sidewalk is time consuming and expensive and two, because I learned that these streets are owned by the county and sidewalk maintenance also requires a lot of money and manpower. Not wanting to give up on this project though, Jennifer propose to do let me work with people want to go build sidewalks near elementary school.

As a result, I decided to change the goals of my project to focus more on helping to build sidewalks near my local schools so that children can safely walk to school. Even though our YMCA changemaker institute is technically over, I continued my project and currently working with Mira Epstein, head of sidewalk project and get an SRT S. Grant to fund for sidewalks near one of my community elementary school. Google Map and survey asking about how people near the school feel about walking to the school have been created. 1100 people completed the survey and analyzed results and realized many people are concerned with the speeding people near the school. As next step, I'm waiting to hear back from the project leader who will have an upcoming meet with the you want to be Committee to ask about how they feel about this project. Additionally, due to COVID, our plans for physically walking around the streets near the school in pairs to map out the potential sidewalk cannot be done we're exploring other possible options to raise awareness for needs of sidewalk around the school. I look forward to working on this project incoming months and years.

To conclude, I have learned that you should do your research first. That means you should find out if your community is currently working on a change that you want to see. And in my case, I found out that my community is working on trying to get a grant installed sidewalk and remember, take action based on what the community needs and not what you think they need. Thank you.

>> JACK KELLY: Hello, everyone. My name is Jack Kelly and I'm from Clifton Park New York that is 20 minutes south from south springs and Albany in the center of the capital district.

And, so, to briefly discuss about me and my history with student advocacy, I have been a member of multiple like student advocacy groups, a lot of those being through the YMCA. For example, I was part of the YMCA youth and government program since my sophomore year as well as the YMCA national advocacy days and safe routes to school programs. What these have done is given me a sort meant of experience not only in governmental participation and things like youth and government, but also direct advocacy with my state legislature and my state lawmakers like the national advocacy days and things like safer to schools and changemakers which I'm

going to talk about more in the next coming slides. Little more context for my work outside of the YMCA alone. I also am the President of my student senate. And this has been where I've gotten a lot of my prior experience doing advocacy.

We have worked on multiple proposals in my years with our Senate, including some work to make our trays and utensils sustainable instead of using disposable plastic. We've also done work in improving our Diversity Council and making sure students are fully represented at the district level. And in addition, we've done work to look at the ability of class rank and how it affects our students. And also I've worked with groups such as what Nicole called homoglobin to work not only youth engagement in voting but also LGBTQ issues and rights such as blood equivalence.

In regards to save routes to school, I began with the inaugural class of alliance of New York State YMCAs and mark Fenton. And this program was established from the New York State of YMCA as part of a CDC active community grant. The goal was to build awareness about safe routes to school and programs it offered in a bunch of diverse communities throughout the State of New York.

Ultimately, the goal was to increase support for the local and state levels. To start, we first met over Zoom and we learned about the importance of walkability and how to perform work audits. Then we performed them and we specifically reported these findings to our local government officials. In my case, I talked to my town including Jen Vigiani and what she did for me, she talked about what my town currently does. My town is very suitable for walkability, so they have been in the process right now of initiating a five-year plan to connect almost all of our town via sidewalks. So she shared with me what my town was doing based on the advocacy I just given her.

These are some pictures from that first walk audit. What I did that summer was focus on the area around my school. So you can see over on the left, there's that sidewalk that leads right into my school campus. And on the right, there's kind of the sidewalk on the other side of the street. Kind of the lack of, effective transportation. We kind of analyzed how effective it was to get to school on a busy campus because it's a 45 miles an hour highway and that's the analysis we're working on that year.

And now, this year, I once again, participated in the SRTS student and master program. However, due to COVID-19, one of our challenges was how do we perform a walk audit when we're not able to walk outside with other people? Our goal had been to bring leaders on these walk audits this year now we've had the experience of doing the walk audit ourselves. We thought it would be effective to take them out and show them. However, there was complications with that. So we came up with virtual ways to demonstrate our ways of work audit. We worked with Mark Fenton who is leader in walking accessibility. And majority of students, including myself decided to use the Google form and short videos and ranking sheet and we released this to town leaders and community members. Feedback was great for the first year. I'd say we got at least 60% to 75% response rate from the emails we celebrity out to. And incoming years, we think this will be much higher, especially and we were in a virtual setting. These are pictures from the walk audit in the spring. You can see both of these pixel were taken relatively in the same area. They're from the business district in our town and we felt

that kind of focusing on this area, since we focused on the school prior would be a useful way to analyze how the town's infrastructure is working and where we can see improvement as we're working through this five year grant.

Following almost immediately after the safe route to school ambassador program which ended around June, as Derrick described before, this is a 10 week program for the YMCA changemakers institute. And I thought this was the perfect time to take my advocacy a little bit further. Of course there's month ago I can do at my town to affidavit for sidewalks or anything. Like David's working on because we agreed to that, there was not a lot for me to fight for there and I had to wait it out. However, I wanted to make most use of my time, so I decided to work with Jen Vigiani to create a community project of walkability for my town. This project which I'll explain more later was something I then shared with both peers for working on similar projects at the time as well as mentors from across the United States who had a little bit of experience on walkability from the Y and who could give me more feedback on how they had seen things on their end and how they had seen projects develop.

So the resulting action of this was creation of the Clifton Park walkability Committee. Essentially, our goal is to develop and improve the culture of walkability and bike ability in the town of Clifton Park. And we have neighboring towns such as Bethlehem New York and we are finalizing it and doing the bureaucratic things to make sure our Committee is completely substantial in a town community. We are working both with community members, town officials, as well as local student groups who have been interested in walkability to connect everyone as we begin our first steps. So that's what we'll be hoping fully rolling out in the next few months. And our first project will take place in late winter, early spring.

So, the lessons learned from all this work, and I don't want to treat it as though this is the final end of my advocacy. But lesson I have learned really are coming two prongs. One to my peers and two to my organizations and the people above me I'm working with them first for my peers, it is important to reach out to your local leaders. Oftentimes, it seems as though these people are kind of like way above us and we're scare to reach out to them. However, they want us to reach out to them. When you're reaching out to a leader, a local leader in your community, you want to make sure you're respecting their time and as such, essentially organize and communicate effectively. For organizations in order to make sure that students and young people feel comfortable reaching out to you in order to kind of subvert that stereotype of leaders in our community don't care about young people. It's really important to listen when young people reach out and be enthusiastically engaged and also to create spaces for young voices. Sometimes young people have a lot to say but they don't know how to do this. And, so, this is essential insuring young people to feel empowered if go out and do these things on their own. Thanks so much and I'm going to turn it over to our next presenter.

>> Stephanie, we love to hear more from you.

>> Yeah, thank you so much, Nicole. I'm Stephanie Tepperberg and I'm a health partnership and why the YMCA USA. And I'm excited to introduce you to our

next presenter and background for their presentations. So with that being, the next two presenters will present the active community work they completed with the YMCA youth and government program and part of the YMCA active community grant. So I know you heard a bit about the Utah center for the division and physical activity and obesity has funded the YMCA originally in all 50 states and mostly deep dive in 11 states to do on the ground programming and infrastructure change as well as state and local policy change and active transformation and safe routes to school all with the goal to strengthen and build active and healthy communities. This work is in all support of active people helping nations. CDC to get 27 million Americans to get more physically active. And it couldn't be done without our creative partner and specifically safe out partnership for their guidance and expertise and tools for measuring systems change through the safe route to school and report cards and a little bit on the report cards, these are available for all 50 states on their website.

And measure policy supports for active transportation funding, safe routes to school and complete street policy and they're released every two years and recently released couple of months ago for 2020. So I sent the link to Nicole and she will provide it after the presentation. But I encourage folks to check it out if you haven't done so already.

And I would be remiss to not mention other partners helping and have benchmarking reports that are helpful and in creating local and state policy change. So check those out as well.

So what's really exciting about this active community grant and the work we've been doing is that for the past several years, our state alliances of YMCA that we worked with on this work have innovative and created ways to empower and elevate youth voices around the importance of walkability, bike ability, and the need for safe and inclusive access to community resources to promote public health.

The Y's purpose is to strengthen communities and we're committed to doing this. And changer institute and the projects exemplify the incredible changemakers and I hope their stories provide inspiration and people who want to do more work. Without further ado I'm honored to introduce Benaja Richardson and Jessika Crockett, our next two presenters. So I'll go and pass it over to you, Benaja.

>> BENAJA RICHARDSON: Thank you, Stephanie. Hi, everyone. My name is Benaja Richardson and I'm currently a freshman at USC Charlotte majoring in political science and I'm excited to talk about the walk America grant I presented as a senior in high school. So I served as student delegation leader for Parkland youth and government leader of William G YMCA of North Carolina and during our club meeting when our YMCA liaison and advisory introduced to us the concept of walkability through the CDC funded project to raise awareness bit throughout our community and state. Now, initially, we didn't know what walkability was much less heard of it. But after learning --

>> We're not able to see your slides.

>> Okay. I'm so sorry.

>> No problem.

>> BENAJA RICHARDSON: Okay, I can go back to the cover. And this is the first slide. So, after the concept of walkability was introduced to us, we collectively agreed that arriving to our school other than anything a vehicle was potentially dangerous. So with concerns who are involved, we took the initial step of conducting research and training and assess the importance of active communities and how to initiate walkability and bike ability.

So some issues walkable areas I addressed in general, one important point is health. Walkable areas kind of limits individual access to health benefits. So they may not be able to have outdoor exercise to reduce stress or alleviate any underlying condition that is may be controlled with exercise and this prevents leading a healthy lifestyle. Second point is dangers of unmarked areas. When areas are left unmarked, more individuals are prone to accidents with emphasis on youth with road miss calculation and jaywalking and there's environmental there's been are increased where lack of walkable areas also means reduction in eco-friendly active transportation option such as scooters or bikes to maneuver around the local community. In addition to this, human connectivity lessens because and this is not concern right now, but individuals will experience decrease in interaction. So this also shows lack of walkable area affects the community. So we were to assess walkable area around Parkland high school in order to configure commit and propose both short-term and long-term ideas to make the local area a more walkable place. I was excited to gain experience in gathering evidence for environmental health and policy change. As well as increasing walkability through public policy and educating our decision-makers in order to bolster these arguments in order to implement safer crosswalk, signage, and, et cetera.

And, so, here's a satellite image to give you a better visual context. So, this red pin on the map of course is Parkland high school and we traveled down our own parking lot through the heavily wooded area. From there, we traveled to the library and crossed over Parkland Park and then we went through the residential area near the school. And then lastly, we went along, we walked along Peter creek Parkway which is more dangerous area which I will expand upon. Concerned to Peter creek Parkway, most students attempt to do across this four lane area daily which resulted in accidents.

So, overall, we walked about a mile. So, these are some awesome photos from our walk audit. The top left corner is from us being in the park. And there's one from the side of our school. And then at the bottom, this is us in the school residential area. And then alongside the library where you see that heavily wooded trail.

So, I got a lot of outcomes from the walk audit. So some positives were that there was a bike and walking lane along the library as well as good lighting around Peter creek Parkway and Parkland park and students and others who are out late, their view won't be obstructed and negatives consisted of areas that should be walkable do not cater to the elderly and this regards to jagged concrete, as well as there being a complete lack of crosswalks were not only at the library, but Peter's creek Parkway as

well to and from the school. And heavily wooded trail, that needs to be rezoned, monitored, and trailed so individuals can walk to and from the library and connecting neighborhoods.

So, after the walk audit, Parkland NC youth government delegation sent out letters and record concerning our findings. And many people reached out to state Senators, legislatures, and so forth so we can kind of branch out. And I had the opportunity to have a phone call with councilmember James Taylor junior who was also a student at Parkland high school and has a great track of being involved in our community. So councilman Taylor junior sent individuals from the transportation to scope the area with us which was impeded upon due to COVID. Also our delegation was planning to attend a City Council meeting in the spring to bring forth our proposal for walkability which was halted as well. But great thing that came out of this was to connect with our local decision-makers. Like Jack previously said, these leaders and decision-makers want to hear from us and they love how the youth is active in the community.

So, I got a lot of learning outcomes and growth from this that I still carry with me. So this interactive experience with assessing on the ground issues and developing policy solutions exposed me to adjust the fragment of the hard and taxing work it takes to investigate problems and fight and work for those causes. And this audit took me from my only little bubble by opening my eyes about this cause about our very own school.

And I say this because for me personally for my area, it's a cul-de-sac or a dead-end, so it's not uncommon for people to freely ride their bikes or walk their dogs without the fear of oncoming vehicles. And, so, this audit definitely instilled in me the community awareness to realize not everyone has access to walkable areas near them.

And these are very real issues I've had the opportunity to learn about. And also the walkability audit most importantly demonstrated how crucial it is for young advocates to be engaged enacting for our communities. So in our government or sort of real decision-making, it's not hard for to us research something and rule on it or draft up a Bill and send it in. But this audit showed the leg work is especially a crucial process in committing to change. So it's a receive life investment this audit taught me and this audit encouraged and impacted my love for policy implementation and the law. And, of course, I want to give a thanks to America Walks, and a very, very special thanks to Rain Thoresen and the northwest northwest YMCA and the Parkland youth and government delegation for this moment.

>> Thank you, Benaja.

>> JESSIKA CROCKETT: Hello, I'm Jessika Crockett and I'm currently a freshman at Stonehill College majoring in political science. And I'm super-excited to share with you my experience with the active communities program. So I got involved with this program through my high school youth and government club where 8 students, including myself were tasked with individually writing a piece of mock policy regard creating active communities. We wrote our own policies. But the central focus was on

the lack of public recreational facilities, and solving that by opening public schools in Massachusetts for community use after classes. Our end goal was to build off the work we have done and possibly choose one of the policies or combine them into one to actually propose to state legislatures. This way we can take the project to the neck level and spread the awareness and idea of active communities throughout the entire state in a more impactful way.

Once everyone had agreed to create their own policy. We began to research write our draft. On this slide is my finalized product. I looked across the country such as New York and Milwaukee and community schools and surrounding town so those in the community can use the school's resources after class are over. I had to decide on how to fund the program. The minimum community hours, and how to staff those hours.

And once I was done, I was getting ready to present my policy. So, the mock policy I created included a minimum of 25 hour per week allotted for community use time after school is not in session. And during any non-school events. It had a minimum of 2 staff members present during the community hours for safety purposes. They would ensure all safety regulations are being met. And the facilities are being used properly.

I decided on a .15% increase for the staffing and training and additional resources needed to keep the schools open longer. And I also outlined the available resources that will be able to be used by the community such as school gym, locker room, conference room, their recreational field centers and their libraries.

So the result of proposed policies. The students have the entire school year to work on the policy. Our clubs met with various points throughout the year with pre-legislative conference and we used that time to get feedback on our policy we have written thus far. And AT&T end of the year conference, and we usually hold that at the statehouse and we propose policies to our entire state program. And every single policy got passed through after debates and voting. Each policy I heard while having the same base concept was executed differently and offered a new perspective on how to tackle the idea such as funding alternatives and different minimum hours or staff requirements.

Sadly due to COVID, we were unable to complete the last stages of the program and closed one the state policies from the legislators. Although once the restrictions are eased, we can see similar policies adopted into the Massachusetts general law.

The impact of the program, the program actually impacted myself and many of my peers quite significantly. As young people we want to help change our communities, but either don't know how or where to start or feel as though our voices won't be heard through our age. During the course of the project, it was clear many people my age wanted to see this become a reality. We see social policy changes like this one don't create communities. They create connected ones. Friends meet up at the track and walk around and people can interact with one another and be active in ways they normally would want be able to. They give exercise equipments, books, and other

things they need. Social policies that could bring about positive change, but it takes someone to speak up and bring the idea to the table first and sometimes that someone is a teenager like myself and the others who spoke before me.

Inclusion, as I wrap-up, I just want to touch on why this project was important to me. Picture on the slide is my high school. And it's new and has amazing recreational facilities that stay dormant after school hours. We have a great track and fitness center. It would be put to good use in the community, but unfortunately, they're unable to. On a personal note, this program greatly inspired me individually. While writing my policy, I slowly began to realize I loved what I was doing and I had the ability to impact so many people. This project was actually one of the factors that eventually made me decide to study political science in college and hope one day to become a lawmaker and create more social policies related to this one so I can help as many people as possible. In closing, I just want to say this is the project of my peers and have helped to show how valuable youth voices can be in making changes in our communities. We're passionate about making the places we live, play and go to school and we hope this provides inspirations for others in the community like we do. Thank you for listening to my story about the active community grant program.

>> Thank you so much, Jessika. And I just want to put up this slide here. If you do have questions for our presenters, please remember we have the chat box. And we can go ahead and take your questions there. And right now, we're actually, I'm going to ask everyone if we can go on camera. And that way, we can do Q&A that seems more interactive, as well as we can do these days. It's great to see everyone.

All right, so we have quite a few questions. I'm just going to start out with a few that I kind of prepared ahead of time. First, I want to start out with in regard to the walk audit tools. That was actually one of our questions from the audience. And I know a lot of people have questions about what tools did you use? Any challenges or lessons learned when were you doing the walk audits? Benaja, when did you your walk audit, you were able to do that obviously with a group of people. And I know Jack, you had to do your walk audit virtually.

So, do you mind just sharing some challenges of the four months you used and what audit tool you used?

>> BENAJA RICHARDSON: Absolutely. So, I wouldn't say there were really any challenges. Because you saw in the photos, we had these clipboards and on the clipboards, it was like a map of the area that we scoped. And that's kind of what we used for what I call a walkability training when we first really sat down and scoped the areas.

And then what we used was kind of like a measurement system. Like we rated walkable areas from 1 to 10 so, on our check board, or our walkability packet, each location was kind of bullet point. So, every time we walked over to that area, we were rated, and then we would write down the pros and cons. So that was kind of all the tools that we used.

>> BENAJA RICHARDSON: We didn't really discuss that if I'm not mistaken.

>> THE MODERATOR: I think we may have lost Jack perhaps. So we're just going to move on to the next question. So, David, what are your plans for Community Engagement as you continue your project. I know you're going to be doing more survey and reaching out to the community. Because you made a great point asking what the community needs instead of deciding for them. So would you like to share a little bit about your future plans for your project in getting involved with the Community Engagement?

>> DAVID FU: So regard to go that question, I would say, in the future, I'll probably talk with the class President and other officials in my school. So they can maybe try to get our high school maybe involved? And also, I would talk with my leader [Audio fading in and out] Epstein and maybe he can talk through this more with other town Committee and stuff. And maybe more surveys in the future to ask for more input from the people.

>> THE MODERATOR: Great idea and Jessica in regard to your project, what are some of the pros and cons of the community schools partnership model in light of COVID-19? I think she might be frozen.

>> JESSIKA CROCKETT: Obviously, some of the cons would be keeping the place clean and below the room active capacity. And the pros would be bringing awareness to the healthy living and wellness by making sure people know that these facilities are up to use and they're able to use them. And also, by using the schools outside of the facilities, such as field and walking tracks who will be able to meet out.

>> THE MODERATOR: So offer them another option for physical activity, which is great. So to go to some of the audience questions, one of our audience members asked, as a youth that was in a position for the opportunities, how would you reach youth who don't know about this opportunity because they're not tied to their YMCA? So do you want to share a little bit about how you learned about the YMCA opportunities? And what made you feel empowered to get so involved in start making so much change in your communities? We'll start with David.

>> DAVID FU: So for the first part, I have been, like, I got involved with the YMCA because for the past two years I have been living in Short Hills, I have been able to take advantage of the YMCA facilities that are offered in the YMCA. So I do feel like - I do feel like I want to repay back. And the first step maybe would be to start with my own community and start by helping get sidewalks. Benaja.

>> BENAJA RICHARDSON: Now, you know it's through the YMCA so, that's kind of how I was able to get involved the Y programs and stuff like that. But for any youth who does want to reach out and partake, you know, these events, I would say start with your teachers. Club advisors, you have to really reach out. Because I never would have gotten to do this opportunity if I weren't in youth and government, and I

found out about youth and government through the civics teacher. So it always starts with school. And those who can kind of guide you towards those clubs.

>> THE MODERATOR: Jessika, you want to chime in?

>> JESSIKA CROCKETT: I also found out about youth and government through my high school. And I got involved with that. But people who don't know about youth and government or maybe their school may not offer one or connected to one today, I think a great place to start is attending some of your town meetings or school Committee meetings if they offer them as an open forum and just going in and not necessarily, you don't have to speak on it but listen to what's going on in your community and getting involved and talking with your parents, teachers, or peers who may be also wanting to get involved. So you can offer your insights. And changes you want to come to the community. It's never too late to get started getting involved in your community and civic engagement.

>> THE MODERATOR: And Jack, we were just asked, I was asking an audience question basically, how did you find out about the programming through YMCA? And what made you feel empowered to get so involved? We'll catch him when he comes back.

So our next question says wonderful presentation. And reflections on Community Engagement and leadership. How did you engage students with disabilities in this work? For example, truncated domes were described as adequate in one of the presentations of was this rating given by someone who is blind? So were you able to, you know, be pretty inclusive with the work you did? If not, is this something that you're considered as you go forward in your work?

>> BENAJA RICHARDSON: I think we definitely should be more inclusive about those certain accommodations, you know, for people. Because no, the truncated domes were not examined by someone visually-impaired people. They were examined by people who were all able-bodied and going down the jagged trail. So we're kind of rating things based off our perspective. But that's also a great point. And I think we could also add a lot more inclusivity. So we can properly rate those types of things.

>> THE MODERATOR: Anyone else want to add to the question?

>> DAVID FU: I would say, I haven't thought about including the disability accommodations. But for now, I would like to first focus on getting the sidewalk and then once we get the bases down, then we can start to think about how to accommodate for people with disability.

>> THE MODERATOR: Is that something to bring back to your mentor and that can be part of the planning process before you officially put them down?

>> DAVID FU: Yeah. Definitely, I'll think about that and consult with my mentors.

>> THE MODERATOR: For Jessika, how would that question apply for, I know that was geared towards walking audit. But are there any issues with inclusion as far as your project with the schools? And proper accommodations?

>> JESSIKA CROCKETT: So I would not foresee something like that coming up, because oftentimes when schools are being built, they're already being built with disability accommodation in mind. Always have ramps, elevators, and wheelchair accessible ways to get to these facilities. I definitely, if we came across a school that did not have something like that, I would be very much inclined to make sure to make them as accommodating as possible for people of all disabilities and able-bodiedness. But for right now, I don't really see that, because we're just kind of reusing the school facilities and opening them up. I don't foresee that being a challenge for my personal project. But if it did come up, we can easily create a ramp system to get to, say, a walking track.

>> THE MODERATOR: Okay. Next question. This may be for, I guess this is anyone who wants to answer. Our presenters may know or Eric and Stephanie ER still with us, what 11 states are included in the active community grant or are the grants still available? And Stephanie and Derrick, you can unmute yourself if you want to chime in.

>> Sorry, I was having trouble with the meeting. Can everyone hear me? This is Stephanie. Great question about the states. So we've got New York, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, South Carolina, Illinois, South Dakota, Nevada, Arkansas, Texas, and I know there's more I'm missing.

>> THE MODERATOR: You're saying that from memory? That is impressive.

>> STEPHANIE TEPPERBERG: Yeah, I will figure out what the last one is and get back to you and maybe you can share that with the group, Nicole. In terms of the grants, they are specifically, you know, assigned, or the CDC funded YMCA to do this work. And, so, one of the best ways to get involved would be if you are in any of those states to contact your state alliance of YMCA or local youth and government program. And we are just starting our 30 year of those grants. So we would love more engagement and involvement. So feel free to reach out to those. And I can include the link to those contacts as well, Nicole, for afterwards.

I did just want to mention we have a website with some walk audit tools and resources that we developed with the safe routes partnership. And, so, a lot of those are typically some of the walk audit tools we use.

>> THE MODERATOR: Okay. I just want to remind those tuning in, after the webinar, this is being recorded. You will receive an email with the information about how to access the recording page. We'll list additional resources, as well as the recording so that way you're able to find out more about the YMCA programming.

And any additional resources that our presenters have and their presentation slides as well. So, we will just wrap-up with one last question. Let's pick a great one to close out with.

I know Jack, in your presentation, you were encouraging organizers to reach out to youth, let their voices be heard. So I just like to hear real briefly from each of you one tip that you can give to organizations or we actually had a question that was specific to public officials and transportation professionals.

How to better reach young people. So whether it's, you know, communication-wise, social media, going to school, just give us like one little brief tip from each of you and maybe it's something that impacted you to get involved. And then I think we'll close out our questions with that. So we'll start with you, Jack, if that's okay.

>> JACK KELLY: Sure. Can you guys hear me all right? Awesome. All right, so, I would say personally, the best way to make, and I'm going focus more on how officials make themselves accessible to youth. I think the best way to do that is really increase your presence in youth spaces. And I say that kind of using youth space as a phrase. That could be Internet and social media or by going into the schools. I think each can be as impactful in its own way and both can be done well or done poorly. You don't want to run a meme account that people don't take seriously. And you don't want to lecture in a school no one feels like it's not connecting to them. And by doing this and being more involved in youth spaces, I think leaders, public officials, can find and learn more about how to connect with youth voices better. So I think that just more you do it, the same way any of us say, the more we do advocacy, the better we get at it and do that stuff. More you make a concerted effort to reach out to young people and include them in your conversation and include them in every decision you're making, the better response and better like response and ideas you'll receive from young people. Montana I'll go to the next person on my screen.

>> BENAJA RICHARDSON: Like you said, show up to our schools and really engage with us. Show us they're receptive. Because a lot of young changemakers may feel that like we may feel like we're not being heard. Or we send an email or we send a letter and it's being tossed into the file. And, so, I just think that definitely like what Jack said, they need to make their presence much more known. And let us know that they're willing to actively engage with us. So we can push for causes that matter to us.

>> THE MODERATOR: Jessika you're next.

>> JESSIKA CROCKETT: Just to echo what Jack and Benaja already said. Yes, make yourself known in our communities. Make us want to feel comfortable reaching out to you. It can be very intimidating as a young person to want to bring about change, because I'm afraid I'm going to be like it's just a kid. They don't know what's going on. But we do. We are part of this community just as much as someone who is of an older age and we want to see change just as much as they do. And by taking away our ability to have a choice, it makes us want to be less active in our communities. And that just starts a spiral into people growing up and not wanting to be engaged in their community and civic duty. Our young people today become the changemaker of tomorrow and we need to keep that in mind when engaging youth within our community and government. So just making sure young people feel comfortable and they will be heard and you want to hear them by, saying, here's how you can contact me. This is so important.

>> THE MODERATOR: And David.

>> DAVID FU: Yeah, I agree with what Jack, Benaja and Jessika said about how to increase certain influence among the youth. And provide a space for them to be heard. I would also like to add that you should also try to -- maybe consider contacting or communicating with more influential members within schools and they might or with maybe even school officers or student officers, and maybe like let them inform about your organizations or individuals so that the youth would know more about you and can consider and can consider contacting you guys.

>> THE MODERATOR: Great. Well, thank you so much. We are going to close out. Let's see. One second. Little technical issue. All right. Can everybody see my slides? Hopefully. So we are just going to close out. Thank you so much to everyone for participating today. Thank you for sharing your projects. David, Jack, Jessika, Benaja. We definitely were inspired by your presentations, by your leadership. And I hope that there are additional youths that can watch this webinar and also feel inspired to get out in their community. So thank you so much for sharing. Again, we want to thank our sponsors for making the webinars possible. And if you've enjoyed today's discussion, I want to ask you to consider playing a part for content like this coming your way by making a donation. Every \$5 makes a long way. And you'll find a donation link in the chat box and followed by an email you receive with the webinar recording. So I highly encourage you to participate by coordinating.

And, again, thank you again for attending this webinar. Youth Leading the Ways: Inspiring Stories of Youth Creating Safe, Accessible Neighborhoods.

We do have our next webinar coming up on October 14th. And that webinar is with author Lawrence T. Brown and he has a upcoming book called "The Black butterfly: The harmful politics of race and space in America." So thank you, everyone, for participating. And I hope you have a great rest of your afternoon.

Thank you!