



Bellevue students join teen activists in Youth Summit

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Ellie Henningsgaard is ready for change.

The senior at Interlake High School and member of Social Venture Kids helped organize the 2010 Youth Summit, a one day conference aimed at connecting teen activists to address the issues facing the Puget Sound region.

"This summit was a great place for local youth to connect and learn from one another," Henningsgaard said. "It was all about gathering resources and ideas for making change in this area."

According to Henningsgaard, the conference was created as a platform for local youth to gather and discuss their common interests surrounding issues such as community service, civic and political engagement, public policy, leadership development and grantmaking.



Students gather at the opening of the Youth Summit.

This year's summit was the first of its kind in the area, engaging 13 youth organizations and participants from the greater Seattle area. The conference was held at the Mercer Island Community Center and attracted a group of 60 youth who gathered together to learn leadership skills, build community and what steps to activate change in their communities.

Henningsgaard joined a group of five other students on the Youth Summit Advisory Board to plan and implement the conference. The summit was broken into workshops, youth presentations and a keynote address.

The workshops focused on leadership, public speaking, and a social capital mapping exercise called 'Circles of Influence,' an interactive exercise that used scenarios where the participants identified, engaged, and activated their friends, fellow students and family members as a catalyst for change.

"We wanted to create the summit as resource for all the many different youth-focused organizations to join together and combine resources to have more of an impact," she said. "I think it was a huge success for our first time around."

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The summit brought together members of the Seattle Foundation's Youth Grantmaking Alumnae Board, Youth Venture, Youth Ambassadors, Penny Harvest, Make the Dash Count, Bellevue Youth Link, Puget SoundOff and many more.

The summit was free for participants thanks to a number of sponsors including Starbucks Coffee Company, Garlic Jim's Famous Gourmet Pizza, the Seattle Foundation and Social Venture Partners.

"The goal of the summit was to build a strong network of youth activists," Henningsgaard said. "I think we met our goal."

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To learn more about the Youth Summit, visit <http://www.wamentors.org/youth-summit-2010>.

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