



Committee Representing Our Young Adults

*CROYA has a 25 year proven track record that should be promoted for another 25 years! Youth need a positive alternative other than being told to "go to the beach," and the new student union would definitely provide that. - Mike Hosking - Police Chief, Lake Forest*

# CROYA History

The Committee Representing Our Young Adults (CROYA) was established in 1980 for Lake Forest and Lake Bluff, in response to serious problems affecting the teenagers of our communities during the mid to late 1970's. Several teen suicides, drug and alcohol abuse, vandalism, and a teen gang called "The Losers" prompted community leaders to take action to address the needs of youth.

A study in 1976 by the Lake County Youth Service Bureau recommended the formation of a community-based "youth council" that would focus entirely on youth. In addition, community organizations such as the League of Women Voters and the Association of Parents and Teachers conducted studies and forums to solicit input. As a result, an Ad Hoc Committee was established in 1979 by the Mayor of Lake Forest with the sole objective to "consider the proper role of the City in responding to the needs of its young people." The Ad Hoc Committee would eventually recommend "the establishment of a Committee Representing Our Young Adults." The CROYA committee was thus formed of citizens appointed by the Mayor of Lake Forest and the Village President of Lake Bluff.

To obtain further insight into youth needs, CROYA commissioned Lake Forest College in 1981 to conduct a Youth Needs Assessment. A significant finding of this study was that while the impetus for CROYA may have been to increase awareness and to work with teens involved with drugs, alcohol, and violence, most young people simply needed help in dealing with the unique stresses associated with life as a teenager in affluent communities.

During the first six years, the CROYA committee learned about working with youth largely by trial and error and through studies such as the Youth Needs Assessment. As a result, CROYA evolved, undergoing

numerous changes in philosophy, direction, and programming. CROYA gradually turned its attention to serving increasing numbers of youth and to providing additional alternative youth activities as a way to reach out to young people and to earn their trust. "CROYA became an organization that listened to youth while hearing adults as well." (Eugene Hotchkiss, President Emeritus - Lake Forest College)

In 1987, through a private donation of \$200,000 from the Waldo Allen Charities Trust, CROYA purchased a section of the Lake Forest Recreation Center, and finally had a place to call home. CROYA gradually hired additional staff (to their current level of five full-time adult employees), expanded its breadth of programs and services for youth, and have become trusted community advisors to young adults. Today, CROYA is a thriving youth agency. Led by committees of young people, CROYA offers weekly meetings, social activities, community service initiatives, educational programs, retreats, and more. Its success hinges on a group process model for working with teenagers. Every facet begins with the CROYA teens and is facilitated by adult staff members who have earned the respect and trust of the youth.

As CROYA began to be recognized as a national model for others in the youth field, a local author was retained to write the book, *Empowering Teens: A Guide to Developing a Community Based Youth Organization*, published in 2000. The book chronicles the historical perspective of our community's journey in embracing our youth; and serves as a guide to others looking to build youth/adult partnerships of any kind.



For more information on CROYA, see the Frequently Asked Questions and Proposed Programs inserts in addition to other materials enclosed, or visit [www.croya.com](http://www.croya.com)