



## IGNITING THE SPARK:

### Examples of Next Gen Engagement Strategies

Prepared by the National Center for Family Philanthropy & Youth Philanthropy Connect, a program of The Frieda C. Fox Family Foundation

PHISH: A PROGRAM OF THE DEKKO FOUNDATION

LOCATED: Kendallville, Indiana

WEBSITE: [www.dekkofoundation.org/phish](http://www.dekkofoundation.org/phish)

MISSION STATEMENT: Fostering economic freedom through education.

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## phish: A Program of the Dekko Foundation

### Who Is Involved:

- Community youth in Indiana, Iowa, Alabama, and Minnesota make up the Youth Pods (total of 13 pods)
- phish is the leadership team from those pods
- Supported overall by staff of the Dekko Foundation; locally by interested adults

### History of Youth Engagement:

The idea for Youth Pods started in the 1990s, when a staff member went to a family philanthropy conference and learned about youth philanthropy initiatives. With no Dekko family members at the right age, the Dekko Foundation looked to the Council of Michigan Foundation's youth advisory committee model to develop youth philanthropy in the communities it serves. Dekko partnered with the local community foundation as the fiscal agent and schools to recruit students and help run the program. The first of what they call "Youth Pods" was started in 1994 in Noble County, Indiana. There are now 13 Youth Pods in four states.



When the Youth Pods began, they focused primarily on grantmaking. Now they work on youth development in the three areas of philanthropy: time, talent, and treasure. This has inspired an increase in volunteer experiences and empowerment. Every pod uses the same basic model, but they have the opportunity to operate uniquely from the rest.

Each Youth Pod applies for funding from the Dekko Foundation. phish, the leadership team of the Youth Pods, reviews the applications and acts as program officers on behalf of the Dekko Foundation. Once the applications are approved, the pods consider grant requests from their community. Each pod then reviews the applications they receive and determines which investments most closely align with their mission. They then present their decisions to the local community foundation that approves and distributes the funds.

## Adult Perspective:

*“Growing up I didn’t have a word for the thing in my heart that wanted to do something good with my life. I love the opportunity to help youth explore what philanthropy means to them. The magic is letting the kids make real decisions with real money that really matter.”*

—Jenna Ott, Program Officer

## Next Gen Perspectives:

*“I also love how much it has helped me grow as a person. We learn so much while having fun.”*

—Jayme Pierschbacher

*“I love phish because the adults and peers gave me the empowerment and support I needed to realize my passions.”*

—Victoria Goodwin

## Current Youth Engagement Strategies:

- Youth Pods choose a focus each year and apply for grantmaking dollars from the Dekko Foundation. Most Youth Pods receive \$15,000-20,000 per year to cover grantmaking, administrative costs, and professional development opportunities.
- phish is a leadership team that helps the Dekko Foundation to continually improve the Youth Pods and reviews their grant requests.
- Service Projects are taken on by each Youth Pod based on identified local needs. These could include activities such as a town cleanup, library fundraiser, or involvement with their grantee organizations.



## Next Gen Perspectives Continued:

*“I love phish because it has given me opportunities and connected me with people that I would never gotten the chance to have without it!”*

—Reagan Brown

*“phish has given me a multitude of opportunities to travel around the nation—enabling me to not only grow myself and my own knowledge, but change my community along the way.”*

—Luke Sturtz

## Advice to Others:

- Don't reinvent the wheel. Travel around to see what others are doing and elaborate on what works.
- Have confidence in your youth and express to them that they are useful to the cause. The more power and trust you give, the more they can flourish.
- Partnerships between youth and adults are key. It can be helpful to have a younger leader to whom your youth can relate.
- Work made fun gets done! Don't get bogged down with the paperwork. Have fun and don't make philanthropy a chore.



## Resources to Share:

- Youth Pod brochures
- phish session materials
- Ten young people with amazing philanthropic experiences!