

Grant program encourages local youth

By Jennifer Eisenbart
STAFF WRITER

For Jessica Safransky, youth are a passion.

The program coordinator for Youth as Resources – a grant program offered through United Way – Safransky sees exactly how youth can impact the community around them.

“Young people can identify a community need and address that,” said Safransky, who has been the program coordinator since 2007.

“We’ve always kind of followed the original model,” Safransky added. “We try to remove the roadblock of not having funding.”

Youth as Resources, or YAR, began in Racine County

in 1996. The program just celebrated its 15-year anniversary, and the model for the program actually started in the 1980s.

The whole idea, Safransky said, is to give youngsters a chance to make an impact where they live. Studies, she said, have shown that youth who participate in community service are less likely to commit crimes because they are involved.

Last year, Karcher Middle School got a \$1,000-plus grant from YAR that turned into Community Cleanup Day. The Karcher seventh- and eighth-graders went to various sites around Burlington, picking up trash and downed

tree limbs, spreading mulch and generally beautifying the community.

Burlington Area School District’s PAC House (which stands for Project Active Citizen, a program for adult students with special needs) did a project in May called “Storybook Friends.” Since YAR counts youth up to age 24, the program was able to apply for funds.

“We can include post-secondary students,” Safransky said.

The PAC participants went to local elementary schools to work with kindergarten

and early education students – reading books and sharing snacks with them. They left a book and a stuffed animal with each classroom.

PAC House completed the project last spring.

“Not only did the young students they were working with see reading was fun ... they also were able to see young adults who had special needs and were able to overcome those needs,” Safransky said.

YAR tries to fund between 8-12 projects a year. “We try to fund as many projects as we can that meet our guide-

lines,” with normally a \$1,000 maximum grant funding, Safransky said.

“It usually depends on the scope of the project,” she said.

The first of several deadlines are currently approaching for the group – Sept. 30, and another deadline Dec. 16. Two more deadlines will follow in 2012 – Feb. 3 and March 3.

If you are interested in applying for a grant, or want to serve on the YAR board, contact Safransky at (262) 898-2251 or by email at jsafransky@unitedwayracine.org.

Harris, the community development director for Pleasant Prairie said the village is pleased to welcome Lynch.

“We wish them great success in the new venture,” she said.

Public meetings

Tuesday, Oct. 4

Committee of the Whole, City Council meeting, 6:30 p.m., council chambers, 224 E. Jefferson St.

Wednesday, Oct. 5

Lyons Town Board 5:30 p.m., Plan Commission 7:30 p.m., Town Hall, 6339 Hospital Road, Lyons

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