

PARTNERS FOR YOUTH WITH DISABILITIES

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About the Agency

Partners for Youth with Disabilities, Inc. (PYD) was founded in 1985 with a mission to empower young people with disabilities to reach their full potential. PYD does this by providing high quality one-to-one and group mentoring programs where caring adults act as positive role models and provide support, understanding and guidance for youth as they strive to reach their personal, educational and career goals.

PYD works to inspire youth with disabilities to develop their talents and abilities by providing adult and peer role models who have encountered similar difficulties in their own lives, and by providing opportunities for youth with disabilities to explore the full range of creative, educational, recreational, and career possibilities available to them. PYD works to foster self-esteem, confidence, and motivation in youth with disabilities and to empower them to express their needs, seek out resources, and build skills that will help them achieve their full potential.

Since 1985, PYD's cornerstone program, **Mentor Match**, has matched youth with disabilities — a traditionally underserved population as it relates to mentoring services — with adults in high quality one-to-one mentor relationships. PYD also finds creative ways to provide group mentoring opportunities through programs that address independence and the development of social, life and career skills for Massachusetts children and youth, ages six to 24. PYD has been recognized for its leadership with the disability community. The organization has a staff of 11 full- and part-time employees, and an annual operating budget of slightly under \$1 million.

PYD helps youths gain control of their lives



PYD's Summer Institute culminated in two performances at the Boston Center for the Arts.

PYD's programs are grounded in a philosophy of empowerment and are designed to provide opportunities for youth to gain control of their lives and to acquire the information, resources, and skills for lifelong growth and full participation in their communities. For youth with disabilities, growing up is often accompanied by feelings of inadequacy and alienation, fueled by the lowered expectations of well-meaning adults. Without the benefit of role models who represent successful and contributing members of society, these youth have no path to follow and little evidence that plans and dreams can be realized. **A critical need exists for youth with disabilities to have access to mentors and positive role models.** This need is more urgent for young people with disabilities who live in isolated and low-income areas where strong community support systems are not in place.

Mentor Match, PYD's core program, partners a child with disabilities with an adult mentor with or without disabilities, fostering a close relationship in support of independent living skills. Mentor Match serves 40-60 youth per year in new and existing matches.

The Young Entrepreneurs Project teaches entrepreneurship, career development and educational goal-setting to Boston-area middle and high school students and provides mentors from the business community. The Young Entrepreneurs Project currently serves between 65 and 85 youth per year in three Boston Public Schools.

Making Healthy Connections empowers youth with disabilities to make a successful transition into adulthood, take responsibility for their health care, and learn about healthy lifestyles, community resources and recreation options. This program serves between 45 and 55 youth per year in Boston and Springfield.

Access to Theatre brings together a diverse group of young people with and without disabilities in Greater Boston to explore their creative talents in music, acting, movement, and visual arts through out-of-school time and summer programming. Access to Theatre serves approximately 40-50 youth per year.

The National Center for Mentoring Youth with Disabilities serves as an advocate for the inclusion for youth with disabilities by providing best practices, training and technical assistance to public and private organizations throughout the nation.

Executive Director

Regina Snowden is the founder of Partners for Youth with Disabilities and has been the organization's executive director for 25 years. She envisions PYD as a state leader in promoting inclusive mentoring programs for youth with disabilities.

Snowden



brings to her work a wealth of knowledge about mentoring and management. She designed PYD's Mentor Match program; this cornerstone program of PYD's work has received the Award of Excellence in Children's Health from the Harvard School of Public Health, as well as an award from the National Organization on Disability. Under her leadership, other PYD programs have also received prestigious awards from the American Red Cross, Citizens Bank, United Way, Children's Hospital, the City of Boston, and the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities.

In 2003, the Rehabilitation Services Administration published an article written by Ms. Snowden entitled "Mentoring Youth with Disabilities" in the American Rehabilitation Journal. In 2008, she received a peer provider award at the Providers' Council's annual Convention and Expo. Snowden holds a bachelor's degree in social work from Anderson University and an M.S.W. from Boston University.