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Ozone House *Providing a safe place since 1969*

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OZONE HOUSE LEADS COMMUNITIES EMPOWERING YOUTH CAPACITY BUILDING INITIATIVE

ANN ARBOR, MI - Ozone House Youth & Family Services has been awarded funding to lead Communities Empowering Youth, a collaborative project among seven local service agencies to build a collective capacity to advance Positive Youth Development among high-risk youth in Ypsilanti.

In addition to Ozone House as lead partner, Communities Empowering Youth member agencies include the Corner Health Center, HelpSource, Parkridge Community Center, POWER, Inc., the Village Initiative of Michigan, and the Washtenaw Area Council for Children.

Because youth who are at risk of child abuse and neglect, youth violence and gang involvement often experience extreme distress and sometimes engage in counterproductive activities as a response, programs geared toward this population typically focus on fixing problems. As a result, high-risk youth are often left out of traditional, positive community activities and opportunities for development. Communities Empowering Youth focuses on engaging high-risk youth in community-based development and leadership opportunities.

"This project seeks to create a community that is responsive to the needs of all young people," said Mary Jo Callan, Ozone House Executive Director. "It will allow us to learn directly from high-risk youth about their needs, whether we are meeting those needs, and how our organizations can work together to create an environment for all young people to develop into the productive citizens they wish to be."

Communities Empowering Youth will evaluate the current capacity among agencies to respond to the issues of child abuse and neglect, youth violence, and gang activity within the community. The project will establish local youth development opportunities that both reduce risk factors for young people and help them become ready for college, work and life.

"This project is designed to help each of these youth-serving agencies better provide opportunities, support, and services intended to reduce child abuse and neglect, youth violence, and gang involvement," said Katie Doyle, Project Director for Communities Empowering Youth. "Unlike other collaborative projects, Communities Empowering Youth will not be providing direct services to youth and families. Instead, the project will provide financial assistance, training, and technical assistance to build each organization's capacity to engage youth to carry out our missions more effectively."

Ozone House is a community-based nonprofit agency dedicated to providing safety, shelter, and a continuum of support services to runaway, homeless and high-risk youth in our community. Our services are voluntary and free of charge. In 2006, Ozone House provided shelter to 110 young people and continuing support services to 670 young people and their families. Our volunteers fielded more than 1,300 crisis calls. For more information, please visit us at www.ozonehouse.org. For more information on Communities Empowering Youth, please contact Project Director Katie Doyle at kdoyle@ozonehouse.org

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