

Gaps in  
Engaging  
Youth In  
Our City

an  
Emerald Youth Foundation  
Study of Knoxville





## Youth Study 2015

@emerald youth

Questions youth service providers in Knoxville have been asking.

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**Henry H** @bruno1979

3h

@emerald youth Where does it make sense to partner in offering youth services?



**John J** @jj25jj

1h

@emerald youth Are we moving the dial in improving kids' lives?



**Mike L** @mikeisme2

29m

@emerald youth What are the coming trends affecting youth development and will the current program models be adequate?

*Our recent study found that thousands of youth in the City of Knoxville are not engaged in faith, learning, relationships, and health.*

## FAITH



Less than 15% of youth are known to be engaged in faith development.

## LEARNING



Youth in our city lag substantially behind their suburban peers in regard to academic outcomes, despite their engagement in learning activities.

## RELATIONSHIPS



At least half of the youth in our city do not have a mentor, like a coach, tutor, or youth worker.

## HEALTH



Less than 20% of youth are known to be engaged in recreational sports.

 = 1,000 Non-Engaged Knoxville Kids

 = 1,000 Engaged Knoxville Kids

*Isolation. Lack of moral guidance. Academic shortfalls. Poor health practices.*

*These are terrible obstacles for a young person to overcome alone.*

*Our work is cut out for us, and we have no time to lose.*

*“Knoxville is in danger of losing this generation in spite of unprecedented amounts of investment in the community’s youth services infrastructure.”*

– Steve Diggs, President and CEO of Emerald Youth Foundation.  
Diggs has served in this role since EYF’s founding in 1991.

## The Bottom Line

*We aren’t doing enough to ensure that young people in our city will flourish.*

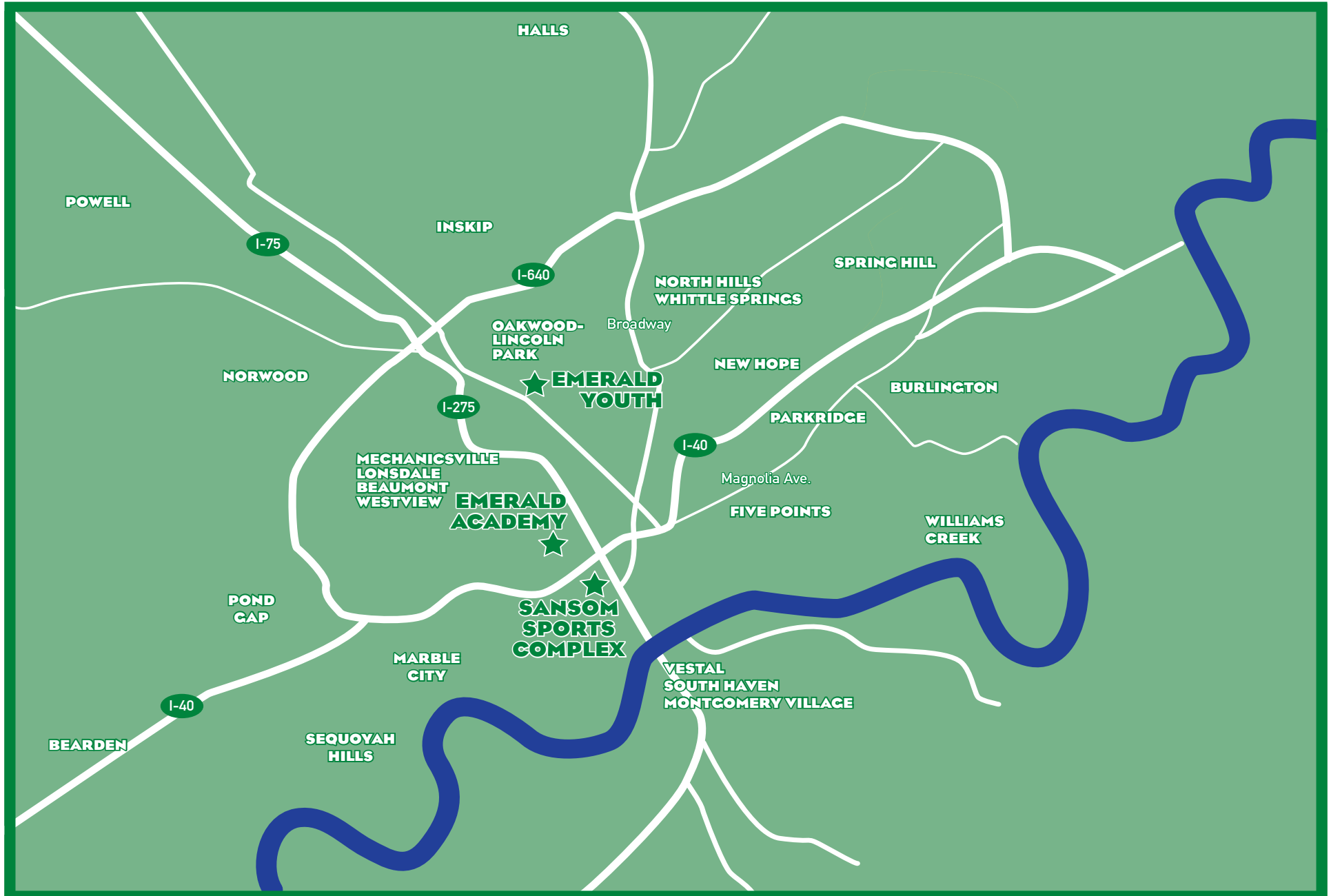
Knoxville’s citizens have made **significant investments** in addressing the challenges associated with poverty in our city’s urban core.

Community charitable giving provides financial and volunteer support to dozens of non-profit organizations that serve the 12,000 youth in our city.

However, the community’s efforts **have not yet achieved the results** that were hoped for. For example:

- Fewer than five percent of high school students in our city meet the ACT benchmarks that predict college success.
- The Knoxville Police Department reports a resurgence in gang activity.
- About 40 percent of youth in our city are overweight and obese.

*The study gathered input from more than 100 organizations\* that serve youth in the 16 square miles of the center city, plus the ring of neighborhoods just beyond it.*



\*See pages 10 and 11 for complete list.

# What Should Be Our Response?

*Based on the gaps and coming trends identified in the study, Emerald Youth Foundation offers the following recommendations as a launching point for community conversations about youth development.*

## Increase Christians' involvement in faith development.



- We are at risk of raising up a generation that does not know the Lord, lacks a sense of calling, and focuses on themselves instead of their community.
- Individuals and churches are needed to explain the Gospel to youth, lead small groups and Bible studies, and walk with young people in their faith journeys and faith community connections.

## Engage with youth and give special attention to underserved neighborhoods, including those just outside the urban core.



- Some neighborhoods have many more children needing to be engaged than current programs can accommodate.
- For example, the number of spaces available in programming for youth in South Knoxville, and Montgomery Village in particular, is far less than the number of children and teens who would benefit from them.
- Neighborhoods that border the heart of the city, like Norwood, Inskip, Spring Hill, West View, and Pond Gap, also need more programming.

## Invest in transformational relationship-building with city youth.



- Students' disconnectedness puts them at risk for pregnancy, substance abuse, violence, and gang affiliation.
- Older youth express an increasing hunger for attention and deep relationships, but they often decline involvement with existing programs that are not highly relational.
- In addition, more community-building programs that focus on long-term development versus near-term betterment are needed.

## Engage more kids in sports.



- A lack of regular physical activity makes youth in our city vulnerable to obesity and associated diseases.
- Effective strategies are needed to recruit participants in a wider range of sport offerings.
- The number of youth who participate in recreational sports drops with age; teenagers either play competitively or they do not play at all.

## Think ahead for drug-exposed babies.



- Organizations must plan for the influx of drug-exposed babies as they age into youth development programs.
- These youth likely will challenge current programming models due to their special needs.

## About the Study

In 2012, Emerald Youth Foundation (EYF) launched a study to address the questions being asked by youth service providers (see page one).

EYF commissioned a nationally recognized researcher to identify the youth service gaps in Knoxville. The findings revealed significant disparities between urban and suburban youth in four major areas: faith, learning, relationships, and health.

Emerald Youth, through its commitment to investing in Knoxville's future, has created an action plan to address these gaps.

### Organizations Interviewed

100 Black Men of Greater Knoxville  
 A 1 Learning Connections  
 Alpha Kappa Alpha  
 Baby Roadrunners Football Commission  
 Baptist Center at Montgomery Village  
 Bearden Baseball Commission  
 Bearden Football Commission  
 Beardsley Farm  
 Big Brothers Big Sisters of East Tennessee  
 Boys and Girls Clubs of the Tennessee Valley  
 Brother to Brother and Ladybugs  
 CAC - Homeward Bound/Project SUCCEED  
 Career and Technical Education (Knox County Schools)  
 Catholic Charities - Columbus Home Assisting Parents  
 Catholic Youth Football Commission  
 Center City Youth Sports Program  
 Central Football Commission  
 Child and Family Tennessee  
 City of Knoxville, Parks and Recreation - Community Centers  
 Community Evangelistic Church  
 Community School of the Arts  
 Compassion Coalition - Restorative Justice  
 Cornerstone Church of God - Kids Hope  
 East Knoxville Athletics Association  
 East Tennessee Technology Access Center  
 Emerald Youth Foundation  
 Faith Promise Church - Kids Hope  
 Fellowship of Christian Athletes  
 Fifth Avenue Baptist Church  
 First Baptist Church of Knoxville - Kids Hope  
 First Baptist Knoxville - Kids Hope  
 First Presbyterian Church - Kids Hope  
 First Tee of Greater Knoxville  
 Girl Scouts of the Southern Appalachians  
 Girl Talk  
 Girls on the Run  
 Grace Baptist Church  
 Great Schools Partnership - Birth to Kindergarten

Great Schools Partnership - Norwood Community School  
 Great Smoky Mountain Council - Boy Scouts of America  
 Helen Ross McNabb Center - Healthy Families  
 Helen Ross McNabb Center - Strengthening Families and Life Skills Training  
 Hope Central of Knoxville  
 Hope Resource Center  
 In Full Motion ACT Prep  
 Joy of Music School  
 Junior Achievement of East Tennessee  
 Karns Football Commission  
 Knox County 4-H Clubs  
 Knox County Health Department - Dental Outreach  
 Knox County Health Department - Healthy Relationships  
 Knox County Health Department - Help Us Grow Successfully  
 Knox County Health Department - Teen Pregnancy Initiatives  
 Knox County Public Defender's Community Law Office  
 Knox Youth Falcons  
 Knoxville Area Urban League  
 Knoxville Inner City Kids Outreach  
 Knoxville Leadership Foundation - Amachi  
 Lighthouse at Austin Homes  
 Literacy Imperative  
 Locked Down on the Outside  
 Mental Health Association of East Tennessee  
 Metropolitan Drug Commission  
 Montgomery Village Ministries  
 New Hope Missionary Baptist Church  
 North Knox Baptist Church - Upward Sports  
 Northwest Basketball and Baseball Commissions  
 Overcoming Believers Church  
 Pond Gap Community School  
 Powell Football Commission  
 Pre-College Upward Bound  
 Project GRAD - College Support  
 Project GRAD - Lonsdale Community School  
 Rocky Hill Baseball Commission

Rule Christian Academy Sports  
 Second Harvest Food Bank of East Tennessee  
 Second Presbyterian Church of Knoxville  
 Serve Ops at Austin Homes  
 Sexual Assault Center  
 SOAR  
 South Knoxville Youth Sports  
 South-Doyle Youth Sports  
 St. John's Lutheran Church - Kids Hope  
 Technology Cooperative  
 tnAchieves  
 Top Ladies of Distinction  
 Tribe One  
 Urban Choirs  
 UT Center for Sport, Peace, and Society

UT Extension/Family Consumer Science  
 UT Federal Credit Union  
 Washington Pike United Methodist Church/Urban Family Outreach  
 Water Angels  
 Wesley House  
 West Bearden Basketball League  
 Western Heights Dental Center  
 Workforce Connections Youth Program (includes UT WAVE)  
 YMCA of East Tennessee  
 YOKE  
 Young Life Knoxville  
 Youth Villages Knoxville  
 YWCA - Phyllis Wheatley Center

### People Interviewed

Tim Adams  
 William Anderson  
 Daryl Arnold  
 Deborah Arnold  
 Susan Barrentine  
 Mark Benson  
 Victor Berry  
 Rick Bise  
 Drema Bowers  
 Kristin Bradley  
 Teri Branam  
 Ernest Brewer  
 Larry Brown  
 Richard Buntyn  
 Caitlin Carey  
 Pat Chambers  
 Deborah Chapman  
 Khann Chov  
 Wayne Christensen  
 Bill Clark  
 Janice Clark  
 Michael Clark  
 Sam Compton  
 David Cook  
 Larry Cox  
 Stephanie Crawford  
 Krissy DeAlejandro  
 Mark Deathridge  
 Pamela Dickey  
 Jim Dickson  
 Steve Diggs  
 Bob Dixon  
 Kevin DuBose  
 Chris Edmonds  
 Laschinski Emerson  
 Randy Garrett  
 Terri Geiser  
 Javon Gibson  
 Misty Goodwin  
 Frank Graffeo  
 Joe Haas  
 Angie Hamstead  
 Edward Harrison  
 Mickeya Murray Harrison

Megan Herscher  
 Robert Hewgley  
 Melissa Hill  
 Tom Hodge  
 Gary Holliday  
 Jackie Holloway  
 Cynthia Hudson  
 Joyce Hurst  
 Lisa Hurst  
 Anthony Ingram  
 Tim Irwin  
 April Jackson  
 Diondre Jackson  
 John Jackson  
 Alicia Johnson  
 Eric Johnson  
 Jesse Jones  
 Booth Kammann  
 Steve Keeton  
 Becky Kinnebrew  
 Thurman Kinnebrew, Sr.  
 Doug Kose  
 Erin Lang  
 Carol Linger  
 Allison Lowe  
 Joe Maddox  
 Kristin Manuel  
 Yvette Martin  
 Elizabeth Matthews  
 Conn McAnally  
 Ola McBride  
 Desiree Miller  
 Bethany Mincey  
 Stephanie Mitchum  
 Denetria Moore  
 Sarah Naill  
 Alvin Nance  
 Jason Nance  
 Gloria Nolan  
 Casey Norwood  
 Catherine Oaks  
 Karen Pershing  
 Thea Peterson  
 Suzanne Petty

Deborah Porter  
 David Rausch  
 Chip Reed  
 Anita Riley  
 Adam Robinson  
 Sherra Robinson  
 Madeline Rogero  
 Robert Rutherford  
 Angie Ryals  
 Amy Sams  
 Dwayne Sanders  
 Julianne Schoolcraft  
 Shara Shoup  
 John Sibley  
 Chris Smith  
 Kathy Smith  
 Vaughn Smith  
 Chase Snyder  
 Veta Sprinkle  
 Grant Standefor  
 Todd Stewart  
 Karen Stier  
 Thomas "Tank" Strickland  
 Lois Symington  
 Melvin Tate  
 Tim Teague  
 Liz Thacker  
 Rosalyn Tillman  
 Karen Tindal  
 Brittany Tuten  
 Greg Tye  
 Holly Wallace  
 Joe Walsh  
 Julia Weissinger  
 Carlene Welch  
 Stephanie Welch  
 David Whaley  
 Jennifer Willard  
 Nicci Williamson  
 Dena Wise  
 Jeannette Witt  
 Clayton Wood  
 Keira Wyatt  
 Jacoby Yarbro

Download the Complete Study at  
[www.emerald youth.org](http://www.emerald youth.org)





# Emerald Youth

ALL KIDS • ALL IN

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865-637-3227 | [www.emerald youth.org](http://www.emerald youth.org)

*Emerald Youth is a more than two decade old Knoxville organization that, through a network of churches and other organizations, is raising up a large number of urban youth to love Jesus Christ and become effective leaders who help renew their communities.*

2015

