

Dear Friends and Colleagues:

There is a renewed energy and excitement around youth development in this nation that is tangible and long overdue. It is exploding on many fronts and being supported by political as well as business leaders in new ways. It is leading to new forms of collaboration and partnership in communities around the country.

To support these efforts, I am pleased to help provide you with this second issue of the Center for 4-H Youth Development's new publication for youth professionals. I am sure you will find this issue's clear research summaries and practical ideas helpful for the important work we all do, both in supporting quality youth development opportunities and addressing the challenges we face.

As of September 1, 1998, I had the pleasure of becoming the new director of the Center, an assistant director in the University of Minnesota Extension Service, and the State 4-H Program leader. I was formerly the Director of Research and Evaluation, and the Strategic Initiatives, at Search Institute in Minneapolis. It was very hard to leave a dynamic and purpose-driven organization such as Search, but the opportunity to help lead an established system as it rethinks its role and meets the challenges of the future was too much to resist. While I have much yet to learn, my first few months have revealed the rich diversity of resources, talent, programs, youth, and volunteers that make up Minnesota 4-H youth development efforts.

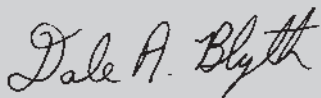
To learn more and to help think strategically as we move into the 21st century, I have established three initial roles for the Center. These are:

1. to support quality 4-H youth development activities and events,
2. to help communities increase their intentionality around youth development, and
3. to expand our understanding of youth development through research and training.

I have also initiated a major review of all of our various communication and publishing efforts and the development of a strategic communications plan that will guide us into the future. As part of this process we really need to hear from you, the readers of this publication and the people who do youth development. We want this publication to be useful to you and the people with whom you work. Please take a moment to complete and return the survey inserted in this publication. Your input is critical to shaping this publication into an effective tool for improving the quality and quantity of youth development opportunities around the state and the nation.

I hope you enjoy this issue as much as so many people did the first issue. That issue helped me decide to take this position. I look forward to hearing what you think of our first two issues and where we should take this effort in the future.

Best wishes,



Dale A. Blyth, Ph.D.

Director, Center for 4-H Youth Development

