

Hoda Transcript

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The neighborhood that I am currently working in and assisting, is the one you see behind me and it has a group of 10-12 junior youth between the ages of 11 to 13 that meet weekly. And they meet weekly and focus on learning about and doing three main things:

One, which is the central element of a junior youth program, is that they are learning to serve their communities, they're learning to volunteer in their communities, they're learning about how to assist others and be giving of others and through various service projects or initiatives that the junior youth themselves will think about and implement they are learning actually to bring together community in spirit of service, in a spirit of giving.

The second element of a junior youth program is this idea that junior youth have to develop their powers of expression. They have to be able to express their ideas and thoughts eloquently and clearly in the world and it's really the use of language or their development of language that will allow them to understand how the world works.

The third thing that the program really focuses on and helps junior youth with is helping them to understand the moral implications of their decisions they make their day to day life, the implications of their own speech and their own actions.

What's really begun to happen is that all elements and all members of a community have really come together, because they have really been inspired I think or touched by the spirit in which this group has worked within their own community. One example of this is that the younger siblings of these junior youth are in a children's class and what's exciting is that the junior youth themselves are assisting in conducting the class on Tuesdays. So they're serving and they are helping their younger peers and their younger siblings.

Another really exciting thing is that the parents themselves have not only been so supportive of the moral and spiritual education that these children are receiving through their junior youth groups and their children's classes but they themselves are starting to become more and more involved in the process.

So they are attending and coming to devotional gatherings where the children and the junior youth have an opportunity to recite the prayers they have been learning in their children's class or to talk about the different spiritual concepts they have been exploring in their junior youth group. So, all of these elements combined, where the children are in the children's class being assisted by the jr youth, the junior youth are learning how to serve their community better in their junior youth group and really learning to work

together as we like to say the fingers of one hand, really working together in unity and fellowship and you have the parents who are supporting this entire process and taking part to the degree in which they are willing and able.

So what is really beginning to emerge within this neighborhood and within this community that's been established already with people who know each other and who are almost like family with one another, is a different level of consciousness of their interconnectedness. So whereas before they were always interconnected and they were always friends, maybe the quality or the purpose of their friendships or their interconnectedness is now just being elevated, it's being raised little by little. So before, you would have junior youth and children maybe playing together, or junior youth looking at their younger siblings as just that, their siblings, but now with this process where we are introducing the idea of service, service to your neighbors, service to your community, they are actually beginning to teach their siblings.