



phish

Who Is Involved:

- ✓ Community youth in Indiana, Iowa, Alabama, and Minnesota make up the Youth Pods (total of 13 pods)
- ✓ phish is the leadership team from those pods
- ✓ Supported overall by staff of the Dekko Foundation; locally by interested adults

History of Youth Engagement:

The idea for Youth Pods started in the 1990s, when a staff member went to a family philanthropy conference and learned about youth philanthropy initiatives. With no Dekko family members at the right age, the Dekko Foundation looked to the Michigan Community Foundation Youth Advisory Council model to develop youth philanthropy in the communities it serves. They partnered with the local community foundation as the fiscal agent and schools to recruit students and help run the program. The first of what they call “Youth Pods” was started in 1994 in Noble County, Indiana. There are now 13 Youth Pods in four states.

When the Youth Pods began, they focused primarily on grantmaking. Now they work on youth

A Program of the Dekko Foundation

LOCATED IN: Kendallville, Indiana

WEBSITE: www.dekkofoundation.org/phish

MISSION: Fostering economic freedom through education



development in the three areas of philanthropy: time, talent, and treasure. This has inspired an increase in volunteer experiences and empowerment. Every pod uses the same basic model, but they have the opportunity to operate uniquely from the rest.

Each Youth Pod applies for funding every year from the Dekko Foundation. phish, the leadership team of the Youth Pods, reviews the applications and acts as program officers on behalf of the Dekko Foundation. Once the applications are approved, the pods consider grant requests from their community. Each pod then reviews the applications they receive and determines which investments most closely align with their mission. They then present their decisions to the local community foundation that approves and distributes the funds.



Current Youth Engagement Strategies:

- ✓ **Youth Pods** choose a focus each year and apply for grantmaking dollars from the Dekko Foundation. Most Youth Pods receive \$15,000–20,000 per year to cover grantmaking, administrative costs, and professional development opportunities.
- ✓ **phish** is a leadership team that helps the Dekko Foundation to continually improve the Youth Pods and reviews their grant requests.
- ✓ **Service Projects** are taken on by each Youth Pod based on identified local needs. These could include activities such as a town clean-up, library fundraiser, or involvement with their grantee organizations.

Adult Perspective:

“Growing up I didn’t have a word for the thing in my heart that wanted to do something good with my life. I love the opportunity to help youth explore what philanthropy means to them. The magic is letting the kids make real decisions with real money that really matter.”

—Jenna Ott, Program Officer

Next Gen Perspective:

“I’ve been given so many opportunities to learn about philanthropy from Youth Pods as well as participating in 4-H and going to conferences and trainings. Now that I know what philanthropy is, I see it everywhere! I love seeing the difference we make in our community through every grant.”

—Marissa Richardson, Junior at Prairie Heights High School in LaGrange County, Indiana

“What is interesting with phish is that I was able to see what is happening in other Youth Pods so I could help my own. Hearing and sharing ideas of what works is so important.”

—Tanner Dickerhoff, Senior at Warsaw High School in Kosciusko County, Indiana

“Philanthropy is my life, not a hobby. I have run my own nonprofit that serves seven counties since I was a Freshman. I sit on the board for our youth center, and work part time at the local council on aging. I know that to engage other youth, I need to ask them personally and show the difference that can be made. Without my Youth Pod experience, I wouldn’t have my current future plans of majoring in philanthropic studies and working in the sector.”

—Colton Strawser, Senior at Lakeland High School in LaGrange County, Indiana

Advice to Others:

1. Don’t reinvent the wheel. Travel around to see what others are doing and elaborate on what works.
2. Have confidence in your youth and express to them that they are useful to the cause. The more power and trust you give, the more they can flourish.
3. Partnerships between youth and adults are key. It can be helpful to have a younger leader to whom your youth can relate.
4. Work made fun gets done! Don’t get bogged down with the paperwork. Have fun and don’t make philanthropy a chore.

Resources They Have Available to Share:

- ✓ Youth Pod Brochures
- ✓ phish Session Materials
- ✓ Ten young people with amazing philanthropic experiences!

Contact:

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