



X-cel Today



By Youth For Youth

Fact Sheet

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EXPLODING MYTHS



These guys are as effective as any I have seen. They are rebuilding troubled communities, one person at a time.

Rev. Nicky Cruz
President, TRUCE



154 Avenue D
Ground Floor
New York, NY 10009

Tel 212 673 XCEL
Fax 212 673 3361

info@generationxcel.com
www.GenerationXcel.com

An Initiative of
Community Solutions, Inc.

Generation X-cel™ explodes myths, exceeds expectations, and makes a difference in individual and community lives. A comprehensive youth outreach program in Lower Manhattan, X-cel was founded in 1996 by thirteen young people who defied the stereotypes about their generation. Rejecting the popular myth that “youth *are* the future” (they *have* a future, along with a present and a past), local young people have opened two youth centers, built a theater in the heart of the East Village, served hundreds through after school and summer camp programs, employed dozens of neighborhood teens, invested in a retreat center upstate, and reached thousands through extensive outreach activities.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

Many Lower East Side and East Village residents contend daily with poverty, drugs, alcoholism, broken homes, abusive relationships, teen pregnancy, and violence. Dropout rates and standardized tests results for the public schools X-cel serves are among the worst in the City.

- Only 39.3% of school age and middle school students meet mandated reading standards.
- Only 35.3% of school age and middle school students meet mandated math standards.
- 70% of young adults (17 –24 years) are not currently enrolled in higher education.
- Despite gentrification in Alphabet City, between 14th Street and Houston Street, Avenue A and the East River, over half of the residents earn a gross annual income of \$25,000.
- 62% of children in the area come from households on public assistance.
- The NYPD has described the immediate area surrounding the X-cel Theater as having the highest concentration of occult activity in New York City, with Saint Marks Place, located one block away, at the center of the occultism. Teens practicing vampirism, anarchists, and homeless youth literally flock to the neighborhood.

(Sources: NYC Department of Education Statistical Summary 2001-2002; 2000 US Census Long Form; NYPD Occult Crimes Task Force.)

CURRENT PROGRAMS

X-cel After School serves over 30 children, ages 8-13, each day during the school year through tutoring, literacy programs, mentoring, peer counseling, arts, and athletics. Academic programs are designed in consultation with licensed teachers. “Group Club” engages kids in friendly competitions while teaching X-cel’s core values: excellence, creativity, resourcefulness, initiative, resilience, and unity. Thematic programming builds character by addressing issues such as self-esteem, violence prevention, and gang awareness. Cultural and community service activities are regularly incorporated as well.

X-cel Summer serves 40 children at a full day summer day camp for eight weeks in July and August. Like X-cel After School, the program fuses the arts, athletics, field trips, group activities, and more around relevant life themes.

X-press @ The 88-Step Theater is an after-school and weekend performing arts program for teens featuring drama, creative writing, spoken word, dance, sound studio engineering, and audio and video production.



**As a single mother,
I'm thrilled that
X-cel provides
my three girls
with role models
to look up to.**

Carmen Torres
Parent



**Generation X-cel
provides a valuable
service to community
youth. I am deeply
concerned about
the lack of alternative
programs available
to fill the void
that would exist
[without] X-cel.**

Hon. Nydia Velazquez
U.S. Congress (D-NY)



**X-cel has taught
me responsibility
and discipline.
Gratification comes
when children
simply say
'Thank you!'
for giving
them hope.**

Carl "Rollie" Barnes
Founding Member

X-cel Outreach engages the community through basketball tournaments, community service projects, block parties, carnivals, and other outdoor activities. The 2003 Summer of Service campaign served over 3,000 families.

YW8? (Why Wait?), a faith-based teen program housed in the X-cel Theater, promotes the idea that youth can make a positive impact in their communities today, without waiting.

X-Cel Upstate, in partnership with a local church, provides over 90 acres in the Catskills Mountains for leadership development retreats, weekend getaways, and sleep-away camps.

Chain Reaction coordinates week long service projects around the country, beginning with three in New York City, Akron, Ohio, and New England in Summer 2003.

YW8-2-XL (Why Wait to Excel?), a college and career prep curriculum that teaches teens how to design a career around what they love to do, will debut a pilot program in Winter 2004.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS: TIMELINE

June 1996 - Thirteen young people age 21 and under open the first Xcel center in the Jacob Riis Houses on Avenue D. Furnished with computers, pool tables, office and athletic equipment, 250 kids register within one year and special events draw as many as 400.

1997-1999 - Housing Authority attempts to evict Generation X-cel without cause in a dispute with the then primary leaseholder. Activism attracts pro bono services of two law firms and leads to an audience with Mayor Giuliani, who insisted that X-cel get its space back.

July 1999 - X-cel reopens and launches its first full-day summer camp. Summer interns include international students from Finland, Germany, Brazil, and Canada.

September 2001 - X-cel co-founders Rev. Richard and Jeremy Del Rio help establish the Ground Zero Clergy Task Force/Northeast Clergy Group in response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11, which grew to include 250 ministers; provided advocacy, disaster assistance, and mental health services; mobilized and housed over 1,000 volunteers from around the world; and produced the 9/11 anniversary Tribute to Grace and Hope and Madison Square Garden.

December 2001 - Generation X-cel adapts its "by youth for youth" strategy to a faith-based context in order to revamp a church-based youth ministry called YW8? (Why Wait?).

October 2002 - Completes a \$125,000 renovation and opens the 3,000 square foot X-cel Theater in the heart of the East Village.

June 2003 - Premieres *Family Portrait* music video at the 2003 Celebration of X-celence, the debut film project of X-cel Productions.

September 2003 - Opens second X-cel after school facility at the 88-Step Theater.

MEDIA COVERAGE

"God Squad," *WLIW*, 4.2003; *HOY* newspaper, collaboration with Safe Space, 2.12.2002; *CBN*, profile, 10.2001; *Fox 5* and *UPN 9*, "visit from Rebecca Lobo", 8.2001; *YouthWalk*, "Speak Out:Generation X-cel," by Luis Velez, 10.99; *WNBC*, "Live at Five," reported by Gabe Pressman on 8.4.99; *Crosswalks Television*, "Town Hall Meeting with Mayor Giuliani", 6.30.98; *WNBC*, "Live at Five," reported by Gabe Pressman on 1.12.98; *NY-1*, reported by Annika Pergamente throughout the day, 1.12.98; 9/11 efforts of X-cel co-founders covered extensively during 2001-2002.