Why do kids need us?

The current generation, Generation Z, is known as the first generation driven by a need for “purpose, passion and impact” (Lovell Corporation study, 2017). When these three elements come together, these youth are capable of producing powerful results. However, many are experiencing increased levels of depression, anxiety, self-harm and isolation as they struggle to find this purpose, passion and impact. In order to unleash the gifts within each of them, youth need to turn outward, actively contribute, connect with others, and make an impact beyond themselves. Additionally, to have the most powerful results, youth also need to engage in the kind of self-discovery that helps them identify and cultivate their unique gifts.

Why do kids love us? (Our vision and approach)

Aaron’s Presents is founded on the belief that every child possesses unique and valuable gifts that they can contribute to the world. There are no exceptions. We believe that those contributions, from the youngest members of society, have the power to uplift and revitalize entire communities, particularly those struggling under the weight of poverty, violence, racism, and inadequate educational and enrichment opportunities.

The research-based 5 C’s of Positive Youth Development are Competence, Confidence, Caring & Compassion, Connection and Character. Contribution is frequently cited as the 6th C and believed to follow the development of the first 5. At Aaron’s Presents, we take a new evidence-based approach, by first asking youth how they would like to Contribute, putting them in the leadership role, following their vision and nurturing each of the 5 C’s. Through our unique mentoring process, youth also develop key job and college readiness skills such as collaboration, creativity, perseverance, and communications and start on their path to becoming empowered, civically engaged adults.

The experience of giving

We can tell kids to give. We can tell kids to think of others and be kind and generous. We can even require them to help out.

But when they see and feel the joy, gratitude and impact that are the direct results of an idea that they themselves have envisioned and planned, out in the larger community -- they just get it. Giving becomes part of who they are.

For our GIVERS and VISIONARIES, Aaron’s Presents invests individualized mentoring time, resources and logistical support to help youth take their ideas about how to help others and make them happen. We challenge them to think about what they care about, problems and needs they observe in the world around them, and the skills and personal qualities they possess that could have a positive impact. We then facilitate taking them out into the larger community to engage in real-time with other youth, adults and organizations, to experience firsthand the impact of their ideas.

Our AGENTS OF CHANGE program continues to support our Alumni from low-income backgrounds and urban communities as they educate themselves, develop their giving mindset and contribute to their communities. Volunteer, academic and summer opportunities are selected to help them identify and develop their gifts further, to truly become transformational leaders for the future.
The central question in life is not, "What will I get?" but "What can I give?" Our lives matter when we do something to make others' lives better. What could be more important to the future of society than to help children learn to find purpose and self-worth by thinking of others?" --Leah Okimoto, Founder & ED

About our youth
Aaron's Presents has mentored 844 youth through 446 projects since 2014. This year's cohort was 74% girls, 72% children of color, 64% low-income, and 66% from the cities of Lowell, Lawrence, and Lynn. We also mentor youth in Andover and the North Shore. Most Agents of Change are from low-income families of color in Lowell and Lawrence.

Impact by the numbers

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td># of Givers/Visionaries</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>129</td>
<td>286</td>
<td>320</td>
<td>299</td>
<td>325</td>
<td>420</td>
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<td>Agents of Change</td>
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<td>75</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>200</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Youth Engaged*</td>
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<td>288</td>
<td>349</td>
<td>366</td>
<td>450</td>
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<td># of Projects</td>
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<td>137</td>
<td>149</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>75</td>
<td>100</td>
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*Some youth participated in both Givers/Visionaries AND Agents of Change programs but have only been counted once.

Over 30,000 people and animals have been helped by our youth to date!

Measuring success
Aaron's Presents is integrating strategic systems and tools, along with quantitative and qualitative data to fully capture our impact on youth and communities. Our evaluation tools are primarily survey-based but have the opportunity to grow to include interviews and focus groups. Currently we are in the process of coding and analyzing all surveys and testimonials received, and strive to adapt established measures to meet the needs of our diverse population and age groups involved. In addition to the 6C’s of Positive Youth Development, we have identified other measurable outcomes in the areas of Civic Engagement and Job & College Readiness to integrate into our model.

A few of the many ways we are helping youth to develop and give their unique gifts:

- 100% create, plan & execute a positive project in their school or community.
- 100% initiate and lead entire process, communicating with a new adult, thinking of needs and problem-solving.
- 86% independently identified one of the 6C’s in open response survey questions.
- 100% have an experience with volunteering, >50% for the first time.
- 100% collaborate with an adult and 70% with peers on their project.
- 94% who have an idea go on to complete their projects.

Financial Resources: #WhatCanIGive $250K Growth Campaign

Building for the future

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Revenue &amp; Pledges Received:</td>
<td>82K</td>
<td>137K</td>
<td>179K</td>
<td>200K</td>
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<td>275K</td>
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<td>Annual Budget:</td>
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<td>$250K #WhatCanIGive Growth Campaign*:</td>
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<td>70K</td>
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*The Growth Campaign amounts each year will lead to yearly growth in the annual budget.

Other achievements: Cummings 100K for 100 Grant Recipient, 2017-21; Finalist, Mass. Nonprofit Network Excellence Awards, 2017; Raised $30K from individuals during 7-week Charity Warriors competition, 2018

For more information, please contact:
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Learn more about us at www.aaronspresents.org!