

University of Tennessee Communications

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UT report discusses needs and opportunities for youth development

KNOXVILLE, Tenn. -- Tennesseans want to find new ways to help the state's 2.2 million youth reach their potential, according to a new report from the University of Tennessee.

The report, "Youth, the Real Future of the South -- Results from the 2008 Tennessee Forums," summarizes information gathered over the past year through 20 community forums and a statewide policy dialogue. More than 500 Tennesseans, including 230 youths, participated. Discussions focused on how to best strengthen and capture the vision, talents and passion of youth.

The forums and dialogue were hosted by the UT Institute for Public Service, the UT Institute of Agriculture and a host of local and regional organizations across the state in partnership with the Southern Growth Policies Board (SGPB).

The report provides a general overview of the status of youth in Tennessee. Key themes from the forums listed in the report include better preparing youth for a global economy, strengthening civic participation among youth, finding new ways to reach and engage youth and addressing the barriers that keep young people from reaching their potential. It also examines issues concerning youth and their development into productive and satisfied adults.

"Successful youth are critical to the state's economic and community development," said Mary Jinks, vice president, UT Institute for Public Service. "Competing in this fast-changing global economy requires youth who are engaged academically, socially and civically in their communities."

"We hope this report will provide support and guidance to policymakers and resource providers in developing programs, allocating resources, and understanding issues related to youth development," said Tim Cross, dean of UT Extension, a division of the UT Institute of Agriculture. "We were pleased to help host these forums, and we are eager to join leading academic institutions, nonprofit organizations,

state agencies and economic development organizations in addressing the issues identified in these discussions."

The youth development forums were part of the SGPB's annual effort to engage communities throughout the South in discussions on issues related to economic development. The non-partisan board was formed by Southern governors in 1971 to unite governors, legislators and business and academic leaders in discussions that encourage economic development in the South.

The statewide UT Institute for Public Service draws on the resources of faculty and research and technology partners to advance the economic well-being of Tennesseans and to help create and retain quality job opportunities.

The UT Institute of Agriculture provides instruction, research and public service through the UT College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, the UT College of Veterinary Medicine, UT AgResearch programs and UT Extension offices in every county in the state.

To view the report online, visit <http://trend.ag.utk.edu> or <http://www.ips.tennessee.edu>.

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