

## Youth Entrepreneurship Transcript

Presented by Joel Rash

<https://connect.msu.edu/p9k6y76cepx/>

**Jennifer Bruen:** This is the entrepreneurial programming webinar with Joel Rash. I just wanted to let everybody to know that we are going to offer the opportunity to ask questions throughout this webinar if you would like. First you will need to type it into the chatbox and then we'll know that you want to ask a question. I would like you to keep your mute buttons on though for now and maybe at the end we will try releasing the mute button and you can ask over the phone. Just to give you a little bit of background on REI, we are the EDA University Center here at MSU and we were established in the fall of 2011 with financial support from the U.S. Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration. The program was designed to support innovative economic development strategies that may yield high-growth entrepreneurship, job creation and economic innovation for distressed regions in Michigan.

The webinar that you are about to view is the product of a collaborative effort between REI and it's dynamic broad-based network of partners all working to strengthen Michigan's economy. Today we have Joel Rash, he's from Flint and I'm going to let him start with his presentation right now.

**Joel Rash:** Good afternoon everybody, while Nich gets the presentation up in front of you there. So the title of our presentation is Promoting Youth Entrepreneurship: Strategies for Building on Michigan's Entrepreneurial Heritage. A little bit of background. I was an entrepreneur early on. I started selling golf balls that I had found in the weeds back to the golfers who had lost them when I was seven years old. They were three for a dollar at the time, but I've always thought that young people knew the value of a buck. We have really looked at some ways to encourage young people to get involved in entrepreneurship, to take advantage of existing programs, and when necessary to start new programs.

So this program is made with support from REI the EDA University Center, Center for Community and Economic Development at Michigan State University, and funding from the U.S Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration.

So over the last century Flint came to be identified as the quintessential company town. General Motors and its related firms employed over 100,000 workers in Flint alone. This huge footprint obscured an important fact – Flint used to be one of the most entrepreneurial cities in the world. First with furs, then lumber, then carriages, bicycles, cigars, and eventually automobiles, Flint was the Silicon Valley of its day. Ideas were hatched, inventions created, start-ups launched, and fortunes made. Similar stories were being written across the state; manufacturing in Detroit, cereal in Battle Creek, furniture in Grand Rapids, chemicals in Midland, appliances in Benton Harbor, and many more. Over time those businesses went from ground-breaking to old news, creating the perception that Michigan was stuck in the past, anti-innovation, and destined for status as an economic backwater. The numbers tell a different story. According to the MEDC, Michigan ranks in the top five states in the nation for number of high tech employees, total amount of research and development expenditures, construction or expansion of

corporate facilities, and number of engineering graduates each year. In its most recent study, from 2010, the Gallup organization announced that Michigan led the nation in job creation improvement. Across the state a potent combination of private business, education, non-profit and government are making real strides in re-inventing our economy. Innovative companies are growing in areas like renewable energy, high-tech manufacturing, and information technology. Higher education programs in entrepreneurship are growing, like Kettering Universities 'Entrepreneurship Across the Curriculum' program. The Great Lakes Entrepreneur's Quest has grown into one of the largest competitions of its kind in the country. From the Governor's office Rick Snyder has put a new emphasis on state tools like SmartZones to boost entrepreneurship. To make these gains sustainable Michigan must look to our innovative past to create an entrepreneurial future, and we must begin with our youth.

So the challenge is preparing a new generation of entrepreneurs. To accomplish this we must ensure that all youth are exposed to entrepreneurial concepts early and often. Despite a variety of programs, in-school and out-of-school, public and private, Michigan's youth entrepreneurship resources do not reach young people equally. Relatively wealthy school districts have far more options, and those options are almost entirely focused on higher-achieving, college-bound students. This does result in important foundations being laid for future academic programs, but leaves significant gaps for youth who could use entrepreneurship as a strategy to improve their lives right away.

This disparity of offerings creates a serious problem; the youth most in need of assistance have the fewest ways to explore entrepreneurship. Poorer school districts have fewer clubs or organizations. Limited family resources make participation in some programs difficult. Furthermore, for some students educational achievements limit their ability to pursue higher education, and early parenthood or even criminal records can hinder employability. A cross-disciplinary approach that bridges education, job training, economic development, and alternative financing shows promise as a strategy to boost entrepreneurship at the most grassroots level.

Even in wealthier school districts there can be a disconnect between classroom activities and the experiential side of starting a business. Clubs can help fill that gap, but are often dependent on the availability of teachers willing to devote the extra time and energy.

For two years a group has been working on a project called YES Flint to provide youth with the entrepreneurship support they need to help launch, grow and sustain their business ideas.

The intent was to create a Michigan-specific model that takes into account our own history, economic conditions and resources.

Coordinating with existing service providers and avoiding duplication were the keys to maximizing the limited funding available for this effort.

YES conducted asset-mapping to determine existing resources, and surveys to identify gaps.

YES also partnered with other organizations offering youth entrepreneurship support, and where needed, began creating a suite of programming that could be offered as a resource to schools, faith-based organizations, community groups, educational institutions, and individuals.

The end goal of the process is to build a collaborative initiative among the area's educational institutions, non-profits, business and economic leaders, and youth, all working to promote a youth entrepreneur culture within the region. By coordinating community initiatives to educate and support youth-led commercial and social ventures, youth entrepreneurship becomes a path to formal employment, educational attainment, and a more sustainable regional economy.

The goal of YES was to create a pipeline for entrepreneurial youth with multiple entry points and several successful outcomes. Participants could be engaged through their schools and clubs, community groups, centers of worship, or summer programs. Whether individuals were exploring a concept, starting a business or trying to make their venture sustainable, they could find assistance. Positive results would include youth starting their own businesses, entering training programs to gain skills they would eventually need in their field, finding a route back into the educational system or becoming more innovative employees at existing companies.

The strategy explored in this REI co-learning plan is to expand a collaborative model that can be adapted to multiple Michigan communities, changing as needed to reflect existing programming, potential funding, and other local programs. Initial research has indicated that most cities already have the beginnings of a network, formal or informal, that has organically started collecting information. Whether an organized effort, like YES Flint, or the presence of a 'go-to' person for youth entrepreneurship questions, educators and professionals are making the links they need to do their work effectively.

So the first step is obviously building the team and this will change with conditions on the ground. At a minimum you need to involve high school educators and club advisors, representatives from higher ed including students in programs and clubs, your local chambers of commerce or business group, local entrepreneurs and executives, community members, and

### **Finding a Home**

There are two choices for hosting the program. One is the creation of a new 501(c)(3) non-profit, the other is becoming a program of an existing organization. The advantages of creating an entirely new structure are that a mission-specific board can be recruited who is well-versed in entrepreneurship and youth, and that a single-issue non-profit is very focused. Drawbacks include the legal costs of filings and creating by-laws, the delay in getting IRS approval, and start-up expenses. The benefits of becoming a program of an existing organization\_ are that it can begin operations quicker and share costs. The drawbacks could be a possible lack of board expertise and the danger of not being a priority as a new program in an established organization.

## **Affiliation**

There are several national youth entrepreneurship organizations, but as well-established groups, they have their own set programming. Very few of these will provide an opportunity to affiliate. Each community has its own organizations and individuals doing the important work of allowing youth to experience entrepreneurship. In some cases there will be a natural fit, whether it is at an ISD, local college, or community group.

## **Paying the Bills**

A collaborative effort that initially relies on volunteers can be launched without outside funding, but the need for programs will eventually require support. Sources will include local, regional and national grants, sponsorships and fee-for-service opportunities. Youth-focused grants can be found at community foundations and corporate sources like the Best Buy's @15 campaign. Michigan is blessed with several family foundations that believe in the power of entrepreneurship, including The Coleman Foundation, The Edward Lowe Foundation, The Kresge Foundation and the CS Mott Foundation. Additional funds could be sought from private individuals, angel investors, federal grants, corporate sponsorships and even crowdsourcing like Kickstarter.com or Kiva.com.

So building the program really relies on your local assets. Michigan is home to a number of entrepreneurship support organizations but very few of these are accessible to youth. Our findings in Flint appear to be very similar to what is happening in many other areas. For creating a youth entrepreneurship network it is important to do some ground-up discovery.

The three main tasks are reaching the target populations, identifying needs, and then filling those gaps. This is where local knowledge is imperative, because much of this activity is happening under the radar. Teachers, pastors, non-profit staffers and community members have a surprising array of activities under way already. Mowing lawns and babysitting are the prototypical youth activities, but these days there are youth earning money through crafting on sites like Etsy.com, selling beats to musicians, providing basic design or IT support, or operating grassroots retail or urban gardening start-ups.

So we're going to run through what some of these target populations are starting with high school students. Michigan has a tremendous diversity of schools and students, and a number of counties will have urban, suburban and rural schools in pretty close proximity to each other. That just adds to the variety of populations of high school-aged youth, each of which needs its own strategy for outreach and engagement. High school often provides the first true exposure to entrepreneurial concepts. Educators are a key conduit for reaching young people, whether the programming is school-sponsored or not. Their experience in the classroom, additional time advising after-school clubs, and first-hand observation and work with entrepreneurial students is an asset that is often overlooked. It is crucial to bring them into the loop, at the same time assuring them that outside programming is meant to complement their programs – not compete with them. So the high school students who have access to entrepreneurship programs are usually involved in after school clubs. So Business Professionals of America and DECA are both competition based clubs that have strong presences in different parts of the state. There's also non-specific entrepreneurship organizations that have an entrepreneurial

component. The FIRST Robotics Competition is very technology and mechanical engineering oriented, but a lot of those kids aspire to owning their own companies as opposed to working for one. Even groups you wouldn't think of like 4H and Future Farmers of America that are in more rural areas have more entrepreneurship curriculums now because the business side of being a farmer is so important. The next category is schools and students without access to entrepreneurship programs. Sadly, this is a growing number as schools lose old programs like Junior Achievement and aren't able to replace them, or schools' ancient business teacher that you and your parents both had retire and they get replaced with an English, math or science teacher who can teach to the MEAP test and they just drop business programs entirely. Finally, there is charter schools which at this point in development have very few entrepreneurial options.

Talking about students means 9 months of the year is covered in school. The other 3 months is summer. That's a key way to engage youth. With unemployment rates for Michigan teenagers really at all-time highs, providing meaningful opportunities in the summer is a great way to ensure those months aren't wasted. Most programming is provided by colleges and universities, whether on their home campuses or off-site at high schools. Two examples we will touch on:

***Teen CEO Program***, Teen Creating Economic Opportunities, is in its fifth year.. Each summer 25 to 30 high school students spend seven weeks exploring an entrepreneurial concept, and ten of those students actually earn \$1,000 in start-up funds to get their programs running. We saw the Teen CEO group this summer set up at Back to the Bricks, which is a huge event in downtown Flint. They set up tables and a lot of them were doing small-scale retail and it looked like they were doing really well. It was kind of exciting to see these kids all decked out and practicing their skills engaging with potential customers.

***Teen Entrepreneur Summer Academy – Grand Valley State University:***

Another is the Teen Entrepreneur Summer Academy which is a Grand Valley State University Program. It's sort of a similar model is bringing together a group of young people in teams to learn how to start their own business. The participants are exposed to the importance of networking, target market research idea generation and then they engage in brainstorming activities, teambuilding lessons and a field trip to an entrepreneurial center to supplement their creative problem solving task. The final day concludes with a business pitch competition and \$1,000 in cash prizes are awarded.

The next target population that you need to bring in are really college students and young professionals so recent high school students that are still in the area, still engaged, and part of the network. Connections between high school students and college students are good for both groups. High school students are exposed to these educational opportunities and learn about business and entrepreneurship programs. College students and young professionals can earn service hours or discover opportunities for research. So programs like DECA that started in high school, now has a significant college wing. A lot of universities have incubators now and provide a space for young entrepreneurs to try out concepts and get their businesses started.

Then almost every school of any size has entrepreneur societies or competition based society of some sort. Establishing that link between high school and college is really important, especially in some areas where it's not expected that high school grads are necessarily going to further their education. So getting young people onto college campuses, getting them into contact with older students, and giving them a chance to hear about entrepreneurship programs and course offerings is really a good way to get them excited about college and understand the benefits of furthering their education and learning more about their skill or trade or area of interest.

Another target population is disconnected youth. These are youth 16-24 years old who are not in school, not working, and don't have a high school diploma or GED. They face tremendous obstacles in creating a stable future, but several cities in Michigan are ramping up efforts to address the challenges they face and entrepreneurship is a key part of that strategy. Connect Genesee is one example. They're specifically targeting this population through their ReMix program. This is a way to get young people who have been either written off or have written themselves out of traditional education programs and let them know that there's a way to make a living with their own hands, with their own initiative and getting them to start their own business is a great alternative, but also getting them to realize the amount of dollars they need to start their own business can be a path back into the education system to get a GED and to further their future that way. The example we're going to talk about is YouthBuild.

*YouthBuild*: The successful model from New York now operates in four Michigan cities: Detroit, Flint, Jackson and Traverse City. The participants learn construction and repair skills, but also have an opportunity to pick up skills needed to start their own companies. In Flint it helps 30 students each year, but over 300 apply for these spots. YouthBuild Flint is currently transitioning into a charter school model to serve far more of those students.

Here is a peek at the asset mapping process. We wanted to chart access to high school entrepreneurship programs in Genesee County. The dark blue is business classes, the middle blue is after school programs, and the light blue are schools that have neither. Only 2/3 of high schools offer business courses, and none are specifically addressed towards entrepreneurship. After school programs like DECA and Business Professionals of America can help fill that gap, but these are only present in about 1/3 of high schools. Urban and rural schools both have lower rates of access. Charter schools, which house a growing percentage of Michigan K-12 students, provide virtually no entrepreneurship programming. If you look at the numbers, there are a lot of potential entrepreneurs out there who can make it out of high school without any direct contact with entrepreneurial programming. One of the reasons YES network is so successful is that it provides a way for those students to get themselves tied in even though their home school might not have that opportunity.

Here's a snapshot of what's going on with local and national programs. What we needed to do is figure out which national models were operating already in the county, which ones weren't, and if there was an opportunity to expand on the strength of these programs. You can see DECA, BPA, and First Robotics are all operating in almost 1/3 of the schools in Genesee County, but there's a lot of models out there that there isn't access to. You see first on that list is Junior Achievement, which was incredibly helpful to me. I participated in JA for 3 years in high school, and learned a lot about business start up, most of

which I ignored when I started my first businesses, but having that baseline education and contact with other potential entrepreneurs was really helpful. In Genesee County at least, Junior achieve was really fueled by volunteers from General Motors plants. A lot of management and engineer folks from GM donated thousands and thousands of hours to coach JA teams. As General Motors downsized, those coaches were transferred and left the area. That was sort of the death knell for that program. One of the ideas of creating this grid is to see if there's a way to use a strong program in your area to pollinate other schools nearby. In Genesee County there's great DECA programs at Flushing High School, at the Skills Center, at Davison High School, so maybe there's a way to bring students and educations from other high schools in that might be interested to learn what's going on, how a DECA program runs and to see the DECA program in their area.

You can also see there's a list of after school programs that aren't specifically entrepreneurial, like Future Farmers of America and 4H, which has a great summer program. Then there's some programs that have shown up on the West Coast and East Coast like Achievers International, Entrepreneurs Organization, the Cairo Program, CEO that really aren't here yet. Those might be really great models, but it takes some study to see how they're funded, how they're built, what kind of adult involvement is needed, and whether that's something to import into Michigan to build on.

One other thing YES looked it was whether there is a way to help fund these activities at the high school level. We know high schools are under financial pressure and staff time is really valuable, so if there's a way to incentivize that with something like startup costs to get something up and running, that's something that a regional group like YES Flint would be able to assist with.

Now that we've looked at the target populations that are out there, the next question is what you do when you've been in contact with them. At YES we came up with the idea that we wanted to provide contact at all levels and reach students at the level of interest they already have and hopefully grow them into to being more and more involved in the future. It is of critical importance to facilitate and maintain regular contact with the targeted groups as well as participants in the initiative Making use of the internet to stay in the consciousness of today's tech savvy and multi-tasking youth. Provide frequent updates on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter, maintain an active and content-full web site, and an updated e-mail list. By engaging in these and similar activities it is possible to maintain regular contact and grow the network. Not every participant will take advantage of every opportunity, but keeping the network active and engaged is key.

I see that Dan Moilanen from Flint just joined us. To give an example of the power of the network, Dan is the manager of Flint Local 432, which is a youth arts program and venue in Flint, Michigan. Dan entered into a Good Magazine national contest to win \$5,000 for being a program using the arts to do good in their community that garnered the most votes. There was a two week voting process. Dan was able to use social media – putting this on Twitter, sending out Facebook invites, getting bands who had gotten national stature who had played the Local in the past to Retweet it. Friday afternoon we found out that we had beaten a really well-organized effort in Denver by 9 votes and had brought \$5,000 back to Flint to improve the venue.

This is where young people live now; it's online, on their smart phones, on Twitter, and on Facebook. That's the first point of contact. Even if they don't come to the meeting, they've heard about it. You're emphasizing your brand, you're exploring opportunity. When they do thinking about starting their own business brand, they're already going to know where it is they need to turn.

The next step we're going to talk about is the monthly meetings are instrumental in connecting with young entrepreneurs. This strategy has proven to be a key way to keeping Network members engaged, attracting new members, sharing information, and build the sense of cohesiveness that encourages all participants to be open and committed to acting on new opportunities. Through these monthly sessions youth are exposed to a network of community partners, which provides additional support and lets them know if they start a business, they're not going to be on their own. Sustaining and growing local businesses and young entrepreneurs will strengthen the economy and embrace youth who have the potential to be leaders, contributors, and hopefully down the road, employers.

The big ticket activities are quarterly and annual. Quarterly activities are regular activities, site visits and events are largely driven by your local participant interest. Gauge your youth's background and entrepreneurial goals to make the best fit. These range from local and informal get-togethers to planned out-of-town trips. Site visits to incubators –puts them in touch with local entrepreneurs and helps raise the energy level, walking tour of available rental spaces, informal 'speed networking' sessions, and weekend boot camps are all ways to get this done.

We had a great walking in downtown Flint. We had heard at one of our weekly meetings some complaints from young entrepreneurs that there was no space available for them to start their businesses. These were young people interested in things like starting a bike shop, developing their own local fashion line, doing a small retail hip used clothing kitschy junk store that would sell to college students and downtown residents. So we set up a walking tour and showed them a dozen different spaces that were available to rent, showed them similar buildings to figure out how to get them fixed up, helped with budget a little bit, and let them know what negotiation process would be with landlord. That's something looking for activities that are effective and low-cost that's on the list.

Annual events – these signature events are a great way to keep youth focused on a goal, especially conferences and competitions. Global Entrepreneurship Week has quickly become a standard time of the year to hold related events, and it seems that the extra press attention is a good hook to drive attendance. It's easy to get press coverage during Global Entrepreneurship Week. A lot of TV news shows do live morning spots and getting on and talking about your event can be an effective way to bring in new people.

Conferences and workshops are a standard for this. They provide opportunities that you can't get in any other way. You can share success stories, learn best practices and inspire youth. The photo is the YES Flint team at the Kauffman Foundation's Global Entrepreneurship Week summit for YouthTrade last year. Those are my colleagues Kenyetta Dotson and Jason Caya standing to the side of Punam Al-Aliah, who is the founder of Global YES.



The next graphic over is a flier for our Youth Entrepreneur Summit. That's original Flintstone Mateen Cleaves, an entrepreneur in his own right. He has an artist management company and a record label that he's starting. He's someone with a lot of energy to get kids excited both about starting their own business and the value of staying in school. He got his degree right here in East Lansing from Michigan State.

A little more about competitions: there are several different kinds. There are business plan competitions, entrepreneurial startup, and a few others listed there. Competitions are a great way to keep young people excited about developing their own ideas. Michigan currently has quite a few events that are easily accessed to observe or participate. There is a learning curve for these events, so just getting your youth to attend as observers is a great way to lay the groundwork for future competitions and they won't be as intimidated when they show up to compete themselves for the first time.

This is a good time to talk about IGNITE. IGNITE is a statewide, collaborative team of educators, non-profits and entrepreneurial support organizations working to promote entrepreneurship to K-12 students. A few years ago IGNITE held a regional business plan competition for youth centered on the Capitol area, and quickly expanded it statewide. This kind of tying together of in-class, after-school and independent programs is a great model for youth entrepreneurship generally.

In addition IGNITE, which works with K-12 students, is part of a continuum with a collegiate group called EnGen and a first stage, early entrepreneur group called Jumpstart. This allows them to pass along their young entrepreneurs to more in-depth assistance as they get older and get involved with more programs.

One of the other programming areas that we didn't start thinking about and quickly moved into is mentoring. Mentoring programs can be operated with low overhead and high impact. Mentor pools can be drawn from young professional groups, college students, current business owners, or retirees. The great thing is when you are working with youth, almost any interested adult can help serve as a mentor.

With that suite of programming in mind, keeping in contact with participants weekly, monthly, the regular online Facebook, Twitter then having that big, capstone annual event, we started coming up with ideas for future programs.

Depending on where in Michigan you are, and what resources your area has available, there are a number of different avenues to follow. We began exploring ways to increase entrepreneurial offerings without duplicating existing services. Some of these options could be:

- Portable activities for classrooms and clubs – a way to take activities into classes that don't have entrepreneurship in their schools and get kids engaged.
- One-off assemblies, which would be similar but on a larger scale.
- Club sponsorship – going into schools and actually sponsoring a club or maybe even staffing a club with an advisor.
- Doing a start-up weekends or a boot camp.

- Finally, a microfinance for youth program. Even these micro businesses require some startup. Programs like Teen CEO offer \$1,000 at the end of the year. In talking with our young entrepreneurs, a lot of them could start their business for between \$1,000 and \$2,500. That's really a low risk with a potential great reward to get their activity up and running.

The end goal of the process is to build a collaborative initiative among the area's educational institutions, non-profits, business and economic leaders, and youth, all working to promote a youth entrepreneur culture within the region. By coordinating community initiatives to educate and support youth-led commercial and social ventures, youth entrepreneurship becomes a path to formal employment, educational attainment, and a more sustainable regional economy.

Michigan's entrepreneurial heritage was never lost; it was merely obscured by decades of industrial success. Our spirit of innovation has continued to create important advances in cutting edge fields. This needs to be celebrated, and our youth need the opportunity to build their own entrepreneurial futures. Establishing regional support networks that ignite that spirit is a great first step.

I want to give special thanks to the YES Flint team who I worked with last year – Kenyetta, Jason, Neil, Alexander. It was a lot of fun developing YES Flint and even better connecting with all the young people. YES Flint was founded by the C.S. Mott Foundation, but had that string of connections that any regional network would need, which is a strong University pattern, representatives from business and the non-profit community.

Here is a plug for the REI Innovate Michigan! Summit, which is coming up at the end of next week. I'd like to thank you for joining us. There is contact information there for more there more information about the REI.

At this point, I'd like to open it up for questions. You can either speak those or type it up and we'll answer as best we can.

**Jennifer Bruen:** Thanks, Joel! My name is Jennifer Bruen and I'm the Coordinator for REI. We are a new program, so we are looking for more and more engagement and interaction with our network. Our networking is probably about 500+ members now. If you haven't joined, please join on our website and that way you'll get information on our upcoming Webinars. We have a few more coming up this week. This webinar will be on our website and it will be transcribed so you can have a nice text version for you to use if you need to go back to it and refer to it for any information. Any questions or comments?

**Male voice:** We do have one question so far, it's from Dan M.: Have U of M Flint, GCRC, Uptown, or any other Economic Development Organization considered opening any youth-oriented incubator spaces in Downtown Flint? Are there any current plans?

**Joel Rash:** Dan, that's a great question. One of first the issues youth entrepreneurs have is where to locate. In Flint, like a lot of cities, is in the process of revitalizing. We have this weird contradiction where all the space in downtown Flint has either been recently renovated and is \$15/square foot or has been ignored for 30 years and is collapsing into the ground. Trying to find ways to get small spaces that are

affordable to young entrepreneurs is really a challenge. I don't know that Uptown or the developers are specifically looking at that. I know there's some land lords that are trying to make it cheaper for businesses to located with the understanding that if businesses are successful, rent will go up.

That's a discussion we're having with Uptown. Instead of having 2 or 3 1500 to 3000 square foot spaces, is there a way to put in a couple smaller 500 square foot spaces that would be specifically set up as incubators.

**Cheryl Peters:** Thank you for recognizing Generation E as far as the showcase. I'm really pleased in however we can partner. We're in over 35-40 counties in Michigan with programs for you entrepreneurs. We collaborate with 4H and Prima Civitas and so forth. Any we can collaborate and help that initiative linking young people, the community, and entrepreneurship, we'd be happy to do that.

**Joel Rash:** If you haven't checked out Generation E website, which you can find pretty quickly by Googling it (because I've done it many times), you should check it out. They've been doing this a long time. They've developed their own curricula. There's really some one-stop-shopping there for communities that are interested in expanding youth entrepreneurship access. One of the challenges in a place like Flint is we have this horrifyingly dysfunctional school district that's grappling with big picture issues. To get anybody's attention long enough to talk to them about the value of entrepreneurship for their students is impossible. Definitely thank you for listening in Cheryl. I've attended several workshops over the last 10 years that Cheryl's been a presenter at and I know I've learned an awful lot there.

**Cheryl Peters:** One of the things we did in the UP was we had local mentors who were business owners who mentored the youth entrepreneurs. They offered them a space within their business and then mentored them. The kids could go in after school and whatever their product or service was and the business owners would mentor them and help them out. The next year they did give them a store front in an open building and the kids created and incubator there, which is a wonderful model.

**Joel Rash:** That's tremendous, thanks. One thing that popped into my head, Cheryl, a lot of our entrepreneurs, they're selling things on etsy.com, they're involved in the creative economy. They don't need their own store. They can get by with a friendly business owner who will let – one of our young entrepreneurs, Kayla Willbourne, who has a fashion line. She does her own purses. It's called Fanny Loucille, it's named after her two grandmothers and figuring out ways to help her get her product into stores that are already in place would be a great first step. We have a couple typed questions from Jose Flores.

**Male voice:** They're all REI Summit oriented, so if you want to answer them, Jen—

**Joel Rash:** What are the main topics and is there a cost?

**Jennifer Bruen:** The main topics are listed on the website. We do have some student feasibility studies that are not in that list. We'll have several webinars this week that will also be presentations at the Summit. Open Educational Resources – Free curriculum, free classes. How will that impact that workforce development? That's one of the topics. Another is looking at real-estate led economic

development specifically the midtown area of Detroit. Looking at that as a model and how they've been able to create a vibrant community in an economy that is not doing well. So how are they doing that with these very small developers. There are several other topics. Obviously Joel will be there, we have microenterprise development from Michigan. That's the Microenterprise Network of Michigan that's putting that presentation together. Innovation Brokering, that's also out of the city of Detroit. That's with Deborah Olson. She's been leading a business cooperative group down there and has some fabulous ideas and case studies on the different groups she's been working with down there. If you go to our website there's a good list there. We'll also have a more solid schedule. It'll be posted within the next day or two. You'll be able to see the times for each session and how the flow of the day will be going. I see the other question about how much it will cost. It's a mere \$15, but if that's too much and sometimes these days it is too much, we have scholarships available and we're being very generous with those. SO if you want to give me a call at 517-353-9555 and talk about scholarships, it really is minor. It's really not a big deal. We can get you there. We'd love to have you. Is there another question?

**Joel Rash:** I see some of our Flint area folks are on. We're hoping to bring over a crew and would love to have some Young Entrepreneurs there at the Yes Flint booth and those costs will be covered. We'll even—lunch is included?

**Jennifer Bruen:** Lunch is included. We are having an evening reception so that might be a good time to network and talk about -- these ideas are kind of ahead of the curve. These are Economic Development ideas that are out of the box. They might be ways that we might go in the state in the future. Some of them are being practiced, but they're different ways of looking at strengthening our economy. They're not the typical incentives we've used in the past.

**Joel Rash:** In getting ready for this, I've watched a couple of the other Webinars and it's amazing the creative thinking that's going on right now and the cool ideas people have. Located in downtown Flint, not everything's going to be a fit for my interests, but at the same time, there are bits and pieces of all of these that have been really worthwhile. The initiative in Detroit and the sort of cooperative model and finance is crucially important -- the new Microenterprise Network. There are Flint organizations that can learn a lot from them. At these events, you don't know what you don't know until someone points it out to you, so showing up and sitting at one of these presentations is a chance to learn and to talk to people who are in towns that might have some similarities to yours that might be struggling with the same issues you are. Oh thank you, Claire Glenn, with the MNM as opposed to Eminem, who is a different person entirely.

**Male Voice:** Are there any further questions? If there is please type them or if you're on the phone, speak up. [from Dan M]Could you highlight some addition success stories, Joel? Just curious about some youth in the area who are doing well in this sort of entrepreneurial project?

**Joel Rash:** I definitely know Flint better than other communities. My work in the past decade has been split half and half between -- the property development/grant side and the youth side, but it's kind of gratifying after living through Flint in the 80s and 90s and downtown was pretty dire. A couple bars and restaurants holding on, but not much else. At this point now, there's a surprising number of businesses

that were started by young people who came out of the music scene and the art scene. Not traditional. These aren't folks with MBAs. One example is Flint City T-shirts that I think is 10 years old was founded by a guy who played in a band, and grew up a suburb of Flint, but got to know downtown through coming to see bands play and playing in his own band. Flint City is actually located in a building I own, and they moved in it was just a shell; we gave them a year's rent free in return for fixing the space up. A couple years to produce rent and now they're turning into a rent-paying tenant and along with being a real asset downtown. Consolidated Ink and Steel, which is a tattoo shop and Consolidated Barber Shop, which located in their basement, and is a startup started by Zach Meinoch started, which are two veteran businesses now.

In the front corner of Flint Local 432 we had a really small space about as big as this room that originally we were going to use for storage or sound gear, but decided it was really poor use of a space with straight access, so we put out a call for proposals and our friend Mitch opened a record store there. Bearded Lady Records, which is the only vinyl record store downtown or maybe in the Genesee county area. It's a small space; he literally had it full of records his first day. But the hope is if he's successful there he can grow his business and move to a higher visibility location, a larger space, and be able to grow his business that way and we'll have this cool little space we can use as a mini incubator for somebody else.

The young people we're talking about, it's not a ton of high schools kids that are starting businesses that are successful. They're learning the skills, they're getting the contacts, and developing that fearlessness you need as an entrepreneur. I started when I was 14 years old as concert promoter doing one-off shows, and if I hadn't gotten that experience, I never would have been brave enough to buy a building and turn it into a more formal business

[Quiet talking]

**Joel Rash:** Thicker than Water is a local band that we haven't had in yet. We really just opened this summer. But our venue that Dan manages, Flint Local 432, is interested in booking bands of all types. We'd love to have them in.

[From chat box]**Bryce Mata:** Congratulations on the Good Maker grant! I voted and had several friends also vote. I'm 22 and currently live in Lansing, though I'm from Flint. Does Yes Flint have any kind of options for participation of people who aren't really in high school or college but want to learn or get involved in entrepreneurship programs like in Flint?

**Joel Rash:** That's a great question, Bryce. It's sort of one of the issues that Yes has put a lot of thought into. What we find is that in Michigan there are a lot of potential entrepreneurs that are falling through the cracks. Whether it's a high school that doesn't have programming, a college situation where between work and school they can't really get involved in other activities, or immediately after graduating high school, those doors at college-based incubators and after school clubs close. It's not like there's organizations there with open arms looking to provide support to young entrepreneurs. There are inventors' groups on one side, there are more technical groups on the computer programming side, but there are a lot of folks who are on their own. With Yes Flint, the high school age is really the target,

but our entrepreneur range is a lot broader. We have a lot of 20-somethings out there who are working that entry-level job as a way to generate income for their entrepreneurial goals. I don't know specifically what there is in Lansing, but my next stop is Prima Civitas Foundation, and somebody there will know, so I'll track you down on Facebook and send you a message. Those resources are around. The Tick – the innovation center, which is an incubator used to be above a book store. It's where the Aveda is right on Grand River across from Campus. Getting the Yes Program in Flint strengthened over the next year is a priority for us, but we're also interested in seeing if we can seed that program in other areas or connect with similar programs that are already operating.

**Jennifer Bruen:** How often in the last year have you spoken to young people that want to start a business that has a socially responsible element to it? To me, this is an emerging phenomenon -- the triple bottom line, the benefit corporations. How often do you hear young people saying they want to do this?

**Joel Rash:** Being involved with Flint Local 432, which is an alcohol-free young performing art space, a significant portion of the young people who come there are committed to saving the world. A smaller portion of them have actually thought in a cohesive way about how to implement that through entrepreneurship or social entrepreneurship. So it really is an important discussion as well because a lot of young people are excited about the idea of a 501c3. So we're going to start this nonprofit and do these great things, but when you look at what their nonprofit idea is, they really want to run a business and have a charitable goal and those are 2 different things. So starting a struggling nonprofit that relies on grant money and soaks up all your time and cash is one way to make the world a better place and starting a company that turns into Google and making billions of dollars to support causes is also a way to save the world. So we really encourage people to explore whether they have a nonprofit model of a for-profit model and concentrate on what it is they want to do and if the business is successful, they can donate all the money they want. The model I've heard lately that sounds cool is several people have said they want to start a restaurant that will be a nonprofit and the staff will be young people that can learn skills and all the profits will go back into training programs. If you've ever owned a restaurant you hear that and think "what profit?" The profit never comes. If your charitable purpose is dependent on making a profit, then lots of small businesses, a huge percentage, fail within 3 years, they never make money. Social entrepreneurship is great, but if you want to start a business to generate a return on investment, to generate income and be able to support your family, you can do a lot of good in that way as well. For folks that really are committed to the social entrepreneurship model, there are some ways to advance that and tying into these networks is a way to find potential funders, to find routes to reach people like we did with the Good Magazine model, to talk to people who might share your views. At the Local we just reopened in the last couple of months, but our expectation is after labor day, we'll see a lot more tabling by people who are interested in finding homes for stray pets or there's a big push in Flint for urban gardening and food programs as a way to address hunger, especially among young people who live in underserved areas, so connecting with those folks is part of the fun stuff that we do.

**Jennifer Bruen:** I've always wondered if anybody's talking about putting in something that would be sort of like a booth or you know how Pac-Man used to be on those stand-up things. What if we had something like this in the high school that a young person could approach and put in an idea for a

business and information would come back about maybe market analysis of the area and how conducive that would be to trying to start a business in that area? Or anything- any business related information based on that idea. I think young people have some pretty out there ideas and before the world slaps them down and tells them it's not going to work, it might be nice to share it with this electronic booth thing and instead of with adults where they could scare you off. Is anybody talking about something like that?

**Joel Rash:** I definitely haven't heard that concept. And for folks younger than myself, talking about old video game consoles and actually back in the 70s, they had flat top ones that you'd set by at the bar and set your drink on and put in a quarter and play Pac-Man. It's something that we talked about – finding that judgment-free, neutral, welcoming setting to get young people to open up and share their ideas. A lot of really smart kids are also really shy kids. To have them raise their hand or offer some input and get made fun of or laughed at and “that's never going to work,” they might never bring it up again. To have something that would be that nurturing and I'm wondering with the Yes Flint display that we carry around and even with the the one for the teen club that we're building, even just having a laptop there that's sort of unattended and there's somebody at the booth who's not looking at the screen, and you can do a little searching around and find out some more information, that's one more route to say if you're interested, like our Facebook page, follow our Twitter account, visit the website, eventually come to the event and win a t-shirt. It's that first event that's so difficult. It can be really daunting to walk through a door for the first time and make it easier for young people to support it.

**Joel Rash:** I want to thank everybody for being such an engaged audience. I know that a lot of you are using this technology for the first time, so other than you having to look at me for an hour, I think it turned out pretty well.