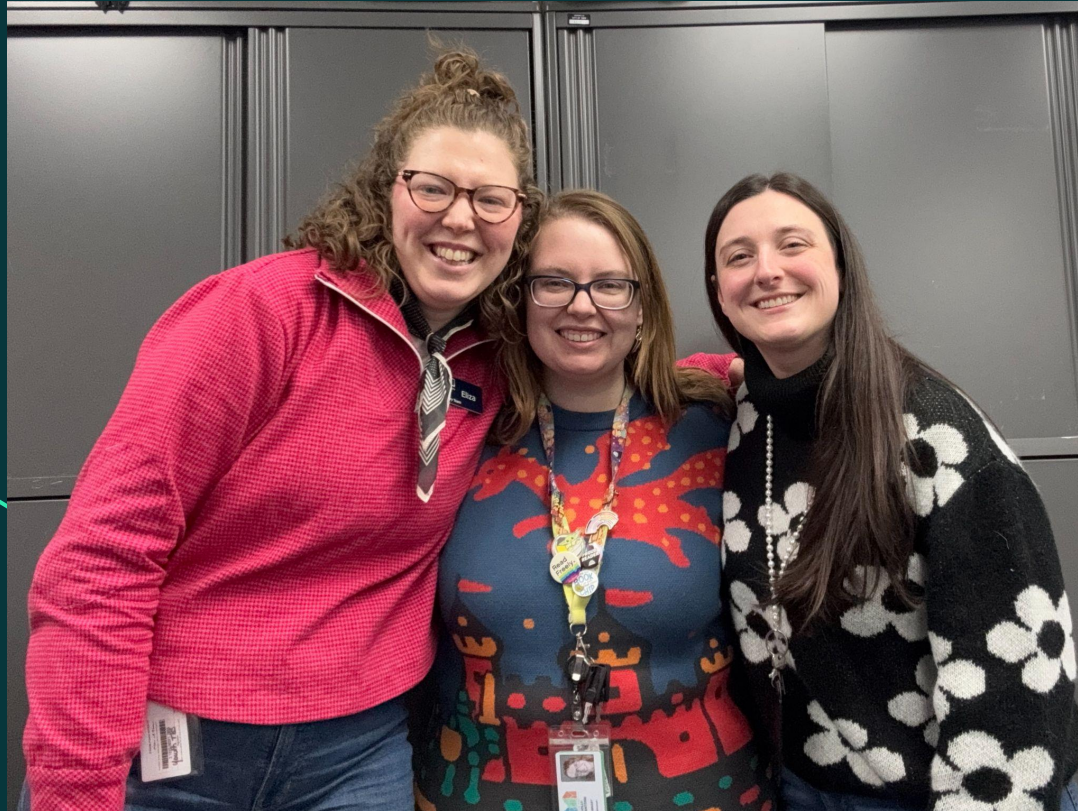


Troy Public Library

Engaging Your Teens with Multiple Volunteer Programs

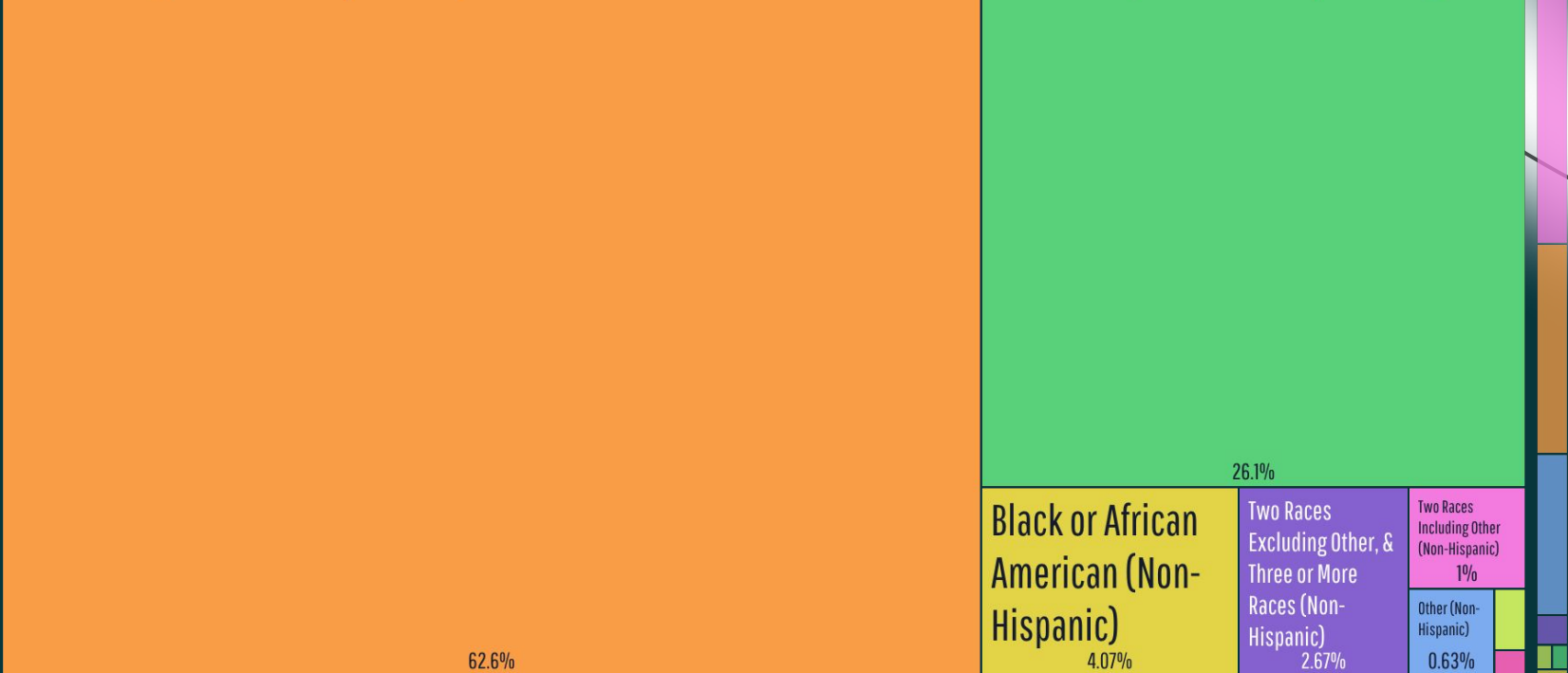
Eliza Barger, Mariel Fechik DesLaurier, &
Holly Osentoski

Meet the team



White (Non-Hispanic)

Asian (Non-Hispanic)



Legend:

- White
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Two Races Excluding Other, & Three or More Races
- Two Races Including Other
- Other
- American Indian & Alaska Native
- Native Hawaiian & Other Pacific Islander

2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023

Troy Public Library

- Teen Services Department (serving grades 6-12) housed in Adult Services Department
- Youth Services Department (serving birth-13 years) is its own department in opposite wing of building
- High traffic library, over 1 million circs for past two years
- One main branch with bookmobile
- Two main programming spaces shared between multiple departments; no study rooms
- High demand for programming across all ages

Why do we have two volunteer programs?

Existed pre-Covid

Frequent request for volunteer hours from both parents and teens

Shift from drop-in to registration, increased programming expectations

Troy Teen Advisory Board

- Typically get between 10-25 teens showing up per meeting
- Mostly Freshmen, Sophomores, and Juniors
- Diverse group of teens
- Has been running for 15+ years



TAB Meetings

- Hybrid model (in-person meetings w/ Zoom link)
- Stay in contact through GroupMe app
- Agendas
 - non-profits
 - guest speakers
- Committees (Marketing, Tween Advisory Board, & Zine Board)



Executive Board

Positions:

- President
- Vice President
- 2 Secretaries
- Marketing Ambassador
- TAB Website Admin
- Outreach Ambassador
- Zine Editor-in-Chief

Elections in May

- Speeches
- Count Votes
- Seniors Assist



The Zine

- TAB has their own annual Magazine that they put together.
- The Zine has it's own board appointed by the Editor-in-Chief
- Submissions are a contest that the top 3 in each category wins a prize
- Here is a Zine from [2024](#)



Bigger TAB Events

- TAB helps make bigger events once a quarter
- Executive Board takes on leadership roles and keeps other teens who have committed to helping on track
- Examples of bigger events:
 - Murder Mystery Nights
 - Troy Talks
 - Career Exploration
 - Escape Rooms
 - International Music



Teen Led Programs

- Teens can run their own events (Teen Librarian oversees)
- They submit a form and I go over it with them
- I only let reliable teens run events
- They have to tell me what materials they need
- I get their contact info to make sure if something happens I can get ahold of them



TAB Awards

- Used to do the Presidential Volunteer Service Award (PVSA)
- Keep track of hours from TAB events & youth volunteering
- We take outside hours
- Must be an active member of TAB to get the award (attend 10 meetings over the year)



Successful Programming for Teen Department

- Ask feedback during & after the program
- Demand for the event
- Did the participants and the volunteers enjoy and get a beneficial experience from the event
- How much work was it for the staff
- Does the time of day/ day of the week work for this event/ time of school year



**AND NOW FOR SOMETHING
COMPLETELY DIFFERENT.**

YS Teen Volunteers

- More structured, designed to take work off of librarians rather than finding busy work for teens
- Librarians in the youth department can request teen support for any of the following:
 - Assist with youth programs, including setup and teardown
 - Hand out prizes for summer reading
 - Prep program materials
 - Helping design passive programming for the department
- Working with entire department, not just us

Structure: Year long cohort Winter 2026–Spring 2027

What do you want them to do?
When do you want them to do it?
How do you want it to be done?

The way you answer these helps build your
program structure

Structure: Year long cohort Winter 2026–Spring 2027

What do you want them to do?

Reduce librarian's tasks

When do you want them to do it?

SLP June –August

How do you want it to be done?

As independently as possible!

Build backwards from your start date!

June Ready to go

May Acclimation/small projects

April Training

Feb Interviews

Jan App open

Dec

- 1 month application period
- 1 month interview period
- 1 month training period

Add in your scheduling constraints- Time off, work projects, other programs etc.

Add in their scheduling constraints- Breaks, new semester, AP exams, finals, national conferences etc.

Applications

* Pronouns:

Please let us know if you have a preferred name or nickname different from your full name:

* Parent/Guardian Name:

* Parent/Guardian Phone Number:

* Parent/Guardian Email:

* Why are you interested in volunteering at TPL? Please provide a thoughtful answer.

* Do you go to school in Troy?

- Yes
 No

* What is your experience working with children? Please check all that apply.

Volunteer Organization

* Where did you volunteer and what were your responsibilities?

Babysitting/watching young family members

* What age(s) of children have you worked with? Check all that apply.

- Birth-Kindergarten
- Elementary School (1-5)
- Middle School (6-8)
- N/A

* Do you have experience working with groups of children (more than three at a time)?

- Yes
- No

* What is your experience working with large groups and/or your comfort level speaking to new people or groups?

* What are some of your hobbies?

* Are you a member of the Teen Advisory Board?

- Yes
- No

* What other commitments do you have, like extracurriculars, jobs, etc.?

* By checking this box, I acknowledge that I MUST attend a training to be eligible to volunteer.

Yes

* I understand that I will be expected to set a good example of proper library behavior. I will abide by the rules of the Library and conduct myself in a manner which is in accordance with these rules.

- Yes
- No

* Do you have reliable transportation to and from the library?

- Yes
- No

Group Interviews

- Introductions and icebreakers led by current volunteers
- We give overview of how program works, current volunteers briefly talk about their time in the program
- Open group discussion:
 - What do you think makes a good first impression on someone?
 - What's something in the library that has made you feel welcome?
 - How could you apply that to kids and families?
 - What does it mean to work as a volunteer? What does the idea of taking ownership mean to you?
 - Librarians are here to support your work, but not guide you through it. What does this mean to you?
 - If you're in extracurriculars/clubs/outside work whatever, what skills do you think you've learned that will help you here?
 - Think of a past experience with volunteering, school, work, etc. and a challenge you had. How did you handle it?
- Time for questions

What does training look like?

Expectations

- timeliness
- attire
- signing in
- behavior
- scheduling
- absentee procedure

Building Confidence

- Meeting new people
- Our department has a LOT of people and a LOT of stuff. In 2025 we added an activity to help build confidence finding and returning items in our programming space

Task Specific

Prize training is run separately and covers everything from setting up/tearing down their station, to using Beanstack

Documentation

- Collecting applications
- Sign up for shifts
- Track hours
- Qualifications/restrictions
- Shared communication:
ysteenvolunteers@troymi.gov



Assessment

- In a program with this many variables, assessment is necessary to learn how to move forward. This has included:
 - Survey sent to teens asking for feedback on what worked and what didn't
 - Seeking feedback from our colleagues
 - Speaking to teens directly, especially those with the most involvement

Adapt & Update



More time for training

In order for teens to be more confident and independent in their work, longer lead time for training into second year

Leadership Team

Student request! Brainstorming ways to involve older returning volunteers with organizing and growing our program

Scheduling/Communication

- Over the years, we've created minor adjustments to how we schedule to better fit the needs of the teens
- Have tried different options to make communication between us and them more efficient

Group Interviews

Years 1 & 2:

- 15 minute 1:1 interviews
- Time consuming
- Didn't show us how people interacted in a group, but all the work is done in a group

Year 3:

- Hosted three 60-90 minute group interviews
- Time saving
- Able to integrate returning students
- Able to get better idea about how teens act in more natural conversational settings

Teen Testimonials

Overall, being a YS volunteer has helped with me improve my patience and time management. Signing up and committing to shifts means always keeping my schedule in mind and being careful about signing up for things I know I can attend on time. Talking to others and helping them when they need it has also really helped with my patience and understanding, because we meet so many people with different needs over the course of the program, which means volunteers eventually learn to adapt to this and provide for those needs. - Diya P.

I would recommend this program strongly, not only to other libraries, but also to other teens. Volunteering has helped me, and many others, find a sense of belonging and support because we are part of something greater and bigger than ourselves. - Lauren H.

It has given me a good way to spend my free time, to learn more about teaching, and it has showed me a new approach of understanding and opportunities to explore different areas that I can be good at. - Iker S.

I really enjoyed taking part in building the monthly displays. Our team worked really hard on every detail and I was really proud of the finished outcomes! - Sonia C.

Benefits

Programming:

- Having volunteers allows for librarians to plan larger scale or more involved programming
- Time is saved due to help with setup and cleanup
- Kids benefit from having slightly older kids around
- There are a variety of programs that are fun to do with teens especially when they are involved in planning it

Mutually Beneficial

- Able to provide a range of volunteering opportunities in a community where they are in high demand
- Provides potential paths to partnership with school district
- Allows teens to give back to a place that benefitted them as kids
- Teens get leadership experience
- Hopefully they are lifelong library users & have good memories of the library
- You get to know the teens that come back often

Challenges

Communication:

- School emails cannot be used
- Teens struggle with checking their personal emails regularly enough
- Bloomerang App/GroupMe
- Communicating with other departments/setting expectations

Parental (Over)involvement:

- Some parents try to fill out application for their child, sign them up without the teen knowing, or have access to accounts and will respond for the teen instead of helping them respond
- Unrealistic expectations

Teens:

- Overcommit themselves
- Don't know their own schedules
- Unexpected absences

Work Permits

Mandated by the state; different permit required for each employer

- **Our process:**
 - Pre-filled permits signed by youth department head (decided upon with city lawyer)
 - Teens fill out top portion and bring to guidance office for school portion to be filled out
 - Must return completed copies (both sides) to volunteer managers
 - Completed forms stored in locked file cabinet for security
- **Organization:**
 - Shared [Google Excel](#) spreadsheet with all names on it
 - Color coded for who is TAB and who is YS volunteers
 - Teens' names change color once they turn 16 & need new permit
 - YS volunteers tracked in Bloomerang
 - [Document](#) shared with TAB

Work Permits Cont.

- Potential Issues
 - SSN Numbers
 - Birthdays
 - Homeschoolers
 - YS volunteers must have permits signed by school before summer begins in order to volunteer
 - TAB volunteers, go to school admin office during summer to get it signed

Contact Us!

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