



## Initiative to aid youth gets into gear

By [SHANNON MORTLAND](#)

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A new initiative was launched today that will provide various programs and tools to help Greater Cleveland's children become productive and self-sustaining adults.

The program is called MyCom: My Commitment. My Community. Under MyCom, the Cuyahoga County Board of Health, Center for Community Solutions, Partnership for a Safer Cleveland, Starting Point, Voices for Ohio's Children, and Youth Opportunities Unlimited will provide jobs for teenagers, out-of-school activities and help for children as they transition to higher grade levels, such as from middle school to high school. Local children and their parents also will be steered toward neighborhood-based programs and services.

"MyCom is a youth movement," said Ronn Richard, president and CEO of the Cleveland Foundation. "By providing kids with positive experiences and caring adults, MyCom will positively influence the lives of young people across Cuyahoga County. In doing so, we prepare our youth for college, the workplace and life."

The Cleveland Foundation made early childhood development one of its top priorities two years ago when it decided to focus on solving the region's problems, rather than just distributing grants to various entities who applied for them.

After meeting with the heads of Cleveland's 16 gangs, Mr. Richard found that children join gangs as a form of protection from other youth. He also found that 193 of every 1,000 teen girls in Cleveland were getting pregnant because they have low self esteem and time on their hands.

MyCom is designed to help children maintain a positive attitude that will help them succeed in life and in building good relationships with the people around them.

"MyCom's innovative approach connects young people and provides greater access to the organizations, mentors, opportunities and resources they need," said Lisa Bottoms, the Cleveland Foundation's program director for human services, child and youth development.

Financial supporters of MyCom include the Cleveland Foundation, the city of Cleveland, Board of Cuyahoga County Commissioners, Saint Luke's Foundation, and the Sisters of Charity Foundation Cleveland. The amount they contributed was not disclosed.

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