

The International Association for Social Work with Groups  
SPARC Program

**Project Title**

Ubuntu Youth: Building Compassionate Leaders of Tomorrow

**Name of Principals**

Karen Rice and Heather Girvin

**Description of Funded Project**

Drs. Rice and Girvin are developing an after-school community-based program that seeks to build an enduring infrastructure involving youth and their support networks, graduates of the program, artists, and community institutions and leaders. The program will harness the expertise of local and world artists, using their talents to inform the expressive arts, the therapeutic dimension of the program. Then, building on newly developed empathy and compassion and incorporating both a formal curriculum and mentoring, the program will teach leadership skills and actively engage youth in changing their communities.

**Project Summary**

On September 26, 2016, Ubuntu Leaders in Lancaster was launched. Nine youth from across Lancaster County participated in the first phase of the three phase community-based youth leadership program. Meeting once a week for one and a half hours, the youth explored stereotypes, oppression, assumptions, social justice, and social change in order to enhance their compassion, develop leadership skills, and promote social justice advocacy. Over the twelve week program, the youth engaged with local artists and program leaders who employed various expressive arts modalities to unpack these concepts. To foster a deeper understanding and enhance compassion, a field trip to the Holocaust Museum occurred in October, 2016. Phase 1 of the program ended December 12, 2016 with a celebration of their progress, to date, and plan of action for addressing the social issues they identified as challenges within their society, which will be used during Phase II as the youth develop the skills necessary to bring about change. That phase begins January 23, 2017.