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EXPLORING LEADERSHIP YOUTH PROGRAM

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Exploring Leadership is a summer program designed to engage high school students to become active citizens who have the tools to participate in and improve their communities. Exploring Leadership participants are thirty-six rising 11th and 12th graders—30-35 youth—who are interested in expanding their leadership skills by examining community issues and existing public leadership.

**Program Participants**—Coro recruits and assembles classes to reflect the full range of diversity of LA Area youth—from extracurricular activities, to amount of leadership experience, to race and socioeconomic background.

**Program Description**—Exploring Leadership is comprised of a set of modules (below) designed to increase the Youth Fellows' abilities in problem-solving, critical thinking and goal setting, ultimately giving them the skills necessary to become facilitators and collaborators for community change. A "focus issue" the class chooses is explored throughout the program and is used as the framework for their learning experience. Past Exploring Leadership focus issues have ranged from "The Family" to "Youth and Educational Opportunity".

**Outdoor Exploration:** This week of activities is designed for team building and for the safe sharing of diverse viewpoints. For many, this is their first experience in nature or wilderness settings.

**Orientation Week:** Designed to give the Youth Leaders hands-on experience with project planning, public speaking, critical thinking, and group facilitation. This is a week of intensive research into the focus issue while preparing for and delivering a public presentation on their findings.

**Internships:** Youth Leaders are placed in five-week internships for three and a half days per week within a business, government agency, or non-profit organization. Youth complete substantive projects to make a meaningful contribution and gain advanced career skills. Internship projects in past years have included working at City Hall, the Tavis Smiley Foundation, KLCS –TV, and The Institute for Urban Research and Development

**Seminars and Interviews:** Friday seminars teach Coro tools and skills in group facilitation, graphic facilitation, ethical fitness, fundraising, project planning, critical inquiry, and more. Focus Days involve field trips into the community where the students use their inquiry skills to interview a diverse array of leaders.

**Group Project:** The youth serve their community by planning a project from beginning to end. This experience reinforces project planning and organizational skills, group facilitation, and the ability to use their summer learning as a basis for informed, effective action.

**Accomplishments**—Youth Leaders have gone on to leadership activities such as city Youth Commissions and Councils, directing school plays, and leadership posts within their schools and colleges. In program evaluations, over ninety percent of alumni reported strong professional skills and confidence as leaders and in public affairs settings. Upon completing the program, one hundred percent reported that they knew their strengths and areas for improvement and had experience working with youth different from them. Participants showed gains in self-confidence, knowledge about their communities, and nine professional skill areas—including business writing, group facilitation, and public speaking. Through Exploring Leadership, Coro gives leaders of our future—and our present—the skills, knowledge, and confidence to take an active role in their communities.

