



# CLARION

Serving The People Of The New Community Network

## Believing In Our Youth

Editorial By  
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When I was a young priest at Queen of Angels Parish in Newark, I learned a valuable lesson about our youth: believing in them can be a powerful thing.

When you set high expectations and show them that you believe in their capabilities, you will be amazed at what young people can accomplish.

I witnessed the youth at Queen of Angels accomplish amazing feats, such as when they conducted legal research and exposed a slumlord for tax evasion (he served jail time) and staged sophisticated protests that put pressure on powerful politicians.

They organized dance fundraisers at the church that became so popular that the line to get inside wrapped around the street.

The civil rights march from Selma to Montgomery, Ala., impressed upon me the fact that youth have unseen potential to do great things. They understand how to work collaboratively. They are internally driven to be part of something bigger than themselves.

When the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. arrived in Newark on March 27, 1968, the young people from Queen of Angels were on the frontline. They worked with field agents from the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, which was headed by Dr. King, to coordinate arrangements for his stay, as well as other activists, and worked the phone banks to rally the wider community.

As associate pastor at Queen of Angels, I had the privilege to foster many of these young community organizers. I was on their side and they knew it. They planned things well and in detail.

They were real leaders. I always felt they were on target.

Many years ago, I established a scholarship fund to ensure that young people have the educational opportunities that they need to flourish in high school and beyond. Last month, New Community celebrated its annual Spring Festival and Auction—as part of our yearlong celebration of the 50th anniversary of NCC—to raise support for the scholarship fund.

Byron Simmons, a young man who is now a senior at St. Benedict's Preparatory School, shared his personal story of how the scholarship has enabled him to receive an outstanding education. He is now prepared to enroll at the college of his choice in the fall.

Young people, such as Byron, remind me of the youth from Queen of Angels. They share the same spirit and unlimited potential to impact the world. It makes you feel real positive about the future.

What the youth need from us, in turn, is to believe in that potential, foster it and watch it take flight.