



# X-cel Today



By Youth For Youth

Fact Sheet

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## EXPLODING MYTHS



*These guys are as effective as any I have seen. They are rebuilding troubled communities, one person at a time.*

Rev. Nicky Cruz  
President, TRUCE



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An Initiative of  
Community Solutions, Inc.

Generation X-cel™ explodes myths, exceeds expectations, and makes a difference in individual and community lives. A comprehensive youth outreach program in Lower Manhattan, X-cel was founded in 1996 by thirteen young people who defied the stereotypes about their generation. Rejecting the popular myth that “youth *are* the future” (they *have* a future, along with a present and a past), local young people have opened two youth centers, built a theater in the heart of the East Village, served hundreds through after school and summer camp programs, employed dozens of neighborhood teens, invested in a retreat center upstate, and reached thousands through extensive outreach activities.

### COMMUNITY PROFILE

Many Lower East Side and East Village residents contend daily with poverty, drugs, alcoholism, broken homes, abusive relationships, teen pregnancy, and violence. Dropout rates and standardized tests results for the public schools X-cel serves are among the worst in the City.

- Only 39.3% of school age and middle school students meet mandated reading standards.
- Only 35.3% of school age and middle school students meet mandated math standards.
- 70% of young adults (17 –24 years) are not currently enrolled in higher education.
- Despite gentrification in Alphabet City, between 14<sup>th</sup> Street and Houston Street, Avenue A and the East River, over half of the residents earn a gross annual income of \$25,000.
- 62% of children in the area come from households on public assistance.
- The NYPD has described the immediate area surrounding the X-cel Theater as having the highest concentration of occult activity in New York City, with Saint Marks Place, located one block away, at the center of the occultism. Teens practicing vampirism, anarchists, and homeless youth literally flock to the neighborhood.

(Sources: NYC Department of Education Statistical Summary 2001-2002; 2000 US Census Long Form; NYPD Occult Crimes Task Force.)

### CURRENT PROGRAMS

**X-cel After School** serves over 30 children, ages 8-13, each day during the school year through tutoring, literacy programs, mentoring, peer counseling, arts, and athletics. Academic programs are designed in consultation with licensed teachers. “Group Club” engages kids in friendly competitions while teaching X-cel’s core values: excellence, creativity, resourcefulness, initiative, resilience, and unity. Thematic programming builds character by addressing issues such as self-esteem, violence prevention, and gang awareness. Cultural and community service activities are regularly incorporated as well.

**X-cel Summer** serves 40 children at a full day summer day camp for eight weeks in July and August. Like X-cel After School, the program fuses the arts, athletics, field trips, group activities, and more around relevant life themes.

**X-cel Outreach** engages the community through basketball tournaments, community service projects, block parties, carnivals, and other outdoor activities that collectively serve over 1,500 people each year.



*As a single mother,  
I'm thrilled that  
X-cel provides  
my three girls  
with role models  
to look up to.*

Carmen Torres  
Parent



*Generation X-cel  
provides a valuable  
service to community  
youth. I am deeply  
concerned about  
the lack of alternative  
programs available  
to fill the void  
that would exist  
[without] X-cel.*

Hon. Nydia Velazquez  
U.S. Congress (D-NY)



*X-cel has taught  
me responsibility  
and discipline.  
Gratification comes  
when children  
simply say  
'Thank you!'  
for giving  
them hope.*

Carl "Rollie" Barnes  
Founding Member

**Nite Spot Café** is an alternative night club hosted by X-cel every last Friday of the month from September through June, attracting as many as 250 young people each month. Emphasis is placed on fun (without booze and drugs) and features a DJ, live entertainment, dance, and refreshments.

**YW8? (Why Wait?)**, a faith-based teen program housed in the X-cel Theater, promotes the idea that youth can make a positive impact in their communities today, without waiting.

**X-Cel Upstate**, in partnership with a local church, provides over 90 acres in the Catskills Mountains for leadership development retreats, weekend getaways, and sleep-away camps.

**Chain Reaction** coordinates week long service projects around the country, beginning with three in New York City, Akron, Ohio, and New England in Summer 2003.

**X-cel Theater** will launch an after-school and weekend visual and performing arts programs for teens featuring photography, painting, dance, musical theater, drama, sound studio engineering, and audio and video production.

**YW8-2-XL (Why Wait to Excel?)**, a college and career prep curriculum that teaches teens how to design a career around what they love to do, will debut a pilot program in Fall 2003.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS: TIMELINE

**June 1996** - Thirteen young people age 21 and under open the first X-cel center in the Jacob Riis Houses on Avenue D. Furnished with computers, pool tables, office and athletic equipment, 250 kids register within one year and special events draw as many as 400.

**1997-1999** - Housing Authority attempts to evict Generation X-cel without cause in a dispute with the then primary leaseholder. Activism attracts pro bono services of two law firms and leads to an audience with Mayor Guiliani, who insisted that X-cel get its space back.

**July 1999** - X-cel reopens and launches its first full-day summer camp. Summer interns include international students from Finland, Germany, Brazil, and Canada.

**September 2001** - X-cel co-founders Rev. Richard and Jeremy Del Rio help establish the Ground Zero Clergy Task Force/Northeast Clergy Group in response to the terrorist attacks of 9/11, which grew to include 250 ministers; provided advocacy, disaster assistance, and mental health services; mobilized and housed over 1,000 volunteers from around the world; and produced the 9/11 anniversary Tribute to Grace and Hope and Madison Square Garden.

**December 2001** - Generation X-cel adapts its "by youth for youth" strategy to a faith-based context in order to revamp a church-based youth ministry called YW8? (Why Wait?).

**October 2002** - Completes a \$125,000 renovation and opens the 3,000 square feet X-cel Theater in the heart of the East Village.

## MEDIA COVERAGE

"God Squad," *WLIW*, 4.2003; *HOY* newspaper, collaboration with Safe Space, 2.12.2002; *CBN*, profile, 10.2001; *Fox 5* and *UPN 9*, "visit from Rebecca Lobo", 8.2001; *YouthWalk*, "Speak Out:Generation X-cel," by Luis Velez, 10.99; *WNBC*, "Live at Five," reported by Gabe Pressman on 8.4.99; *Crosswalks Television*, "Town Hall Meeting with Mayor Giuliani", 6.30.98; *WNBC*, "Live at Five," reported by Gabe Pressman on 1.12.98; *NY-1*, reported by Annika Pergamente throughout the day, 1.12.98; 9/11 efforts of X-cel co-founders covered extensively during 2001-2002.