



Youth Personhood

The 2029 cohort will partner with the City of Alton's UNICEF Child Friendly Cities Initiative to prioritize the needs of children and young people, combat discrimination, and advocate for child and youth voices in local governance and decision making.

Founded in 1837, Alton is a Mississippi River town, located 25 miles north of St. Louis, Missouri, with an estimated population of 25,430. CFCI represents an initiative from UNICEF dedicated to youth empowerment and advocacy. This initiative asks students about their needs and shares those stories with adults with the primary goal of increasing awareness of the issues important to youth. There are currently six sites working on this initiative: Denver, Colorado, Minneapolis Minnesota, Houston, Texas, Decatur, GA, Prince George's County, MD, and Alton, IL.

Youth in Alton have high rates of mental health challenges and exposure to gun violence. According to Dr. Anne Scheer, a resident and advocate for youth, many children report not expecting to live to the age of 25.

The cohorts working on this project will focus on youth personhood in two ways: increasing youth participation and voice in government and translating data about Alton's children into a format that tells a story about the current experiences of students in this city. Over a two-year period, CODE Scholars will gain familiarity with research on rural mental health, child development, community building, trauma-informed practices, youth civic engagement models, and evidence-based intervention strategies. Scholars will work with Alton's youth at the middle and high schools to learn more about what they would like to see change in their city to support their mental and physical health and help them to thrive.

IMPACT



As an outcome of their two year project, students will create a series of digital stories that address some of the primary issues raised by Alton's youth. The goal is to support the City of Alton to increase civic engagement and participation across the city, and to transform data into meaningful and impactful formats.

CODES is a selective program offering full tuition for students who are Pell Eligible, historically underrepresented in their major, or among the first in their families to attend college. CODE Scholars collaborate with community partners with the goal of creating a more socially just world. They study and address the local shape of global problems and share their outcomes using digital humanities methods. CODES apply methods from various fields, including history, literature, anthropology, biology, and sociology, for example.