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RCC Scholarship

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If you had the chance to help develop youth involvement at the Romanian Community Center, what would you do?

The perception of young people has undergone massive changes throughout history. From being 'seen and not heard' to having unchallenged voices, having the youth involved in any movement or organization guarantees its longevity. Being a child of immigrant parents growing up in the United States, it can be difficult to maintain and understand my cultural ties. In the case of the Romanian Community Center, I would invest in hands-on programs to engage and connect with the youth while allowing them autonomy and trust.

One style of program to implement would be a collection of classes to engage the youth all while allowing them to have fun and develop life skills. For instance, a cooking class would show the youth what Romanian culture tastes and smells like. It helps the kids get introduced or more familiar with certain ingredients and dishes. It establishes trust as well, letting kids cook on their own or with minimal help. Another style of class could encompass skills and trades associated throughout Romania's culture and history. Whether that be sewing, knitting, or wood carving, the youth can learn styles specific to Romania while creating lasting experiences. The classes can include already created pieces, such as hats, skirts, or simple carvings to feel and see physical items of the culture. Furthermore, it can allow different levels of generations to connect with adolescents as well as pass down expertise and allow the youth to indulge in new hobbies as well. While preserving Romanian culture, it also allows kids to learn life skills that a traditional

school may not focus on.

Some programs may not be completely hands-on, but just as engaging. Utilizing internet programs can combine the youth's internet savvy persona with conserving culture. The Romanian Community Center could use any satellite image website to allow kids to "walk" around both historical and natural landmarks. While a far cry from being able to see the sites in person, it can create a strong image in their heads about the physical culture of Romania. It further establishes their autonomy as they have control in where around the landmarks they want to explore. They would see the site from different angles and even have fun seeing the possible buildings and tourist shops surrounding the area. Some other internet programs could include more of Romania's history. Creating maps of Romania throughout time could allow kids to learn about the different traditions in each region. It gives the youth autonomy in allowing them to click and explore what they want to discover without being stuffed with oftentimes difficult and heavy information. Being able to use the vast potential of the internet can allow the RCC to create stronger youth development.

Interactive programs allow the preservation of Romanian culture to go one step further. It is one thing to tell the youth about a culture, to have slideshows filled with clip art and stock images, but it is another to feel and experience the culture.