Families and Communities

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Youth City Councils

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Every community can benefit by actively involving youths in city government. By structuring this involvement, youths not only are guided into worthwhile endeavors, but they also discover that citizen involvement is possible. They have the opportunity to expend their energies in helping to identify and solve community problems. Communities become a training ground for the development of future leaders.

In Youth City Councils (YCC) elected or appointed youth leaders assume responsible roles in developing communication among community groups and with other young people in the community. Young people learn to identify their needs, to organize activities and service for themselves, and to participate with their adult counterparts in city programs. Through this process they:

1. Become more aware of community leaders and their concerns.
2. Identify community opportunities and problems that involve youth.
3. Set priorities for action.
4. Examine alternatives for best solutions,
5. Assist the City Council in action programs.
6. Become more involved in the democratic process.

Creating Youth City Councils

Here are specific things to consider when creating a Youth City Council:

- ***The Mayor and City Council should support the Youth City Council.*** In order for the YCC to be a success the Mayor and members of the City Council or governing body must take a personal interest in the program.

- ***Have a city council person be a liaison to the City Council.*** This city council member serves as an advocate for the YCC with the City Council.

- ***Have YCC Advisors.*** The council should have one or more adult volunteers who advise the youth and help them understand their duties and responsibilities. Advisors are critical for successful programs.

- ***Set up the YCC to mirror the local municipality.*** Youth serve as Youth Mayors, Youth Council Members, Youth Recorders, and if numbers warrant, as department heads which mirror the local municipality.

- ***Oath of Office.*** Arrange for the YCC leadership to take the same "Oath of Office" that their adult counterparts use. This can be done in a City Council meeting.

- ***Hold regular meetings.*** The YCC should meet twice a month. One of these meetings each month should be held in conjunction with the City Council meeting. Activities of the YCC should be first on the agenda.

- ***Develop and adopt a Youth Council Charter.*** This document outlines the purposes, organization, duties and responsibilities, limitations on authority, requirements to serve on the YCC, and other governing principles. Most YCCs have youths who are 14 to 18 years old.

- ***Follow and use agendas in meetings.*** The youth should prepare and follow an agenda to conduct their YCC meetings.

- ***Finance your YCC.*** Financing of the YCC varies from council to council. Cities may have an appropriation from their municipal budgets, give a one-time donation which is replenished through YCC fund raisers, or rely totally on fund raising events.

- ***Have the YCC report their activities to the City Council.*** It is a good idea for the YCC to report their activities and fundraising efforts back to the City Council. Mayors and Council Members are much more willing to support organizations that endeavor to support themselves and show progress in meeting community goals.

- ***People thrive on recognition.*** We like to be thanked for a job well done. This may be done formally during a luncheon or dinner at which time the Mayor recognizes the achievement of the individuals in the presence of their peers, or the Mayor may present individuals with a certificate of recognition for their achievement.

Youth City Council Service

Youth City Councils become involved in many areas of community activity. Some of the things Youth City Councils do include:

- ***Provide time and resources to help accomplish city goals.*** They contribute to local festivals and City Days Celebrations.

- ***Sponsor Community Activities.*** Many organize and sponsor activities for children, or activities or programs that bring old and young people together to learn from each other.

- ***Work with civic clubs.*** They work with civic clubs to improve their community and become involved with summer camps or day camps that celebrate the arts.

- ***Support police, fire, and emergency medical services.*** They have projects and activities that support local law enforcement, fire department, and emergency medical services.

- ***Develop employment skills.*** They learn about and develop basic employment skills. They become familiar with different employers in their city and the types of jobs, skills, and education requirements needed to work there. Some develop interviewing skills, including appropriate dress, timeliness, and how to answer interview questions.

- ***Work on projects that enhance public parks, buildings and property.*** They participate in community cleanup days and city beautification contests.

- ***And, many other service activities.***

Benefits for Youth City Council Members

Youth who participate in a Youth City Council program learn how to be mature citizens, develop a sense of personal achievement, and come to understand local government and the political process. The leadership and interpersonal skills acquired are carried into future education and career opportunities.

Youth City Council Members taking Oath of Office

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