



Mayor's Youth Advisory Council

Working to Create a Strong Civic Future for Sugar Land

Written by Katherine Goldberg

With so many issues facing our cities and towns these days, wouldn't it be nice to have an inside look into how our local government functions? Wouldn't it be great to be actively involved in helping to shape our community for a brighter future? The Sugar Land Mayor's Youth Advisory Council gives Sugar Land high school students the opportunity to do just that. Through regular meetings and special programs, students in the MYAC are given a peek into the needs of the city and how our city services provide for the residents of Sugar Land.

The council was started in 2005 with the goal of empowering youth from various backgrounds to become active members in the community. Enrollment in the program is limited and students go through an application process to determine their commitment

to the program and their desire to become a member of this dynamic team. The MYAC follows the school calendar year, with the application process beginning in August. Over 120 students participated in the MYAC Class of 2008-2009, where they were able to provide a youthful perspective to local government and learn the powerful impact they can have on the community.

Learning to Lead

Aside from their monthly meetings at Sugar Land's City Hall, the council actively communicates with Mayor James A. Thompson, who encourages their involvement in civic activity. He explains, "Over the course of the year, MYAC participants learn about the many ways through which they can become active citizens – whether by running for elected office someday, by going to school

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The MYAC participates regularly in various service projects throughout the year

to become an engineer or accountant, or even just serving on one of our boards or commissions. It is really all about learning and empowering them to be community leaders.” One of the ways that students learn about the community is through enlightening “Meet the Chiefs” events. These are days specially created for MYAC students to go around Sugar Land, meeting the heads of the Police Department, Fire Department, and other vital services that help our city. By introducing students to leaders in our community, MYAC encourages students to see the human face to these important city positions, and visualize their own role in the future leadership of Sugar Land.

The Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council also aims to actively serve the community throughout the year. The MYAC students participate regularly in various service projects, such as the Light of Hope ceremony which spotlights child advocacy, and the continuing program to educate Sugar Land middle school students about internet safety. The impact that MYAC has on the community is evident as Mayor Thompson describes, “The response from the community has been one of appreciation for the work these students are doing in their hometown.”

Creating Community

The connection between the students and their hometown really is at the core of MYAC. By providing students with the tools and knowledge to take an active stake in their community, they achieve a sense of ownership over their own actions and responsibilities, and gain pride in their hometown. Being an involved citizen is the best way to maintain our great city, and the Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council equips Sugar Land students to be respectful, considerate, and brave citizens who give this city great hope for the future.

The Sugar Land Mayor’s Youth Advisory Council is certainly not the only way for kids to get involved in our community, but it is without question a very positive program for our youth and our city. The council has received recognition and thanks for their efforts at bettering our community and the Class of 2009-2010 promises to continue that good work. Perhaps Mayor Thompson explains it best when he says, “More than anything else though, I think the community response is best seen in the amount of students who continue to apply for this program. It is clearly making an impact on not only the community, but also the students who participate.” SLM

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