



NOVI YOUTH COUNCIL

Civically Active Teens

In the movies, teenagers are portrayed as moody, self-centered and rebellious against the establishment. As so often is the case, Hollywood fiction doesn't mirror reality. A case in point is the Novi Youth Council. The 21-member



group is charged with making recommendations to the Novi City Council about the needs of children, youth, and families in the City, and the appropriate means by which public and private agencies - in cooperation with volunteer efforts -- may address such needs and engage community teens.

It's a responsibility Andrew Ying takes seriously. "I recognized that the unique and potential-filled opportunity that is Novi Youth Council would be rewarding for not only me, but more importantly for the community," the Novi High senior said. "Whether by organizing events such as *Addicted to Games, Not Drugs!*, or by volunteering at promotional events such as *Fall for Novi*, I loved the idea of being able to meaningfully contribute to my community while simultaneously gaining invaluable experience."

In summer 2005, the Novi City Council adopted a policy resolution encouraging Novi youth to become civically active within the community as members of the Novi Youth Council. Each year the City Council interviews and appoints school

students to the Youth Council. Since then, the Youth Council has initiated innovative programs and partnered with the community for the betterment of Novi.

The Youth Council is open to all high school students in Novi. The group is currently comprised of students from Novi High and St. Catherine of Siena Academy. Novi Communications Coordinator Stephanie Schuetzler acts as the staff liaison from the Community Relations Office between the City and the Youth Council. "I attend their bi-weekly meetings and events," she said. "The



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an awesome organization through which I can influence decisions for the benefit of Novi and its citizens.”

The Youth Council also partners

with the Novi Police Department on project “Sticker Shock,” placing more than 6,000 stickers on multi-packs of alcoholic beverages warning purchasers of the dangers of contributing to underage drinking. The campaign is conducted during prom, graduation, and homecoming season annually. Connecting with older adults is also an interest of the Youth Council. The group has conducted a “Senior to Senior” Prom with the Waltonwood Twelve Oaks retirement community since 2007. More than 100 seniors are treated to an evening of sharing with members of the Novi Youth Council, dinner, and dancing.

“It is set up essentially like a high

younger students, the event will feature arcade games and bowling.

Schuetzler said the group is always looking for ways to improve the program. “One member has expressed an interest in starting a book drive. We have been brainstorming ways of collecting information about the youth and teen population as a whole – what their interests are, what they are passionate about.” Working with the Youth Council is a honor, Schuetzler added. “I have a background in education, so I thoroughly enjoy working with such a talented group of intelligent and passionate young adults.”

Both Raina and Ying encourage younger students to get involved with Novi Youth Council.

“If you like seeing how the City works, and if you want to have a voice in in the future of Novi for teens, then you should definitely apply,” Raina said. “The people are what makes the Youth Council so fun to be in.”

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group focused on a few events for the fall – Project Sticker Shock and Addicted to Movies Not Drugs – and did a really great job. Both events were a huge success.”

Addicted to Movies Not Drugs featured an all night movie marathon. The Youth Council partnered with the Novi Police and Fire Departments and Emagine Entertainment for the event, which was held in early November. The event, which annually raises more than \$5,000 for drug prevention programs, featured drug education materials. It also gave students the opportunity to create public service announcements about drug education for broadcasting on local television.

“I enjoy being part of an awesome organization through which I can influence decisions for the benefit of Novi and its citizens.”

Andrew Ying

Senior, Novi High School



Novi High Senior Raj Raina said helping to put on events like Addicted to Movies Not Drugs helps him feel more engaged in the community. “It makes me feel like I have a much bigger say in a lot of events in the city,” he commented. “Even for events that are not directly run by the Youth Council, we still get asked what our opinion is and how we could make the event better from a kids’ perspective.”

Ying agreed. “By voicing my opinion, supporting or engaging in constructive dialogue with other members and lending my time to set up events, I help to develop, enhance, and execute NYC’s projects and goals,” he said. “I enjoy being part of

school prom full of fancy dresses and suits and food,” said Ying, who has been on the Youth Council since his sophomore year, “Instead of high schoolers, we have the seniors dancing around and enjoying themselves. They love it every year.”

The Youth Council also participates in the City’s Fall for Novi, organizing children’s games and volunteering as youth ambassadors to the more than 1,500 visitors at the event annually. In January, the group will host *Addicted to Games, Not Drugs!* The event will be held at Lucky Strike in Fountain walk. Geared for

Adds Ying: “If you feel like you have something to contribute to Novi, then do yourself a favor by joining. Being on NYC is not only rewarding but also extremely enjoyable. You have the unique opportunity to explore new avenues, engage yourself with Novi, and meet and form friendships with others as eager as you.”

For more information about the Novi Youth Council, visit cityofnovi.org or contact the Community Relations Office at 248.735.5628.