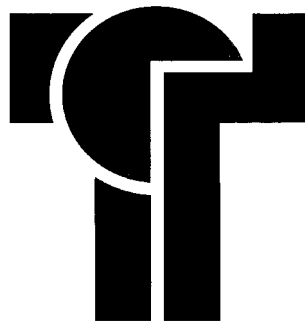


City of Tempe

**Mayor's Youth Advisory
Commission**

Youth Town Hall Report

2008



Dear Mayor and City Council:

This has been another exciting year for the Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission (MYAC). Activities organized by MYAC have allowed Tempe's youth to contribute their ideas and assist in the continued development of our city. We would like to thank you for your on-going support of our Commission and its projects.

The events sponsored by MYAC this year were very successful. Student Government Day emphasized the importance and effectiveness of community involvement. High school students were given the opportunity to experience first hand the inner workings of government by shadowing city officials and by participating in a mock City Council meeting.

Our annual Town Hall allowed youth and community leaders to exchange ideas on issues concerning youth. A summary of the dialogue that occurred and the recommendations made are detailed in this report. These recommendations are the original ideas of Tempe's youth to solve problems facing our community.

On behalf of the Commission I would like to thank you again for your dedication and commitment to the youth of Tempe. The successes we have had could not have been achieved without your support.

Sincerely,

**Veekas Shrivastava, Youth Town Hall Chairperson
Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission**

**Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission
2007/2008 Officers**

**Allie Gorton
Chairperson**

**Kimberly Trudgen
Vice Chairperson**

**Kurtis Zinger
Administrative Recorder**

**Caitlin Long
Treasurer**

**Corie Owens
Student Government Day Chairperson**

**Veekas Shrivastava
Youth Town Hall Chairperson**

**Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission
2007/2008 Members**

**Alex Austin
James Funk
Carmen Gammage
Jevin Hodge
Cecilia Iole
Leslie Klein
Enrico Lage
Amanda Lovins
Sachin Nair
Jeremy Pompa
Gonzalo Vichilis
Brant Ziemba**

Tempe City Council

**Mayor
Hugh Hallman**

**Vice Mayor
Shana Ellis**

**Council Members
Ben Arredondo**

Mark Mitchell

Joel Navarro

Onnie Shekerjian

Corey Woods

Tempe Youth Town Hall

Chairperson's Report

Presented by

Veekas Shrivastava

Youth Town Hall Chairperson

March 26, 2008

The Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission sponsors Tempe's Youth Town Hall each year in order to bring together youth and adults from the community to discuss issues of concern to Tempe's youth and offer recommendations for practical solutions.

This was Tempe's twenty-eighth year to sponsor Youth Town Hall, which was held Wednesday, March 26, 2008 at the Westside Community Center. To ensure input from all sectors of our community, representatives from high schools, middle schools, service clubs, youth organizations, community centers, local businesses, the police department, and juvenile court were invited to participate.

Participants were divided into six discussion groups covering three topic areas. Two groups discussed **Teen Depression and Suicide** and two other groups discussed **Teen Drug Use**. The remaining two groups addressed **Teen Sexual Behavior**.

After a welcome by Mayor Hugh Hallman, and a keynote address by Donald Smith, 2002-03 National Youth of the Year, Boys & Girls Clubs of America, participants met in their groups. They began discussion of their assigned topics by defining the problem and possible contributing factors. Groups then made recommendations for solutions and focused on those that were practical and could be easily implemented. Youth spokespersons from each of the discussion groups presented their committee's recommendations to all Town Hall participants in the closing general session. These presentations gave those in attendance the opportunity to gain understanding and insight from one another.

The Youth Town Hall Report is available to various agencies, organizations, schools and service clubs for review and as a planning tool in our community. Youth Town Hall provides both youth and adults the opportunity to communicate openly with one another about important issues that affect them. It is hoped that Youth Town Hall will continue to be the model and success it has been in the past.

CITY OF TEMPE YOUTH TOWN HALL AGENDA

Wednesday, March 26, 2008
Westside Community Center
715 West Fifth Street

- 8:15 - 8:45** **Registration** Front of Westside Community Center
Continental Breakfast served
- 8:45 - 9:20** **Opening Session** Westside Community Center Gymnasium
- Introduction -Allie Gorton, MYAC Chairperson
- Welcome - Mayor Hugh Hallman, City of Tempe
- Keynote Address - Donald Smith, 2002-03 National Youth of the Year,
Boys & Girls Clubs of America
- Instructions - Veekas Shrivastava, Youth Town Hall Chairperson
- 9:30 - 12:00** **Committee Sessions** - Breaks will occur at the discretion of each committee.
Refreshments will be available in the meeting rooms.
- Committee A** - "Addressing Teen Depression & Suicide - 1"
Westside Community Center – Sunset Room
- Committee B** - "Addressing Teen Depression & Suicide - 2"
Westside Community Center – Riverside Room
- Committee C** - "Preventing Teen Drug Use - 1"
Westside Community Center – Los Vecinos
- Committee D** - "Preventing Teen Drug Use - 2"
Westside Community Center – Computer Lab
- Committee E** - "Addressing Teen Sexual Behavior -1"
Westside Community Center – Lindon Park Room
- Committee F** - "Addressing Teen Sexual Behavior - 2"
Westside Community Center – Art Room
- 12:00 - 1:00** **Lunch** – Provided to all participants at the Westside Community Center
Catered by Dilly's Deli
- 1:00 – 1:55** **Committee Sessions Resume - Discussion Wrap-Up**
- 2:00 - 2:30** **Closing Session** – Westside Community Center Gymnasium
- Committee Summaries
 - Each committee representative will give a 3 to 5 minute summary.
 - Closing Remarks – Veekas Shrivastava, Town Hall Chairperson

Addressing Teen Depression & Suicide – 1

Discussion Summary:

Participants in our group began by discussing statistics that reflect the high rate of teen suicide in Arizona. Most did not realize that Arizona has more teens per capita that commit suicide than most other states. Discussion focused on some reasons for teen depression and what can lead to suicide.

Participants wanted to know what is already in place to help address depression and suicide. Most youth were surprised to learn that there were any resources available at their school or in the community. Youth participants, in particular, felt there are some common themes among youth at various schools that can impact teen depression and suicide including:

- Teens feel a lot of pressure (academics, future, peers, etc).
- Adults don't understand what is normal of teens and what is not.
- Alcohol and drugs may play a role.
- Too many teens don't know where or how to get help.
- Teen relationships (break-ups) may cause depression.

Recommendations:

1. Increase mental health counselors at schools and in the community.

Schools need more mental health counselors to help young people with personal issues. The city or other agencies could provide a full-time counselor on each high school campus. The teen centers in each of the City's three community centers could also have a counselor at least one day per week to reach more youth.

2. Provide education and information about teen depression and suicide.

Agencies specializing in teen depression and suicide could implement a teen depression awareness campaign that would target schools, parents, teachers, and the community. The city could use their TV station and website to place public service announcements about teen depression. Posters could be placed at the community centers. Information could be sent home to parents with the report cards.

3. Provide school training on suicide awareness.

Agencies specializing in teen depression could send a specialist to each school to talk about depression and what to do. They could help students understand how to help their friends. Also, they could train an adult on each campus who is trusted and can relate well to youth. This

“trusted adult” would receive training on depression and suicide. These individuals would provide information on depression, suicide and community resources to all students in the classrooms and/or at assemblies.

4. Increase the availability of workshops for parents and teens.

Parents need to understand what teens struggle with and how to increase their self-esteem. There needs to be more opportunities, such as No Parent Left Behind workshops, to help parents and teens understand what’s going on and how to help.

Addressing Teen Depression & Suicide - 1

**Facilitators: Lynette Stonefeld
Kimberly Trudgen**

**Tempe/Kyrene Communities in Schools
Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission**

Youth Participants

Alisha Aills

Sara Christman

Theodore Cooper

Jameelah Lee

Carmen Ortiz

Shannon Osgood

Diana Romero

Alec Swanson

Elizabeth Thresher

Trevor Whitaker

McKemy Middle School

Corona del Sol High School

Chandler Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission

New School for the Arts/Escalante Teen Leadership

Tempe High School

Marcos de Niza High School

McClintock High School/Escalante Teen Leadership

Connolly Middle School

Chandler Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission

Corona del Sol High School

Adult Participants

Emma Bordner

Nicole Gordon

Armida Lopez

Leslie Pechkurow

Dene Phillips

Tempe Community Council

Gililand Middle School

Chicanos Por La Causa

City of Tempe Social Services-Counseling Services

Maricopa County Juvenile Probation Dept.

Addressing Teen Depression & Suicide – 2

Our discussion group began by identifying contributing factors that lead to teen depression and suicide. The group identified problems with relationships, isolation, chemical imbalances, loss, disappointment, drug/alcohol abuse, and parents' divorce as some major factors contributing to teen depression and suicide. Our group then identified factors that lead to depression and suicide and discussed the warning signs. They then discussed available and needed resources and identified possible ways to address teen depression and suicide. These include education, training, and the need for an open, accessible system of information and referral.

Recommendations:

1. Develop an information clearinghouse.

Many programs to address teen depression and suicide exist but teens are very unsure of how or where they would access information on these services. An organization, such as the Arizona Suicide Prevention Coalition, could develop a clearinghouse of information that includes agency names and descriptions specific to teens. This information could be accessed through a central number or a website. This "1-800" number or website could be advertised in school offices, on flyers, school agendas, student newspapers, and announcements.

2. Provide information and training to teachers, coaches and students.

Many teens will not approach a parent or counselor; rather they are more likely to approach a friend, coach, or teacher that they trust. Social workers and school psychologists could provide trainings on how to effectively respond to depressed and/or suicidal youth. Awareness information could be provided at school assemblies, student and teacher organizations, health fairs and information sessions on campus during lunch. There could also be specific classes or trainings for teachers, administrators, and coaches.

3. Create a web based link for information and answers to questions.

With almost every teen accessing the internet on a daily basis developing a solution sharing website would be a great tool. Teens would be able to go on the website and post questions and have the answers posted back from school counselors and other professionals. The website could also offer referral services. A link to the website could be installed on the desktop of school computers and accessed from home via the school website.

Addressing Teen Depression & Suicide – 2

**Facilitators: Matt Torres
Caitlin Long**

**City of Tempe – Community Services
Mayor’s Youth Advisory Commission**

Youth Participants

Victor Barrios
Danielle Burbach
Alexandra Dollar
Dara Fahardi
Molly Francis
Jessica Hidalgo
Olamide Ogunde
Rocio Tilapa
Niki Webster

Marcos de Niza High School
Fees Middle School
Marcos de Niza High School
Kyrene Middle School
Corona del Sol High School
Connolly Middle School
McClintock High School/Escalante Teen Leadership
Chicanos Por La Causa Peer Leader
Gililland Middle School

Adult Participants

Linda Cano
Stacia Kyle
Mira Milosevic
Suzanne Niemann
Christina Tremaine
Susan Voirol

City of Tempe Parks & Recreation Dept.
Tempe High School
Kyrene Middle School
University Presbyterian Church
Fees Middle School
Tempe Union High School District

Preventing Teen Drug Use-1

Discussion Summary:

Our discussion group began by identifying the primary factors that contribute to teen drug use. Stress, family drug use, accessibility, peer pressure, curiosity, boredom, athletic performance, body image, weight loss, an escape from problems, anger, recreation or 'partying', and ignorance of the damaging consequences of use were identified as contributing factors to teen drug use. Our group also discussed the prevalence of drug use during school and the need for schools and students to address this problem.

Our group then focused on solutions to the teen drug use and identified the need for a continuum of substance abuse prevention programs and services. There was consensus that prevention education should be age appropriate, relevant, begin as early as pre-school and be provided during the elementary, middle, and high schools years in the schools and in the community.

Recommendations:

1. Provide substance abuse education to parents of children of all ages.

Parents need information and education on how to effectively communicate with their child, how to recognize the warning signs of substance use, how to intervene appropriately, and how to access resources. Age appropriate information could be provided at school fairs/carnivals, 'meet the teacher' or curriculum nights, parent/teacher's association meetings, concerts and other school activities. This information could be provided by the school districts and by substance abuse prevention agencies in the community.

2. Implement mandatory in-depth drug and alcohol education programs in the schools.

School health classes already offer a short unit on drug/alcohol education. However, a mandatory, lengthier, in-depth school health unit could be provided at all grade levels. To more effectively engage students the education should utilize a number of teaching strategies, including multi-media and personal stories by recovering substance abusers. Resources should also be provided to students.

3. Establish peer support programs.

A peer support program could be established on school campuses that would offer support and information to students in need of services. The peer support program could be overseen by school counselors, teachers and social workers.

4. Increase school security.

To deter drug use campus security could establish a stronger presence on school campuses through more campus security, random security checks of lockers, bathrooms, and other locations where students use drugs, and through surveillance cameras.

Preventing Teen Drug Use - 1

**Facilitators: Tricia Gilman
Leslie Klein**

**City of Tempe – Community Services
Mayor’s Youth Advisory Commission**

Youth Participants

Albert Blanco	Connolly Middle School
Erin Blevins	Corona del Sol High School
Nelson Fernandez	Gililand Middle School
Ian Francis	McClintock High School/Escalante Teen Leadership
Joey Green	Kyrene Middle School
Alexandra Lutz	Marcos de Niza High School
Manny Munoz	Escalante Teen Leadership
Vicki Peng	Chandler Mayor’s Youth Advisory Commission
Taylor Shelberg	Corona del Sol High School
David Tatelbaum	Kyrene Middle School
Guadalupe Urbano	McKemy Middle School

Adult Participants

Bill Amato	Tempe City Attorney’s Office
Shelle DeSousa	Kyrene Middle School
Ken Harmon	Tempe Police Department
Rindy Corn	Maricopa County Juvenile Probation Dept.
Heather Rennells	Kyrene Middle School

Teen Drug Use -2

Discussion Summary:

Our group began by discussing the reasons teens use drugs. They include too much free time, easy access to drugs, social and peer pressure, an escape or coping mechanism, enjoyment, rebellion, and the influence of parents who abuse substances. Youth participants felt that drug use, especially of alcohol and marijuana, was common and frequent. We then focused on why teens don't use drugs. While enforcement and consequences from schools and/or police and courts is a deterrent for some people, youth also identified other reasons why teens would choose not to be involved in drug use: personal morals and values, thinking about their future, family relationships, physical consequences and their focus on sports and academic success.

Our group then identified solutions and made recommendations to deal with teen drug use. These ideas ranged from those teens themselves could implement to programs that schools, non-profit organizations and the City of Tempe could consider.

Recommendations:

1. Provide parent education on teen drug use.

Teens felt that many parents are simply not aware and/or up to date about teen drug use. They also may need assistance on how to effectively address with their children the issues of peer pressure, rebellious behavior, etc. Parent education programs could be provided by community agencies in partnership with schools.

2. Encourage parent/adult involvement in preventing teen drug use at school bus stops.

Students reported that a lot of undesirable behavior, including substance use, occurs at school bus stops. Parents could form a volunteer organization through the school PTA or through neighborhood associations or block watch programs to provide supervision at these areas.

3. Provide alternatives to in-school and out-of-school suspension.

The group felt that suspending a student for drug use was "too easy" and did not address the problem. Requiring the student to perform community service and/or attend an education program focusing on substance abuse and/or health issues instead of in-school suspension would be more productive. Students who are suspended for longer terms should be offered alternative school programs that assist them in continuing their education as well as addressing their behavior and substance use.

4. Provide more after-school activities for teens.

Schools in partnership with community agencies could provide more after-school clubs and no-cut sports activities for students. Mentoring programs that pair high school students with middle school and/or elementary school students could be implemented or expanded. More neighborhood community centers that provide activities and places for kids to gather could be built.

5. Increase awareness through creative use of media.

Public service announcements about substance abuse could be developed and placed on Facebook and MySpace. This could be a project for interested youth groups. Students in media classes in high schools could produce anti-drug videos and ads as class projects.

Preventing Teen Drug Use - 2

**Facilitators: Rebecca Bond
Cecilia Iole**

**Tempe Connections
Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission**

Youth Participants

Julio Antino
Gabriel Dotson
Brian Drew
Jennifer Griggs
Mariah Hoffman
Mirela Omerovic
Julio Romero
Kristin Sankey
Brittany Wright

Gililand Middle School
Corona del Sol High School
Fees Middle School
McClintock High School
Marcos de Niza High School
McKemy Middle School
McClintock High School/Escalante Teen Leadership
Marcos de Niza High School
New School for the Arts/Escalante Teen Leadership

Adult Participants

Jim Denton
Karen Poole

Isaac Salcino
Jenni Steinkamp
Rochelle Wells

Tempe Union High School District
Center for Workforce Development-Maricopa
County Community Colleges
Chicanos Por La Causa
Maricopa County Juvenile Probation Dept.
Tempe Elementary School District Governing Board

Addressing Teen Sexual Behavior - 1

Discussion Summary:

Our discussion group began discussing the reasons teenagers engage in sexual behavior, the negative impacts of sexual behavior at an early age, and where they received information on sex education. Group members felt it is important for parents to be involved in teaching their kids, but both the youth and adult participants commented that kids feel uncomfortable talking about sex to their parents. The majority of youth participants commented they receive most of their sex education from school, but mass media also supplies a large amount of information since it is provided in a more interesting manner. All discussion group members agreed that school sex education and the format used is a problem.

Our group then focused on sex education in school, the message being delivered, and the effectiveness of that delivery. Youth participants mentioned the information they received in school was about sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy, but they never heard not to engage in sex. The message of abstinence may be delivered in the sex education information; however, youth are not hearing it or retaining it. Youth participants noted that the lack of interest and ultimately retention of the material is largely due to the boring content, lackluster delivery, and the disconnect between teacher and student. Our group was in consensus that sex education in schools is one of the most controllable factors to decreasing teen sexual behavior, but the material, the delivery, and the presenters need to be addressed.

Recommendations:

1. Create a survey to evaluate the effectiveness of sex education in Tempe.

A public health agency could collaborate with the school districts to create and implement a student survey regarding sex education and information. The survey would help establish an understanding of what is being taught and more importantly what is being learned. The survey would facilitate improved sex education that is relevant and meaningful to teens.

2. Initiate partnerships with outside agencies to provide relevant sex education in schools and improved training for teachers.

Public health agencies could partner with the schools districts to provide facilitators to conduct sex education and teacher training. These partnerships would improve the delivery of the material, increase knowledge base, and improve dialogue with students.

3. Sponsor a teen performing arts group to provide sex education.

A teen performing arts group could be created to deliver sex education information in skits and video productions. Performances and video announcements could be presented in schools and

at City events. This would be a creative way to deliver sex education material to teens by their peers and would increase acceptance of the message.

Addressing Teen Sexual Behavior - 1

**Facilitators: Alex Jovanovic
Allie Gorton**

**City of Tempe – Community Services
Mayor’s Youth Advisory Commission**

Youth Participants

Angelee Andorfer
Gabriel Arviso
Natalie Burgess
Tommy Kim
Justin Martens
Shanay Omori
Carly Robertson
Chaunci Toney
Kenya Villela
Ave Wright

Marcos de Niza High School
Fees Middle School
Kyrene Middle School
Gililland Middle School
Corona del Sol High School
McKemy Middle School
Corona del Sol High School
Chandler Mayor’s Youth Advisory Commission
Chicanos Por La Causa Peer Leader
New School for the Arts/Escalante Teen Leadership

Adult Participants

Mitzi Epstein
Elena Hernandez
Patricia Hillman
Zita Johnson
Bronwyn Paes

Kyrene School District Governing Board
Maricopa County Juvenile Probation Dept.
Fees Middle School
Tempe Union High School District Governing Board
TUHSD Adolescent Pregnancy & Parenting Program

Teen Sexual Behavior - 2

Discussion Summary:

Our group discussion quickly focused on the lack of updated and comprehensive curriculums offered to teens through the school district or from their parents. Current sex education programs lack pertinent information about issues facing teens today. The group agreed that societal culture desensitizes teens towards sex by imposing sexual images throughout media including music, advertising, films, and television. Pressure is also covertly suggested as a means to fit in, to be popular, or is expected and accepted within long term relationships. The group agreed that little or no information is being provided on the emotional issues or consequences resulting from sexual behavior and pressures. The group thought it was important to have teens address these issues in a forum with other teens so as to make it real and personal.

Recommendations:

1. Create a comprehensive sex education curriculum.

The Tempe Union High School District could employ professional health care workers to implement and present an updated and broadened sex education program to all students. The curriculum should include information on finances, economic realities of teen pregnancy, all forms of birth control protection, STD's and educate on how to navigate the pressures of teen sex by making informed decisions. Through the use of videos real teens could tell their stories, focusing on the consequences and impacts on their lives. These steps would make sex education relevant and allow teens to make informed responsible choices.

2. Create a teen website designed by teens for teens.

A public health organization could sponsor and maintain a website that posts information concerning teen sexual pressures. This website would also have health care professionals respond to questions posted by teens. Selected teens would design the interactive program in order to attract teens. The website would also include links to health care resources. The goal of the website is to provide needed information on a confidential basis.

3. Increase publicity to Tempe residents of current No Parent Left Behind University workshops that deal with teen behaviors.

Tempe high schools could work with the district's No Parent Left Behind University to further advertise upcoming workshops. This could be accomplished through fliers, newsletters, posters, school announcements and newspaper notices.

Addressing Teen Sexual Behavior - 2

**Facilitators: Mickie Berry
Corie Owens**

**City of Tempe – Community Services
Mayor’s Youth Advisory Commission**

Youth Participants

Ramon Abreu
Desiree Contreras
Jessica Cooper
Morgan Harder
Carmen Lopez
Gaby Lopez
Rachel Middleton
David McKaig
Astrid Orozco
Jenny Tang
Alyssa Williams

Marcos de Niza High School
Gililand Middle School
Corona del Sol High School
Kyrene Middle School
Chicanos Por La Causa Peer Leader
McClintock High School/Escalante Teen Leadership
Connolly Middle School
Marcos de Niza High School
McClintock High School/Escalante Teen Leadership
Chandler Mayor’s Youth Advisory Commission
Tempe High School

Adult Participants

Erica Berry
Kathryn Cantrell
Michelle Helm
Lorelei Hillman
Barbara Miller
Karen Poole
Maja Switzer

City of Chandler – Parks & Recreation
Maricopa County Juvenile Probation Dept.
Tempe Union High School District Governing Board
University Presbyterian Church
Maricopa County Attorney’s Office
Kyrene Middle School
City of Tempe - Escalante Community Center

The Mayor's Youth Advisory Commission would like to extend a special thanks to the East Valley Boys and Girls Club - Tempe/Ladmo Branch. Their assistance in hosting this year's Youth Town Hall at the Westside Community Center contributed to the event's success.