



2007 YOUTH TOWN HALL REPORT

Phoenix Youth and Education Commission

On February 8, 2007, more than 250 students from middle and high schools throughout the Phoenix area converged upon the Phoenix Convention Center to take the driving wheel and head out on the road of life. They participated in the 29th annual Youth Town Hall, sponsored by the City of Phoenix Youth and Education Commission. Attendees discussed five topics that are on-ramps and off-ramps in their lives: downtown revitalization and participation, transitions in

schooling, self-expression, substance abuse and youth homelessness. After being divided into groups, participants discussed one of the topics and developed potential programs that would implement these recommendations through the Focus on Results Grants. The students understand that the conceptual programs discussed during the town hall may already exist, but they believe that further publicity of the programs is necessary.



Issue 1: Downtown Revitalization and Participation

Overview: Downtown Phoenix is rising to new heights, and the youth of today will one day live, work and study in it. At YTH, students focused on active youth involvement in the changing downtown culture and how their vital ideas aid the process.

Recommendations

- ◆ **Cultural Partnerships** – Students felt that strengthening cooperation between the fine arts and youth communities was imperative to the creating of a common downtown culture. One suggestion was displaying teen art in the Phoenix Art Museum.
- ◆ **Recreational Space** – All participants echoed their interest in having a central location that integrates youth into the new downtown community. Some ideas included the improvement of shopping opportunities and more youth-centered festivals.

Conceptual Programs

Copper Square ArtFEST – The City of Phoenix should sponsor and implement an annual fine arts competition specific to youth that will showcase their talents in Copper Square and its many businesses and cultural venues.

Shopping Village – In the spirit of the Arizona Center, teens would like to see a new shopping center in the heart of downtown that caters to the youth consumer with coffee and music shops, arcades, and a central food courtyard with lounging area.



Issue 2: Teen Self Expression

Overview: This break out session promoted the positive forms of displaying each individual's personality, emotions and talents. Also, teens explored the ways the City of Phoenix can encourage constructive teen expression.

Recommendations

- ◆ **Writing Seminars** – Youth Town Hall participants believe expressing oneself through poetry, lyrics and prose enables them to display their inner core. Offering structured workshops about different literary techniques would encourage more communication.
- ◆ **Activity Center** – Teens would like to see the development of focal spaces that have a greater emphasis on creative, high-energy artistic groups and activities. This would generate friendships and self-confidence needed to fully express oneself candidly and openly.



Conceptual Programs

Phoenix Alive – This festival would be student-run and incorporate the various cultures that comprise our City and the features of its unique population. The overall aim is to find a common ground among them that truly identifies what it is to be a Phoenician.

City Council District Socials – Each City Council District should host an annual event to recognize achievements of schools, individuals and community organizations emphasizing personal expression that display the District's artistic image.



Issue 3: Youth Homelessness

Overview: As the City of Phoenix grows so seemingly does the youth homeless population. At Youth Town Hall, students sought ways to solve this pertinent issue. The discussions identified potential programs that can assist homeless teens in reintegrating into society.

The ideas presented in this section mirror programs offered by HomeBase Youth Services. The following ideas are not meant to minimize the positive and helpful programs of HomeBase, but to increase the amount of resources for homeless youth.

Recommendations

- ◆ Mentors – The students felt there should be more mentors and programs to guide homeless youth in the right direction. One idea was to create a Homeless Youth Center that would provide resources for coping with problems.
- ◆ Financial Support – It is a necessity that homeless youth have financial support in order to thrive. Workshops that offer assistance and advice on earning and maintaining money would be beneficial to answer questions and address concerns.

Conceptual Programs

Homeless Youth Health Clinic – A central center offering counseling services with trained professionals will provide guidance in confronting and overcoming hardships. In addition, basic hygienic needs and medical care at the site guarantees essential services and gives homeless youth healthier lives.

Financial Support Center – Homeless high school students often need help in establishing their financial foundation. This center will give local employment opportunities, interview preparation and bank account management assistance.



Issue 4: Teen Substance Abuse

Overview: Teens face the temptations of abusing addictive drugs every day in schools, with friends and even at home. Concerns were raised about the harms substance abuse causes and its long-term impact. Participants felt that encouraging proactive resistance to peer pressure is the best avenue to avoid potential drug and alcohol problems.

Recommendations

- ◆ Alternatives – The participants identified alternatives that might lessen the overall use of drugs and alcohol. Some of the alternatives include hobbies, community service, fine arts, and athletics. By being active in their communities, youth are taking the initiative in avoiding substance abuse and making a difference.
- ◆ More Access to Information – Students agreed that providing resources that educate the dangers of abuse and programs available to prevent use are necessary. In addition, they felt that increasing communication among teens would encourage honesty about problems, which is needed in order to truly get help.

Conceptual Programs

Drug Forum – The students decided that a drug forum would benefit the younger population who might be abusing drugs and alcohol, or who are considering starting. At this forum, there should be motivational speakers

to talk about their negative experiences with drug and alcohol abuse, as well as how they overcame the addictions. There should also be discussions with City officials to share efforts underway to curb drug use and possibly identify new options.

Youth Rehabilitation Center – The City of Phoenix should establish and sponsor a youth rehabilitation center for the younger, addicted population. Within this center, there should be peer support groups for the youth. Another idea for this center is to host events such as plays, concerts, and dances in order for the youth to experience positive, enjoyable activities.



Issue 5: Educational Transitions

Overview: Students discussed responsibilities, effective time management, and goal setting as ways to ease high school and college transition. Youth also felt as though making information more readily available would also ease this transition and make students more successful in the future.

High School Transition

Recommendations

- ◆ More Advice – Students requested that information and acclimation infrastructure should be improved by adding peer mentors, shadow programs, visitation days, or even student-guided tours. First hand accounts from those who have gone through the transition offer insight and suggestions that can aid those in the process.

Conceptual Program

Peer Mentoring/Visitation Days – Participants called for the establishment of mentor programs including, tour days of other high school and college campuses. Students would then be better equipped to choose the appropriate academic experience for themselves.

College Transition

Recommendations

- ◆ Developing Support Infrastructure– Youth called for more information regarding the transition to high school and college, specifically scholarships, applications, and simple life skills. This will assist them in making important decisions about their academic goals. Readily available information from schools or even a centralized City of Phoenix source will facilitate the process.

Conceptual Program

College Club (C2) at the Phoenix Public Library – Youth suggested instituting a program entitled College Club, or C2. The club would meet monthly at all of the various Phoenix Public Library locations to increase awareness about the different facets of the college transition process. Students referenced having well-educated counselors, and parents of college attendees to share information with high school students, parents, and counselors.

Conclusion

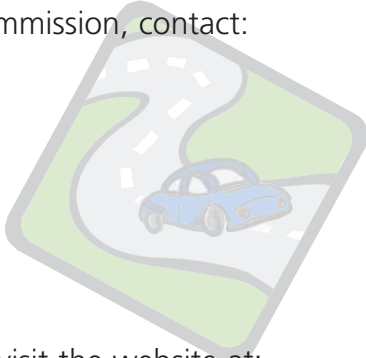
Today, more than ever the youth of the City of Phoenix are making their voice heard. Having more access to City programs propels the call for better services for youth, which will guide them on the road of life past tempting off ramps such as substance abuse and taking the on ramps of self-expression, higher education, helping the homeless, and proactive participation in the rising new downtown Phoenix.

Every suggestion has been derived from the successful 29th annual Youth Town Hall in hopes of establishing solutions for resolving problems in the community. These recommendations will be submitted to the City Council and Mayor for their review. The Phoenix Youth and Education Commission will tailor the Focus on Results (FOR) Grants to reflect the recommendations from the youth. It is obvious that the youth are definitely driving their lives, using their innovation, and taking the future prosperity of the City of Phoenix along with them in the passenger seat.



FOR MORE INFORMATION:

To learn more about Youth Town Hall or other activities of the Phoenix Youth and Education Commission, contact:



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