

Survey reveals youth's problems and concerns

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A summary of the annual Youth Forum at Bonney Lake High School gave members of the City Council a glimpse of some of the problems and concerns facing local youth.

The forum, conducted Feb. 24, was an opportunity for young people to express their opinions about their communities and schools.

Input from the forum was presented to city government, schools and agencies for planning purposes and special proposals.

Forty to 45 students attended each of the two sessions with the group split into seven or eight smaller groups.

Facilitors from the city included Mayor Neil Johnson, Assistant Police Chief Dana Powers and Special Events Coordinator David Wells.

Other facilitors were Toni MacDougal of Community Health Care, Pam Page of Lake Tapps Community Church, Robyn Lawrence from the Lions 4 Kids House, Molly Mergeth of Sumner School District, Paula Eismann of Creator Lutheran Church, Michelle Edwards of the Bonney Lake PTA and Kristen McClintock of Safe Streets.

Johnson said the youth provided the city with thoughts and opinions that don't always surface in other types of community sessions.

"It's a lot of information," said Johnson.

Councilman James Rackley said he was impressed with the results of the youth forum.

"I've read many of these over the years and I think we got a pretty strong grade for our city," Rackley said.

He said he didn't feel the city was getting enough information to high schoolers about

some of the city programs like the Tree City USA program.

When asked about the community's strengths, the youth felt the city is a safe place to live and that they receive strong support from the the community, enjoy clean parks and good schools and have plenty of shopping centers and restaurants.

The youth felt the city needs more employment opportunities, more sidewalks, a community center, more public transportation within the city, more parking areas, a skating rink and bowling alley. They also expressed concerns about drug use and drinking.

The forum revealed that students believe solutions could be found in more police patrols, more businesses, more transportation and programs to discuss dangers of drugs and alcohol.

Solutions to problems included doing more volunteer work, more community involvement, raising awareness of problems, getting youth involved with planning events and attending council meetings.

Students presented questions to Johnson at the forum. Some involved the drug issue, the number of houses, more jobs, a bowling alley and more businesses and entertainment centers in the city.

Councilwoman Laurie Carter suggested that forum results be shared with the Bonney Lake Chamber of Commerce, as well as the city's Park Board and police chief.

"It's obvious if they are thinking about these things, and their parents, grandparents and neighbors are thinking about it also," Carter said.

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