



CITY OF
FORESTPARK

City Council Agenda Item

Title of Agenda Item: Presentation from Walking In Authority Teen Council, Councilwoman Akins-Wells, Ward 4

Submitted By: Ricky L. Clark, Jr., City Manager

Date Submitted: October 17, 2024

Work Session Date: October 21, 2024

Council Meeting Date: October 21, 2024

Background/History:

Walking In Authority Teen Council originally was called the Forest Park Teen Council. The Forest Park Teen Council was officially formed in 2008 by Mayor Pro-Tem Sparkle K. Adams with a group of students from Forest Park, began to thrive in 2009. In January 2010 students ages 13-19, from Forest Park Middle, Babb Middle, Forest Park High, and Forest Park Street School were referred to Mayor Pro-Tem Adams to run for office. The offices included Teen Mayor, Councilperson, City Manager, and City Attorney. An election was held in February 2010, student body elected 47 students to serve in these capacities. An official swearing-in was held and the teen council began holding meetings on the 2nd Tuesday of each month. That increased to the 2nd and 4th Tuesday's of each month when the teens began to engage in multiple activities. A new election was held on Feb. 21, 2012 with 46 students elected in various positions.

In 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012, we participated in the annual Keep Forest Park Beautiful Clean Up. In 2010 we assisted in planting the city's first community garden. In 2011, we were recognized at the Black History Month Celebration called "Rising on The Southside"; conducted a mock trial focusing on bullying with Judge Allison Pitts; attended and spoke at the Forest Park City Council meetings; participated in Clayton County Board of Health's Teen Summit; participated and graduated from the Forest Park Police Department's cadet program; attended the Neighborhood Watch meetings; held a fashion show with clothing made from recycled materials as an awareness campaign; assisted with 5K Fun Run; was interviewed on cable channel 24's television show "The Hot Seat"; helped with the 2011 Halloween Festival; assisted the Forest Park Kiwanis Club with their semi-annual pancake breakfast; aided and interacted with the Atlanta Chapter Tuskegee Airmen while attending events with the public; and launched the broadcast of their radio show "Make It Happen" on WJPMG, FM 106.3 Feb 2012. The Teen Council held a voter's registration drive in May 2012 at Forest Park High School with a successful registration of approximately 40 people. They also conducted a voter's forum involving candidates for the July 2012 primary election with participation of approximately 150 people. Collaborating with Keep Forest Park Beautiful and Retrofit-A-Million in July and August 2012, they assisted with the distribution of 1000 energy efficient light bulbs and water kits to senior and disabled residents of Forest Park.

Out of the 46 original members elected in February 2012, we have approximately 25-30 actively participating in the program. Most of the 25-30 were recruited or referred when some of the original members moved, graduated, or just found different interest. We actively receive support from the parents, principals, counselors, teachers, and administrators at Forest Park High, Forest Park and Babb Middle Schools to encourage participation in the program. An added incentive comes from the acknowledgement from the Forest Park Mayor, City Council, city staff, and press releases. There have been several positive articles written in the Clayton News Daily and the Clayton Neighbor Newspaper. The students are also able to use this experience to meet the requirements of some college scholarship application looking for community volunteer project. Some students complete summer internships working in the various city departments and go on to lucrative careers.

SUMMARY:

Walking in Authority Teen Council, name changed from Forest Park Teen Council in 2013, is a 501(c)3 nonprofit organization founded to educate and bring awareness to the young children and adults in our community through education, motivation, mentorship, empowerment and commitment. Our life skills training and education program develops employability skills, financial literacy, citizenship and related competencies while our leadership training and education program cultivates social and emotional learning skills such as self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision-making and self-management while serving as a platform for promoting civic responsibility and encouraging community advocacy.

Mission:

Walking In Authority Teen Council empowers teens (13-19) and their parents in Metro Atlanta to advocate for themselves, gain exposure to civic duty, and develop leadership skills in preparation to address community issues and to become agents of change.

Vision:

To create an international network of future leaders united to become change agents in response to critical issues.

Goal:

To empower youth leaders by catalyzing them to become community assets and lead the charge to address the most pressing health and social issues impacting their peers and find valuable resources for crafting successful solutions to community problems.

Our organization aims to provide youth with evidence based or evidence informed life skills training and education programming supported by comprehensive leadership training and education designed to strengthen our teen's social and emotional competencies while preparing them for a life of community advocacy.

Our strategies include our youth meeting twice per month in a community setting to participate in highly structured training and education sessions; using facilitators adept at keeping youth engaged to lead them through a process of training and education using real world scenarios and relevant case studies; and networking through field trips to

give hands on exposure to professional environments and civic responsibilities. Meals are prepared and served at each meeting to the youth and families, since the meetings are generally held after school and work.

In addition to the above strategies, we form collaborations and partnerships that help us network and reach out further than our base and provide skills in the following areas: home, food, self-determination and management, financial literacy, personal appearance, community, employment, technology, citizenship, health and wellness, transportation, and social media. We invite elected officials and community business leaders along with the faith based community to speak to the teens. By showing bi-partisan support at the local and national levels we're teaching tolerance and diversity of thought. We hold sessions' regarding the voting process to help the teens understand what happens at the polls directly affects the community. We perform community engagement projects and service learning excursions. Through partnerships and collaborations with major corporations, and some private organizations we can create a pathway to college and leadership opportunities.

We have helped students through our core program bring up their grade point average, meet professionals, minimize destructive behavior, and focus on improving test taking techniques, study skills, and career development. Through a series of facilitated discussions, youth have explored educational modules containing information about nutrition, diet, and health and wellness.

We have also helped them enhance workforce development skills and through the service learning excursions and community service projects the teens have a great appreciation for civic responsibility. Our participation in the Ambassador's Program with the State of Georgia, accomplished registering teens to vote and educating them on the voting process.

We continue to carry a legacy that emphasizes the engagement of youth toward all matters involving our communities. Rain or shine, we Walk In Authority! We continue taking great steps toward further expansion.

Action Requested from Council:

Cost: \$

Budgeted for: _____ **Yes** _____ **No**

Financial Impact:
