

# **City of Chandler Mayor's Youth Commission**

## **Teen Town Hall Report 2009**



# Chandler City Council

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Boyd W. Dunn

## **Vice Mayor**

Bob Caccamo

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# Mayor's Youth Commission 2008-09

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Andy Tran

Pauline Tran

Shengen "Katherine" Yeh

## **Honorary Members**

Jacob Foos

Kyle Narducci

Jake Sullivan

The Mayor's Youth Commission sponsored its first Teen Town Hall on Thursday, April 2, 2009 at the Tumbleweed Recreation Center. The purpose of the Teen Town Hall is to bring together teens from the community to discuss issues of concern to Chandler's teens and offer recommendations for practical solutions. To ensure input from all sectors of our community, all private and public high schools within the City of Chandler were invited to participate.

The Teen Town Hall began with a welcoming speech by Mayor Boyd W. Dunn, followed by a keynote address by Jessica Smith, coordinator from the Students Against Drunk Driving (S.A.D.D.) organization. An energizing team building activity led by Abel Mendoza, Recreation Coordinator I for the City of Chandler, concluded the opening session. Participants were then divided into three committee sessions covering different topics. Groups discussed: **Teen Drinking and Driving, High School Drop Out,** and **Mall Loitering.**

Participants met in their groups and began discussion of their assigned topics by defining the problem and possible contributing factors. The groups were then asked to focus on solutions to the issue and develop practical recommendations that could be easily implemented in the City of Chandler.

In the closing session a teen spokesperson from each of the discussion groups presented their committee's recommendations to all of the Town Hall participants in the closing session. Each teen presented a topic, two to three recommendations, how these recommendations were to be implemented and which group should implement the suggestions. These presentations provided attendees the opportunity to gain understanding and insight from one another.

The Teen Town Hall report is available to various agencies, organizations, clubs and schools for review and to be used as a resource in our community. The Teen Town Hall provides both teens and adults the opportunity to communicate openly with one another about important issues that affect them. It is hoped that the Teen Town Hall will continue to grow in the coming years.

# Teen Town Hall

Hosted by the City of Chandler Mayor's Youth Commission



## Schedule

8:00 a.m. – 8:30 a.m.	<b>Arrival and Registration</b> - Cotton Room South
8:30 a.m. – 9:15 a.m.	<b>Opening Session</b> - Cotton Room North <b>Special Guest Speakers:</b> Mayor Boyd Dunn Jessica Smith – S.A.D.D. Teambuilding activity
9:25 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.	<b>Committee Sessions</b> Teen Drinking and Driving – Meeting Room Teen Loitering at Chandler Fashion Center – Classroom High School Dropout – Art Room
11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.	<b>Lunch (provided)</b> - Cotton Room South
12:30 p.m. – 1:15 p.m.	<b>Committee Sessions Resume</b>
1:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.	<b>Presentations</b> - Cotton Room North
2:00 p.m. – 2:30 p.m.	<b>Closing Session</b>

Within the committee sessions, participants will be divided into groups and given an issue that affects local teens today. Teen Town Hall aims for these groups to propose an effective plan of solution for the given issue. The recommendations will then be compiled into a report given to Mayor and Council for their consideration. Our goal is to immerse high school students in the local government action process and to expose them to issues affecting teens today and how they can create solutions for them.

# Teen Drinking and Driving

## **Discussion Summary:**

Discussion focused on issues surrounding underage consumption of alcohol, impaired driving and the resources available to assist in educating youth on the consequences of underage drinking and impaired driving. Top issues identified that led to underage drinking were a weak cycle of consequences set by parents and schools, older friends and siblings providing alcohol, parents wanting to be the “cool parents”, accessibility, media make it glamorous and peer pressure. Discussion then moved on to what makes young people not drink. Key reasons were possible suspension of license, getting caught by parents, early education and awareness about the effects of alcohol, parent influence, other alternatives and adult concern. The group recommended ways to educate students about the dangers of drinking and driving impaired. Recommendations included early education starting in junior high school, informing parents about consequences of underage drinking, and initiating partnerships with local businesses and other mass media outlets to inform the public about the dangers associated with underage drinking and impaired driving.

## **Recommendations:**

### **1. Educate junior high school students about drinking and driving impaired.**

The goal is to increase underage drinking awareness with junior high school students before they start drinking. To implement this recommendation, members of other youth organizations/clubs such as Mayor’s Youth Commission, ICAN, and SADD would create peer-to-peer connections to help negate the effects of peer pressure. Connections would be done through an optional annual assembly in schools with guest speakers who inform students of the dangers of underage drinking and impaired driving as well as the consequences.

### **2. Inform parents/households of the consequences of underage drinking, impaired driving and the laws regarding providing alcohol to minors.**

Often students are provided alcohol by their parent/guardian or older family member. Many parents provide alcohol to their child to keep an eye on them so they won’t drink somewhere else or they want to be the “cool parent.” To reduce alcohol accessibility this program would educate parents/households through the mail, phone, and Internet with in-depth information. The program should be a partnership between organizations such as Mayor’s Youth Commission, ICAN, and the Chandler Chamber of Commerce, with funding provided by Mayor’s Youth Commission.

### **3. Increase public awareness regarding drinking and driving.**

Many students do not realize the impact of drinking and driving and the statistics affecting their peers and the Chandler community. To bring awareness, the City of Chandler and the Chandler Chamber of Commerce should partner with local businesses, radio stations and other mass media outlets to inform the public about underage drinking and impaired driving. This can be done with existing campaigns and materials available through organizations such as SADD, ICAN and MADD.

## **Addressing teen drinking and driving**

### **Facilitators:**

Jessica Smith, Students Against Drunk Driving (S.A.D.D.)

Jenny Tang, Mayor's Youth Commission Member

### **Teen Participants**

Ariel Cauanaugh, Valley Christian High School

Patrick Hayes, Valley Christian High School

Daniel Johnson, Valley Christian High School

Seo-Young Jun, Hamilton High School

Matthew Larsen, Valley Christian High School

Jake McDonald, Valley Christian High School

Lucy Shi, Hamilton High School

Kelsi Sullivan, Hamilton High School

Victoria Taylor, Hamilton High School

Shih-Chi Yen, Hamilton High School

# High School Dropout

## **Discussion Summary:**

Discussion group began by identifying contributing factors that lead to dropping out of high school. The identified factors were academic pressure, lack of family support, low expectations from teachers and family, students feeling disconnected, and students unable to handle real life stresses. Available resources were discussed and identified as possible recommendations to address high school dropouts. The recommendations included updating school curriculum, reformatting teacher training and intervention.

## **Recommendations:**

### **1. Life 101 – update health curriculum**

Currently, health education courses touch lightly upon important topics, however, delving into specifics that apply to students' everyday lives would increase course effectiveness. Courses should include the following topics: money management, sex education, drug education, college prep and problem-solving skills. The key to executing this program is to keep the students engaged by teaching them how to handle concerns in their lives. To implement a change of curriculum, a committee of students, parents, teachers, and administrators will be formed to approach the school district to make an official request. The purpose of the curriculum change is to educate students about "REAL LIFE" concerns such as paying taxes, cost of everyday living, earning potential and the challenges that they would face without a high school education. To implement this recommendation, Chandler Unified School District would need to consider reorganizing current course structure and possibly reallocate funds.

### **2. Student led in-service workshops for teachers**

Often students do not succeed in school because they do not relate to the teachers' styles of teaching. Students and teachers will partner up and develop a training curriculum to be delivered during teacher in-service training days. This training will give teachers a better understanding of what it is like to be in the students' shoes. This program would improve the teacher/student relationship, challenging teachers to update their teaching styles and involve students in their own educational success.

### **3. Drop out intervention**

Many teens drop out of high school because they feel they are not supported and are misunderstood. A co-op of agencies would come together and intervene when a student says "I want to drop out" or a student is identified as a potential dropout due to low grades, poor attendance and behavior. The student will be assigned to a likable mentor who will talk to them about the consequences of dropping out. The school district would partner with agencies such as the Boys and Girls Club, Big Brothers Big Sisters, ICAN, local churches and community volunteers.

## **Addressing High School Dropout**

### **Facilitators:**

Sara C de Baca, City of Chandler Recreation Superintendent

Katherine Yeh, Mayor's Youth Commission Member

### **Youth Participants**

Nancy Arndt, Valley Christian High School

Taylor Donaldson, Hamilton High School

Lindsey Forry, Hamilton High School

Sam Gilbreth, Valley Christian High School

Garret Kidd, Valley Christian High School

Beverly Makhubele, Hamilton High School

Teresa Servin, Hamilton High School

Michael Watkins, Valley Christian High School

### **Adult Participants**

Matt Dawson, City of Chandler Recreation Coordinator I

# Mall Loitering

## **Discussion Summary:**

Discussion group began by reading an anonymous letter from a concerned citizen regarding teens loitering at Chandler Fashion Center. The letter voiced an opinion that groups of teenagers are making the mall customers shy away from visiting because they feel uncomfortable, unsafe, teens trashing the mall, and vandalism issues. The group then identified why teens are drawn to the Chandler Fashion Center. Teens visit the mall because they feel there is nowhere else to go in Chandler, it is a place to “hang out”, and parents feel safe about their children going there. The group then focused on solutions to reduce teens loitering at the mall and identified the need for other teen hangouts, a designated area for “art”, teen organized events and activities, and enforcement of the mall rules.

## **Recommendations:**

### **1. Other teen hangout locations**

Teens enjoy doing different things and socializing with their peers. Parents need to feel their child is safe for them to allow their teens to go somewhere. Westcor should recruit a business to come to the mall that would draw teens to congregate in its area such as an arcade, rock wall, or café with live music. If the mall is not a good location then the City of Chandler should work with a business/group to encourage a similar venue in a strip mall or in downtown Chandler. A location outside of the mall would alleviate teens hanging out at the mall and reduce vandalism.

### **2. Teen organized event(s) and activities**

Chandler does not host many teen focused events or activities compared to what Tempe Marketplace does. Teen groups from schools and the Chandler Mayor’s Youth Commission should get together to plan activities for their peers. Teens would rather go some place where teens are hosting the event/activity. Events and activities could be hosted at community centers and encompass concerts, clubs and hobby groups. The City of Chandler, schools and local organizations should fund these programs.

### **3. Designated “art” area**

Since trash and vandalism are a concern at Chandler Fashion Center the Westcor management should provide a designated art area inside of the mall. The area would provide a space for individuals to draw creative art expressions on it that are not offensive or gang related. The art area could be a chalkboard or surface that only a certain type of writing instrument could be used on (Crayola Color Wonder Markers and paper). Security officers could monitor the art expressions for inappropriateness or the art area could be placed next to the guest services area where members of that staff could monitor it. Westcor management should also provide more trash cans and cite people who litter. They can also post signs encouraging people to throw their trash away in the appropriate place.

#### **4. Enforcement of mall rules**

To deter mall loitering and vandalism, mall security could establish a stronger presence by clarifying mall rules and policies through education. Instead of waiting for teens to violate a rule, the security guards should approach groups in a friendly manner and inform them of the rules and the consequences of breaking them. Teens would rather be spoken to calmly and this would allow security guards to recognize and build respectful relationships with the teens. If a teen is violating curfew, parents should be called first, and then the police department. The mall rules should be standardized and equally enforced for everyone. Additional funding for security staff should come from each store in the mall.

#### **Addressing Mall Loitering**

##### **Facilitators:**

Abel Mendoza, City of Chandler Recreation Coordinator I  
Pauline Tran, Mayor's Youth Commission Member

##### **Youth Participants**

Bach-Ngan Chau, Hamilton High School  
Lillian Chu, Hamilton High School  
Andy Graham, Valley Christian High School  
Hannah Grant, Hamilton High School  
Lauren Hannenburg, Valley Christian High School  
Shehzaar Kak, Hamilton High School  
Daniel Kang, Hamilton High School  
Stephen Sasso, Valley Christian High School  
Aaron Sieczkowski, Hamilton High School

##### **Adult Participants**

Sarah McDonald, Arizona Republic

**The Mayor's Youth Commission would like to extend a special thanks to Floridino's for providing lunch, Fry's Marketplace for their donation used to purchase beverages and the City of Chandler for providing the use of Tumbleweed Recreation Center for the day's activities. These businesses and organizations allowed the Teen Town Hall event to be a success.**