

Youth Empowerment Summit

Friday, January, 30, 2009

War Memorial

350 youth and 150 volunteers, facilitators, and exhibitors assembled at the Youth Empowerment Summit at the War Memorial building in Balboa Park. San Diego Unified School District, Probation, and San Diego Police Department facilitated the Summit. There were also exhibitors such as the Workforce Partnership in attendance. The youth were given the opportunity to voice their concerns and share how collaborations and partnerships could be of assistance to them.

They identified: Counselors, teachers, mentors, parents, neighbors, police, and community members as those who can help and participate in creating positive partnerships. Youth also identified other goals that they can achieve in order to participate actively in their safe community. Specifically, 150 students came up with "Commit to self-change", "Stay active within your own family", "Become a leader", "Lead by example". Also, 200 youth want to have the opportunity to become "Volunteers, mentors, and advocates for change".

The Commission has developed two workplan initiatives as a result:

1. *Support partnerships between San Diego Unified School District, community sports organizations, Star Pal and other Community Based organizations to create youth recreation activities.*
2. *Continue to Celebrate youth by participating with organizations sponsoring creative events that empower and invite youth input into strategies that promote positive activities-like a week of community education about services to help youth succeed in life.*

There were specific topics that were agreed upon by a majority of the 350 youth in attendance that would facilitate such creative events as follows: "Gang Violence, Grief and Loss over loved ones, Graduating High School, Employment, Racial Conflict, Healthy Family, Mentorship, and Community Building."

Because students identified a select group of adults who they admire and to whom they listen, a week-long community education group should include: Counselors, Teachers, Law Enforcement, Coaches, Employers, and other positive Community Members with shared experience. The Gang Commission will support mentoring initiatives and youth service programs, such as work readiness, anger management, conflict resolution, and positive communication with adults.