

Oak Ridge Youth Advisory Board State of the Youth Address 2011

Good evening, Mr. Mayor, members of City Council, distinguished guests, and fellow citizens of Oak Ridge. My name is Calvin Cummings and I am the Chairman of the Oak Ridge Youth Advisory Board. It is my pleasure to come before you tonight to deliver the State of the Youth Address.

The Youth Advisory Board was created in 1991 with the purpose of providing ongoing and direct input on government policies and practices that may affect teenagers. We act as the liaison between our local government and the youth of Oak Ridge. Additionally, the YAB provides the community with youth oriented events and services that encourage the young people of Oak Ridge to become active in our community. The State of the Youth Address allows us to review the events of the past term and address the concerns and opinions of the youth of Oak Ridge.

At the start of Youth Advisory Board's 2010-11 term of office, we set down a list of goals that included volunteer services for the community, recreational and educational activities for students, and improved communication with the high school and with City Council. Some of these events were new, some were old, but with each event the YAB was able to find potential for improvement or expansion.

This year, some of our most successful recreational events were Breakfast with Santa, Graduation Celebration, which hosted 81% of the ORHS Class of 2011, and the Battle of the Bands. The Battle of the Bands is my favorite event that we hold and believe it is so popular because it gives teenagers the ability to showcase their talents for the whole city of Oak Ridge. This year we hosted a record 13 bands on stage!

Our educational services included CPR and First Aid certification programs, and the Kid of the Month program at Girls Inc. This program rewards kids for participating in tutoring and for displaying admirable qualities such as leadership and compassion. These and the other services the Youth Advisory Board offers aim to provide students with the knowledge and life skills necessary to be engaged members of society.

The YAB also encourages philanthropy by setting an example. Each year the Board volunteers at the city Halloween Party, collects sports equipment for the Global Gear Drive, continues the recycling program at the Civic Center, and sponsors Angel Tree children. We have donated to Angel Tree for the past five years and been involved in the Global Gear Drive for four years. The Halloween Party has continued to be successful as we shifted our focus towards a new demographic. Our "Glow Room" aims to entertain the older children and teens who come to the event with their families or younger siblings. The board also started a new tradition this year in the Turkey Bowl Disc Golf Tournament, which will be held in November each year.

We are very proud of the success of our programs and services and we hope to increase their impact on our community through improved advertisement and public communication. However, we could not escape the fact that there are no easy ways to make our events successful. Zack Plaster, who couldn't be here tonight, who served for his first year as a senior reminded us at most of our meetings that in order for people to be excited for our events, we have to also be excited about our events. There is no room for apathy when it comes to providing young people with safe and healthy ways to enjoy their time in Oak Ridge. We were deeply appreciative for these reminders because we not only learned how to encourage our friends to come to our events, but also how valuable

and important it is to encourage people to attend. We were, whether we realized it or not, showing kids what it looks like to serve others well. I've served on the board since I was in 8th grade, and I believe this year's board showed the most dedication to leadership than any I've been on, especially from the under-classmen and middle school students. This makes me quite excited for the future of the Youth Advisory Board.

Our board also traveled to Nashville in February to learn about state government and to spend time with Senator Randy McNally and Representative John Ragan, who led us in a Mock Senate Session on the floor. It was a great learning experience, which culminated in our group being the first group to have an official photo taken with newly elected Governor Bill Haslam.

Something we provide at the Battle of the Bands every year is a Youth Survey. Surveying allows us to gain insight into the youth's perception of Oak Ridge and how they feel we can improve as a board. The YAB Survey for 2011 included questions regarding suggestions for the waterfront, tough issues that teenagers face, and future programming ideas that the YAB is considering. The survey results, included at the end of this report, show the comments and ideas from Oak Ridge students on plans for the future of the City. The survey revealed that students are interested in seeing new retail opportunities, more sports type events, development at the Marina, and any other types of plans that offer teens a place to go.

I would now like to thank the City Council on behalf of the Youth Advisory Board for their continued support. Your support of the YAB gives the youth of Oak Ridge the ability to be productive and safe while still having fun. Also, I can personally

attest that being a member of this board has impacted my life immensely and given me a heart to lead and serve whatever communities I will be living in in the future.

The new term of YAB begins August 1, 2011, and any council member or citizen who wishes to get involved with the Board is welcome to attend our meetings. Regularly scheduled meetings will be posted in the Oak Ridger as those meeting dates and times are set by the newly elected Youth Advisory Board. I would be more than happy to answer any questions that you may have at this time about this report. We would also love to hear your ideas on the future direction of the City of Oak Ridge Youth Advisory Board.

Thank you!

Calvin Cummings

Chairman of the Oak Ridge Youth Advisory Board