



home > city hall > press releases

New Members Join Youth Advisory Committee

The City of Perris has sworn in a new group of students to its Youth Advisory Committee, welcoming the teen-agers whose volunteer work at community events has drawn praise from elected officials and administrators.

Members of the Youth Advisory Committee serve as liaisons between the City policy makers and the teen-age set about issues affecting adolescents and young adults.

Since its inception in 2013, YAC members have become mainstays at City parades, festivals, Live Well Perris events and community activities like Breakfast with Santa and the Harvest Festival.

To serve on the committee, members must be between 13 and 18, attend 8th through 12th grades and live in Perris or its unincorporated areas.

The City Council unanimously approved the appointments of Jasmin Garcia, Jenna Owens, Bernice Triqueros, Jacqueline Reliford, Dianne Ochoa and Aasiyah DeAndrade as new YAC members.

Returning members include Gabby Bulacan, India Rockett, Brittany Burch and Alexa Olivas. Except for DeAndrade, all were sworn in during the June 9 City Council meeting. DeAndrade took the oath of office during a special ceremony June 16 at the Perris Teen Center.



New members of the Perris Youth Advisory Committee appeared June 9 at the City Council to be sworn into office. They are Jasmin Garcia, Dianne Ochoa, Bernice Triqueros, Jaqueline Reliford and Jenna Owens.

YAC members departing for college include Shaera Ahmed, UC Berkeley; David Enriquez, UC Berkeley; Vanessa Garcia, UC Santa Barbara; Oskar Guzman, UC Riverside; Victoria Mac, UC San Diego; Gloria Olivas, UC Riverside; Jose Ortega, UC Irvine; Josue Santana, California Baptist University and Amanda Torres, UC Riverside.

Perris Mayor Daryl Busch and City Councilmembers lauded the efforts of the initial group of YAC members, saying they set a high bar and great example for the new committee members to meet and exceed.

"You all did a wonderful job and set the foundation for the coming years," Busch said. "We're going to miss you but we know you will do well in the future."

Mayor Pro-Tem Tonya Burke said she looked forward to the college-bound YAC alums to return to the City one day and leave their mark.

"Maybe you will be sworn in members of the City Council," she said.

City Councilman David Starr Rabb urged the outgoing YAC teens to "remember where you came from" and continue to be a "beacon of light and hope" to those they encounter in college and beyond. He expressed confidence the incoming members would continue to excel "in the full plate of projects coming up" in which they will participate.

City Councilwoman Rita Rogers thanked the YAC members present and past for their "tremendous service to the City of Perris" adding that they have "set the benchmark that others will follow." She left this message to the outgoing committee members: "enjoy your journey and live life in truthful and meaningful way."

City Manager Richard Belmudez said he was impressed by the energy and enthusiasm of the inaugural members of the committee, adding that he hopes they would continue "lives of service in the future." To the new members, Belmudez said he was looking forward to seeing them leave their mark on Perris as well and thanked their parents for supporting the Youth Advisory Committee.



Members of the Youth Advisory Committee, returning as well as new members, are pictured following the June 9 swearing in of new participants. They are Brittany Burch, Alexa Olivas, India Rockett, Bernice Triqueros, Dianne Ochoa, Jenna Owens, Gabriella Bulacan and Jacqueline Reliford.

Here are brief biographies of the new YAC members:

Jacqueline Reliford, 15, Rancho Verde High School

Jacqueline performs with the marching band and concert band, is a member of the Rancho Verde Scholars and the EAOP. She joined the YAC to help identify and "solve common youth problems in our city" and credits her parents with instilling in her "that it's important to help others." She identified the major problem today is peer pressure to try drugs and alcohol and bullying.

In recommending Jacqueline for the commission, teacher Michelle Reams wrote that she has "demonstrated a great work ethic and attitude," "tries her best on all assignments and strives for perfection."

"She demonstrates leadership skills during the class by leading group discussions, motivating others to participate, and by showing respect to the adults in the classroom," Reams wrote.

Bernice Triqueros, 16, Rancho Verde High School

Bernice participates in the National Honor Society, Class Council co-president, tennis team manager, Feminist Alliance Council, Bible, Club and Photo Club. She joined the YAC because "I would like to promote a safe environment and also provide opportunities for everyone to be involved. Being admitted would let me know that my voice is being heard."

Bernice believes the major problem confronting teens is peer pressure in school and stress from homework which leads to drug use.

Jenna Owens, 16, Rancho Verde High School

Jenna sports a 4.0 grade-point average in school, where she is member of the National Honor Society, Art Club, Associated Student Body, Rancho Verde Scholars, school marching and concert band. She volunteers at Relay for Life and helps feed the homeless at area soup kitchens.

She said her participation in extra-curricular activities "has allowed me to get a taste of what it is like to be in an environment where all you have is teamwork to rely on to succeed in a project."

"One has to be able to communicate with each other, stay calm under pressure when something may have gone wrong and being able to have fun while working hard," Jenna wrote in her YAC application. She identified peer pressure to do drugs, steal, drink alcohol and have sex as major issues confronting teen-agers today. She would like to create a teen-mentoring program where high-schoolers could assist younger children.

In recommending her for the Youth Advisory Committee, Adam Vincent, AP chemistry teacher said that Jenna is always ready to help peers master complexities of advanced chemistry. She maintains a "positive attitude (that) is contagious and she is very approachable, as she always has a smile on her face," he wrote.



Perris City Clerk Nancy Salazar (right) administers the oath of office June 16 to the newest member of the Youth Advisory Committee—Aasiyah DeAndrade.

Dianne Ochoa, 14, Tomas Rivera Middle School

Dianne is a member of the volleyball team, cheerleader, AVID (Advance Via Individual Achievement), peer mentor and assists at community events. She would like to see Perris teens take part in community clean-ups, volunteer at animal shelters, visit elderly people in retirement homes and the sick in hospitals. She wrote in her application to the YAC that the major challenges facing teens are access to drugs and bullying.

Teacher G. McWhorter, in recommending Dianne, wrote: "She is not afraid of a challenge and is a self-motivated individual. She is capable of making tough decisions and sticking by them."

Jasmin Garcia, 13, Lakeside Middle School

Jasmin is a member of Girl Scouts, Running Club, Drama Club and AVID. She said she is "ready to become a leader I know that the Perris Youth Advisory Committee will help me get there." She would like to see Perris teens take part in projects like planting community gardens. She listed as her greatest concerns facing teenagers as depression and self-harm.

Lakeside instructor Jonathan Dang, in recommending Jasmin for the YAC, called her "someone who is inspiring for those who are around her on a daily basis." He said further that Jasmin "has a passion to learn and lead others to fulfill their expectations and beyond."

Aasiyah DeAndrade, 16, Rancho Verde High School

Aasiyah maintained a 3.66-grade point average while taking a challenging course-load that includes AP (Advanced Placement) biology, AP world history, pre-calculus Honors and College Prep World Literature classes. Instructor Stacy Dedeaux, in writing a letter of recommendation on Aasiyah's behalf, called her a student "I can always count on to actively engage in class discussions and offer insightful discourse about broad themes relating to the text at hand."

Aasiyah lists as her main concern facing teens the pressures to experiment with drugs and alcohol. She said she would like to see the City plan and host more events geared to teen-agers. She said she applied for a position on the Youth Advisory Committee to help build her leadership skills, as "being a leader sets the foundation for one to have a prosperous and successful future."

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