



## Youth Action Network Newsletter

November 2007

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Hey Amy!

We've got some very interesting stuff in this newsletter that everyone can benefit from reading! October was an exciting month and November should be even more thrilling! So read on and find out what's been happening...

YAN Squad

### **Austin Community Conversations**

By Maya DiTraglia

For three consecutive Thursdays, (October 18<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, and November 1<sup>st</sup>), E3 Alliance in partnership with AISD and Austin Voices, held Community Conversations at Reagan High School to brainstorm ways to bridge the achievement gap in Austin Schools. To encourage a large turn-out, the meetings were free to attend and provided food, Spanish translators, and childcare. The strategy seemed to work as an average of 70 people participated in each meeting. People were then separated into small groups with two moderators each, so that everyone was guaranteed a chance to share their ideas. Among those who showed up were superintendent of AISD, Dr. Pat Forgione, who observed the 2<sup>nd</sup> community conversation, and candidate for Congress, Larry Joe Doherty, who spoke with participants at a meeting.

Overall, the conversations were a great success as they attracted a diverse group of people including businessmen and women, parents, teachers, and school officials who would normally not have the opportunity to discuss their concerns and hopes with each other. Joanna Clasberry, a member of Austin Voices as well as a moderator for the conversations thought that, "[the conversations] got everyone together to speak about what should be fixed and [they] were organized in presenting

people's goals. It was a good attempt to help schools." Additionally, delegates from each group will take the input they gathered and present it to several Central Texas school district officials on November 15<sup>th</sup>. Hopefully the different districts will not only acknowledge but implement the information given to them so that schools across Texas can work to close the achievement gap.

### **Know Your Rights!**

By Tex Russell and Brooke Fowler

The police have the right to stop you in public and, if necessary, search you. But, you have rights! During training police are trained to use high levels of force only when completely necessary. In most situations the use of tasers, guns, batons is really not needed. Sometimes this is over looked. In Decatur, TN on Wednesday, September 20th, 2006, an unnecessary force was used on a **13-year old girl**. To understand the full story you must first have the facts. After hitting the Assistant Principal, kicking a police officer, and throwing quite a wild tantrum, this thirteen-year-old girl was tasered to be arrested. Even though she may have been out of hand, and creating a scene, it was probably not necessary to taser this young girl. Tasers are shown to cause cardiac problems especially in youth. Lets think about this for a moment; large and usually drunk crowds at concerts causing fights, injuries, and sometimes even deaths are not tasered, but this officer concluded it necessary to taser this juvenile.

If you don't want this to happen to you, **Listen Up!**

1). If the officer tells you that s/he thinks you have committed a crime, you are obliged to give your name and address. You don't have to say anything else. You have to right to get the officers name and police station which is suggested just incase the officer does something that was not allowed.

If the police want to search you:

1). You can only be legally searched if the police suspect you are carrying illegal drugs, stolen goods, weapons, other items used for crime. If they suspect you, they also have the right to search the vehicle in which you are traveling in.

2). If you are under 17, you have the right to have a responsible or appropriate adult with you, unless it is an emergency.

You should also not forget that if you feel like you have been mistreated by the police, or that they have violated your rights, you do have the right to complain and you do not need the permission of your parent or guardian. You are entitled to go to your local police station, with or without a parent, and issue a formal complaint.

### **Know Your Rights!**

#### **Austin Voices Voter Registration Drive**

By Joanna Clasberry

Could it be? It is, indeed, time to make sure you are registered to vote! For Give Kids Good Schools Week, the Public Education Network funded Austin Voices to help students understand the purpose of voting, and to encourage students to get out

to the polls and get their voices heard. Because of the planning of Anne Webb, A.V. held a Voters Registration Drive at Reagan, Johnston, and Garza high schools during lunch periods to help students register. This is the first year it has been held and proved to be successful. 27 young people have now been registered to vote! Many others, not yet old enough, were informed about the process and the importance and were encouraged to sign up for this newsletter, so they'll be reminded to register once they are of age. On March 2, a mock election will be held, and another drive is hoped to be held before the March elections. "I would do it again. Every year we should do it... voting is very important. It's not slanted. It's simple: YOU decide who YOU want to vote for. Get your voice heard!" says Ariel Kay, who worked alongside Anne Webb at each school visited. Tim Eubanks, a coordinator/volunteer helping at Reagan's drive, adds "It's important because you get greater political power inside society. [A place] with lower voting rates, by consequence get pushed around more."

So if you missed out on these drives, not only did you miss out on free YAN t-shirts and candy, but you missed out on making your voice heard. Don't worry, it's not too late!! Go register, and get to the polls. Get your voice heard! You decide your power!

### **César Chávez Remembered**

By Maya Gaster

On October 9<sup>th</sup>, 2007, a bronze statue of civil rights leader César Chávez was unveiled on the West Mall of The University of Texas at Austin campus. I was so lucky to be present during this historic event! There were day-long celebrations honoring Chávez, a great leader and advocate for social justice. César Estrada Chávez (1927-1993) was a Mexican-American civil rights activist and farm-worker who was instrumental in the creation of the United Farm Workers union. Chávez is seen as a hero for his struggles to improve working conditions and wages for immigrant farm workers and his life-long dedication to the causes he believed in.

Prior to the erection of this statue of Chávez, there was only one statue of a non-white male in all of the University of Texas's campus, which was of Martin Luther King Jr. The unveiling of the statue was a joyful and exciting event; several students vital in the creation of the project to commission the statue and organize the celebration on October 9<sup>th</sup> spoke at the unveiling as well as the U.S. Under Secretary for Education Sara Martinez, retired Texas Senator Gonzalo Barrientos, and Texas House Representative Dawna Dukes.

The most interesting remarks, in my opinion, were from UT alumna Frances Valdez. She founded the UT student group "We're Texas Too" in 2003 and instigated the entire Chávez statue project while a leader in that group. Listening to her speak about how she organized UT students and worked so hard to find the funding and support from University student affairs officials was inspiring and reflected so well the values that César Estrada Chávez is remembered for.

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