



Bellevue Launches Youth Court

by Xuan Yang
Bellevue High School

Recently the City of Bellevue held its first Youth Court session launching only the second of this type of Youth Court program in King County.

Bellevue Youth Court is a Diversion Program option in partnership with the King County Juvenile Court. The Court will sentence second-time offenders, making it one of the two such courts in the state.

Bellevue's Youth Court is modeled after Whatcom County's Youth Court program. During its first year, the Youth Court will sentence misdemeanor and gross-misdemeanor cases. Neither truancy nor traffic cases will be heard.

Bellevue Youth Court is a three-year pilot project in collaboration with the King County Superior Court.

The program is funded by Bellevue Youth Link, which will contribute up to \$50,000 over the three years. Bellevue Youth Link initiated the program in 2003 and also manages the Bellevue Youth Court volunteer program. Other partners include: Youth Eastside Services, King County Juvenile Court, King County Prosecutor's Office, King County Diversion Program, Bellevue School District, and Washington State Administrative Office of the Courts.

Beginning in October 2007, the Youth Court Action

Team has worked to bring this project to fruition. Teens meet every 2nd and 4th Tuesday of the month to plan Bellevue Youth Court.



Phoebe Huang & Stan Biryukov
Youth Court Judges

Along with the team, over 70 youth have signed up to volunteer in the court sessions by acting as advocates, bailiffs, clerks, or jurors. Roughly 30 to 50 volunteers serve during each session, which take place the 4th Tuesday of every month at the Bellevue City Hall. Each court hearing is comprised of two cases.

Teens who choose to serve on the Youth Court are trained by practicing attorneys, members of the Washington State Bar Association, and King County Superior Court judges.

"It was really beneficial to us," Phoebe Huang, Bellevue Youth Court action team member, teen judge of the first session of Bellevue Youth Court, said, "we were taught how to speak more fluently, how to present ourselves to the court in an affluent manner, and the whole process was really fun."

Many professional attorneys volunteered their time to this event, including Judge Carol Schapira, from the King County Superior Court, who has devoted much of her time to guiding the Bellevue Youth Court. By providing interested

youth with the opportunity to interact with legal professionals, the Youth Court program grants students an understanding of how courts function and the inner workings of cases.

"I'm really excited about this program," Stan Biryukov, Bellevue Youth Court action team member and teen judge during the first session of Bellevue Youth Court, said. "I believe that through this project, peers can make a difference [in the lives] of their peers."

The first session of Bellevue Youth Court took place in the Council Chambers of Bellevue City Hall on January 29th, 2008. Media stations such as KUOW Radio, Bellevue Reporter, KING TV and KOMO TV all



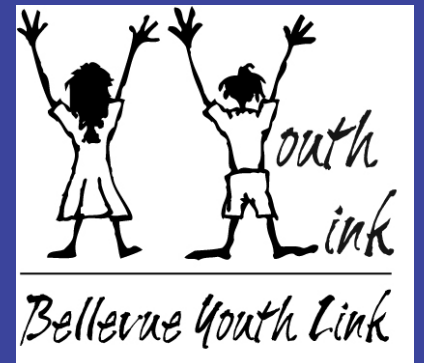
provided media coverage of the first session.

"We had 81 people in attendance [that] evening, including officers of the court; respondents and their families; media and guests. Great first session," Helena Stephens Family, Youth, and Teen Services Manager with the City of Bellevue, said.

For more information call Teen Services: 425.452.2846 or visit www.YouthLink.com



Outspoken is a product of Youth Link



Youth Link is a partnership of the City of Bellevue and Bellevue Public Schools

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Everyone to the Relay!

by Amulya Uppala
Newport High School

Bellevue's 24-Hour Relay Challenge is an event to which much of the city looks forward. The Relay was created ten years ago to build and strengthen community connections, and promote civic responsibility by engaging youth and adults in ongoing leadership and service opportunities. Youth and adults alike form



friendships while raising funds for youth programs in Bellevue.

Youth and adults form teams of ten. For 24 hours, each team member walks or jogs for one mile, then passes the baton to another teammate. Each team of 10 collects \$400 (\$40 per person). The cost is only \$350 for those who register early - by June 1. Teams have come up with creative ideas

to raise money, from car washes to donations for babysitting.

Participating in the Relay is one way for teens to get active within the community - while receiving community service hours. Teens are also encouraged to join the Relay Steering Committee. The committee is a group of youth and adults responsible for overseeing and planning the event.

Avinash Suntosh has served on the committee for three years and explains, "During the meetings, the committee divides up into smaller committees: Food and Hospitality, Logistics, Public Relations, and Entertainment. Each subgroup discusses specific goals and concerns. After an hour, the four groups meet and share what they've discussed."

Suntosh is a member of the Entertainment Committee; he has also been appointed as a Youth Relay Director and collaborates with committees on ensuring the over-all quality of event.

"I work with other members to come up with many ideas that appeal to the teams and

encourage new members to join this celebration. I feel a sense of awe and great contentment every year when the Bellevue Downtown Park is transformed into a vibrant place of gathering," said Suntosh.

The committee plays a key role in the event itself. Early in the morning, they arrive at the park to set up the tents and kitchen. Once the teams arrive, the event begins. Throughout the day, the committee carries out countless tasks to ensure success.

The Relay has attracted more and more people each year. Last year, there were 100 teams - the largest Relay in the event's history! Over 1,500 youth and teens participated for the entire 24 hours.

Elected officials support the Relay each year. Last year, U.S. Congressman Dave Reichert, State Representative Judy Clibborn, Mayor Grant Degginger, Deputy Mayor John Chelminiak, King County Council Member Jane Hague, and various members of Bellevue City Council and Bellevue Park Board came out to enjoy the festivities.



"Supporting the development of children and youth into positive, contributing members of our community is an issue that is very close to my heart. I was both honored and excited to participate in such an important Eastside community event," said Hague.

To celebrate the 10th anniversary, the Relay will be the biggest and best yet! Sign up early to reserve your spot; reservations will fill up quickly!

The Relay is June 21 and 22, 2008, 10:00 a.m. Saturday through 10:00 a.m. Sunday at the Bellevue Downtown Park.



For more information contact: teen services at 425-452-2846 or visit www.youthlink.com

Get onto the TRACKS! Bellevue's Outdoors Project

by Rachel Jiang
Newport High School

Off the couches and into the wild! Bellevue City Council is expanding its Fit-and-Active initiative by introducing a new educational program focused on promoting children's health. The program, named TRACKS, champions six main goals, from which it derives its name - Teaching, Recreation, Adventure, Competency, Knowledge, and Stewardship.

"We're trying to get people outside in a nontraditional way - we want to enrich these experiences to fulfill what TRACKS stands for," Jeannie Anderson, a member



of the TRACKS management team, attests.

Meant to satisfy youth's and family's need for excitement while allowing them to explore Bellevue's precious

natural environment, TRACKS leads participants outside through activities ranging from learning about the salmon cycle to canoeing through Mercer Slough's wetland ecosystems. In between,

the Pond Detectives curriculum will allow youth to poke at water-loving creatures, while those with a knack for catching "creepy crawlies" can explore their passion in the Fall Bugs Safari. Eco walks, studies on

real skeletons of local species, free natural photography workshops, classes on animal senses, and lessons on the local parks system add to the wide variety of options available to the Bellevue region's families.

"Children these days are often in front of the television or computer screen. We want to get them away from those places, and we will help them develop the skills needed so they can enjoy the outdoors," Ranger Bob Schafer explains. "We expand existing opportunities and find new things across the board for kids and families to do."

As the TRACKS initiative initially focuses on the juvenile population, the team has taken steps to incorporate youth into its planning and coordination.

Teenage participants can return the next year as paid mentors, and students of Bellevue can even help to direct the program through Youth Link action teams.

"Getting the teens to collaborate with us on this is just another spoke in the wheel of the initiative. We want teenagers' input," TRACKS coordinator Joe Moorman says. To Bellevue's youth, he has this one message: "You are creative. Come up with the ideas. We're the resource."

For more information: e-mail tracks@bellevuewa.gov or call 425-452-6885



The World of Teens, Steroids, and Baseball

by Andrew Kranseler
Newport High School



Over the last decade, 'getting juiced' has become all the rave in sports. Whether it's baseball, swimming,

football, running, or countless other sports at all levels of play, steroid abuse has become a major problem.

Many athletes have been caught, many have yet to be caught, and many never will be caught; but cheating in sports can ruin one's reputation and lead to being labeled as a "steroid user."

Anabolic steroids, those most commonly used by athletes, are hormones that increase protein synthesis and help increase the buildup of cellular tissue.

They are usually used to increase the body's potential for muscle mass and physical strength. But, oftentimes the extra

bulk is paired with a hefty dose of negative side effects, overshadowing any possible benefits.

For example, prolonged use may cause masculinization, liver failure, breast tissue growth in both males and females, an increase in cholesterol, acne, stunted growth, possible baldness, and hypertension.

Steroids are currently a major issue in baseball. In early December, former Senator George Mitchell issued the Mitchell Report, the product of twenty months of research on steroid use in professional baseball.

Mitchell was appointed by Bud Selig, the Commissioner of Major League Baseball (MLB), to investigate the use of illegal steroids and other performance-enhancing substances by MLB players. The report names 89 MLB players who have supposedly used steroids or performance-enhancing drugs.

This report is a major step for baseball and sports in general because of all the allegations

against athletes in the past decade.

Some say it is too late to stop steroids from intruding upon sports, but this was exactly what George Mitchell's report hoped to refute. Mitchell stated that his report was published not for the sake of exposing, accusing, or sentencing every steroid user in baseball, but in order to make the general public more aware. He wants people to know what is happening with the stars they envy and idolize as role models.

A call to the Seattle Mariners' community outreach office began in a willingness to give an interview about baseball, yet ended in their saying that it is their policy to not comment on the steroids issue.

Steroids are not only in the adult community, they have reached much of the youth population. According to the National Institute on Drug

Abuse, 2006 Monitoring the Future Study, an estimated 1.6% of 8th - graders, 1.8% of 10th - graders, and 2.7% of 12th - graders have taken anabolic steroids at least once in their lives.

Gil James, the athletic director for Newport High School, said that high school athletes face "the pressure to meet society's version of success. If you are not #1 you are a failure."

The same is true with the professional athletes who decide to use illegal steroids. High school and lower level athletes are heavily influenced by the actions of their favorite sport's stars, leading many to assume that steroid use is an acceptable means of enhancing performance and image.

"My hope is that sports will get a handle on this issue and the message will soon be those doing [steroids] are getting caught and being punished. I truly hope we can clean up sports for everyone's sake," said James.



Ground Zero Teen Center Music Program

by Emily Stafford
International School

Ground Zero Teen Center originated in 1994 as a Youth Link Project. It is currently an ongoing partnership between the City of Bellevue and Boys

and Girls Club of Bellevue. It is known throughout Bellevue for its safe and fun environment. Teen musicians looking for a way to make their big break will find that Ground Zero Teen Center offers them and their fans a perfect place for rocking out.

Ground Zero's Music Program is one of its most popular attractions. The Music Advisory group is run by students; they meet every other week to discuss ideas. They are responsible for putting on one event per month,

booking local bands, helping run concerts, and volunteering at weekend events, amongst other music-related functions.

"I feel like I'm doing something productive and groovy being a community organizer. It's something I'm proud of," says an ecstatic Riley Walund, a Music Advisory member. Bands looking to play for a live audience will find the opportunity to book shows at

"Band Pool". The band brings a recording of their songs, and chooses the one that best represents them. The audience determines which bands they like the best and who plays in the next show. Ground Zero has two guidelines: 1) at least one

member of the band must be a teen, and 2) they can only play at Band Pool once every three months.

Music fans looking for a place to go should dance their way straight to Ground Zero. Concerts are every Friday and Saturday night at 7 PM. Admission is 6 dollars (or 5 dollars with a can of food).

"When you walk into the room, and the music is playing, you just feel the energy everywhere. Your whole body just vibrates with the energy!" describes ecstatic Hannah Coleman, a freshman at International School, after her first concert at Ground Zero.

"We'll definitely be coming back!" "That was so cool." exclaim Derek Tom, Jacob Wright, Leeza Soulina, and Colin Brinton (freshmen at International School) while leaving the Ground Zero concert.

Free acoustic shows and poetry nights take place on some Thursday evenings,

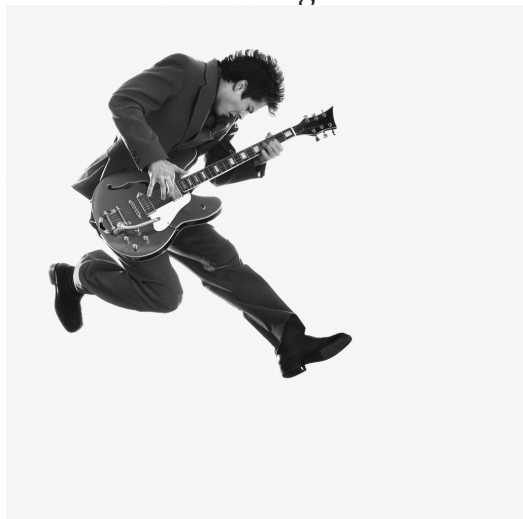
where anyone can come and show off their skills.

Ground Zero's Internet Radio program is the place to be to learn the basics of pod casting, mixing, recording, and editing music, and then release their music into the world through the internet.

Musicians will find the recently remodeled Practice Room to be their musical paradise. It has bass and guitar amps, drums, spare instruments, and a p.a. system ready for use. Bands are welcome to bring their own equipment if they want.

"The best part of the music program? For me, it's seeing individuals evolve from inexperienced kids into well respected bookers and promoters, or seeing bands that put in hard work get a great turnout for their shows," says Daniel Johnson, supervisor of the Music Advisory.

Contact info: (425- 452-6119) or visit www.myspace.com/groundzeromusic.



Kids Coat Care Drive

by Lucinda Li & Bonnie Pan
Odle Middle School

The Kids Care Coat Drive has distributed more than 1,500 coats and jackets to families in need for the past four years. This charity drive runs on donations of outerwear from kind benefactors willing to contribute warm coats and the countless volunteers who distribute them.

The 2007 Kids Care Coat Drive took place on Friday, December 14 from 5:00-7:00 p.m. at Crossroads Community Center. The event was paired with the Crossroads Winter Holiday Dinner, sponsored by the Crossroads Community Center. Over 400 adults and children attended the dinner, allowing the coats to reach a large population.

This drive was founded by Rick Teegarden, age 15, in 2004. As a member of the Bellevue Youth Council he volunteered at Youth Link's Teen Closet monthly clothing distribution events. The lack of warm clothing brought to his attention the community's pressing need for coats. In response, Rick started a coat drive at his middle school, which later evolved into the Kids Care Coat Drive.

"It really helps the community and that's why we do it. Being able to cut the cost for 1,200 people who need to buy coats each year really makes a difference," said Teegarden.

Last year, the project expanded as Eastside Catholic School, Bellevue High School, International School and Tyee Middle School joined the cause. In addition, Youth Link volunteers set up donation boxes at the YMCA in Bellevue, the Crossroads shopping center and at Microsoft's Redmond campus.

"The drive was a huge success this year, collecting about 1,200 coats. It really touches me to see how large this middle school coat drive has gotten," Teegarden remarked.

Jackets were donated to the Crossroads Community Center Holiday Meal, Wrap-Around Project at Lake Hills Elementary, Friends of Youth Shelter at the Bellevue Family YMCA, United Way of Lewis County (benefitting victims of the recent floods), Elizabeth Gregory Transitional Home and drop-in center for homeless women, New Horizons Ministries drop-in center for homeless youth, Street Youth Ministries drop-in center for homeless youth, and the Encompass preschool program of North Bend.

The drive continues to impact the community, propelled by people's willingness to donate not only jackets, but time. When it first began in 2004, 350 coats were collected, while in 2007, about 1,200 were distributed.

"This event provides much needed warm clothing and jackets to youth and families in our community. It also shows that [the members of] our community care for each other," Patrick Alina, the Youth Link Program Coordinator, commented.

"Every year we get the best volunteers who show up with a smile on their face and warmth in their hearts. One of my favorite sayings that I use is, 'Even though we're teens we can still help,'" said Teegarden.



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2008 Relay Steering Committee Meetings Bellevue City Hall from 6:30-8PM First and Third Wednesday of the month

March 5 - room 1E-112	March 19 - room 1E-108
April 2 - room 1E-108	April 16 - room 1E-108
May 7 - room 1E-108	May 21 - room 1E-108
June 4 - room 1E-108	June 18 - room 1E-108

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