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FOR INFORMATION CALL

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Curfew, Jobs, Sex Education, Glamorization Of Violence: Some Of The Issues Brought To Youth Council During Open Forum

*Approximately 70 Young People Attended 'Listening and Information Exchange'
Event Last Night at Rufus King High School*

Like a scene from a pep rally, there were cheers from friends and classmates when some members of the City of Milwaukee Youth Council introduced themselves at the start of an open forum event last night in the auditorium at Rufus King High School. The cheers weren't a big surprise, given the fact that several members of the 15-member Youth Council are students at Rufus King.

But the cheers quickly subsided, the tone grew serious and many in the audience spent the better part of the next 90 minutes sharing their views about some of the major issues affecting young people today in the City of Milwaukee.

The views expressed by the teens were sobering and to the point:

- Violence and violent lifestyles are glamorized in popular culture – especially in some music videos.
- Young people in Milwaukee are often mistreated by police officers, and some police officers seem unable to communicate respectfully with young people.

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Youth Council Gets Earful Of Teens' Concerns/ADD ONE

- Teen pregnancy and the high incidence of sexually-transmitted diseases could be better addressed if the current health curriculum in Milwaukee schools is replaced almost entirely by sexual education.
- There's a lack of jobs in Milwaukee's inner city and in the city in general, and there is also a lack of positive news about the inner city.
- The city's 11 p.m. curfew for anyone under 18 years of age is viewed by many young people as unfairly restrictive.
- There is a lack of facilities – such as cultural education centers – that encourage young people to engage in productive behavior.
- There is a need for alternative sentencing programs, offering young people counseling, mentoring and tutoring rather than jail time.
- There is a need for more youth facilities and youth groups focusing on arts and the creative process.
- There is a need to do more to promote the positive face of young people in Milwaukee, and this could be done through the use, for instance, of transit advertising and segments on television programs.

Ald. Joe Davis, Sr., who authored legislation creating the first-ever Youth Council last year, was not able to attend the event because he's attending a National League of Cities conference this week in North Carolina.

Ald. Ashanti Hamilton, who represents the Rufus King area, attended last night's open forum and welcomed the Youth Council and the attendees to the 1st Aldermanic District. "The open forum was a success in the sense that dozens of young people braved the cold on a school night to share their views and voice their opinions with their peers," said Ald. Hamilton, who currently includes a profile in each edition of his aldermanic newsletter of a young constituent who is doing positive things.

"It was important to hear what they had to say, and I think Common Council members are willing to listen to these views and concerns and will take them to heart," Ald. Hamilton said.

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Youth Council Gets Earful Of Teens' Concerns/ADD TWO

The Youth Council has been meeting regularly since May to discuss issues affecting young people in Milwaukee. The council has also been receiving regular briefings and question-and-answer time with city department heads to learn more about the inner workings of city government. The body also has selected its first president – Arlee Vang of the 10th District – a student at Hamilton High School.

The City of Milwaukee Youth Council is comprised of 15 high school students ages 18 and under, with one from each aldermanic district. The council's next regular meeting will be Wednesday, December 14, 2005 at 5 p.m. in the third floor Council Chamber at City Hall, 200 E. Wells St. The council's regular meetings – open to the public and the media – are also broadcast on City Channel 25 on Time Warner Cable in the City of Milwaukee.

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