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Published November 9th, 2011

Orinda Teen Advisory Council WANTS YOU!

By Natasha Morsey

Did you know there is a group of young student leaders in Orinda who meet to create community events, plan service projects, and advise the City Council about issues important to teens? Known as OTAC, the Orinda Teen Advisory Council is organized by Orinda youth in grades six through twelve.

Co-Chair of OTAC, Alex Glaser, a senior at Miramonte High School, commented that the council decides "what teens can do for Orinda and what Orinda can do for teens." The official youth-written mission statement states: "This city-sponsored teen committee provides input to the city council about teens and focuses on the involvement of teens in the community through community service, programs, and fundraising."

The OTAC wants more input from junior high students and is involving Orinda Intermediate School. Members of the council have already visited OIS to make a leadership presentation. The Principal of OIS, Michael Randall, advertises the importance of the council on his weekly podcast.

"The OIS students are the future of OTAC," says Haley Cassriel, a senior at Miramonte and co-chair of OTAC. Council member and Treasurer, Devin Stein, was drawn to help on the council while he was in middle school. "I was at OIS in 8th grade when I attended a council meeting with a friend," says Devin, now a high school junior.

Glaser said that many of the events are created for OIS students. OIS students are important on the council because they have suggestions and perspectives that older students may not consider. For example, kids in junior high do not have drivers' licenses. Transportation options must be discussed and they may have earlier curfews or different restrictions than older teens.

OTAC hosted a fun Harry Potter themed movie night featuring a unique dish served by Lord's Ice Cream. Thinking ahead to next April, OTAC is collaborating with the Lafayette and Moraga councils in the hope of presenting a "Battle of the Bands" with profits targeted at supporting local high school sports teams.

Volunteering at OTAC has influenced members' possible career choices. Cassriel says she is interested in public health administration because of OTAC. Glaser is also considering a major in which she can use the skills she learned working with the council.

Orinda Teen Advisory Council invites students from junior high and high school to join them. Monthly meetings take place on the first Monday of each month at 4:00 p.m. at the Orinda Community Center. Participation also fulfills community service requirements. For more information, go to <http://www.ci.orinda.ca.us>. Join the fun and help plan the future events of Orinda youth.

The opinions expressed in Teen Scene are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the Lamorinda Weekly.

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