



For Immediate Release
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Preparing and Debating City Ordinances, Campaigning for Council
Office,
Lively Panel Discussions,
Among Activities Planned at YMCA Youth in City Government
Conference

For three days – February 5, 12 and 13 – more than 125 students from 13 Cincinnati area high schools will be immersed in hands-on, interactive exercises all aimed at teaching them skills of responsible citizenship. At the YMCA Youth in City Government Conference, teens of diverse abilities, and socio-economic, cultural and religious backgrounds will be working together and independently to learn how government works and how they can be full participants in their community. (for location and time, please see bottom)

Alexandria Barnes, a senior at Summit Hills Country Day School, campaigned and was elected to youth city mayor at last year's conference. After attending other national and regional leadership conferences as part of their terms, she and her YMCA youth city council are helping to organize the three-day event.

“Teenagers need to understand how government works. They need to know they have a voice, and how to effectively use it,” she said. “It’s our hope that everyone who participates in the conference will leave as a more active citizen, whether that means becoming better educated about issues on the ballot and voting, getting involved with issues that are important to them, or even choosing a career in politics after they graduate.”

The theme for this year's YMCA Youth in City Government Conference ‘what do you want your city, nation, and world to be?’ Students will take part in panel discussions with city leaders and international groups; workshops on campaigning (and actual campaigning for youth city council), global youth service day; community activism and more. *New this year* – an activity on diversity among schools where students will work together in teams to create solutions to problems.

Also new, attendees are being asked to bring ordinances that they developed in advance. At the conference, they’ll work on researching and improving upon them before debating their ordinance with their peers.

“Through the ordinance exercise, students will gain experience in research, critical thinking, public speaking, writing, and communicating effectively with those from differing backgrounds,” said Jana Lavelle, director, civic engagement, for the YMCA.

The YMCA Youth in City Government program has definitely impacted at least one high school teen, but more than likely dozens. “When I was little, I used to want to be the first woman president,” said Alexandria. “Now, after what I’ve learned through this program, I want to do something that works with environmental policy.”

The YMCA is the largest non-governmental, non-profit community services organization in this area that is committed to helping everyone reach their God-given potential in spirit, mind, and body – regardless of their ability to pay. Each year tens of thousands of people from children to seniors are able to participate in YMCA programs and services because of financial assistance, including health and wellness, active older adult programs, youth and teen camp, swimming and water safety lessons , teen achievers, college readiness, and job preparedness. With 60 locations, the YMCA of Greater Cincinnati is also the largest provider of child care programs, that in 2007, served nearly 10,000 kids on YMCA scholarships. The annual Strong Kids Campaign helps make that possible.

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FACTS

YMCA Youth in City Government Conference

WHEN and WHERE:	February 5, 2008	Duke Energy Center	from 9 to 3:15 p.m.
	February 12, 2008	Duke Energy Center	from 9 to 3 p.m.
	February 13, 2008	City Hall	from 8:30 to 2 p.m.

Schools:

Aiken University
Aldersgate Christian Academy
Harmony
Hughes Center
Moeller High School
Mother of Mercy High School
Summit Country Day
School for Creative and Performing Arts
Riverview East Academy
Withrow University
Simon Kenton in Northern Kentucky
St. Xavier High School
McAuley High School