

Sophomore fights for teen rights

Falcon's Cry

C.E. Jordan High School

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By: Scott Winton

Whenever sophomore De-warren Langley gets a good idea, he writes it down.

Last summer, Langley had an idea to form a political organization for teenagers, which aims to protect and advance the civil rights of local youth.

Langley explained the concept to his cousin Angela Langley, who is on the Durham City Council, and John Rohr, a community-based mentor for the Duke Durham Partners for Youth Program.

Rohrs and Angela Langley encouraged DeWarren to follow through with his idea for the good of teens in Durham. "Politics affect teenagers and youths as well as adults," DeWarren Langley said. "Not only will my organization be beneficial for me, but for the youths within Durham."

Langley's club, Teens Politically Active, aims to promote the creation of more safe places for teens to hang out, lower violence in Durham and improve public school conditions.

"Students have to travel tremendous distances to get to school and when they get there, they are greeted with overcrowded classrooms where they get no individual attention," Langley said. "No child's educational needs are met with a class size of 20, 30 or 40 students. Schools focus more on extracurricular activities than on class sizes and whether students are getting the individual attention they need."

Langley was also motivated to start TPA after watching political campaigns preceding the elections in November. Langley realized how little the views of teens are represented in national and local government. "I feel that youths are the most neglected people in the United States, whether the candidates admit it or not," he said. "[Politicians] say, 'Teens can't vote, so why say anything for them?' Political campaigns are about appealing to people who can vote."

So Langley began recruiting members by e-mailing teens and staying after school two days a week to ask Jordan students to join. Freshman Shariyar Zarea joined the club after Langley spoke to him in the library after school. "[Being asked to join in person] gave me more motivation to join than hearing [a message] over the intercom," said Zarea, who is now the club's vice-president.

TPA has 34 members from Jordan, Riverside, Hillside and Southern High Schools. Langley said that as TPA grows, the organization will take action and talk to administrators or the school board to solve school problems. "I will set up a meeting with anybody I think will help with the problem," Langley said.

The club made a presentation to the Durham City Council Nov. 20 to inform the representatives about the its purpose and to present the council with an award for its

efforts to improve the lives of teens in Durham.

TPA representative Jessica Murrell, a sophomore at Hill-side, also spoke to the council against a juvenile curfew in Durham. "I think [the council members] are interested and want to help us," Murrell said. "I'm quite proud of my peers and DeWarren."

TPA will begin sending members to all City Council meetings. Starting in January, all TPA members are required to attend 12 meetings per year.

Angela Langley said TPA is unusual because DeWarren has organized it by himself. "I'm not doing anything except giving him information," she said. "[DeWarren] is running [TPA] and doing an excellent job. He's very mature for his age."

Angela Langley said De-warren has great leadership skills, which have helped him get TPA up and running. "As I have watched him grow up, he has shown some traits of a leader," she said. "He's a great talker."

Students interested in joining TPA can find more information from the web site at: http://hometown.aol.com/teens_active/myhomepagebusiness.html.