

Annual Report of the Mayor's Youth Action Council
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Dedication

To begin, the Mayor's Youth Action Council (MYAC) would like to express its bottomless gratitude towards Mayor Justin Nickels and his Assistant Stacey Groll for their abundant support, guidance, and their continued and fruitful efforts towards making Manitowoc a city we love.

Author's Note

In our last meeting as a complete organism I volunteered to write the MYAC's first annual report. My compatriots also agreed to my proposal to permanently amend to the duties of the Vice President the composition of this report after it was made clear to us that the Vice President's present functions were perhaps lacking in rigor and utility.

Overview

This year the MYAC was comprised of 14 members, Alethea Quick (11), Ivy Gauthier (12), James Oberbroeckling (12), Kaylin Vang (10), Lia Haile (11), McKenna Pleus (10), Ryan Jacoby (11), Sara Ademi (10), Tristan Petersen (12), Ethan Haupt (12), Marcos Valenzuela Cuevas (12), Miguel Gutierrez (12), Nayzeth Fonseca (12), and Tyler Bonin (12). The last five people listed were also members during the previous and inaugural year of the MYAC. The new members were selected by the returning members through an interview process. It began with written applications which were due by 9/30/20 and was supplemented by video conference interviews afterwards. The new council then had an orientation meeting on 11/21/20.

The MYAC met at least every second Wednesday of the month for an hour from December to May in Council Chambers. On 12/9/20, as per the MYAC Structure document, the council elected its President, Lia Haile, Vice President, Marcos Valenzuela Cuevas, Public Relations Coordinator, Alethea Quick, Treasurer, Sara Ademi, and Co-Secretaries, McKenna Pleus and Ryan Jacoby (the vote was tied and the council chose to give two people the title of secretary instead of breaking the tie). Additionally, members organized unofficial meetings when necessary or desired. These unstructured meetings also functioned as team bonding. A notable occasion was the group's viewing and study of a previously recorded yet nonetheless ardent council meeting while in the Mayor's office.

The MYAC's mission statement is as follows: "The Mayor's Youth Action Council is dedicated to empowering Manitowoc's diverse youth by continuously improving unity and engagement through government and civic participation. We strive to raise awareness within our community and develop a sense of pride among our peers." A key question this report must answer is whether or not this mission was in harmony with the work accomplished during this term. A good metaphor is perhaps that of the internal genotype (the DNA) versus the external phenotype (the traits) of an organism. During this term, many members expressed their passion

for respecting and conserving Nature and its resources in Manitowoc. Through drives and a fundraiser, the MYAC was also able to participate in the mobilization of resources in our city's economy. Last but not in a million years least, our last couple meetings featured meaningful discussions which brought to the group's awareness the plight of Disabled and older Hmong peoples; they are well established, indispensable, and increasingly aided members of the Manitowoc community who were unfortunately marginalized due to physical and programming, or language barriers, respectively. Early on Ethan Haupt announced that for him, success for the MYAC would mean doing a few things *well*; the events which will be outlined are witnesses to the group's embrace of this principle.

Projects

Before the orientation meeting as a full group the MYAC volunteered to help the City clean up the flower beds in Downtown on 11/14/20. This event, simple in its premise, served as an opportunity for members to start forming relationships organically. The MYAC was subsequently featured in one of the City's Facebook posts, in other words making us public.

In January the MYAC launched its Instagram page. As of the writing of this report the account has 29 followers. Social media presents an opportunity to engage with the youth of Manitowoc. As the MYAC matures and grows in its influence it's social media platforms have the potential to become the youths' premier news/information source where content made by youth for youth can attempt to cultivate educated opinions on immediate, local, and tangible topics. A possible vision is that of high school classmates discussing a recent MYAC post between classes. Inspiration can be taken from Mayor Nickels' own Instagram page @mantymayor.

On 12/5/20 half of MYAC members did a park clean-up at Silver Creek. To learn more about waste management in parks the group contacted the current Parks and Recreation Division Manager Curtis Hall. He explained that Manitowoc parks have an overabundance of garbage cans and not enough staff to continually empty them. Other park systems have found success with having few cans if any. Working with city government officials to learn about the broader systems that shape our day to day is awesome and grounding.

On 5/5/21 the MYAC adopted the Little Manitowoc Prairie and River Walkway Park for a year. One of the reasons the group chose to do this was ensuring that future councils would be exposed to environmental work.

On 5/8/21 MYAC members volunteered at the Friends of the Manitowoc River Watershed's (FMRW) beach clean-up at Warm Waters. On 5/22/21 MYAC members helped the FMRW again by planting an assortment of native plants at Lower Schutte Park. Building a relationship with this local, active, volunteer organization connected the MYAC with past environmental efforts and with others' visions for the future of our Natural spaces.

On 12/9/20 half of the MYAC began a week-long drive for baby supplies. Over 300 items were collected through donation boxes hosted by 7 different Manitowoc businesses. All items were donated to the Hope House. Originally the group desired to create care packages for

Manitowoc's homeless adults. During the course of this project we learned to communicate with the institutions we were working with, in this case homeless shelters, and ensure that our efforts to help were in harmony with their needs.

During the month of March, the MYAC participated in the Police Department's food drive for Peter's Pantry. Members set up donation boxes at Lincoln High School, where 375 items were collected, and Roncalli High School, where a similar number of items were collected. The generosity of schools is astounding. Additionally, the MYAC took advantage of the demand for service hours many students had at Lincoln. The administration there allowed students to transfer food donations into service hours. The MYAC can continue to shape and inform student service work by supplying opportunities that further our mission.

From 2/19/21 to 2/21/21 the MYAC conducted a fundraiser. Hot chocolate and baked goods, donated by Kwik Trip, were sold at the Briess Parking Lot next to the ice rink created by the Manitowoc Fire Department. This also doubled as a nice opportunity for members to spend time with each other. The group was not able to find/create a way to spend the \$- raised during this term. Having these funds served to push forward the creation of the MYAC's account.

Conclusion

In summary, this has been quite a jubilant term for the MYAC. Members have participated in both community and government functions. We have learned to engage our peers and raise awareness through social media and service hour requirements. We have empowered really small youths through our baby supply drive and contributed to the health of our local natural systems which will in turn continue to promote the bodily and economic health of all citizens. And finally, it is my sincere hope that every MYAC member has, over the course of our term together, grown to be increasingly proud of our City, (its hard-working government, its dedicated citizens, and its natural and built beauty), to a point where it's contagious. *Power Clap*