

## Riverside County Fourth District Youth Advisory Council

### Annual Report 2015-2016

The Fourth District Coachella Valley and Palo Verde Valley Youth Advisory Councils (YAC) identify youth-related concerns and issues specific to the Fourth District. YAC is comprised of students from Cathedral City, Coachella Valley, La Quinta, Palm Desert, Palo Verde, Rancho Mirage, and Xavier high schools.

*Listed are the key projects the 2015-2016 Fourth District Coachella Valley and Palo Verde Valley YACs accomplished throughout the year:*

- **30th Annual College Voc-Tech Night – October 14, 2015**  
With Supervisor John J. Benoit's assistance, the Palo Verde Valley YAC facilitated transportation to Indio for Palo Verde High School students attending the 30th Annual College Voc-Tech Night. This college and career fair, held at the Riverside County Fairgrounds, featured representatives from more than 80 four-year universities, community colleges, vocational-technical schools, the military, law enforcement and scholarship organizations. This event provided a valuable experience to students from the Palo Verde Valley, who don't typically have exposure to as many college representatives in a single college fair in their community. YAC and Supervisor Benoit are proud to make this opportunity available to them and hope to serve even more students in the future.
- **Steps for the Cure – October 17, 2015**  
The Palo Verde Valley YAC volunteered at the Blythe Cancer Resource Center's 9th annual "Steps for the Cure" fundraising event. At the event, YAC members built a balloon arc, helped with set up and tear-down, and hosted a photo booth. YAC's photo booth was consistent with the event's Hollywood theme and gave participants the opportunity to wear props and have their photo taken. The Council charged \$2 for a Polaroid or \$1 for cellphone selfies. The profits from the photo booth, \$88, were donated to the Blythe Cancer Resource Center.
- **Children's Craft Day at Coachella Valley Rescue Mission – October 25, 2015**  
Coachella Valley YAC members hosted a Halloween-themed craft day at the Coachella Valley Rescue Mission's (CVRM) Family Center. CVRM's Family Center provides temporary housing to mothers and children who have been displaced from their homes and need support. YAC members wanted to bring some joy and laughter to the children. The Council facilitated crafts and activities with the families, including cookie decorating, cape and mask decorating, face painting and coloring.
- **Writing Workshop – November 1, 2015**  
The Coachella Valley YAC expressed a desire to get better prepared on college admission essays, resume writing and interview skills. An admissions representative from the University of California, Riverside provided an afternoon workshop for YAC members. The workshop helped YAC gain a better understanding of what colleges are looking for and provided them with techniques to improve their writing.

- **Grandparents Raising Grandchildren “Adopt A Family” – November 2015**  
 Palo Verde Valley and Coachella Valley YAC each adopted two families from the Riverside County Office on Aging’s Grandparents Raising Grandchildren program. The objective was to provide complete Thanksgiving Dinners for the entire family. YAC members collected turkeys, side dishes, desserts, and beverages to feed all four families.
- **Healing Field – November 7, 2015**  
 For the third consecutive year, in Cathedral City, Coachella Valley YAC had the honor of participating in the Healing Field memorial event at Patriot Park. Hundreds of volunteers came together to remember the lives of fallen service members from the war in Iraq and Afghanistan. YAC members helped place 8,000 flags and accompanying name tags, in memory of each fallen service member.
- **Stuff the Bus Drive at Target – November 3-5, 2015**  
 “Stuff the Bus” is an annual donation drive hosted by SafeHouse of the Desert with the goal of collecting enough daily essentials for the organization to fill a school bus. Over a three-day period, Coachella Valley YAC members volunteered at the Palm Desert Target parking lot and provided information to shoppers about the event and the items needed. In addition, YAC helped sort all the donated items before placing them on the bus.
- **Rock Out With Your Socks Out – November 20, 2015**  
 As part of Palo Verde Valley YAC’s goals to create an engaging community for youth, they hosted a “crazy socks” themed event at the Joe Wine Blythe Recreation Center. The Council noticed that there weren’t many events available where elementary and middle school aged youth could participate. In an effort to change this, YAC partnered with the recreation center and facilitated an evening of cookie decorating, sock coloring and games.
- **Palm Springs Festival of Lights Parade – December 5, 2015**  
 The 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Festival of Lights Parade was held in downtown Palm Springs, helping local residents and tourists ring in the holiday season. Coachella Valley YAC members had the privilege of walking alongside Supervisor John J. Benoit’s float while singing Christmas carols.
- **Civil Servants for Santa – December 19, 2015**  
 The Blythe Police Department invited children from low-income families to go shopping for their own Christmas gifts. Palo Verde Valley YAC members assisted with check-in, while keeping children entertained with crafts and games. Additionally, Council members assisted with preparing lunch.
- **Toy Wrapping for Oasis Mobile Home Park – December 21, 2015**  
 Coachella Valley YAC members wrapped more than 150 toys collected by the California Highway Patrol for underprivileged children residing at a mobile home park in the community of Oasis. YAC members helped distribute the gifts at a Christmas celebration and felt rewarded when they saw the smiles on everyone’s faces.

- **Donate A Dime, Donate A Dollar, Donate A Ham– December 22, 2015**  
 The Palo Verde Valley YAC raised funds for the Blythe Emergency Food Pantry in an effort to help families during the holiday season. The Council was able to donate \$180 in spare change to purchase food items during the food pantry’s neediest season.
- **DIY Toys Benefitting the Blythe Animal Shelter – January 14, 2016**  
 The Palo Verde Valley YAC provided support for the Blythe Animal Shelter by facilitating a do-it-yourself project. Council members made 13 kitty wands and 16 tug braids, and donated them to the shelters, helping offset the cost of cat and dog toys.
- **DisAbility Sports Festival – January 30, 2016**  
 The Coachella Valley YAC volunteered at the DisAbility Sports Festival, an event that provides opportunities for people with disabilities to try multiple sports. YAC members served as leaders in different sports and assisted participants with the various activities, including judo, soccer, baseball and self-defense. YAC helped the organization with set-up and tear-down.
- **7<sup>th</sup> Annual High School Competition – February 12, 2016**  
 In an effort to bring more young people to the Riverside County Fair & National Date Festival, Coachella Valley YAC members organized the Seventh Annual High School Competition, featuring a series of entertaining Fair contests: musical carpets, relay race, blanket balloon toss, reverse charades and school spirit. Teams from four high schools competed for the coveted Date Cup Trophy. YAC members selected the games, acted as judges and awarded trophies to the first place team.
- **First 5 Riverside – February 13, 2016**
- Coachella Valley YAC members volunteered at First 5 Riverside’s booth at the Riverside County Fair & National Date Festival. First 5 provides programs for babies, toddlers and preschoolers. YAC members welcomed visitors, ran activities and distributed information.
- **Volunteer at the Animal Shelter – February 18, 2016**  
 The Riverside County animal shelter in Blythe welcomed YAC members to spend hours grooming, playing and feeding animals. YAC was pleased to volunteer their time after school in assisting abandoned and orphan animals in the care of the shelter.
- **Graffiti Cleanup – February 27, 2016**  
 The Palo Verde Valley YAC collaborated with the City of Blythe and the Palo Verde Valley Transit Agency to remove graffiti throughout the Blythe community. The combined effort consisted of cleaning, washing and painting local areas to keep the environment safe, beautiful and clean.
- **Riverside County Youth Summit – March 10, 2016**  
 The Palo Verde Valley YAC helped prepare 500 goody bags for high school students attending the 18<sup>th</sup> Annual Youth Summit. The students were from schools throughout Riverside County.

- **Youth Force Cleanup – March 12, 2016**

The C.L.E.A.N Youth Force program, sponsored by Supervisor John J. Benoit, provides an opportunity for schools and non-profit organizations to raise funds for their programs by cleaning illegal dumpsites. Coachella Valley YAC dedicated a Saturday morning to the community of Thermal, cleaning a site that is used as an illegal dump. Household waste, agricultural waste, dead animals and tires were found along the roadside. More than eight tons of trash and more than 300 tires were collected at the cleanup. For their hard work, YAC members received \$2,000. They donated \$1,000 each to two non-profit organizations, SafeHouse of the Desert and Shelter from the Storm.

- **Baseball Buddies – March 14, 2016**

One of Coachella Valley YAC's most cherished projects involved volunteering for the Baseball Buddies program, which allows children with physical and emotional challenges to play baseball. Each child had a buddy to help play the game. YAC members acted as buddies and helped the children hit and catch balls and run bases.

- **Donate a Penny, Donate a Dime, Donate a Dollar – April 2016**

The Coachella Valley YAC facilitated a fundraiser to create care packages for homeless individuals in the Fourth District. The project was named "Donate a Penny, Donate a Dime, Donate a Dollar." All funds collected were used to purchase materials for the care packages. YAC members collaborated with local shelters to deliver the care packages.

- **Palo Verde Valley Cemetery Clean-up – April 9, 2016**

Palo Verde Cemetery staff asked YAC for help in cleaning up the cemetery's most problematic areas. The Council assisted in cleaning up trash and trimming bushes, allowing the cemetery to look as beautiful as ever.

- **Care Kits for Troops – April 28, 2016**

To show their gratitude, the Palo Verde Valley YAC took the opportunity to supply overseas troops with care items. The Council collected about 90 items. The items included: toothbrushes, toothpaste, deodorant, hand warmers, mini flashlights, batteries, wipes and chapstick. The Council assembled these items in care packages and donated them to Operation Gratitude, a non-profit volunteer-based organization that supports service members.

- **Palo Verde Valley YAC Bring a Friend & Potluck – May 20, 2016**

Palo Verde Valley YAC hosted a potluck to celebrate their accomplishments during the 2015- 2016 term. YAC members also had the opportunity to invite potential 2016-2017 YAC members.

- **2016-2017 Recruitment**

Recruitment for the Fourth District Youth Advisory Council is ongoing through the end of the term and summer. YAC members provide contact information of students they recommend for the 2016- 2017 Council. YAC members have also invited potential applicants to events and meetings during the end of the term. The Fourth District YAC is promoted through local media, Supervisor Benoit's Web site and the e-report, The Benoit Bulletin, letters to school officials, community leaders and local organizations, and word of mouth.

-----**Summary of the Year**-----

**Goals for the 2015-2016 Youth Advisory Council term:**

Coachella Valley

- Support and work with senior citizens and veterans.
- Find ways to help underprivileged and homeless youth and address the issue of poverty.
- Create service projects to improve environmental issues in our community through educational events, clean-ups, water conservation and recycling.
- Raise awareness about domestic violence, human trafficking and mental health.
- Promote the importance of the council engaging in meaningful events that will leave a lasting impact in our community.

Palo Verde Valley

- Create an engaging community for youth
- Find ways to promote environmental awareness and help make 4th District a cleaner place
- Provide help and assistance to the Riverside County Animal Shelter
- Work with the community to alleviate hunger and help with homeless services
- Build relationships with organizations and raise awareness about local resources

**Recommendations for the 2016-2017 Youth Advisory Council term:**

- Continue to host innovative community service projects
- Recruit members from all high schools in the Fourth District
- Host more presentations from community organizations
- Host more events with fellow Riverside County YAC

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The 2015-2016 Youth Advisory Council had 46 members and they delivered 26 projects in total. They have dedicated 1,573 hours of community service to the Fourth District of Riverside County. Overall, YAC members felt that they excelled in accomplishing their expectations and goals for the year.

*The Fourth District YACs would like to thank the Board of Supervisors for their ongoing support throughout the year.*