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# Mayor's Youth Office

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**S**ince its inception in 1981, the Mayor's Youth Office has tried to keep pace with the changing needs and wants of Burlington's young population. We work to provide an environment which offers opportunities to participate and develop self-confidence and fosters a sense of belonging in the community. Our job, as we see it, is to respond to the talents and interests of our City's young people rather than react, after the fact, to the well-publicized "teen problems." By identifying kids by their strengths instead of their weaknesses, and by offering ongoing support and friendship, we hope to make those hard choices a little bit easier when they have to be made. The focus is prevention, rather than intervention, and our efforts are directed at developing potential, not at filling time. Highlights of some of the programs and activities we've sponsored this year and on an ongoing basis to achieve these goals are listed below.

## 242 MAIN

242 MAIN, Burlington's teen center located in Memorial Auditorium, continues to thrive as a comfortable, open, creative, and friendly environment for kids of varying ages and interests to get together after school and on weekends. On weekdays, kids gather to listen to music, watch films, play board and video games, read, do homework, participate in workshops, and enjoy delicious, creative cooking from the full-service snack bar. On weekends, crowds come in all ages, sizes, and styles to listen and applaud live local and touring talent. Coffee Houses on Friday nights offer "open mike" entertainment, ranging from acoustic music and guitar to poetry reading. Saturday nights showcase up-and-coming bands, emphasizing original material, in an ongoing effort to expose kids to the new talent which abounds in our area. 242



MAIN is most definitely a place "of the kids, for the kids, and by the kids" and we look forward to its continued success.

## Kid's Day

In 1986, in an effort to create widespread community awareness, participation, and appreciation for kids, the Board of Alderman joined several other cities throughout the country in establishing an annual Kid's Day by passing the following resolution:

WHEREAS, the City of Burlington wants to recognize the value and importance of its youth; and

WHEREAS, the City of Burlington wants to provide an environment which will be a positive, healthy influence on children; and

WHEREAS, any investment of Burlington resources for its children is an

investment for the good of all citizens; and

WHEREAS, children benefit from recreational, cultural, and educational activities which continue to build their talents and allow them to share these talents with others.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the fourth Saturday in April of each year shall be designated as KID'S DAY - Burlington, Vermont.

This year, on April 23rd, Burlington's annual Kid's Day on the Church Street Marketplace was enjoyed by countless families and young people, excited to be part of this significant day. Events such as the parade featuring the New England Music Festival's top five bands, floats, achievement and student art displays encased in storefront windows on the Marketplace, and a potpourri of entertainment and activities, both by and for kids, is but a small sample of what makes Kid's Day so special and fun for everyone in the community. We are very grateful to the downtown merchants, performers, volunteers, parents and friends, and most especially, of course, the kids, for their enthusiasm, support, and participation in this wonderful celebration of our most precious resource, our children.

## 242 MAIN Presents

Created and produced by middle school and high school students, this innovative, sometimes provocative, and always informative television news magazine airs on Cable Access Channel 15 and addresses the community-at-large from the young person's perspective. 242 MAIN Presents strives to provide kids in our community with an opportunity to say what they think and feel, be heard and appreciated, and have fun while they're learning such skills as video photography, interviewing, reporting, and editing. The format of the show usually includes five or six short segments on topics of interest, concern or significance to kids, separated by "fillers" of 30 to 60 seconds in length. A few things our young reporters do are: interview 'people-on-the-street', alternating between silly and serious themes; showcase local and visiting talent in a variety of milieus; explore interesting or unusual programs or educational approaches in area schools; highlight newsworthy events or issues with question and commentary; and try their hand at comedy, or producing public service announcements or mock commercials.

242 MAIN Presents continues to be a vital, creative, and healthy outlet for children to be seen, heard, and involved in making a difference in our community by telling it like it is.



*One of the five award-winning New England marching bands in the Kid's Day Parade.*



*Sara Shortt performs at 242 MAIN's Friday Night Coffeehouse.*

## **Performing Arts Program**

Over the years, the Mayor's Youth Office and The Flynn Theatre for the Performing Arts have intermittently collaborated to offer quality performing arts programming for children of varying ages as well as adults. All classes and workshops are taught by leaders in their respective fields, and community resources such as Contois Auditorium, The Flynn Theatre, 242 MAIN, and the Fletcher Free Library provide the backdrops for programming focusing on voice, theatre, and movement. This year's multi-dimensional fare set an exceptional stage for aspiring performers to learn and hone their chosen craft in such classes as Advanced Acting Technique, Afro-Caribbean Dance, Voice, Expression, Comic Relief, Creative Theatre and Movement, On-Camera Acting, Improvisation, and Developing A Personal Acting Technique. We were extremely fortunate to have an exceptional group of instructors including Hugh Cronister, Darri Johnson, Richard Gonzales, Jody Albright, Rachel Bissex, Julia Kiley, Jennifer Borthwick-Leslie, and Amy Bernstein.

We're happy to report that this year's programming was well-received and well-

attended, and we look forward to continued cooperative efforts with The Flynn Theatre as well as expanded community input and participation in those efforts.

## **Holiday Party**

As in years' past, this year's Holiday Party, sponsored and hosted by Tony Pomerleau and his family, brought a great deal of joy and happiness to the lives of many less fortunate neighbors and friends in our community. On December 20th, young and old alike gathered together in the Adirondack Room at the Radisson Hotel to share and rejoice in the spirit of the holiday season. The Burlington Boys Club, King Street Area Youth Program, Sara Holbrook Center, Women Helping Battered Women, Old North End Community Association, and the City Kids Program enjoyed bringing a little extra warmth and attention to a number of children and families through this event. A number of residents from 10 North Champlain elderly housing project also expressed their delight at being included. Many other people who were not affiliated with any of these groups but were feeling a bit lonely or blue added their warmth and merry-making to this wonderful day.

The festivities included many memorable events for people to carry with them throughout the holidays and the New Year. A sumptuous 'turkey with all the fixins' buffet luncheon was served, followed by a generous giving of gifts to all the children present. Spirited and traditional entertainment was performed by the Project Harmony Singers and Jon Gailmor, and family portraits were taken and sent to families and friends as a reminder of this very special day.

## **Halloween Party**

In a joint effort to provide kids of all ages with fun, safe, and interesting activities, the Mayor's Youth Office, Officer Friendly and the Burlington Police Department again collaborated on a huge Halloween Party this year with the help of U.V.M.'s Volunteers-In-Action. Open to the public and free of charge, Memorial Auditorium was where the action was for younger trick-or-treaters ages K-6. While a live DJ spun tunes, kids visited the





*People of all ages enjoyed the Kid's Day festivities on the Marketplace.*

haunted house in Memorial's dressing rooms, had their fate revealed by a fortune teller, and played games such as Bop the Cop, Pin the Wart on the Witch, bean bag toss into the pumpkin, and Twister. There was also a Costume Contest held where kids with outstanding costumes in several categories were awarded prizes, and a free raffle gave many other children prizes to bring home as well. Of course, in the Halloween tradition, an abundance of free goodies such as ice cream, candy, and soda was available throughout the night. Middle school and high school students were invited to a free Halloween Dance Party at 242 MAIN, with music by "The Cuts", and many kids showed up in and out of costume to celebrate the night by sharing music, laughter, and a scary story or two.

### **Battle Of The Bands**

Each year, aspiring young musicians from bands all over Vermont vie to win Burlington's Battle Of The Bands. The 'Battle' gives hot, new talent the opportunity and the audience to play their original repertoire to, and hopefully go on to the often-dreamed-of rock glory. Perhaps what makes this annual event so successful is that the audience is an eclectic mix who shares the common bond of appreci-

ating original music for its artistic contribution. Indeed, the Battle Of The Bands generates unrivaled support from the music community, who's anxious each year to lend a helping hand to the winning bands by donating such prizes as brand new musical equipment, recording time at a local studio, or designing a new logo. The judges of the 'Battle' are a diversified, dedicated, and discerning group, selected from popular local bands, entertainment agencies, radio stations, and the press, making this one tough battle to win, but certainly well worth the fight.

We are extremely pleased to sponsor this exciting and always different event each year, and want to take this opportunity to thank the many, many people who contribute to its ongoing success.

In conclusion, I'd like to especially thank staff members Sherri Molleur, Kathy Lawrence, Rachel Bissex, and Jennifer Borthwich-Leslie, and interns Karen Suchar, Kristina Anderson, and Kathy Biscardi, as well as the numerous volunteers for the unlimited amounts of time and energy they contributed throughout the year. The Mayor's Youth Office staff is here to serve you. Each of us has our own area of expertise but we work together as a team on the programs and activities. If you have any questions, ideas, concerns or suggestions, please feel free to call or visit us.