

Carthage Main Street Youth Program



Photo: Carthage Main Street Youth Advisory Council group. Photo Credit: City of Carthage Main Street

Recently we asked members if anyone had established a youth advisory group for downtown. Cindy Deloney from the City of Carthage Main Street Program responded and graciously shared helpful information about how she and the Carthage Main Street Advisory Council started a youth group last year and its impact on downtown.

Cindy and the Main Street Advisory Council got started by researching how to start a downtown youth group and found a number of resources that helped them develop bylaws, a process for applying, and a plan for getting the group off the ground.

To be considered for service, students from Carthage High School are required to apply to the Main Street Youth Advisory Council (also known as the "YAC"). They must complete an application form, write an essay about downtown and community service, and get a teacher recommendation. Ten kids applied during the first round and all were accepted. Four additional slots were recently filled, leaving two spots open (the YAC bylaws allow up to 16 council members).

All actions and activities of the YAC must be reviewed and approved by the Carthage Main Street Advisory Council.

When the council was first initiated over the summer, the group met frequently to participate in training and get started on the first downtown event and project. The council is scheduled to meet once a month, although there was a hiatus in the fall as the Carthage High School marched to state football championships (Go Bulldogs!). In October the YAC hosted their first event – a Homecoming Street Dance - held the Saturday after the homecoming game.

Council members were responsible for planning all aspects of the event – hiring a band, decorations, recruiting sponsors, and selling tables. They also filmed a commercial with help from high school faculty to promote the event that was shown during football games.



Photo: YAC group during filming of their commercial promoting their downtown Homecoming Street Dance. Credit: City of Carthage Main Street

The council is also raising money for a downtown project - to add a life size chessboard to the park on the square where the courthouse once stood.

YAC members are required to attend a chamber event each semester and to work at least 2 hours each semester in the Carthage Main Street office. Cindy said the students were a huge help during the past year and that she is really going to miss the group of seniors that will be graduating this spring.

We are so proud of Carthage Main Street for getting teenagers involved and hope that more Texas downtowns will consider a similar program that will engage the next generation.

Learn more about the Carthage YAC program on the Carthage Main Street website: <http://www.carthagetexas.us/main-street>

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