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In Neighborhoods

BUILDING A **HEALTHY** SACRAMENTO

Young Voices Making a Difference

BY KATE GONZALES

Every Friday night, a group of teenagers gather in support of a Sacramento ballot measure that most of them will be too young to vote on. But that does not mean they'll be silent.

Measure Y — the Sacramento Children's Fund and Marijuana Business Operations Tax — proposes placing a 5 percent tax on medical marijuana sales in the City of Sacramento to invest directly into youth programs. The teens are collecting young peoples' thoughts on the kinds of programs Sacramento youth need, and if the measure is approved, it could provide funding to fulfill those needs.

The East Bay Asian Youth Center received a grant from The California Endowment to organize young people who wanted to improve the lives of their peers. The center's Youth Action Team in Sacramento is using this grant funding to better organize and expand its scope.

Last year, the team designed and distributed a survey to get youth opinions on how potential Measure Y funds should be spent. They conducted surveys at middle schools, several high schools and at the Sacramento County Juvenile Hall.

"Youth who are from under-served communities, impacted by violence or other factors, have barriers to being successful," says East Bay Asian Youth Center Program Director Leesai Yang. "Yet they often understand the programs they need the most."

Respondents said that if the measure passes, money should be spent on afterschool

programs, youth centers, and internship and work opportunities. Recognizing the importance of safe spaces and greater opportunities, the Youth Action Team would support the construction of a wellness center, where students can access services.

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Christopher Phakeovilay, Youth Action Team member

"I feel like youth need an opportunity," says Christopher Phakeovilay, an intern and sophomore at Luther Burbank High School who helped develop the survey. "Youth these days don't have opportunities — they really don't."

If Measure Y is approved by voters, the team will share information from the survey with the City Council in hopes of influencing how these funds are spent. For now, they are developing a plan for door-to-door campaigning and event outreach throughout Sacramento to raise awareness on the measure.

Only a handful of Youth Action Team members will be old enough to vote for



East Bay Asian Youth Center Youth Action Team interns Tommy Lee and Yia Lee work with a group of teens to plan advocacy and outreach efforts. Photo by Kate Gonzales

Measure Y when it appears on the June ballot. Dee Khang is one of them.

"I'm excited," she says. "I'm happy I get to vote now."

Khang, along with the other interns, will continue to advocate for a brighter outlook for Sacramento's youth.

"They say the kids are the future," Phakeovilay says. "If the kids are the future, then the kids should be able to plan for the future."

BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

In 2010, The California Endowment launched a 10-year, \$1 billion plan to improve the health of 14 challenged communities across the state. Over the 10 years, residents, community-based organizations and public institutions will work together to address the socioeconomic and environmental challenges contributing to the poor health of their communities.

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Your **ZIP code** shouldn't predict how long you'll live — but it does. Staying healthy requires much more than doctors and diets. Every day, our surroundings and activities affect how long — and how well — we'll live.

Health Happens in Neighborhoods. Health Happens in Schools.
Health Happens with Prevention.

For more information on the
EBAYC Youth Action Team,
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PAID WITH A GRANT FROM THE CALIFORNIA ENDOWMENT