

Young Americans impact Holyoke

Holyoke was blasted with a burst of energy last week.

From the minute they stepped off the bus and into the homes and hearts of Holyoke, close to 40 Young Americans were spreading good will and optimism throughout the community.

Their enthusiasm multiplied when they embraced 139 area students in grades 4-12, including 104 Holyoke youth.

Three days of workshops found Young Americans focusing on providing experiences and tools that yield individual and personal growth, as well as understanding.

Many smiles, much laughter and lots of hard work were evident as Young Americans became not only teachers, but strong encouragers and promoters of self worth.

Young Americans gain training for a year in Corona, Calif., then audition for international YA tours, where they present three-day workshops in schools.

Purpose of the one-year college classes in California is to provide talented Young American student performers (age 15-21) with education in music, dance, performance and teaching.

Students selected for the Young American tours then use their training to support music in schools—touting its inherent benefits. They do this by conducting international music outreach workshops in educational facilities of all types throughout the world.

Scoop'n the News

Written by Brenda Johnson Brandt

It was this workshop setting that was coordinated in Holyoke Jan. 31-Feb. 2 and culminated in a two-hour concert featuring the workshop participants performing alongside the Young Americans.

Holyoke music teachers Pat Wiebers and Marcia Dalton should be commended for their part in coordinating the Young American visit in Holyoke.

It was an emotional time when Dalton acknowledged the impact of the Young American visitors on the local participants. Students were led out of their comfort zones to showcase their talent and abilities, to have fun at the same time and to build confidence.

What an experience!

Young Americans themselves performed a fabulous concert for the first half of last Tuesday's program. Their talents and energy levels exploded as the community watched their hard work come alive.

The auditorium was packed with an awed audience. And when all Young Americans and 139 youth workshop participants were performing, it was not only a full stage, but the aisles were lined with young singers and dancers.

Energy was abundant!

Our local talent stepped right in time with the encouraging visitors, and I lost more than one tear as I watched individual youth burst forth with their own special touch to the evening show.

They jumped, they laughed, they clapped, they danced, they sang out, they felt good about themselves. Wow!

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Young Americans were gracious and appreciative in the homestay settings and quickly became part of the families who hosted them. In three quick days, they became members of this community.

For local youth, Young Americans brought a lifetime opportunity to town. Holyoke can be proud to have hosted such a worthwhile experience.

Many staff members for the Young American program, in California and on tour, work as volunteers. Most are former Young Americans themselves.

All are dedicated to the proposition that music and dance, along with the enthusiasm, optimism and good will of the student performers, will make the world a better place.

It worked in Holyoke.