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MARLBORO TOWNSHIP
CITIZENS WHO SERVED
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MARLBORO
TEEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE
TAC

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Marlboro Township's Teen Advisory Committee

Tapping Into the Power of Our Teens

By Larry Rosen
Teen Advisory Committee
Founder and Deputy Mayor,
Marlboro Township

n August 2007, at a time when Marlboro Township Mayor Jon Hornik was still a candidate for Mayor, he became intrigued by a small group of 30-40 teenagers in Marlboro who had been working on developing their leadership skills and performing community service.

"I was invited to give a civics presentation to this energetic group of young men and women and to explain to them why I was interested in becoming Mayor," said Mayor Hornik. "After spending only a few hours with them, I saw firsthand their raw talents and energy and instinctively knew that the teens of Marlboro were an untapped resource for our town."

Mayor Hornik met with the Teen Advisory Committee (known as "TAC") on two other occasions prior to the November 2007 mayoral election (in which he swept every voting district) and was so impressed with TAC that one of his goals in his *100 Day Plan for Progress in Marlboro* was that TAC would become a Township Committee upon his taking office in January 2008.

"When Mayor Hornik won the election, he took the time and made special mention of the Teen Advisory Committee in his inauguration speech, which was very empowering to the teens and turned out to be the tipping point for TAC," said Gordon Loeb, one of TAC's adult facilitators and a co-founder.

TAC now has over 400 members and is by far the most popular and fastest growing committee in Marlboro Township. The committee has meetings in alternate months, which are run entirely by TAC's teens (the membership base annually elects an Executive Board that sets the meeting agendas and runs the meetings).

"From the outset, we emphasized to the kids that TAC is a leadership group dedicated to developing community leaders and performing community service, and not a social club," said Natalie Loeb, another of TAC's adult facilitators. Guided accordingly, TAC adopted the slogan *DO GOOD!*, and its initiatives and accomplishments to date are impressive.

Seizing upon the reality that the senior citizen demographic is one of the fastest growing groups of computer and mobile phone users, TAC teens regularly visit the homes of Marlboro Township senior citizens and sit side-by-side with them, training them on the basics and also the nuances of computer and mobile phone use. The teens create e-mail accounts and address books for them, and teach the seniors how to create, send, and save e-mails, change ring-tones, and program speed dial for frequently called numbers such as their children, grandchildren, doctors and pharmacists.

MARLBORO'S TEEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE NOW HAS OVER 400 MEMBERS AND IS BY FAR THE MOST POPULAR AND FASTEST GROWING COMMITTEE IN MARLBORO TOWNSHIP.

"Many senior citizens do not know how to 'surf the net' or change options on their mobile phones. TAC's teens, who grew up in the age of technology, are the perfect mentors for our senior citizens," said Mayor Hornik. "Also, because they have not had children in our school system in decades, senior citizens understandably feel that they are paying a disproportionate amount in property taxes for schools and education. When one of our TAC teens spends time in the home of a senior citizen teaching them how to use the computer or a mobile phone, it is truly a case of 'your tax dollars at work,' which our senior citizens greatly appreciate."

Residents of Marlboro's assisted living facilities learn to play the Wii video game thanks to TAC teens. Playing Wii helps promote physical and mental activity, and provides a good time and a few laughs for members of Marlboro's elder population.

Picutred, L to right, at the Teen Advisory Committee Booth on Marlboro Day are Marlboro Councilman Frank LaRocca, Mayor Jon Hornik, Deputy Mayor/TAC Founder Larry Rosen and Teen Advisory Council Executive Committee members Spencer Krug, Alec Loeb, Banghi Laki, and Gregory Doukas. At the far right are TAC Adult Facilitators, Natalie Loeb and Gordon Loeb.

There is rarely a week that goes by without a request for TAC assistance, which comes from the municipal government, community based organizations, houses of worship, sports and recreation organizations, town clubs and elsewhere. Whether it is the enticement of community service credits, the opportunity to add anecdotal content for an impending college application, or simple altruism, within minutes of a *DO GOOD!* opportunity being e-mailed to the TAC membership base, more volunteers than are usually needed respond. They are ready, willing, and able to help.

Recently Marlboro's Green Team, chaired by Marlboro Township Council President Frank LaRocca, led a community-wide environmental initiative whereby Marlboro residents were encouraged to switch from traditional incandescent light bulbs to the more environmentally friendly compact fluorescent light bulbs (CFLs). Said LaRocca, "We needed many volunteers to walk the 30 square miles of our town and distribute free CFL light bulbs to our residents, so we naturally turned to TAC. The next thing we knew we had 135 smiling and motivated teenagers willing to spend their Saturday morning walking through town, knocking on doors, handing out the free bulbs, and educating our residents on the

environmental importance of using CFL bulbs! We would not have been able to reach over 3,000 homes that morning and help reduce the carbon footprint in our town without a group like TAC. They were incredible!"

In addition, TAC recently collected, and then with generous assistance from US Congressman Rush Holt arranged for overseas shipment of almost 400 coats and jackets donated by Marlboro

residents to be delivered to an orphanage in Afghanistan identified by Lt. Colonel Jeff Cantor, who is also a Councilman in Marlboro Township.

Residents of Marlboro's assisted living facilities have been introduced to the Wii video game by TAC teens. Playing Wii promotes physical and mental activity, and provides a good time and a few laughs for members of Marlboro's elder population.

Teen Advisory Committee members assist with a blood drive.

In addition, TAC teens serve as on-going "buddies" to special needs children in Marlboro who are faced with special physical and mental challenges. TAC teens are always present at town volunteer events, including at Arbor Day planting trees, Alliance events promoting the anti-drug and alcohol message to younger kids, or anywhere else where volunteers are needed. Their presence is always willing, with a smile, and in strong numbers. TAC teens understand the importance of giving back to their community, are a shining star in Marlboro, and a source of pride for the entire community.

Marlboro's TAC program has recently attracted the attention of other New Jersey municipalities, who have expressed an interest in setting up a teen advisory committee in their own towns and cities. In response to this growing interest, on March 11, 2010, Mayor Hornik hosted an informational meeting about Marlboro's TAC program, which was attended by representatives of Sayreville, Middletown, Woodbridge, Asbury Park and Howell.

"If every town and city in New Jersey tapped into its teen population and empowered them to '*DO GOOD!*,' then every town and city in New Jersey will in very short order become a better place to live, work, and raise a family," said Mayor Hornik. "Marlboro's teens are fantastic, and we greatly appreciate all that they do for our community."

For more information about Marlboro's TAC program, or for assistance in starting a similar program, please visit the Marlboro Township website at www.marlboro-nj.gov/TAC.html or call Mayor Jon Hornik at 732-536-0200. ▲

"IN A WORLD WHERE TEENAGERS ARE GENERALLY KNOWN TO BE SELF-INTERESTED, I AM PROUD TO BE A MARLBORO TEEN DEFINED BY GIVING, NOT TAKING."

By Zack Winnegrad

If you take a journey through Marlboro, you will find some pretty incredible things. Visit some of our assisted living facilities, and you will see teenagers brightening the residents' day by teaching them how to play the Nintendo Wii. At the Recreation Center, you may find the town's teens volunteering at a blood drive, or preparing to help plant trees on Arbor Day. If you visit some of Marlboro's homes, you will find that most of them have at least one energy efficient CFL bulb, brought to them by a group of volunteering teenagers through the Town's Green Team initiative. If you are impressed after seeing this, you should be; such occurrences cannot be seen in many other towns. In Marlboro, teenagers take on an adult role in benefiting the community, and even better, they are organized and efficient. The source of this proactive, community-serving spirit is Marlboro's Teen Advisory Committee.

TAC is an organization of Marlboro's teenagers with a simple goal and motto: "Do Good." For over two years, hundreds of eager TAC members have been doing exactly that: volunteering their time and effort in many community serving functions. However, TAC has offered more to the community than extra helping hands. The enthusiasm of TAC to find ways to benefit Marlboro has invigorated the town's spirit of giving and helping others. Those who think of worthy community service initiatives can know that TAC will be ready with hundreds of teenagers ready to help. By bringing a large new demographic into community service, TAC has made many initiatives possible in Marlboro, that could not otherwise have been accomplished.

Through its determination to give without any desire for compensation, TAC has brought new pride to Marlboro, and a stronger sense of community. TAC has made teenagers want to help their community. As a member, I can say that it has certainly helped to motivate me. In a world where teenagers are generally known to be self-interested, I am proud to be a Marlboro teen defined by giving, not taking. Thanks to TAC, in Marlboro we have young adults who are ready to help, ready to give, and ready to "Do Good."