

Valdosta Youth Council Inaugural Year 2015-2016

Under the direction of Mayor John Gayle and his appointed advisory board, the 14-member Valdosta Youth Council (VYC) successfully completed their inaugural 2015-2016 council year with a variety of accomplishments, meeting all expectations for their first year. The VYC was created for youth to build leadership skills and learn about civic responsibility, to gain a better understanding of municipal government, and to prepare youth for a lifetime of public and community service.

Throughout the 2015-16 school year, VYC members embraced their mission and accomplished the following:

- Gained an understanding and appreciation of municipal government by meeting monthly with a variety of city leaders.
- Established an anti-bullying campaign, partnering with a local author and the Valdosta Police Department to plan an anti-bullying event in the public schools for October 2016 (National Anti-Bullying Month).
- Oversaw the 2016 “If I Were Mayor” Essay Contest (which is no longer hosted by the Georgia Municipal Association).
- Collectively completed more than 112 community service hours—a minimum of 8 hours each.
- Won 1st place in the category of “Best Group Tree Hug” in the Valdosta Tree Commission’s Hug A Tree Photo Contest.
- Participated in the Valdosta Christmas Tree Lighting and other city-sponsored events.
- Established the Teen Talk show on Metro 17 with the assistance of Metro 17’s Marcus McConico, to discuss issues being addressed each month at VYC meetings.
- Established a VYC Facebook page for local youth to follow the work of the VYC, to be informed on youth issues, and to discover ways to be engaged in their local government.
- Adopted a .6 mile portion of N. Lee Street for monthly cleanups.
- Ten of the 14 VYC members have made commitments to continue on the council for the 2016-2017 school year!

The members of the inaugural VYC: Amelia Barnett, Rachel Carter, Drew Correll, Dante’ Echols, Matthew Hall, Charlesie Hammond, Jalith Harding, Makayla Jackson, Keria Jones, Erin Kelly, Zion Leggett, Abbi Long, Tay Ramsey and Christy Williams.

The appointed members of the VYC Advisory Board: Councilman Ben Norton, City Clerk Teresa Bolden, Valdosta Middle School Educator Lynn Orenstein, J.L. Newbern Middle School Guidance Counselor Jennifer Williams, and Public Information Officer Sementa Mathews.