

One blistering hot evening recently a friend and I attended a baseball game at Roosevelt Park between the Reds and the Braves of the Old North End Baseball League that is sponsored and coordinated by the Mayor's Youth Office.

We were very impressed by the demeanor and skills demonstrated by the boys and girls who played, and the supportive attitude displayed by the coaches, Rick Whittlesey and Mica Cassara. The numerous fans and participants all seemed to have a really fun time.

The jovial, constructive atmosphere that the baseball game exuded is consistent with other activities that have been sponsored by the Mayor's Youth Office, including the recent production of "Grease" by the "after-school" School for the Performing Arts, the annual Burlington People's Circus, and the participation of teen-agers in the tree planting beautification program.

But the office's initiatives have not been limited to recreational-type events. The Mayor's Youth Office has worked with the Department of Social and Rehabilitative Services and the Chittenden County Court Diversion program to fight the twin problems of juvenile delinquency and unemployment by setting up a cooperative garden project in which low income and disadvantaged kids work off community service or for money for themselves or to pay restitution.

As Sanders has stated many times, the theory behind the Youth Office is not very complicated: if kids are playing baseball, planting trees, working jobs, or practicing for a theater production, they will have less need to act destructively for money or recognition.

The Youth Office is a wise long-term investment for the city, and Sanders and the director of the office, Jane Driscoll, should be commended for their roles in helping members of the community reduce their fear of teen-agers.

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