



You are using an outdated version of Internet Explorer. For a faster, safer browsing experience [UPGRADE TODAY](#)

Editor [Camille C. Spencer](#): Heard some news you want us to check out? Let me know: [Camille.Spencer@patch.com](mailto:Camille.Spencer@patch.com)

**Summer Discounts!**  
 1-on-1 In Home Tutoring  
 Say Goodbye to Summer Backslide  
 813-949-4499 [CLICK HERE FOR WEBSITE](#)

- [Home](#)
- [News](#)
- [Events](#)
- [Places](#)
- [Marketplace](#)
- [Q&A](#)
- [Volunteer](#)
- Search

[Schools](#), [Volunteers in the News](#), [The Neighborhood Files](#)

## YMCA Develops Strong Leaders Through Teen Leader's Club

Teens can better the community and themselves

By [Deborah Bostock-Kelley](#) | [Email the author](#) | June 1, 2011 | [Print](#) | [0 Comments](#)

[Email](#) [Tweet](#)

[View full size](#)



### Tell Your Neighbors About Patch

The three pillars read, "For Youth Development, For Healthy Living, For Social Responsibility." They are the foundation for the YMCA's Teen Leader's Club.

Up to 35 YMCA members meet from 7 p.m. until 8 p.m. every Tuesday of the month at the Bob Sierra Youth & Family Center, intent on bettering both their physical fitness as well as their community.

Evan Eleff, senior program director for the YMCA, said the group is a leadership development program for teens aged 13 to 18.

"It is based primarily in volunteerism and physical fitness," he said. "Our goal is to help everyone reach their full potential."

A \$30 annual fee for YMCA members allows any student to join who meets the following criteria: A minimum GPA of 3.0, 100 hours of availability and the ability to attend at least 75 percent of all meetings.

Each Tuesday offers a different meeting: planning and calendar, fitness, committee breakout, and a social and team-building meeting that is sometimes held off property.

The club's teens are exposed to different types of fitness activities that range from ultimate frisbee and circuit training to zumba, yoga and kick-boxing. Occasionally, personal trainers and group exercise people come in and work with the members.

No matter what Tuesday, students have the opportunity to stay fit.

"The expectation is to come ready to do something physical," Eleff said. "Always dress to perform."

During the planning and committee meetings, to make sure their fitness isn't just once a month, students have a fitness activity or challenge.

"We also have fitness testing – in the beginning to see where you are as a starting point, in the middle and the end to see how far you've progressed," Eleff said.

He explained that the program is primarily a school year program, tapering down for the summer and preparing for the following school year. The orientation meeting is in September, with the date yet to be decided.

"One of the neat things about Leaders Club is it is set up to be teen led and teen driven," said Eleff. "Ultimately, I should have the role of a facilitator. The leaders themselves – the teens – should be directing themselves, choosing their own activities, their own volunteer opportunities, figuring out money allocation for any of the projects we take on – how they want to operate overall. "

Teen Leader's President Jake Bittle, a sophomore and student reporter at Steinbrenner High School, found himself on the other side of an interview when he reflected on his three years as a member of the program.

"I like the camaraderie - the unity of the group, being able to help the community, the creativity that gets put into the projects, servicing the YMCA, the friendships, the teamwork, and the opportunity it (the club) presents me."

Besides coaching younger members, refereeing, running concession stands, tutoring afterschoolers, and assisting with YMCA events, the club's members focus on one signature event per month, starting with Phantomfest in October.

"Phantomfest is a Halloween-themed sleepover, and they do everything for it. From about 8 to midnight, the leaders are running everything," said Eleff. "They set up the haunted hay ride, a haunted house, games and activities for the younger kids. It's really community-driven. It's run by the teens that grew up going to Phantomfest, and every year they try to one-up themselves."

Members of the Teen Leader's Club care not only about their local community, but globally as well. Jake explained his planned that fundraising goal next year would assist an African organization with its fight against AIDS.

"Raising money here, we can indirectly help a much more important cause," said Jake. "Next year, we can put our focus on that."

The Teen Leader's Club is not all work and no play. Besides their social Tuesday, twice a year members have a special Friday through Sunday event, a winter and spring rally where teens from many different YMCA Clubs get an opportunity to meet.

The Teen Leaders Club also allows high school students to earn the volunteer hours required for graduation.

"We are not necessarily about earning the hours as much as we are about building the individuals. We ask how can you take the leaderships things we do here and introduce them into other aspects of your life," explained Eleff. "What else are you doing that's going to separate you from someone with the same grades and same number of hours? How did you impact someone's life through Leader's Club? Every year, we sit down and talk with the group and ask what your legacy is going to be for this year."

"In Leader's Club, I've learned about devotion and persistence, keeping to a goal. I've gained a lot of knowledge about myself and my capabilities as a leader," said Jake. "That's what it (the Club) brings out in you – your capabilities for leadership."

To learn more about the Teen Leaders Club, visit [www.ymca.org](http://www.ymca.org) or email [evan.eleff@tampaymca.org](mailto:evan.eleff@tampaymca.org).

**Related Topics:** [13-18](#), [College](#), [Fitness](#), [Fun](#), [School Year](#), [Teens](#), [Volunteer](#), [the Bob Sierra Youth & Family Center YMCA](#), and [volunteer hours](#)

Interested in a follow-up to this article?   Keep me posted!

[Email](#) [Tweet](#)

[Follow this article](#) [Submit a tip](#) [Add photos & video](#) [0 Comments](#)

**Leave a comment**

Submit ›

**Advertise**

Advertise on Patch and reach potential customers in your backyard and beyond. Click here for more information.

[Learn more »](#)

**Volunteer**

If you want to help local causes, or your cause needs local help, your next click should be right here.

[Learn more »](#)

**Contribute**

- [Send us news tips](#)
- [Put an event on the calendar](#)
- [Announce something to everyone](#)

Patch Info  
[About Us](#)  
[Jobs](#)  
[Advertise](#)  
[Terms of Use](#)  
[Privacy Policy](#)

Get in Touch  
[Help](#)  
[Contact Us](#)  
[Patch Blog](#)

Patch Initiatives  
[PatchU](#)  
[Patch.org](#)

Goodies  
[Newsletters](#)  
[Widgets](#)



Copyright © 2011 Patch. All Rights Reserved.

