



DATE: March 19, 2018

TO: Mayor Chelminiak and City Councilmembers

FROM: Helena Stephens, Family, Youth & Teen Services Manager, 452-2834
Parks and Community Services Department

SUBJECT: Youth Link Board – 24th Youth Involvement Conference

The City of Bellevue's Youth Link program will host its 24th Youth Involvement Conference on Friday, March 23, 2018. This biennial student-led conference is an open invitation to Bellevue's middle and high school students to develop their "youth voice". Bellevue and Issaquah Public School, private school, and home-schooled students are invited to participate, with an anticipated 300-400 youth expected to attend. At the day-long conference, students learn life skills and make recommendations to elected/public officials and community leaders about community priorities.

Several workshops are scheduled for the morning, including "Communication for Building Bridges", "Think Beyond Green", and "Be the Change". During the afternoon session, youth traditionally discuss six topics including Education, Employment, Health, Recreation, Safety, and Transportation and determine the top 10 priorities to discuss with community leaders at later date.

The Youth Planning Team has invited two local high school students, Rhiannon Rasaretnam (Tacoma) and Emilia Allard (Seattle), coordinators of the upcoming "Save Our Lives – Seattle" March, to give the keynote address. The students' remarks will focus on the following:

- Their personal experience in student leadership;
- Why the "safety" issue moved them to involvement; and
- An invitation to attend the march following the conference on Saturday, March 24.

This year's Youth Involvement Conference is an opportunity for students to discuss themes in a safe space, such as safety and gun violence in schools and to develop their opinions. Youth will share their opinions with community leaders after the conference. Since 1990, the Youth Link Program has provided an opportunity for middle and high school students to develop their "youth voice" and advance as community leaders — while addressing the concerns and priorities of the Bellevue youth community.