Citrus Heights Serves: Youth Leading Through Service

A Message from Mayor MariJane Lopez-Taff

As I continue my monthly focus on service in Citrus Heights, I want to highlight one area especially close to my heart: our youth. Some of the most meaningful service happening in our community comes from young people who care about others, want to make a difference, and are ready to lead. Every time a student volunteers, helps at a community event, joins a leadership program, shares ideas, or steps forward to serve, they help strengthen our city. They are also building skills that will stay with them for life including leadership, teamwork, communication, and civic responsibility.

When youth are engaged, communities grow stronger. We build connection, create pride of place, and help prepare the next generation of residents who will one day lead, serve, and care for Citrus Heights. That spirit was on full display recently during our Youth in Government Day at City Hall. Students from Mesa Verde High School and San Juan High School spent the day learning how local government works and how decisions are made. They explored topics such as city budgeting, public safety, roads and infrastructure, planning and development, and community engagement. Students also participated in a mock City Council meeting, worked through team challenge projects, and shared thoughtful recommendations for the future of our city. They brought curiosity, creativity, and a clear desire to be part of something bigger than themselves. It was an encouraging reminder that the future of Citrus Heights is bright.

We also recently invited students across our community to share feedback through a citywide youth survey. Participation was strong, and the message was clear: local youth care deeply about safety, belonging, activities for teens, clean public spaces, mental well-being, and having a voice in decisions that affect them. Many also expressed interest in leadership and service opportunities. We heard them, and we are taking action.

That is why I am excited to announce the new Youth Advisory Commission, which creates a meaningful seat at the table for local students. The Commission will include 13 Citrus Heights students in grades 8 through 12 and will meet monthly at City Hall from September through May. Members will advise the City Council and staff on youth issues, recommend ideas and programs, participate in community projects, and help strengthen youth engagement across Citrus Heights. More information can be found at www.citrusheights.net/youthadvisorycommission

Here are some additional ways youth can engage in Citrus Heights with a heart for service: library volunteer programs, parks and recreation classes and activities, community clean-up efforts, school-based service clubs, neighborhood beautification projects, public

meetings and City Council participation, internships and career exploration opportunities, public safety awareness programs, local nonprofit service opportunities, environmental stewardship projects, event support roles, and peer mentorship or tutoring programs. If you are a student who wants to make a difference, I encourage you to apply for the Youth Advisory Commission or find another way to get involved. If you are a parent, teacher, coach, or mentor, please encourage a young person in your life to step forward and serve.

The future of Citrus Heights will be shaped by the next generation. Our responsibility today is to create opportunities for them to lead now. When young people choose service, they strengthen our city today and shape its future tomorrow.

With gratitude and appreciation,

MariJane Lopez-Taff
Mayor, City of Citrus Heights