

Leadership Academy Prepares Youth for Civic Involvement



Leadership Academy graduates, City of Monterey Park commissioners and staff celebrate the inaugural year of the high school-age youth program.

Five Monterey Park high school students were honored at the May 16 city council meeting for their graduation from the Monterey Park Youth Leadership Academy. Residents Colette Han, Liam Iglesias, Oona Iglesias, Kassandra Vera and Annie Wu completed the inaugural year of the new program started by the city's Recreation and Parks Commission.

The program seeks to teach young residents how to become civically engaged in their community and hopes its graduates will continue on to become young leaders in the city. Commissioners Randall Avila and Paul Duke Lee who created the program are lifelong residents who saw a lack of opportunity for high schools students to get involved in the city.

Students who graduated from the program were required to attend ten monthly classes where they learned from various elected officials, city commissioners and local community volunteers. At the conclusion of the program students worked together to develop an initiative or ordinance to address a problem in the city. The students chose to pursue the revival of the Holiday Festival of Lights initiative that promotes holiday spirit from residents by encouraging residents to decorate their homes during the winter holiday season. All five students presented their positions to the city council at the May 3 council meeting.

The Monterey Park Police Officers Association funded academic scholarships for all of the program's graduates. The Monterey Park Youth Leadership Academy will begin its second year in September. Applications are being accepted now and are available by contacting the Recreation and Community Services department at 626-307-1388. All Monterey Park residents who are currently enrolled in high school are eligible to participate in the program