

Team Delta Max Task Force in transition mode

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Team Delta Max Task Force is undergoing a transformation.

The task force, the adult advisory group that assists Team Delta Max, a student-led, drug- and alcohol-free group at Upper Arlington High School, is in talks with the city of Upper Arlington to fill the role of the city's now-defunct Youth and Family Council.

Assistant city manager Joe Valentino said Team Delta Max Task Force representatives approached him in December about how to redefine that organization's mission. Valentino oversaw the Youth and Family Council during his tenure as the city's Parks and Recreation director from 2001 to 2005.

Valentino has a long history of working with young people. He served as youth minister for the Upper Arlington Lutheran Church for 24 years before going to work for the city.

"Working with students and, particularly, the idea of helping them not make bad choices is something I've been involved in most of my career," Valentino said.

Valentino said he plans to meet next month with UAHS teacher Erin Mayne, who oversees Team Delta Max, along with Joe Roush, the city's probation officer, and parent Kim Stands, who are also Team Delta Max Task Force members, to discuss the organization's future.

"We are going to restructure how it operates and try to set some vision and some goals as we go forward," Valentino said. "We will look at, how do we support what the students are doing and how do we help parents and families have those conversations with their kids and have policymakers and school board folks involved."

Mayne said she is optimistic that Valentino will provide helpful guidance on engaging the community to find positive solutions to underage drinking.

"We're at a time where we want to define what the next stage is," Mayne said. "We have a small group of us who meet pretty regularly. As we met in December, we asked ourselves, where are we headed? We talked about a 2009 action plan.

"We always tell young people to create change and make adjustments and do whatever you need to do to be successful. We discussed what would have to be

necessary to get to the next step. Part of the next step was simply taking on a new shape."

A major reason why the Youth and Family Council disbanded last year is because it didn't continue to evolve over the years, Valentino said.

The organization was founded in the late 1990s by then-Upper Arlington City Council member Paula Brooks, who is now a Franklin County commissioner, and included city officials and representatives of the schools and library, as well as parents and youth. The organization brought community leaders together to brainstorm on recreational programs for youth and families.

By the time the Youth and Family Council disbanded, "it had run its course. When it first was started, Paula Brooks really had a passion. It was very structured," Valentino said. "Great idea, worked really well for a number of years. There were some elections and some of those folks were no longer a part of it. The passion waned and it was difficult to get a quorum."

Since its founding in September 2007, the Team Delta Max Task Force has strived to remain relevant and fulfill the mission of engaging the community in supporting youth in drug- and alcohol-free activities, Mayne said.

"We're looking to taking on whatever form will help us continue our work on behalf of our youth," she said.

The Team Delta Max Task Force ultimately may not replace the Youth and Family Council, but it serves an important role, Valentino said.

"Team Delta Max isn't a replacement," he said, "but it sure is going to fill that need as a place where people can express their concerns and get projects done."

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