

SOUTH BOSTON

Teens say: Give peace a chance

As youths meet for a `summit,' a focus on violence

By Hui Feng, Globe Correspondent | September 24, 2006

The Silver Line was more crowded than usual Sept. 15, as hundreds of teens flocked to the twelfth annual Mayor's Youth Summit at the Bank of America Pavilion. Students came from all over the city, many with textbooks in hand and school bags still on their backs.

There were high expectations. Tyeson Bell of Roxbury anticipated the event would be "fun and informational." Later, referring to this year's violence in the city, she said, "It might help what is going on."

Coordinated by the Mayor's Youth Council, the summit aimed to connect teens with peers, resources, and better options for how they spend time after school. The night revolved around the theme of "bigger than your block." In his speech, Mayor Menino urged teens to "brighten your horizons" and to see life in terms of the city, the country, and the world, not just the block.

There was also hope for peace on Boston's streets. Artists from around the city gathered on one stage to share their powerful voices, talented moves, and forceful words. Sofia Snow, a student at Boston Latin Academy who won an award for making positive changes in her community, read from one of her poems: "We can no longer settle for this. I hope for a better day than yesterday."

Snow was not alone in that message. A young girl named Kayla, wearing a T-shirt that reached her knees, rose to declare "I'm here to take back the streets."

Moments later, two girls who identified themselves as sisters of Herman Taylor III of Roxbury, who was shot to death there this summer, described a scene that was familiar to too many members of the audience.

"On July 12, our only brother was killed on the streets of Boston," one said. "It shook our world. . . . We challenge you all with starting peace." At that, the audience roared its approval.

The show incorporated its message into entertainment including jump rope, singing, dragon dance, and everything in between. The crowd danced and sang, and occasionally had to be asked to settle down.

Meanwhile, in back of the pavilion, nearly 100 organizations described the opportunities they offer youths. Programs included art internships, opportunities for student-run radio shows, biking for peace, and much more. Teens surrounded the resource tables for applications and a chance to speak with eager representatives. Roslindale teen Jane

Carper declared that teens need ``new programs that reach out and inform. Kids don't know what's out there."

But it was not all about recruitment. Organizations also hoped to educate youths about current issues. The Boston Student Advisory Group notified teens about the new School Committee policy that forbids schools from locking out tardy students, while Youth for Human Rights offered club starter kits for students to establish human rights awareness chapters in schools.

When the summit came to a conclusion, teens again crowded onto the Silver Line. Their voices and songs rang in the chilly night air. They were excited for the future. And they were hopeful that, one day soon, peace will come.

Hui Feng is a senior at Boston Latin School. ■