

# Times-Free Press

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## COMMUNITY

## Joining the mayor's Youth Council is a great opportunity ... Just ask Eastie's Jackie Barreto

BY JOHN LYNDIS  
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East Boston resident Jackie Barreto heard about the Mayor's Youth Council two years ago from a friend and thought it would be a great opportunity to get more involved in her community and try to tackle some of tough issues facing her peers in the neighborhood.

Barreto, now a senior at East Boston High, was one of two students from Eastie chosen to represent her neighborhood on the council.

"I've been doing it for two years and it's great," said Barreto. "We meet twice a month and address the different issues facing teens and try to find ways to improve youth programs, keep kids out of gangs and improve the quality of life in our neighborhoods."

Because Barreto and the other representative from Eastie, Cassandra Semexant, are high school seniors, this will be their last year on the council. Barreto and Mayor Thomas Menino are encouraging students from Eastie to apply for this rare opportunity to have a voice in city politics.

"I would definitely recommend applying for the chance to be on the council," said Barreto. "It's been a wonderful opportunity and I've enjoyed my work on the council."

Mayor Menino established the council in 1994 to provide Boston's young people with an active role in addressing youth issues. These young advocates are volunteer representatives selected to reach out to Boston teens and let them know about existing opportunities within the city and also to take suggestions on improvements the city can make in youth-oriented efforts.

"The Mayor's Youth Council is not only a great resource for teens living in the city, it is a great opportunity for the teens involved to take active roles representing their neighborhoods and dealing with the issues their peers face," said Menino. "The Youth Council is a way for teens to gain valuable leadership experience and make the city a better place. They are my eyes and ears in the neighborhoods."

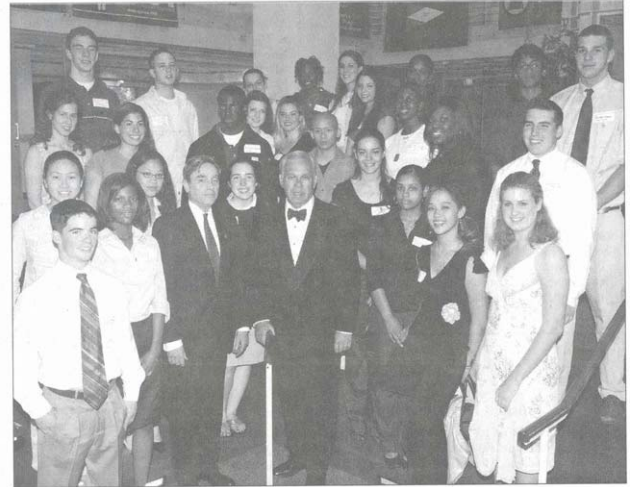
Menino meets with the Youth Council on a regular basis to listen to their concerns and to work on developing positive solutions. The hood Council is open to teens who will be

entering their junior or senior in high school or an alternative program the following September. Boston residency is required and knowledge of teen programs and issues is preferred. Representatives from each neighborhood will be chosen, and duties include attending two evening meetings a month at City Hall, participating in Youth Council meetings with the mayor and other city leaders, having ongoing outreach to peers and youth programs and participating in skill building workshops.

The application can be found online at <http://www.bostonyouthzone.com/myc>.

Applicants must also submit two letters of recommendation written by a teacher, employer, coach, mentor or youth worker, and explain why the applicant would be a good youth council representative.

If mailing, send the forms to: Mayor's Youth Council, Boston City Hall - Room 603, Boston, MA 02201 or fax to 617-635-3496. The application must be returned/ sent in by April 15. Applicants will be contacted in April for group interviews. For more information, contact Patty McMahon at 617-635-4490.



Mayor Thomas Menino and members of the Youth Council.