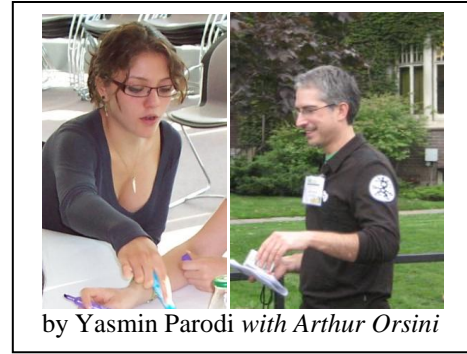


## Pass the permission form, I'll be there.

by **Yasmin Parodi** *with Arthur Orsini*

In certain circumstances skipping school has its benefits.

In my case for instance I found it definitely worthwhile missing out on a day of school to attend the YWALK Youth Forum. Environmental conferences and workshops like YWALK get me away from my everyday teen culture and the usual things that go down in day-to-day high school life. Environmental forums much like YWALK give student leaders a chance to get together and meet people who actually care about important issues similar to their own.



These conferences are places without advertising, and there are no in your face "must haves" being sold: not clothes, music, games, electronic gadgets or fashion. No one telling you who to be. It's a place to learn how to make changes that benefit your world, the people you love, and yourself. You do get bombarded by free stuff though, which is not a problem by me. You get thrown a plate of fresh ideas, and enthusiasm about the things that people have done and are willing to share. What you get is confidence in that the world is crawling with teenagers doing some pretty remarkable things.

When you miss a day of school to go to a youth forum or workshop, you are given the chance to re-assess your day-to-day life. Teachers and principals might think we want to attend these conferences in order to just get out of class, but it's kind of the opposite. Instead of missing out on work, you get more. Not only do you have to catch up on your school work, but work on your new projects you began while at these conferences.

By the time you're in high school, it has definitely become a routine. School is not necessarily the kind of place that you'd be inclined to show up if you had a choice. But when you step out of that routine and meet some like-minded people, you get the chance to meet, grow and create together with other teenagers who have made the choice to get involved. Teens who've heard something about the event found a way to get there, whether their school knew about it or not, and in the end the entire school has a chance to benefit from the great ideas brought back.

Teachers and principals have meetings and conferences with other schools to hear about projects and resources – so why shouldn't students? Obviously because we are students, but my point is we have our own things to talk about. Student leaders don't get that same chance and that means if we want to become more active on important issues, we have to take the lead.

Environmental conferences like YWALK are a fantastic opportunity to get involved in our community and try to impact a positive change in the world around us. To me, it's not a big deal to miss a day of school in order to help change the world – so damn straight, pass me the permission form and I'll be there!