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## New program aims to build character in Arlington youths

By Amanda Rogers  
Special to the Star-Telegram

**ARLINGTON** - Local Kiwanis are looking for a few good young people to do a few good projects and a few good adults to help them.

The five Arlington Kiwanis Clubs have formed the Arlington Alliance for Youth. Based on the national America's Promise campaign, the new group hopes to get local young people and caring adults involved in community service and build the character of the next generation. And they're willing to back it up with grants for worthy projects.

"What we're trying to do is galvanize people and get the youth involved," said R.J. Bessenhoffer, a member of the North Star Kiwanis and public relations chairman of Arlington Alliance for Youth. "The actual work will have to be done by caring adults and youths working together."

The city will kick off the Arlington Alliance for Youth campaign at 11 a.m. today with a proclamation at City Hall.

The national America's Promise program, begun in 1997, promotes five tenets for youths: Ongoing relationships with caring adults, safe places with structured activities during nonschool hours, healthy start and future, marketable skills through effective education, and opportunities to give back through community service.

"I saw a presentation at the Kiwanis International meeting last June about the five promises that America makes to its youth," said Jim Walther, chairman of the Arlington Alliance for Youth. "If the promises are carried out, the youth will have the kind of education that they need to succeed."

Although the city has supported the national program since 2000, the Arlington Alliance for Youth wants to back specific projects. Meeting with the Arlington school district and the Council of PTAs, co-sponsors of the new Arlington group, the members came up with a few ideas for local youngsters.

Developing neighborhood-watch programs, teaching Internet classes at nursing homes, conducting a diet and exercise workshop, holding a bike fair to teach safety, teaching English as a second language classes and supporting senior Scout community service projects were some of the suggestions.

"It is so great to get involved in the lives of other people," Walther said. "That needs to be passed on to the next generation."

IN THE KNOW

### Arlington Kiwanis Grants Program

- To subsidize the projects, the Arlington Kiwanis' Grants Program, sponsored by the Arlington Alliance for Youth, will give grants of up to \$300 per project.
- Applications will be accepted through April 22 and winners will be notified by May 7. The projects must be completed by Sept. 30.
- [www.arlingtonalliance4youth.com](http://www.arlingtonalliance4youth.com)

youth.com

- Applications can be e-mailed to the site or mailed to Arlington Alliance for Youth, P.O. Box 697, Arlington, TX 76010.