



Drumming Up Support

In order to gain support for your cause, you need to get your message out! Think about the medium (email/letter, print poster, social media post, article, etc.) and what type of text and graphics best support it as well as the purpose of your message (see below).

Remember, if you plan to put up a print poster, first make sure you have permission from the location (e.g., school, library, store, etc.).

Inform & Educate

State the issue and briefly summarize your action plan.

Think about how you will appeal to intellect, or logic, as well as emotion.

Consider adding short quotes from stakeholders or decision makers.

Call to Action

- Clearly state what you want people to do and how they can do it.
- Tell people why it's important.
- Include information about when and where they can participate.

Enlist the Media

You might want to enlist the media to spread the word. Consider writing an article for a school newspaper or newsletter, writing a letter to the editor of a local newspaper, posting an event advisory on social media, or sending out a press release. Below are some examples to help you brainstorm ideas.

Example: School News Article

A group of students here at West Middle School are working to stop the closing and destruction of one of our favorite places to play, Strohacker Park, just down the street at 55th Street and Kostner Avenue. The 7th-grade students are participating in the Our American Voice (OAV) program, which helps them learn about U.S. government and how to have an active voice in American democracy. Through an examination of the U.S. Constitution, the students have learned that the First Amendment to the constitution, part of the Bill of Rights, guarantees that citizens have the “right to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” That means that any American can contact the government if they think that they or their community will be harmed by something the government proposes to do.



“When we found out that they were going to close Strohecker Park and convert it to a parking lot, we knew we had to speak out,” said our own Richie Wright. “In the program, we learned that ordinary citizens can do extraordinary things and we hope we can save our community’s only park.”

The OAV students have already asked for community input and done research to determine that there really isn’t a need for more parking near Midway Airport. They also met with 23rd Alderman Michael Zalewski, whose ward contains Strohecker Park, here at school.

“Alderman Zalewski was very impressed with the students work and passion for saving the park,” said Mrs. Cavanaugh, our 7th-grade teacher who oversees the OAV program.

Now they’re planning a public rally at Strohecker on [Date, and time]. We hope that all West Middle School students and their families will join the OAV students and Alderman Zalewski at the rally to show their support and help save our wonderful park!

Example: Letter to the Editor

[Date]

Recently, the Chicago Park District and the City of Chicago quietly and discretely announced that Strohecker Park at 55th Street and Kostner Avenue on the city’s southwest side will be closed, demolished, and paved over to create a paid parking lot for Midway Airport. We, the Our American Voice students from West Middle School, strongly oppose this plan to destroy a valued and important part of our neighborhood.

OAV is a youth civics program developed and run by the Barat Education Foundation to foster civic knowledge and participatory citizenship. The program has encouraged us to use our American voices to let you know how much we treasure Strohecker Park as a place of play and learning. While Strohecker may be one of the smaller public parks in Chicago, it is a unique and critical community asset.

In our effort to inform the public of the importance of saving Strohecker Park, we will hold a special community rally at the park on Saturday, April 25, 2011 at 2 p.m. We will also ask participants to sign our formal petitions to the City Council and the Chicago Park District. We urge all citizens to voice their concerns to Chicago mayor’s office, Chicago Park District officials, and 23rd Ward Alderman Michael Zalewski and 13th Ward Alderman Frank Olivo.

Example: Social Media Post

You may add additional information depending on the text limitations of the social medial platform. Also, make sure to include at least one compelling image with your post.



Say YES to people and NO to convert Strohacker Park into a parking lot! Join the Our American Voice students from West Middle School in public rally to support the cause at 2 p.m. on [Date], at the park at 55th Street and Kostner Avenue in Chicago.

Example: Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WEST MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS FIGHT TO SAVE COMMUNITY PARK

Our American Voice Project Promotes Citizenship {Location} [Date of press release]

Students from West Middle School near Midway Airport are fighting the good fight. The Chicago Park District and the City of Chicago recently announced plans to close Strohacker Park at 55th Street and Kostner Avenue and replace it with a paid parking lot for Midway Airport. The Our American Voice (OAV) group of 22 middle-school students at the southwest side school are trying to stop the park's closing. "We play at Strohacker several times each week, even in the winter. Our school doesn't have any outdoor facilities and there are no other parks nearby," said OAV student Jeanette Cavico, age 12.

OAV is a youth civics program developed and run by the Barat Education Foundation to foster civic knowledge and participatory citizenship.

The West Middle School OAV students have learned about the U.S. Constitution, including the Bill of Rights and have zeroed in on the "right to petition the Government for a redress of grievances" guaranteed by the First Amendment. "The students have really taken to this, and it's been more than just saving the park," said Margaret Cavanaugh, West Middle School OAV facilitator. "These children have also learned what it takes to become active American citizens."

These dedicated young activists will lead a special public rally at Strohacker Park at 2 p.m. on Saturday, April 25. Concerned citizens are invited to attend and demonstrate their support.

The students also plan to take their crusade to save Strohacker Park to the offices of 23rd Ward Alderman Michael Zalewski, 13th Ward Alderman Frank Olivo, the offices of the Chicago Park District, and the office of the Mayor. "We want these young people to understand that everyone has a voice, and that our American democratic rights come with responsibilities. That is why they focus on changing or saving something of community importance," said Sheila Smith, Barat Education Foundation Chair and CEO.

For more information on the students of West Middle School and their effort to save Strohacker Park, contact Margaret Cavanaugh at [email address or phone number].