

## **Island kids to show their positive effects**

Article Last Updated: Wednesday, June 04, 2003 - 4:02:49 AM PST

**By Susan McDonough, STAFF WRITER**

ALAMEDA -- Yo, yo, yo. Just because they wear funny things like leather studded bracelets and, OK, let's face it, use questionable grammar sometimes, that doesn't mean they don't have anything meaningful to contribute.

They're teenagers, not terrorists.

Students at Home Base will demonstrate Saturday that while headlines scream recession, teacher layoffs and murder, plenty of young people are making positive contributions to their communities.

The students have invited as many as 300 youth and adults to their charter school Saturday for "Hands In," a day of workshops, performances and a collective art project designed to get youth and adults talking and to showcase the good things kids do.

At 17, Carolyn VerDuin, for example, is still a Girl Scout, something she is not remotely self-conscious about. She recently brought craft kits, journals and Bingo games to young cancer patients to earn her Gold Award, she said.

Classmate Matthew Dalao, 14, went from skipping 53 school days one year to volunteering with youth groups.

Yet plenty of adults think teenagers are "little evil people who go around stealing things," said VerDuin.

When the students organized a public candidate forum at election time last year, local newspaper articles criticized the group for being disorganized, complained student Alejandria Sales, 17. "We were the only youth group that did that."

Home Base Executive Director Leslie Medine reminded students there are plenty of caring adults and good kids around. "Hands In" is a way to build "bridges" between them, she said.

The day is also the students' final project, replacing final exams students at traditional schools around the Island are taking in these final weeks before summer vacation.

The students agree they need mentors to succeed and for confidence. The ideal mentor

would be "real, somebody who can understand us," they said.

"At least give it a try to relate to us," Sales said.

"Hands In" is open to the public and free to those under 18, \$15 for adults (includes lunch). The event is 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday at Home Base school, 2750 Todd St., Alameda Point. To register, call the school at (510) 748-4326.