

# Enthusiastic voice added to voter registration drive

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With less than three weeks left before the presidential election, Danni Ngo finally made up her mind after the third debate.

``They're both not the best, but you have to pick one," the Union City resident said. She appreciated Sen. John Kerry's debate skills; she felt President George Bush didn't refute effectively. She liked Bush's approachability but felt Kerry would strengthen international ties, and ``that's really important."

On the other hand, it's all academic. Ngo doesn't turn 18 until January.

That hasn't stopped the Logan High School senior from actively urging others to vote. Racing to meet Monday's state deadline, she'll be standing in front of a Marina Foods market Saturday, registering new voters, just like last weekend.

Not only that, she's enlisted her friends -- who also are too young to vote -- to volunteer at other voter registration tables outside markets in Fremont, Newark and Union City. Across the bay, the League of Women Voters worked with a Los Altos High School club called Girls for a Change to register new voters at Peninsula street fairs and events. None of them, said senior Yasmin Sharifi, can vote yet.

## Old enough to care

Meet the human face of what researchers say is a definite shift in attitude among teens. The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement reports that the percentage of 15- to 17-year-olds who say voting is not important has dropped from 52 percent in 2002 to 9 percent in 2004. With celebrities like P. Diddy pushing the voting-is-cool wave, election consciousness is all around high school campuses.

Danni said she used to think politics was boring until she took U.S. history in the eighth grade. That was around the time of the 2000 election furor over the voting in Florida, and the real-life lesson in the difference between the popular vote and the Electoral College. Then last year, the capper: the California recall election. She saw for herself, she said, how important it was to vote.

``I can't vote; I was sad," said Danni, who has enjoyed the post-debate discussions in her forensics class. ``I'd hear in class that a lot of people don't vote because they don't know how."

When someone from Fremont-based Citizens for a Better Community asked for volunteers to register new voters this month, she took the initiative.

In four hours outside of Marina Foods, using English and her ``broken Cantonese," she was able to persuade two dozen people, including an 80-year-old man, to register for the first time. Cecilia Chang, who recruited Danni, was impressed.

One elderly woman ``told me that when she saw a young person standing there smiling and offering new immigrants like herself help, it made her want to register," Chang said.

## Youth helping turnout?

Danni's enthusiasm is infectious. She'd be horrified -- horrified -- if anyone tore up her hours of hard work, as a Nevada worker alleged in a lawsuit claiming his supervisor tore up applications from people choosing to affiliate with the Democratic Party.