

NOT ILLEGAL, **JUST ILLUSTRIOUS!!**



Members of the Boys II Men Fraternity and its sister group, the Diamonds Sorority, celebrate their victory after successfully defending their popular organization against allegations of illegality on Monday, April 7, 2008

BOYS II MEN CLEARED BY SCHOOL OFFICIALS

By [HEATHER GILLERS](#)
hgillers@scn1.com

AURORA -- James Jones believes so strongly that Boys II Men helped him make it to age 17 that he spent his birthday testifying on the organization's behalf.

Jones told the East Aurora School Board he "thought gangs were cool in middle school," but the advice and mentorship he got from Boys II Men effected a "180-degree turn."

The East High junior was one of about a dozen students who spoke in support of the 6-year-old non-profit organization last week after a resident raised questions about whether the group violated a rule prohibiting selective fraternities in public schools. A cheer rose up from the meeting room packed with youth and parents as School Board member Juanita Wells pronounced the group "not illegal" and not in violation of state or district code.

Founded in 2002 by School District spokesman and community activist Clayton Muhammad as an alternative to gangs for male students, Boys II Men has since spawned Diamonds, a sister organization, B2M scholars, for older

"Whenever they need any sort of help, we're that toolbar for them to click on and get the help they need."

Uriel Terrazas, B2M Scholar

members, and junior B2M, a group of grade-schoolers mentored by Boys II Men members.

The group meets two Sundays a month for three hours to talk about everything from grades to girls to just getting along. Members tutor peers, lead youth events and occasionally attract the attention of state legislators for their work.

After local and regional school officials sought clarification on the group's legality, members of the group and their families packed the School Board meeting.

Boys II Men member and East High junior Gilberto Chaidez told board members Boys II Men is "the biggest first-aid package (a young man) can get."

Diamonds member and Waubonsie Valley High School senior Shalis Delgado, who plans to study aviation at Southern Illinois University next year, said the group helped motivate her academically and

gave her the backbone to pursue a career in a male-dominated field.

Boys II Men member Uriel Terrazas, a West Aurora High School graduate and Aurora University freshman, compared the group to the shortcut function in the computer program Microsoft Word.

"Whenever they need any sort of help," he said, "we're that toolbar for them to click on and get the help they need."

Even Mayor Tom Weisner submitted a letter praising the group for "bringing together young people of different ethnic and cultural backgrounds in order to create greater understanding."

The Illinois State Board of Education, the Kane County Regional Office of Education and a committee of School Board members began looking into the status of Boys II Men in January, after a citizen questioned whether the organization violated a 1961 school code prohibiting selective organizations in public schools. As a non-profit organization whose members are chosen based on academic and community achievement, the group was cleared by school officials.