



SHERRIE BUZBY/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Table activism: Unlike its counterparts in the '60s and '70s, political activism on college campuses now is more likely to take less-confrontational forms, such as registering people to vote. Jerome Farmer and Karen Bowen sign up Pinak Acharya (left) and Terry Sawyer (right) on the University of Michigan campus.

Getting out the vote at a young age

BY LARRY O'CONNOR
STAFF WRITER

Derek Einhorn, 21, from West Bloomfield diligently takes notes on a fresh spiral notebook. Which wouldn't look out of the ordinary on a typical afternoon in a university classroom, except for what the senior English major happens to be jotting down for his own benefit.

Rather, he's devising ways to rouse people his age out to vote.

The group Einhorn belongs to is Just Vote, one of several non-partisan campus organizations trying to accomplish such a goal through registration, education and getting people out to the polls on Nov. 3. Along with nine other students, Einhorn sees his efforts as a civic obligation.

"It's important because, as people say, we're going to be the ones running this country," said Einhorn, who is a graduate of West Bloomfield High. "Also, it sends a message to our leaders now — that we are an important part of the population."

Important, yes, but politically active?

Think again.

Statistics indicate people between 18-35 traditionally vote less than those older. The trend is expected to continue in this election, according to pollsters.

A Times Mirror poll, quoted in U.S. News & World Report, predicts only 28 percent of those 35 and younger eligible are likely to vote for president this year.

Weaned on MTV and raised in the conservative clover of the Reagan years, the 18-29 age population is one said to be saturated in cynicism and rampant in mistrust toward the political system. They've been told to expect less than their parents.

Thus, they have seemingly accepted the idea that they are unable to change the status quo.

"Young people expect a lot more out of government than any other age group," said Gregory Markus, a political science professor at U-M. "But they have the lowest voter turnout of any age group by far. They pay taxes . . . and expect services from the government."

"The notion there is something more

to (political participation) than just paying taxes hasn't been put across to younger people."

With such a dire outlook, people tend to write off the post-babyboomers as less effective in affecting change. But not all is gloom.

Markus says studies indicate political participation among college students — who tend to fall into the 18-24 age group — is as high or higher than in the campus protest era of the '60s and '70s.

"It just may take different forms, and not be as dramatic," he said.

Involvement is more likely to come in the less-confrontational form of voter education and registration.

Tim Leighton, 27, of Garden City is active in the non-partisan student political group Psi Sigma Omega at Madonna University. He's also a deputy register, taking a class through Wayne County to become certified.

Much of his efforts involve dispensing information to other students on campus.

"A lot of times it's a lack of education," said Leighton, a social science ma-

ior with emphasis in political science. "They don't know who's running or they don't know anything about the candidate or they don't believe their vote means anything."

Michelle Dube, 19, of Birmingham finds herself in similar situations at Eastern Michigan University where she works as an office manager in the student government office.

"I try to tell people the more people in our age group who vote it helps," said Dube, a 1991 graduate of Birmingham Seaholm. "In the past, people in our age group haven't voted because they don't think it matters. But it does."

But why, unlike their apathetic counterparts, have they become active? In many cases, a particular cause or special interest is a catalyst.

Einhorn is a member of Environmental Action, a group whose also become involved in the Just Vote effort at U-M. He's written to politicians and is active in the campaign to save the spotted owl

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