

Thunderbirds Teen Center in north Phoenix expands programs

Director reaches out to attract clientele to Phoenix location

by **Connie Cone Sexton** - Mar. 28, 2012 08:00 AM
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The Thunderbirds Teen Center near Seventh Street and Union Hills Drive in north Phoenix is struggling to bring in participants.

It's a disappointment but not terribly surprising to Dawn Trapp. She recently took over managing the center, which has offered limited programming the past few years.

"The teens don't know we're back open," Trapp said. "We're reaching out, trying to bring them in."

Trapp is executive director of the Civitan Foundation Inc., a non-profit that Phoenix selected in 2011 to take over the teen center and expand the programming to include the school year.

The 9,000-square-foot, two-story facility is at 1106 E. Grovers Ave., just north of the Mountain View Community Center, and shares its parking lot. Although a teen program was offered last summer, the center was then shuttered due to the city's budget woes.

The Thunderbirds Teen Center, which includes a game room and audio recording studio, had its original grand opening in February 1996. The city-owned building aimed at giving preteens and teens a chance to meet friends, participate in recreational events and learn new skills.

Today, the teen center is offering programs for ages 11 to 17. There is a \$10 annual membership fee.

Trapp said the Civitan Foundation, which also runs programs for children and adults with developmental disabilities at the center, got the keys to the building a few months ago and has worked to spruce up walls and flooring.

The center reopened a few weeks ago and teens are starting to trickle in, Trapp said.

"Early on, we have had about 30 kids who were curious," she said.

But an open house Saturday brought in about 100 to 150 people, she said.

A few days before the grand opening, activity inside the center was quiet, with no teenagers sitting around or playing games. Asked about the dozen or so youths who were outside playing basketball just steps from the center, Trapp said she's still working on engaging them, adding that they've been invited to come inside, several times.

During the school year, the center is open from 2 to 7 p.m. weekdays, with special events on Saturdays. Activities will include help with homework, recreation classes, information on food and nutrition and how to lead a healthy lifestyle, Trapp said.

"We'll have enrichment classes, like art classes or computer classes," she said. "We'll have certification courses, such as first aid or CPR or babysitting."

Summer hours will be 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays, with special events on Saturdays, including field trips.

Trapp said the center hasn't offered any opportunities in the recording studio, yet.

"It has equipment but it needs to be upgraded. We're working with professionals to see what is still needed."

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