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## RIVERDALE - Youth Canteen grand opening to be celebrated

(by Leslie Scott - Staff Writer - November 14, 2008)



Staff photos by Joe Sarno

*Some young ladies all participate in a dance class offered in the Riverdale Youth Canteen. The dance class is one of the first few programs that are now available.*

**RIVERDALE** - For the past year, senior citizens have been able to enjoy many activities at the Riverdale Senior Community Center. Now, the borough's children have their own place to congregate, get inspired, have fun and learn about making positive choices all at the same time.

The community will celebrate this exciting time on Saturday, Nov. 22, when borough officials host the grand opening of the Riverdale Youth Canteen at the community center.

"We are inviting the (Morris County) freeholders and the assembly people, and the superintendent is going to be inviting the Board of Education," said Mayor William Budesheim.



*Recreation Director June Carelli said with this addition the borough will now be able to offer many more programs for the residents to enjoy.*

The council is excited about this new addition to the community. Councilwoman Elaine Wetzel said that she has always wanted to have such a center for Riverdale.

“This was actually the idea that got me to make the move from a being a recreation volunteer to actually running for the council. It was one of those things you feel that you can only do so much as a volunteer and in order to take the next step you get involved on a larger level,” said Wetzel.

“The important thing is that we finally did it. I am very proud of it and I’m very proud to have been involved in it on any level and I look forward to enjoying it for a lot of years to come,” said Wetzel.

Councilwoman Donna Bush said she looks forward to holding functions for the Riverdale Municipal Alliance in the center.

“It will give us a place where we can have events for our middle school and the high school students. We are planning in November and December to have some teen movie nights. We will be able to sponsor movies in a safe environment with supervision and serve refreshments and possibly even have some guest speakers come in,” said Bush.

“They have a place where the kids can congregate especially when the weather gets bad. This is a more constructive atmosphere instead of just hanging out on the street,” said Councilman Ted Guis.

This new addition also means expanding the activities in the Recreation Department, said June Carelli, recreation director.

“I am very excited. I’ve already started a morning music class for tots ages 2 to 4. We are running a lot of children’s dance classes in the basement. I have a lot of things planned for the winter, everything from computer classes, teen movie nights to tumbling, anything you can imagine for the kids,” said Carelli.

Some of the activities will be free, and some will have a fee. Carelli said any fees collected would go directly to the instructor of the class.

“Just like the top level, the lower level will be available for rental for family and children’s birthday parties,” said Carelli.

Children will enjoy both the inside and outside of this facility. The building’s renovations have been completed, and the yard has been transformed to serve the recreational needs of the community.

New amenities to the yard include a basketball court, a bocci ball court, and playground equipment.

The borough used about \$50,000 from its open space tax to renovate the fields. An \$80,000 federal Housing and Urban Development grant, distributed by Morris County, financed the lower level of the center.

Several residents and local businesses also contributed to this project. For his Eagle Scout project, Mark Knopsnyder built the bocci court. CVE Technology Group on North Corporate Drive donated a 52-inch plasma television for the youth center, and Texas-based developer DR Horton enclosed it in a closet as protection, the mayor said.

Also, Tilcon New York, owner of Riverdale’s operating quarry, volunteered to provide some excavation at the site and donated gravel for the basketball court as well.

Those interested in celebrating this milestone should stop by the center on Nov. 22. The dedication is scheduled for 11 a.m. with an open house from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

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