

Warner teen center combines fun with learning

BY TIM SMITH
STAFF WRITER
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A former pilot after-school program at Warner Middle School is giving students a chance to soar.

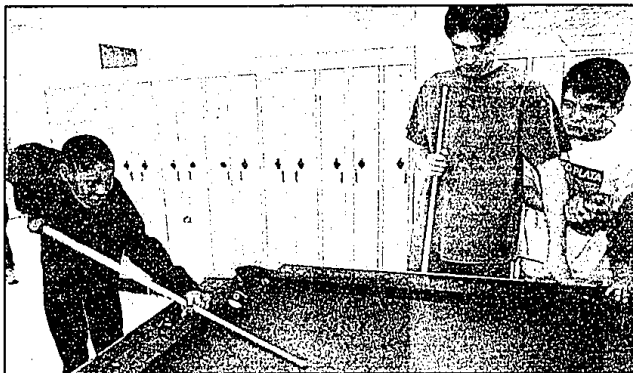
Five days a week, from 2:30-5:30 p.m., the Warner Youth Center provided youngsters with usual recreational outlets such as ping-pong and video games. But from 2:30-4 p.m. Tuesdays and Thursdays, they also could talk to their teachers in a more-relaxed setting and get a jump on homework assignments.

The dual-purpose program just concluded for the year, but will start again in the fall.

"I think kids here feel you have more time for them," said teacher Sherri Daniels, helping sixth graders Lindsey Branch and Danica Sapp with fractions during a recent session. "Even if we're not doing math, we're shooting the breeze."

Besides, noted Daniels, there is a benefit to going straight to the media center after the final class bell sounds, which the Tuesday-Thursday sessions afford.

"It saves time and you might want to go outside and play later



Good shot: Warner Middle School student Avery Huckaby shoots pool during a recent after-school session of the teen center. Watching are staffer Trevor Your and fellow student Vincent Jamil.

on," Daniels explained. She wouldn't get any argu-

ment from Warner teacher Tracy Wallace, who wore a "WYC" T-shirt while making the media center rounds, further underscoring the informal atmosphere.

"The children, after they come in a couple times, they tell me 'I really got my work done, and when I go home, I have free time to do what I want to,'" Wallace said.

Before 4 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays, however, recreational fun and freedom must wait. It is part of the "contract of attendance" that a student and his or her parent signed before beginning the program.

Guaranteed participation is

important, because teachers or counselors referred students who received a D or E in any marking period the previous year, youth center coordinator Ruth Daniels said.

But kids getting tutoring don't walk in with targets on their shirts. With recreational activities going on down the hall, under the direction of Farmington Hills Area Youth & Family Services Supervisor Todd Lipa and his staff, and because any student can come in for some extra learning help, it eliminates the potential for identifying someone as a so-called at-risk student.

"If you're struggling, and (the program is) only homework ... you're labeled," Lipa said.

He emphasized that the availability of various games and activities is essential to the success of the homework aspect.

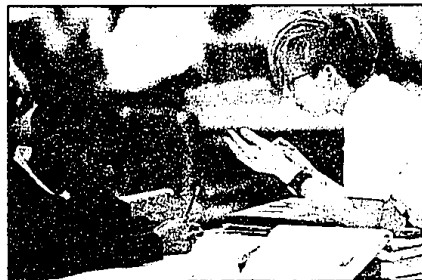
"You've got to have the vehicle to have kids come here," Lipa said.



Here's help: Staffer Tracy Wallace (right) works with students Sam Kalish and Katie Muskovitz.



Work first: Students Vincent Jamil and Saesha Nix catch up on their homework before enjoying some of the recreational offerings at the Warner Teen Center. The after-school program just concluded for the year.



Solving it: LaMeurica Coleman and Nicholas Hinrichsen help each other with homework.

said. "If it was just homework, they wouldn't come."

In keeping with the relaxed mode, teachers call themselves "academic coaches." They're there for the kids, "not for the money," said Daniels, noting that teachers receive hourly pay for the sessions at a much lower rate than their regular salaries.

Assisting with the tutorial sessions are volunteers from high schools and Madonna University.

Getting work done early isn't the only benefit, Daniels said. With these coaches nearby, students sit together at tables and discuss lessons with each other, brainstorming solutions.

"And it creates responsibility, that they allocate this time for homework," Daniels said.

Daniels said the "marriage" of activities and academics is a winning combination, because kids have a place to be and things to do during a time of the day when they might otherwise be courting trouble. They can stay late enough for their parents to pick them up, another key aspect.

Of the 450 students who signed up for the program, which does not require an enrollment fee, Daniels estimated that a combined 100-120 attend on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Of those, 30-50 usually spend time in the media center taking advantage of teacher assistance.

Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays often include field trips to the William Costick Activities Center or YMCA.

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For Daniels, the logistics of supervising the teen center on the days of homework help can be somewhat challenging. But she muddles through. "I'm in the hallways and I don't let the kids bounce back and forth. Some kids need prodding, or else they'd always be at the Nintendo."

Adults such as Evelene Kenny also laud the program. She said it helps give individualized instruction to her younger brother Brian, who has attention deficit disorder. "Brian ... needs the one-on-one attention that teachers and counselors can give here, to improve himself."

Most of the \$50,000-\$60,000 funding for Warner's program is supplied by the city of Farmington Hills, although the city of Farmington chips in a small portion. Also helping with costs are Farmington Public Schools and a federal grant, Lipa said.

After-school recreational programs also are held at the YMCA, the Costick center and Farmington Hills Ice Arena. But those do not include academic tutoring.

Lipa said the Warner teen center and other programs help fill a void left by a fast-moving society, with many two-income households.

"Kids are kids and, unfortunately today, I don't think we give them a lot of time," he said. "Everybody is so busy. It doesn't take fancy toys or fancy cars. It just takes caring about kids, spending time and truly listening."

Warner Middle School is located at 30303 14 Mile Road in Farmington Hills. For more information, call (248) 489-3640.

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- Kickboxing*

SUMMER CLASS SCHEDULE

7-WESTLAND
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Bailey Recreation Center
(36651 Ford Rd., E. of Newburg, behind City Hall-734-722-7620)
1 day per wk \$39 2 days \$50 Unlimited \$63 8 weeks
T/TH 9:30 A.M. Low/Kick Boxing July 6 L.N.
*Babysitting available \$2.00 per child \$4.00 per family

8-PLYMOUTH
JoAnne's Dance Extension
(Ply. Trade Ctr., 9282 General Dr., Ste 180 & 190, bet. Ann Arbor Rd. & Joy, E. of Ulfly)
1 day per wk \$39 2 days \$50 Unlimited \$63 8 weeks
M/W/F 9:30 A.M. Low/Kick Boxing June 21 K. VanHout
T/TH 9:30 A.M. Hi/Low Impact June 22 K. Rudolph
*Babysitting available \$2.00 per child \$4.00 per family
SPONSORED BY: Plymouth Parks & Recreation
Plymouth Cultural Center (525 Farmer-724-455-6620)
1 day per wk \$39 2 days \$50 Unlimited \$63 8 weeks
M/W 6:00 P.M. Low/Hi Impact June 28 S. King
Sat 8:00 A.M. Sculpt/Tone July 3 S. King

9-LIVONIA
Holy Cross Lutheran Church (30650 Six Mile Rd., E. of Merriman)
1 day per wk \$39 2 days \$50 Unlimited \$63 8 weeks
No classes week of June 21
*M/W/F 9:00 A.M. Hi/Low Impact June 14 P. Peitz
M/W 6:30 P.M. Low Impact July 7 Staff
T/TH 9:00 A.M. Sculpt/Tone June 15 K. Godin
Babysitting available \$2.00 per child \$4.00 per family

10-FARMINGTON
Phonics Classes have been moved to Farmington Gymnastics Center (23968 Freeway Park, Farmington Hills, MI 48335) 1/2 mile N. of 9 Mile W. of Halsted, W. on Industrial Drive - 2nd street Freeway Park turn right.
1 day per wk \$48 2 days \$62 Unlimited \$78 10 weeks
**\$10.00 rental fee will be charged for the step classes or bring own step
M/W 9:15 A.M. Low/Hi Impact June 14 N. Goodman
M/W 6:30 P.M. Hi/Low Impact June 14 N. Swider
F 9:15 A.M. Aerobic Circuit June 18 S. Kambouris
T/TH 9:15 A.M. STEP June 15 P. Karwan
T/TH 6:00 P.M. Hi/Low Impact June 15 K. Trask-Gibb
Sat 8:00 A.M. Hi/Low Impact June 19 L. Burke
*Babysitting \$2.00 per child \$3.00 per family
SPONSORED BY: Farmington Hills Recreation Center
Farmington Hills Activities Center
(23800 11 Mile Rd., Gate 4 Door 2-484-473-1816)
1 day per wk \$44 2 days \$56 Unlimited \$77 9 weeks
M/W 6:30 P.M. Hi/Low Impact June 21 S. Williams
M/TH 9:30 A.M. Aerobic Rotation June 21 J. Stec
Sat 9:00 A.M. Hi/Low Impact June 26 K. Trask-Gibb
*Babysitting \$2.00 per child \$3.00 per family
**Classes alternate between Hi/Low Aerobics/Circuits/Sculpt/Tone Check with instructor.

11-NOVI
Novi Civic Center
(45175 W. 10 Mile Rd., bet. Novi & Twp, 248-347-0400)
All Novi students must register/pay through Novi Pks. & Rec. Office (248-347-0400).
Registrations/Payments will not be accepted through the Fitness Factory office or through the instructors. Non Resident fee 20%. Please bring a mat or towel to class
NO CLASSES: July 5th
1 day per wk \$48 2 days \$65 Unlimited \$90 10 weeks
**\$10.00 rental fee will be charged for the step classes or bring own step
M/W 9:00 A.M. Low Impact June 21 R. Rice
M/W 10:15 A.M. STEP/Circuit June 21 L. Whelan (Dancing)
M/W 6:15 P.M. Hi/Low Impact June 21 Staff
T/TH 9:00 A.M. Sculpt/Tone June 22 S. Paragon
*Babysitting \$2.00 per child \$3.00 per family
Novi High School - gym (moving to Novi Meadows Bldg. August 30)
(Register through Novi Comm. Ed. - 248-449-1206)
Session 1:
1 day per wk \$48 2 days \$65 10 weeks
Session 2:
1 day per wk \$15 2 days \$20 3 weeks
M/TH 7:30 P.M. Hi/Low Impact June 14 Staff
M/TH 7:00 P.M. Hi/Low Impact August 23 T. Smith

*A small portion of kickboxing has been added to all our high/low classes.

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