

Hanna Center in Sonoma opens recreational hall for teenagers

“When I looked at the Rec Hall, I saw how this space could serve an underserved population of our community—the local teens,” said Joe Petersen, recreation and camp manager for Hanna Center. “We transformed the underutilized space into a fun and safe hub for Sonoma teens to call their own and connect by having fun.”





















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The movie room is one of the spaces at the new Hanna Center Community Recreation Hall, where teens from throughout Sonoma Valley can gather and play games, watch movies or just hang out. Photo taken on Monday, Jan. 29. (Robbi Pengelly/Index-Tribune)

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While growing up in Sonoma, Joe Petersen wanted to hang out with his friends, but didn't feel there was anywhere they could go to have fun together.

Now, as recreation and camp manager for Hanna Center, he has helped to address that need with the opening of Hanna Center Community Recreation Hall as a gathering place for Sonoma Valley teenagers.

Located above the swimming pool at the front of the campus, the space was used by Hanna Center's residents as well as for its summer camps and events before serving as a recreation hall for many years.

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"Recently, it underwent a renovation to cater to the more modern generation of teenagers," Petersen said. "We transformed the underutilized space into a fun and safe hub for Sonoma teens to call their own and connect by having fun. It has served our campus residents for years and is now opening to serve the community."

The hall features pool tables, table tennis, foosball, shuffleboard, darts, an arcade, a movie room and ample lounge spaces for board and card games. It also includes a patio with seating and grass for corn hole, spike ball and other outdoor games.

"Teens provided input during the update, and we'll continue to include them in future decisions," Petersen said.



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All youths in Sonoma Valley who are 13 to 18 years old can use the facility. They need to sign up for a day (\$5) or monthly pass (\$25) at the rec hall ahead of time or upon arrival.

The rec hall is open on Thursdays and Fridays from 3 to 7 p.m. and on Saturdays from 12:30 to 5 p.m.

"Chosen to align with teens' schedules, we offer after-school hours on Thursdays and Fridays, and push back early openings on Saturdays to accommodate for sleeping teens," Petersen said. "However, we also host community open gyms on Saturday mornings. So, we can serve Sonoma both in the morning and afternoon on Saturdays."

Petersen hopes the program's success will lead to expanded hours, thereby making it more available to Sonoma Valley teens.

The rec hall will have two staff members and maintain a 20:1 participant-to-staff ratio. More staff will be added as needed with the growth of Hanna Center's recreation department, Petersen said.

"The recreation department is included in Hanna Center's larger goals to open up the campus to the serve the entire community, he said.

Funds for Hanna Center are raised through private donations, grants and other opportunities.

Hanna Center will celebrate the opening of the rec hall by offering an open house and welcome event for the Sonoma Valley community on Saturday, Feb. 24, from 1 to 5 p.m.

The launch will feature a local vendor serving food, a deejay and free facility use.

"It will be a great opportunity for teens, families and community members to explore the space and what the program has to offer," Petersen said. "This marks the beginning of a new chapter for Sonoma's teenagers and I'm excited about the positive impact the rec hall will have on our community.

"Hanna Center remains committed to fostering connections, creating a sense of belonging and providing a space for all to thrive."

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