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Stepping Up for Kids

CONTINUED FROM FRONT

server.

The programs focus on math and science education, the arts, sports and wellness, workforce readiness, public service and leadership. At Rockwood, there are innovative spaces with top-notch equipment, including tech and art labs, a game room and a peace lounge. Teens have their own dedicated area where they can participate in programs like UPS Road Code to learn about driving safety or hone their career skills with targeted workforce training.

"It's learning how to work with people, it's learning how to problem solve and conflict resolution, and also know that they have safe adults that they can come to," Muhammad said.

The club also has a full-sized kitchen where youth receive meals and snacks. Partnerships with supporting organizations have resulted in a new Nike-sponsored gym; the Bemis Field, which includes two outdoor futsal courts gifted to the campus by the Portland Timbers and Thorns; the C.J. McCollum Dream Center, dedicated to broadcast and journalism activi-

ties; a state-of-the-art music studio; the Johnson Teen Center; and more.

The need for a Boys & Girls Club in Rockwood is rooted in the gentrification of north and northeast Portland which shifted a population of families with children from inner city neighborhoods to other locations where the cost of living was more affordable. The demographics of Portland east of I-205 is lower income and more ethnically diverse than the city-wide average. There are eight different languages spoken by children in the club. The club also serves five school districts: David Douglas, Parkrose, Centennial, Gresham/Barlow and Reynolds.

Muhammad has been working for the Boys & Girls Club on and off for 13 years, including at the Blazers Boys & Girls Club on Northeast Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard. While she dislikes the term 'at-risk youth' to describe the demographic the organization serves, she said the club's after school and summer programs can often help children who've been impacted by trauma shape their futures for the better.

"For young people that have

unstable housing, young people that don't have their parents that they live with, you have to have an after school program to help them change the trajectory of their life. I mean, I think it's essential because parents can't do it all. Especially if 70 percent of the households are ran by single parents," she said.

All of the Portland area Boys & Girls Clubs offer affordable all-day programs for youth in the first to sixth grades, with an extra 7:30 a.m. to 9 a.m. Sunrise Club option, helpful for parents who go to work early and available for a small fee. Teen programming for seventh to twelfth graders runs from noon to 6 p.m. Visitor drop-in rates are also available.

Youth also have the opportunity to take summer field trips across the metro area and beyond to include OMSI, the Oregon Zoo, getting out in nature and participating in summer internship programs. Other fun summer activities are themed around robots, comics, cartoons, superheroes and music making.

Summer registration is currently open. Because spots are limited, parents are encouraged to visit bgcportland.org/summer and register today.

Countdown for Signatures

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

campaign chair and senior pastor of Augustana Lutheran Church, led the conference, which was held at his northeast Portland church. He was joined by chief petitioner Rabbi Michael Z. Cahana of Congregation Beth Israel, and campaign treasurer Imam Muhammad A. Najieb of the Muslim Community Center of Portland. Other faith leaders and committee members involved in the campaign were also in attendance.

On May 23, the campaign received a certified ballot title as approved by the state Attorney General, giving petitioners until July 6 to collect the required 88,184 signatures in order to move the measure to the ballot.

If passed, the initiative would require currently owned semi-automatic weapons and large capacity magazines to be registered by their owners, as well as for the prohibition of the future sale and transfer of these weapons and magazines statewide.

Joe and Janey Paterno, part of a signature gathering training committee for the measure, an-

nounced that they are planning on working with volunteers at training sessions across the state to make sure enough people sign on to the measure. Sessions have already been scheduled for Portland, Astoria, Pendleton and Bend.

Tamara Knutson, working on behalf of a youth committee supporting the initiative, emphasized the deadly toll assault weapons and high capacity ammunition magazines have taken on children in school shootings and other incidents across the country.

As public schools in Portland and across Oregon begin their summer breaks in early June, student volunteers will be trained to gather signatures and spearhead the process.

Imam Najieb reiterated the importance of the measure being written in a way to impact a younger generation's safety and well-being.

"What future do we have as a country if we do not prepare the foundation for our children today?" he said.

Knutson also offered condolences on the recent mass school shooting in Santa Fe, Texas,

saying that, "We offer not just prayers, but a recommitment to action - we must stop the violence."

The church leader also paid tribute to the victims of the Thurston High School shooting in Springfield, noting the two decades that have passed since the school shooting in Oregon shocked the nation.

"We have lived with fear of gun violence in our schools for 20 years," he noted.

Rabbi Cahana stated the importance of faith leaders having a higher calling regarding the promotion of gun safety.

"This campaign is intentionally led by clergy people, who have historically taken responsibility of providing comfort to families after mass shootings. Now is the time to provide more than comfort and say 'enough is enough,'" he said.

Echoed Knutson, "The number of students who have died in school shootings is immoral. And we can do something about it."

More info about the campaign and its signature training sessions can be found at lifteveryvoiceoregon.com.



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