

GYAC enters 20th year with major events

By Mike Winikoff
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VERO BEACH — Two big November events helped launch Gifford Youth Achievement Center into its 20th year, which will be celebrated with an anniversary gala on Jan. 27.

On Nov. 15, the first GYAC Gifford Job Fair attracted a huge crowd of local employers and 350 job seekers, far surpassing expectations.

"I cannot believe the turnout at the Job Fair today at GYAC," Marketing Coordinator Christina Tascon told Hometown News, with great excitement. "Every chief of police, the sheriff, County Commissioner Joe Flescher, and Vero Beach Mayor Moss were here, plus a color guard, Grand Harbor Community Outreach, 28 employers and tons of service agencies. I was very impressed."

The employers came to the event ready to fill 300 open positions. Many job seekers were hired on the spot or given appointments for second interviews.

Job training managers and ten service agencies were also on hand to provide further guidance and to help resolve issues that may impede employment.

Guests included Sheriff Deryl Loar, Vero Beach Police Chief David Currey, Fellsmere Police Chief Keith Touchberry, Sebastian Police Chief Michelle Morris, and Indian River County Fire Chief John King.

Along with GYAC, the job fair was presented by CareerSource Research Coast, Grand Harbor Community Outreach, the Progressive Civic League of Gifford, Piper



Photos courtesy of GYAC
Willis Thomas shows Dr. Nicholas Coppola his picture at the open house.

Aircraft, Gifford Front Porch, United Way of Indian River County, John's Island Community Service League, Publix Supermarkets and the Indian River County Chamber of Commerce.

As Director of Public Relations and Facilities Operations Freddie Woolfork has told Hometown News, "GYAC is so much more than an afterschool program," and the resounding success of the job fair proved that. GYAC plans on making the job fair an annual event.

The next day, Nov. 16, GYAC held a well-received open house. GYAC is based in a 24,000 square foot facility with classrooms, computer labs, a library operated by the county, and an indoor gym. Guests enjoyed a tour led by Freddie Woolfork, and met



GYAC Executive Director Angelia Perry, Grand Harbor Community Outreach President Doug Sweeny and CareerSource Research Coast's Carolyn Thornton Nelson.

with Executive Director Angelia Perry and some of the children served by GYAC.

Despite being a rainy evening, many visitors came to tour the facility and meet Fire Chief John King, David W. Jackson, Director of Community Relations to U.S. Representative Bill Posey, and Nick and Elaine Coppola of the Live Like Cole Foundation.

"Beyond educational programs which pair the kids with teachers, mentors and tutors and give them a safe place to come after school to do their homework with guidance, GYAC helps mold the whole child," said Ms. Tascon.

GYAC is a 501(c)(3) non-profit that opened in 1998, originally as part of the Progressive Civic League of Gifford. GYAC became a separate not-for-profit corporation in 2002. Its primary purpose is to enhance the academic achievement of chil-

dren, targeting at-risk students in Gifford, Sebastian, Vero Beach, and Wabasso, with an emphasis on increasing high school and college graduation rates.

GYAC also provides programs for adults and seniors citizens and has a daily attendance of over 200 students and adults.

Upcoming GYAC events include the 20th Anniversary Gala on Jan 27, 2018 at Oak Harbor Club, with music, dinner, dancing and a raffle. Tickets are \$150 per person. For information about full tables or to become a sponsor, call Director of Philanthropy Peggy Gibbs at (772) 794-1005, ext. 241.

The next open house tour of the GYAC facilities is Feb. 23.

Gifford Youth Achievement Center is located at 4875 43rd Ave., Vero Beach. For more information, call (772) 794-1005 or visit www.gyac.net.

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