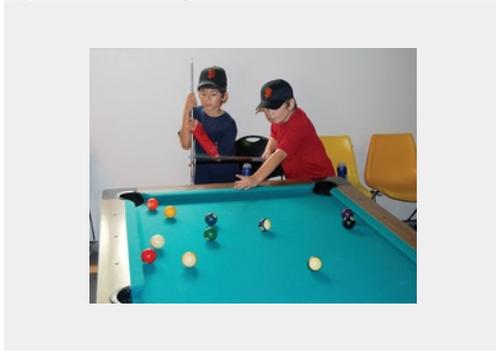


Cops offer kids fun and games

Police Activities League offers recreational, educational programs

By Susan Belknap Press-Tribune Editor



Courtesy
Matthew Ornelas, left, and Josh Rhinesmith enjoy a game of pool at the Roseville Police Activities League recreation room.



Trying to keep at-risk kids from getting into trouble can be difficult for law enforcement officers. But organizations like Roseville Police Activities League are facing that challenge by offering a variety of recreational, athletic, social, educational and cultural programs.

"Last year we had 45 kids at the gym each day," said Karl Dyer, Roseville Police Department sergeant who oversees the program. "This year we've got 100 percent more activities and open gym five days per week."

Dyer said RPAL utilizes the California Children's Outdoor Bill of Rights, which is a document adopted by the California Roundtable on Recreation, Parks and Tourism to encourage youth to learn to swim, camp, explore nature and play on a team. Activities to be featured this summer include kayaking, mountain biking, swimming and paintball games. Any Roseville youth ages 8 to 19 can participate in RPAL for an annual fee of \$25, which can be waived for those unable to pay.

"Some of the kids at first don't want to be here," Dyer said. "But usually later, they turn the experience into something good."

Clay Bradley, 8, enjoys coming to the gym each day.

"I like to come here," Bradley said. "It's fun. I like to play dodgeball and hang out with my friends."

Cody Schlenzig, 12, enjoys watching the movies the center offers.

"My favorites are 'I Am Legend' and 'Rambo.'"

Marcus Lo Duca, RPAL board member, said many of the participating kids end up learning leadership skills and helping other kids in the program.

"We need to get to those kids when they are young," Lo Duca said. "We see so many kids who are at risk and we want to help them."

"It's always better to build a child than to rebuild an adult," Dyer added.

Gray Allen, another RPAL board member, is also devoted to trying to help divert kids from trouble.

"I got involved with the program because I really care about kids," he said. "It troubles me to see kids take the wrong path because they don't know where to turn."

Allen said in addition to physical activities, RPAL offers Roseville youth exposure to seeing police officers in a positive way. By being involved in the league Dyer said it helps to break down some of the barriers that often exist between teenagers and law enforcement.

"Many of these kids would never be included in anything like this," Lo Duca said. "Sometimes we help them to find jobs and some of the kids even end up going into law enforcement."

"We have six officers in the youth services department," Dyer said. "I know this has a positive impact."

Lo Duca and Allen agree the program couldn't exist without support from the city of Roseville and the Roseville Police Department.

Dyer said RPAL is supported by funds allocated by the city, various grants, private sponsors and fundraisers throughout the year.

"This year is the first time we have a fireworks stand to help raise funds as well," Dyer said.

The stand is located at the corner of 5 Star Boulevard and Stanford Ranch Road until July 4th, he said.

Roseville is not the only city that offers a Police Activities League. According to Lo Duca the program began in the 1970s with boxing instruction.

Today the league is available throughout the country with a variety of activities that focus on healthy lifestyles with many leagues offering rock climbing, ropes courses and several activities that emphasize being part of a group.

RPAL hosts these activities throughout the year during the in-service school days, fall, winter and spring breaks as well as during the summer at 100 Corporation Yard, located behind the Roseville Police Department.

For more information about RPAL call Dyer at 774-5062.