

The PKZ Newz

Parramore . Kidz . Zone



Parramore Kidz Zone is linking Parramore's children to positive opportunities, such as pre-k, after school, mentoring and economic opportunity programs. As a result, school performance is expected to improve and teen pregnancy, juvenile crime and child abuse rates decline in the neighborhood.

May 2007

T.O.P. - TEENZ OF PARRAMORE

Growing up amid gangs, violence and drugs doesn't define who you are and what you will become. Parramore's youth are "taking back" their neighborhood. Twelve teenagers serve on PKZ's Youth Advisory Council to ensure programs are youth-inspired. Youth have elected officers and given themselves a name: T.O.P. - Teenz of Parramore. T.O.P. members designed a logo and organized a series of events during Spring Break 2007, including "Movie Day" at the Downtown Recreation Center and a neighborhood kickball tournament. Stay tuned for more NEWZ from T.O.P. during the years ahead.



T.O.P. members speak out

LaQuinta Chandler and DeMarkus Oliver "want to see positive things in Parramore" including "more opportunities for Parramore youth and more programs to keep them off the streets" and, according to Phillip Gordon "help them stay out of trouble". For Portia Massey T.O.P. needs to "make an impression on Parramore." The way to do that, say Demurio Fountain and Thomas Joseph, is to "make Parramore a better place for children" and "a better place to live." In the words of Deshanqueonette Jones: "PKZ is making Parramore fun!"

MENTORZ

PKZ's newest program - Mentorz - is recruiting mentors for Parramore children. Mentors spend 30-45 minutes a week with a child, helping them set goals, succeed in school, and strengthen positive values and behaviors. Mentorz aims to recruit, train and match mentors for 250 Parramore children. According to Linda Johnson, Mentor Coordinator at Howard Middle School: "So many children ask me to find them mentors! I hope more adults will step up." To boost the number of mentors, PKZ has contracted with Holly Vanture, who has served as Fern Creek Elementary School's Mentor Coordinator for 4 years. Mentor training takes about one hour. For more information, please contact Holly at

holly.vanture@ocps.net or 407-222-4761 or visit PKZ's Mentorz website at: <http://www.cityoforlando.net/executive/children/volunteer.htm>



Holly Vanture, with Kyler Haley, a 4th grader at Fern Creek Elementary School. According to Holly, "Mentoring makes a difference in a child's success and has a life changing impact on the adults who volunteer."



HOMWORK ROOMZ

Marcus is 15 years old and attends the Homework Room at the Downtown Recreation Center on Parramore Avenue, where I work. He's a student at Excel Orange, a school for children who have been expelled from regular school because of behavior problems.

At the Homework Room, I help Marcus with schoolwork every day. He says his teachers treat him better now because he turns in assignments.

One day Marcus said Excel had recommended his return to public school. But first he would have to write a resume and cover letter.

I helped him write the resume, but he wanted to write the cover letter by himself. When I read what he wrote, I was deeply moved. I couldn't believe the transformation Marcus had made.

Later, I cried in my car. I will never forget that moment. He did all of this on his own. He's a great kid and that moment defined everything I believe PKZ to be about. These kids have so much potential. Someone has to help them or they won't achieve it.

-written by Ashley Eason, Coordinator of PKZ's first Homework Room, which opened January 8, 2007



Traci Yeager, Program Coordinator for UCF CREATE-Center for Research in Education, Arts, Technology, and Entertainment helping a child in the Homework Room.

PKZ Homework Roomz operate at three sites in Parramore: the Downtown Recreation Center, New Image Youth Center and Dr. J.B. Callahan Neighborhood Center. Forty-five children from 16 different schools - including elementary, middle and high schools - regularly attend the Roomz. At Homework Roomz, they work with tutors on school assignments and projects, study for tests, prepare for the FCAT, and have access to computers and the internet. They are given healthy snacks and free school supplies donated from private individuals and *A Gift for Teaching*. Homework Roomz also give older youth safe places to discuss concerns, stresses, and debate topics such as non-violence and dating. PKZ will open additional Homework Roomz in the fall, in partnership with non-profit organizations and community centers. The goal is that all children in Parramore have access to the materials and adult support they need to do well in school.



Getting the job done!

THANKZ

PKZ is grateful to the Orlando Magic for its donation of \$50,000 a year for the next 5 years to expand youth programming in Parramore. The Magic's donation will bring the After-School All-Stars program to the Dr. J.B. Callahan Neighborhood Center, to offer summer and after school activities to 60 middle school aged children. In addition, it will finance Orlando's first "Roving Leaders" initiative, providing structure, encouragement, and personal attention to Parramore youth vulnerable to gangs, drugs, and violence, through athletic activities, community service projects, field trips, teen dances, arts initiatives, special events, and leadership development.



On June 18, 2007 at 10:00 a.m. Lisa Early, Director of Families, Parks and Recreation, will present Parramore Kidz Zone's Annual Report at an Orlando City Council workshop. Please join us in City Council Chambers on the 2nd floor of City Hall, located at 400 S. Orange Avenue, to hear more about the project and lend your support.

MESSAGE FROM MAYOR BUDDY DYER

"A few weeks ago, the [SAFE Orlando Task Force](#) presented recommendations to City Council in three areas - prevention, law enforcement and re-integration. The Task Force recognized Parramore Kidz Zone as an effective model of prevention. In just under a year, PKZ has engaged hundreds of neighborhood youth in positive opportunities that prevent youth crime. I commit to you that the City will act swiftly and deliberately to implement or advocate for the SAFE Orlando Task Force recommendations, and am proud to know that we are already beginning to see results thanks to PKZ."



If you would like more information, or wish to get involved with PKZ, please contact Cheryl Rainsberger, at the City of Orlando's Families, Parks and Recreation Department, 407-246-4320 or cheryl.rainsberger@cityoforlando.net.

<http://www.cityoforlando.net/executive/children/pkz.htm>