

More room, services at new location

By **KIMBERLY FORNEK**
 kfornek@pioneerlocal.com

The Haven Youth & Family Services has moved its headquarters from Winnetka to a more welcoming place with more room in downtown Wilmette. The agency opened its new offices on the second floor of 825 Green Bay Road on Sept. 29 and will hold a ribbon-cutting ceremony Thursday morning.

Haven provides free youth and family counseling, emergency housing for adolescents, and crisis intervention 24 hours a day.

The relocation, while still convenient to the people Haven serves, offers "a brighter and more positive environment," than the previous headquarters which were in a basement, with portions unheated and without air-conditioning, therefore unusable during much of the year, Haven's Communications Director Bonnie Ryan said in an e-mail.

"The usable space at our new location is about twice as big, and the therapy rooms are larger and much more inviting and friendly," Ryan stated.

"The main room is a multi-purpose room cut into

two parts, both very conducive to socializing and group work."

The room, furnished with couches and chairs, "is a great place for kids to hang out with each other and Haven staff."

The new headquarters has four private rooms for counseling — one more than the agency had previously.

"All of the rooms that will be used for counseling have multiple large windows, which is much more therapeutic than a room in a basement with cement walls," Ryan said.

The new headquarters also has better parking for clients and their families.

Each day, Haven social workers see between five and 10 young people or their family members. The staff includes two licensed social workers, two outreach workers, the executive director, two students from Loyola University's master's program for social work and a student worker from New Trier High School.

"Every day our outreach workers and interns go to New Trier High School and Washburne Middle School, (where) . . . they talk to kids and provide informal counseling."

The number of kids who stop by Haven's headquarters to "just to hang out" fluctuates daily from as few as one, to as many as 15, Ryan said.

"In addition, we have a very successful community service program. Kids come in every day to do community service hours for their church, school or peer jury. So far (this year) we have had approximately 15 kids come to Haven through this program. More than 75 percent of these kids have ended up enjoying being at Haven so much that they end up sticking around . . . to volunteer or join the Youth Board. About half of our community service kids are now members of the Youth Board," Ryan said.

"We hope that these numbers will grow as a result of our move to Wilmette, one reason being the number of youth and schools is greater in Wilmette."

The public is welcome to attend Haven's Open House from 4 p.m. to 7 p.m. Nov. 3, and meet and question members of the staff.

For more information, call (847) 251-6630 or look at the Web site, www.havenforyouth.org.

Comment: pioneerlocal.com