
New facility opens for local youth

The Boys and Girls Club of Strathcona County is celebrating the opening of its new Sherwood Park facility

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Youth who are members of the Boys and Girls Club of Strathcona County have a new building where they can participate in the kid-oriented program.

A ribbon cutting was held late Wednesday afternoon to celebrate the opening of the new Children and Youth Community Centre on Spruce Avenue, about a block from Sherwood Heights school, Pine Street elementary and Our Lady of Perpetual Help school.

Chuck Van Deel Piepers, president of the Boys and Girls Club of Strathcona County, said the new building, owned by the Robin Hood Association, effectively doubles the area the local Boys and Girls Club had at its old location.

The new centre is a joint project between the Robin Hood Association, Parent Link, Alberta Health Services and the Boys and Girls Club of Strathcona County, said Van Deel Piepers.

In addition to the programs usually offered by the Boys and Girls Club, Parent Link and Robin Hood Association, Alberta Health Services is running a neuro developmental assessment clinic at the property.

Van Deel Piepers said he approached Robin Hood Association CEO Ed Riediger last fall to discuss sharing the property because he knew the lease on the club's past property was about to expire.

All four organizations share the building, but have their own respective areas. A full-sized kitchen and full-sized gym are shared by all four organizations, as is the outdoor play area behind the building.

Having the gym on property means no longer having to drive kids to and from Sherwood Park's recreational facilities for exercise programs, Van Deel Piepers said.

Also announced at the ribbon cutting by Van Deel Piepers was a grant about to be issued by the provincial government that will create sustainable funding for the local club and enable it to open a licensed child care program for up to 60 children with hired staff.

The target start date for that program is June 2010, Van Deel Piepers said.

The club is also receiving an estimated \$25,000 in funding from RBC this year.

About 35 kids are currently registered with the local club and 25 of those youth use the centre on a daily basis, Van Deel Piepers said.

An estimated 300 kids are a part of the Boys and Girls Club annually.

Although the ribbon cutting was held on Wednesday, the facility has been open for use since June 1.

In addition to its new building in Sherwood Park, the Boys and Girls Club is also expanding into rural Strathcona County with programs in Ardrossan and Antler Lake.

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