



From left to right, Joshua Jones, Kevin Calhoun, Monica Vasquez, Denis Nishihara, Tracy Lawson and Linda Hoschler pose in the Oak Park Community Center.

PHOTO BY PHILIP VASQUEZ

Programming a community

Kevin Calhoun made it crystal clear that he doesn't run the show at **Oak Park Community Center**. He said that as a **program coordinator**, he is part of a team that runs the center. Calhoun works with people of all ages, planning programs for teens and all things involving sports and recreation for adults—such as Zumba dancing, table tennis and weight room hours. Calhoun says the activities bring people together from all walks of life, people who might not interact otherwise.

Oak Park's diversity is evident as you walk down its streets, visit McClatchy Park or step through the double-door entrance of the Oak Park Community Center. Inside, Spanish, Fijian, various Chinese dialects and English are all spoken. Calhoun invited SN&R to chat in his office there, where a poster of Muhammad Ali hangs on the east wall.

What do you admire about Muhammad Ali?

He spoke his mind. He stood up for the little guy, and he was very, very, very confident. He knew his abilities, and he bragged about it. I love that about him.

What led you to work at the center?

I used to work in child care, for licensed daycare. And it was an opportunity to get back to stuff I really loved, which was hands-on working with teens, really. I don't want to say deprived [teens], but, you know? Areas that don't get as much attention, and don't have that much of role models—people that look like them and talk like them, and stuff like that. So this was a great opportunity.

What sorts of programs do you hold for teens?

Right now we have Teen Scene, which is our daily program. It goes 4:30 to 7 [p.m.], Monday through Friday. They do scrapbook making, they do field trips, they do their homework, they do life-skill training, they play sports, they play outdoor activities. Did I say field trips already? We went to Mojo Dojo [a trampoline park]. They've been to bowling. It's exposed them to stuff that a normal kid in Oak Park might not be able to do. We took some kids to K1 Speed [a go-kart racing track] on Bradshaw ... All of them thought they were like IndyCar drivers. I said, "Can you guys drive?" They said, "Oh, yeah. We can drive."

... Our Teen Scene program is to introduce them to, you know, life. But you are a teenager and you're getting older, and things are gonna become serious for you. College prep, they do college prep. They went to a Black College Expo at Sac State. They've been to UC Davis. Our staff are great role models, 'cause most of them are goin' to school, and our kids can look up to that.

And how about sports?

We have organized sports leagues, run through our teen services division of the city of Sacramento. We finished flag football and we just got done with basketball, and these are both 10-week programs. Everything that I told you about is free ... Anything that's teen or youth related, Measure U covers all that ... It's all free.

How would a person become a volunteer here?

They would have to come up here and fill out a volunteer application ... and we have a lot of opportunities for volunteers. □

Visit the Oak Park Community Center at 3425 Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard or online at facebook.com/OakParkCommunityCenter.

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