

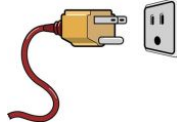


From the Desk of Andrew D. Gillum
City Commission, Seat 2



2009 - 1:12

The Outlet



One of the largest influences in my life, besides my mother, my grandmother, and my six siblings, was my ability, while growing up, to participate in neighborhood and community service activities. While attending high school in Gainesville, Florida, I served on “The Outlet” – a teen council where we helped to develop programming for our peers and ourselves. Our logo was a plug going into an outlet, and our theme was providing young people an outlet to do good things through community works and enhancing peer relationships.

Our work mainly focused around community service involvement, as well as fun and safe entertainment activities. It was a countywide effort – from all sides of town. When we got into our common youth space, only the sky was the limit. We prepared workshops for each other. We learned what it meant to be a part of a small business incubator developing our own business ideas. We had our music and our technology. We had everything we wanted, and our community supported us.

As mentioned in the [2009 - 1:4 edition of this newsletter \(see Fund Florida's Future\)](#), it has continued to be a vision of mine to expand opportunities for local high school youth that promote social responsibility, civic awareness, and leadership development. Soon after being elected to the City Commission, I met Public Defender Nancy Daniels, who shared a common interest in creating a teen youth space in the City of Tallahassee where youth could congregate, create their own programs, and be positive influences on and for one another.

[\(Continued next column.\)](#)

Ms. Daniels believed, as I did, that by putting young people in a communal space where they could have a shared human experience and explore common challenges (e.g., peer pressure, bullying, academic pressures) would help them overcome some of the superficial barriers (i.e., International Baccalaureate vs. Advanced Placement, honor students vs. general students) that often are detrimental to building peer relationships. Hence, also dispelling the myth of bad vs. good, rich vs. poor, north side vs. south side.

It was a great vision, but at that time we didn’t have the resources or the wherewithal to make it work. In September 2009, the City cut funding for the Palmer Munroe Community Center due to demographic shifts in the neighborhood that resulted in a low threshold of service under the former program model. This presented an opportunity to possibly do something good out of an unfortunate situation. Having conferred with Ms. Daniels and others in the community who were similarly interested in trying to figure out what we could positively do for this space, the idea of a youth center with teen-focused activities came to mind.

To that end, for the last three months, various members of the community, including private individuals and reps from the City, Leon County, Leon County Schools, Department of Juvenile Justice, and NAACP, have been exploring this initiative. We also received input from youth (approx. 300 surveys have been collected) to obtain a sense of what they desire.

↻ An Idle Mind ↻

My grandmother would say, “An idle mind is a devil’s workshop”, meaning that when you don’t have something constructive to do, someone will turn you on to something to fill that time. The whole concept of a teen-focused facility is to help adolescents transition, in a positive way, into adulthood.

“Serving is Leading”

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Palmer Munroe Youth Center



Our goal is not to say that constructive outlets do not exist or that youth are not making positive strides in their lives. It is our hope to proliferate the opportunities and get them so hooked to the space that they will want to be

affiliated with it and become members to do community activities together. Tallahassee has many great programs, yet there's a group of kids who aren't tuned-in to anything. We want to capture that group.

We envision the Palmer Munroe Youth Center (PMYC) to be program driven, idea generated, and executed by young people themselves. In summary, a space "of us, by us, and for us". Our vision is to incorporate this youth-involved/youth-driven concept while offering cultural, vocational, and artistic programs that allow them to learn, socialize, or just hang out in a fun, accessible, and safe environment.

In addition to surveying local middle and high schools, we met with several teens (including the Walker Ford Community Center Teen Council) and asked them what they would like to see happen. Feedback ranged from the typical leisure activities, such as sports fundamentals and dance classes to including skills-based training, mentoring/tutoring, educational assistance, community service projects, public speaking, self-defense, and GED training.

Based on their and prospective partners' feedback, we came up with what a PMYC programming schedule might look like:

8am to 3pm (weekdays) – administration of restorative justice programming, administration for teen activities and possible parental programs.

3pm – 9pm (weekdays) – normal recreation center type activities with the exception that it will be a space for teens 13-19 years old.

Friday Nights – movie night, late night basketball

Saturday – fieldtrips, workshops, community service

Sunday – homework assistance, recreation, community service

PMYC Community Forum

Organizations such as the Salvation Army, Oasis for Women and Girls, Tallahassee Police Athletic League, and others offered their services at the public forum held in mid-



Salvation Army rep offers support

November to obtain input from the community. We also anticipate collaboration with Florida A&M University, Florida State University, Tallahassee Community College, and other individuals and agencies in the community with demonstrated expertise in the areas that address poignant needs of our young people.

Several attendees pleaded for inclusion of youth younger than the targeted age group of 13 to 19. Heartfelt concern was expressed regarding the current state of delinquency amongst elementary school age youth. Painful as it was to hear, let alone agree with the validity of their concerns, it is imperative to realize that PMYC cannot be the "be all, end all" answer to resolve all the varying constituency concerns that confront us. Additionally, a frequent observation at other community centers and a common theme from the youth surveyed was that they want their own space separate from the younger kids.

PMYC Restorative Justice

Although the proposed PMYC presents similarity to the former Palmer Munroe Community Center by providing structured and freelance recreational activity, it also offers the unique element of restorative justice. This component offers daytime programming (e.g., counseling, anger management, professional intervention, truancy prevention) that can help youth with these needs get back into the educational system.

PMYC will also have Neighborhood Accountability Boards to help prevent kids from being arrested for misdemeanor offenses. Emphasis will be on training and partnering with adults to help provide a safe place for youth and improve the quality of life in the neighborhoods. This restorative justice concept is consistent with the national initiative for NAACP.

"Serving is Leading"

On September 23, 2009, the City of Tallahassee adopted the FY2010 City Budget that included closing the Palmer Munroe Community Center beginning October 1st of this year. During that same budget adoption process, the City Commission authorized me to explore the possibility of using the site as a teen center.

The Commission supported the exploration of the concept, but emphasized that they didn't want anything that will cost more than we can afford. In fact, they preferred a solution that didn't increase at all the burden on the City's budget, but perhaps spread that burden out between a number of partners. This proposal, which will be presented to the Commission at its December 9, 2009 City Commission meeting, offers two different and significant elements from the former operation of the facility:

1. The City spent a little over \$300K/yr. in operating the Palmer Munroe Community Center as a normal neighborhood community center. The City will be asked to put half that amount (around \$150,000) into PMYC. It is projected that the County and the State will offer a similar amount. Grants will also be solicited from community and national foundations to help supplement some of the innovative work that will take place at PMYC.
2. Previously, the City took full responsibility for the operation of the community center without any partnership from any other entity – private, county, state, or otherwise. Under this proposal, we plan to pull from various sources to make it work, including possible requests for a proposal (RFP) for the management and operation of the facility.

We expect the end result of our efforts to be more enriching activities for teens in our community with a byproduct of less delinquency and a healthier teen population. We have much work to do to open the doors and to make sure it is sustainable. Our goal is to make the work at PMYC so transformational for those who participate that it will be unthinkable to not see work like this continue.

The glory of public service is the opportunity it gives to work with and help other people. "No man is an island" is apropos to this mission. Collaboration and partnership yields synergy in effectiveness and productivity.

- Perhaps you commented on a policy issue being addressed by the City Commission,
- Perhaps you spearheaded a community project or participated in a public forum,
- Perhaps you donated money, served as a mentor, worked or volunteered in other roles,
- Perhaps you led a campaign to emphasize more open, frugal, and efficient governmental services,
- Perhaps you trumpeted a message or rallied the troops to stand for a common cause,
- Perhaps you offered prayer, guidance, or support in other ways to frontline leaders,
- Perhaps you commemorated a milestone event or memorialized a fallen community member,
- Whatever your "perhaps", thank you for your valuable contributions to make Tallahassee the special place that it is.

As 2009 closes, it beckons us to reflect on our accomplishments, rejoice with those who helped us press forward, and rededicate our focus and efforts to the common good of humanity. It's an honor for me to be a public servant for and with you. I invite your continued active engagement and robust dedication as we face the challenges and opportunities of 2010.

December Calendar Events

"Subject to Change"

Date	Time	Events
12/2	9 am – 2 pm	Office Appointments
12/2	2:00 pm	Fire Executive Session
12/2	4 pm	CC Meeting @ CHC
12/8	1:00 pm	HHS @ CH
12/9	9 am – 4 pm	Office Appointments
12/9	4 pm	CC Meeting @ CHC
12/14	10 am	FVIG @ CH
<i>Season's Greetings and Happy New Year</i>		

Code:

- CC – City Commission
- CH – City Hall
- CHC – City Hall Chambers
- FVIG – Financial Viability in Government Target Issue Committee
- HHS – Health & Human Services Target Issue Committee