

Marblehead for Teens: My Interview with Molly Williams

-Alex Kerai

Last Thursday I sat down with Ms. Molly Williams, the executive director of “Marblehead for Teens”, to talk about the new teen center that she has helped to pioneer for Marblehead. She told me that idea came about “eight years ago when parents were asking what was missing from Marblehead. The parents agreed that the kids needed something to do with their free time and the teens needed a hangout.” That’s where Marblehead for Teens comes in. The non-profit group plans to build a brand new teen center across the street from the fire-station where Sundance preschool used to be. But Marblehead for Teens is different than the YMCA or the JCC. Instead of having everything be run by *adult* boards with *adult* supervisors who decide the activities and schedules, Marblehead for Teens is completely *teen* run with minimal adult supervision (the goal is for college students to supervise). Ms. Williams compared the program to Pleon Yacht Club, where the kids run the club and the kids decide what they want to do. If they kids want to have pizza party fridays, they can! If they want to do have football sundays, they can! It’s all up to them.

Ms. Williams said that the goal is to have a Leadership Council “made up of teens from the High School who volunteer time and help to run the center. It would be a council of thirty or so kids representing many ages, groups, and ideas.” This council would help make the decisions about pizza party fridays and football sundays. Ms. Williams said that any idea that the kids have is taken the leadership council and the kids get to pitch their ideas. If it could work, it happens.

The center would be open Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 2:30 until 6:00 pm, Friday from 2:30 until 10:30 pm, and on Sundays 3:00 until 10:30 pm. It would always be staffed by two adults. The building has room for a café and lounge, game room, music and art room and space for dances or concerts on the weekends– but it is all up to the kids! The kids decide what they want to do with the building. One of the great things about the Teen Center is that is walking distance from the middle school and high school and that it is also close to the fire and police stations, so it is safe and secure.

Ms. Williams and I also got to talking about how the money would be raised for the teen center, there could be lots of things that the kids want to do with it (flat-screen TVs, game rooms) that require money. She said that to start there would be a campaign (hopefully run by the Teen Leadership Council) to raise awareness for the Teen Center and to also raise money. Then once the Teen Center has begun, there will be memberships available: \$50/year with a \$10 café voucher for High School students and \$15/year with a \$5 café voucher for 7th-8th Grace students, guest passes would also be available for \$5/day.

Over the course of hour and a half conversation, Ms. Williams told me how she hopes that the Teen Center will come to represent a “home base” for teens in Marblehead and that it will spawn collaborations with the YMCA and JCC. More importantly, she hopes that the Teen Center will be a fun place for kids to go and hang out. “Right now,” she says. “I am just focused on getting my Teen Leadership Council together and getting the programming going.”

If you are a student at MHS and want to learn more at Marblehead for Teens please visit Mrs. Norman in the front office. If you have more questions about Marblehead for Teens visit marbleheadforteens.org or email Molly Williams at molly@marbleheadforteens.org

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