



Teen Center of Wilton

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
OCTOBER 8, 2019

This school year TRACKSIDE TEEN CENTER is off to a great start, increasing our positive impact on area Teens!

Trackside is looking ahead to their fundraisers and Annual Appeal to bolster the positive momentum and continue to bring the Wilton teens and community together.

WILTON, CT – Trackside Teen Center is off to an exceptional start this school year in hitting record high attendance and impact by launching a number of new events and programs in the 2019/2020 school year despite ending FY19 with a deficit.

Under new executive leadership of John Priest and Cindy Moser and many new members of their Board of Directors since January 2019, the center has been working hard to increase the positive impact it has on our Wilton community and especially our tweens and teens. That hard work has been paying off as Trackside's popularity, participation and ultimately impact on the lives of our kids has been steadily growing. The number of tweens and teens participating in Trackside's safe and substance free drop-in hours, programs, clubs and events has been on the rise along with the number and diversity of programs and events being offered.

Below marks the milestone accomplishments the center has achieved at the start of this school year

1. **Higher participation** - over 200 tweens and teens have participated in Trackside's safe and substance free drop-in hours, programs, clubs and special events. This is up significantly from last school year where it took nearly 7 months to draw in the same number of teens.
2. **Weekly Drop-ins and Sign in attendance have increased** Weekly, Trackside is averaging over 60 student sign-ins per week and have over 80 in the busiest week this school year. On a busy afternoon, there are easily 35 or more teens at Trackside participating in a range of programs and activities. This is up from the springtime, were an average week drew about 25 student sign-ins.
3. **Expanded impact** - Tweens and teens from not only Middlebrook and WHS have been participating at Trackside, but also from Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Academy and Wilton students at Fairfield Prep. Our open stage night, featuring Ridgefield's School of Rock House Band also drew teens from the surrounding communities of Ridgefield, New Canaan, Brookfield and South Salem and Brewster, NY,
4. **New Programs and Events offered at the Center** - To appeal to more kids, and keep the previous teen visitors engaged and energized, Trackside has launched ideas from the



Teen Center of Wilton

Student Advisory Boards, including high school led and mentored programs. Input from the students has helped to create an expanded menu of new programs and events, ensuring the center is appealing to a diverse group of teens and offering opportunities to experience new things with both new and old friends.

While only the start of things to come in 2019-20

This September we have seen:

1. The return of Gaming Thursdays and Smashbros tournaments for HS and MS
2. New! Girlz Rule Mondays
3. New! Trivia Night
4. New! Open Stage Night (in partnership with School of Rock Ridgefield)
5. New! Quiz Bowl Club

Upcoming New October events:

1. Dungeons and Dragons Club,
2. Painting with a Purpose*
3. Pre-play Improv Club returns
4. Virtual Reality (VR) Gaming Club*
5. Music Trivia night

* *Made possible through grants from County Assemblies and Wilton Kiwanis*

“The beginning of this school year has been incredible. We are crafting new events and seeing great excitement and interest from a cross-section of kids. One of the most promising directions we have taken is having high school students lead clubs and mentor our middle school students. Our Quiz Bowl Club, and Pre-Play Improv Club were initiated BY kids. Our Trivia Nights and Open Stage Nights are for middle AND high school kids. Our Seasonal Smashbrothers All Star Tournaments are combined middle and high school levels! When you operate a space like Trackside, for teens and by teens, you can't lose.”, states Trackside's Programming Director, John Priest.

Looking Ahead

As Trackside enters its 15th year open to Wilton's teens, the center is looking to increase support from the community. Last year, Trackside unexpectedly lost two major donors and, as a result, are working hard to replenish critical operating and programming funds. Donations, grants, sponsorships and participation in fundraisers all help to ensure that Trackside continues to have the resources to make a meaningful difference in the community as a teen center, as a community meeting space and as a versatile rental venue.

In August, the Wilton Food Truck festival was a tremendous success in bringing the community together. Over \$9,000 was raised for the center with more than 2,500 people attending (400 more than last year), over 700 vehicles in attendance (100 more from last year), 16 food trucks, and 17 vendors and displays. Kids entertainment and music from local bands kept the crowd engaged through the entire event.



Teen Center of Wilton

As we move through this year and next, continuous energy on generating much needed revenue to support our operations, programs and mission will be focused on key areas. The first is ensuring that the community hears about the many benefits of Trackside as we kick off our Annual Appeal season. In parallel, we are planning on expanding our fundraising efforts through 3 or 4 additional community building events and a new set of sponsorship opportunities for local businesses and individuals. We additionally are working hard to continue to evolve as a rental space, which is also a critical source of revenue to keep the center running.

Trackside Teen Center is a true Wilton gem as one of the few teen centers in Fairfield County. Having achieved the very rare feat of being open for our teens for 15 years this November, Trackside Teen Center, as a private non-profit, is the uniquely valuable place for Wilton teens. As a safe place that is not home, and not school, Trackside is the in between – where pre- teens and teens can come to socialize, explore new interests, meet new friends and most importantly just be themselves in a supervised environment.

If you can not attend the community events, volunteer and rental inquiries can be made to Trackside at: <https://www.trackside.org> . If you believe that our town needs a safe place for our kids, that is not home, and not school, all contributions are welcome here <https://www.trackside.org/donations.html> .

###

Press Contact: Merideth Gilmor, 917-860-5792
Merideth.gilmor@me.com

or Cindy Moser 203-834-2888
cindy@trackside.org

About Trackside:

The objective of Trackside Teen Center is to promote healthy age-appropriate development for teens and pre-teens in Wilton. This is achieved by providing an environment designed to develop positive social skills and social competence, foster moral development, and enhance self-esteem - all of which are related to reduced risk-taking behavior, academic success, and healthy interpersonal relationships. Trackside is a venue that stands against the illegal use of alcohol and illicit drugs and seeks to be an arena that advocates and advances the efforts of the community to reduce teens' participation in such activities. Trackside exists as a safe zone where teens can build social relationships and have fun in a safe, alcohol and drug free environment Trackside is a not-for-profit 501(c) (3) organization. While the town of Wilton covers a portion of staffing costs, Trackside must raise money to fund the balance of these costs as well as 100% of annual operating expenses, regular maintenance, facility upgrades and programming designed to reach out and appeal to a broad cross-section of teenagers.