

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 27, 2009 » A SUPPLEMENT TO THE TENNESSEAN EVERY WEDNESDAY AND FRIDAY »

Reduced fees help Y members



Greg Hersh of Nashville works out at the Green Hills YMCA.
JEANNE REASONOVER / THE TENNESSEAN

Small increase planned for all centers

By Nicole Young
THE TENNESSEAN

When Sophia Severino lost her job as a flight attendant this summer and in the midst of a divorce, she turned to the Green Hills Family YMCA.

"This is a place where I can come to always feel good about myself no matter what," Severino said. "It's really my second home." Severino, 49, a Green Hills resident and mother of three, has been a member of the Green Hills

YMCA for about four years. She's also been enrolled in Open Doors — a program that helps members facing catastrophic personal crises, such as job loss, divorce or death, afford to stay at the YMCA — since she first joined.

Through Open Doors, Severino's membership fees are reduced about 85 percent each month. Without that help, she says, she would never have been able to afford her membership.

"It's humbling," she said. "I've been on the other end before. I've been a donor, and it's an amazing lesson to be the recipient of a gift like this when you've known the

blessing of giving."

Severino isn't alone.

Jessica Fain, spokeswoman for the YMCA of Middle Tennessee, reported an additional 1,183 memberships this year over last.

Membership up

Meanwhile, the organization has seen an increase in financial assistance requests, with about one-third of those with memberships seeking aid.

In Green Hills, Associate Executive Director Lisa Ellis said about

» FEES, 5N



» CINDY SMITH

Adult store isn't wanted, but it's not breaking law

Reporter Nancy DeVile wrote in last Friday's edition of Davidson A.M. about a new adult store that has opened in Sylvan Park.

Plenty of residents are riled up about having Ava's Adult in the neighborhood, but it appears the store is there to stay. It is a perfectly legal operation under current Metro law, and even new, more restrictive legislation couldn't shut it down. Under any new legislation, Ava's would simply be grandfathered in, and the shop at 5329 Charlotte Ave., would go on about its business.

Residents who have been calling us about the story seem to understand that and are resigned to the business, but they are still upset about Ava's Adult's large, red, white and blue sign with a prominent arrow that directs customers to the store.

John Foreman, principal at St. Ann School, summed it up best: "Parents have expressed concern about the large billboard that is drawing in strangers off the street into the neighborhood."

I drove down Charlotte the other day to see for myself what the residents were talking about, and the store itself is rather nondescript and is in a commercial strip mall. The sign looming above Ava's is certainly eye-catching. I suppose it could be worse.

There are no XXXs or words you couldn't use in church. It's not electronic, so it won't be showing DVD clips.

But, like the store, the sign appears to be perfectly legal. Actually, as Principal Foreman rightly points out, it's not a sign at all, but a billboard, and that is a key point.

"The billboard is on a separate piece of property, and the zoning law, the state law, says that it is a structure in and of itself," said Jon Cooper of the Metro Legal Department.

As a billboard on its own parcel of land, it's not subject to Metro restrictions about on-premise advertising, according to Councilman Jason Holleman.

Holleman, one of many Metro employees and elected officials who got back to me despite the holiday, says the neighbors are still talking about options.

We'll keep you posted.

Cindy Smith is editor of Davidson A.M.



Brooke Bloom, left, Annie Brooks and Briggs Horn attend last year's Kappa Alpha Theta Bal d'Hiver in Nashville. FILE / THE TENNESSEAN

They dance to help children

Annual Bal d'Hiver has raised almost \$1 million for CASA

By Natalia Mielczarek
THE TENNESSEAN

An infant with sullied diapers infested with maggots.

A baby born to a crack-addicted mother serving a prison sentence.

A third-grader with broken bones.

Those are just some of the children in Nashville's court system for whom 74 young women will dance on Saturday. Bal d'Hiver, Nashville's oldest charity ball, raises money for the

CHARITIES THAT BENEFIT FROM BAL D'HIVER

■ Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children, 601 Woodland St., Call 425-2383 or go to www.casa-nashville.org to donate, volunteer or find out more information.

■ Family & Children's Service, which provides an array of support programs for children and families, is at 201 23rd Ave. N. Call 320-0591 or go to www.fcsnashville.org to donate and learn more.

■ Kappa Alpha Theta Foundation raises money for college scholarships and other programs for its members. Go to www.nashvillethetas.org for more information.

Court Appointed Special Advocates for Children (CASA), college scholarships and Family & Children's Service. It has

donated about \$1 million in its 60-year run.

Krissie Binkley, a Harpeth Hall graduate, accepted the invitation

Visit Tennessee.com/Davidson to see more photos of past Bal d'Hivers.

to participate because of the cause, she said. A senior at the University of Georgia, Binkley said she understands the importance of helping less-fortunate children even more now that she's been mentoring a seventh-grader in Athens, Ga., who lives in a housing development.

"She doesn't have a lot of stability in her life, so seeing that there's someone in her life who'll be there for her week after week

» DANCE, 5N

Message to homeless: Someone cares

By Natalia Mielczarek
THE TENNESSEAN

The intersection of Drexel Street and Seventh Avenue South downtown smelled like smoked meat.

More than 600 pounds of food — sausage, chicken, pork butt, peppers and onions — smothered in olive oil and Cajun seasoning was cooking, destined to later become jambalaya for 800 homeless men, women and children.

The cooking took place in the loading dock of the Nashville Rescue Mission on Friday, Nov. 13, courtesy of Franklin couple Donna Fricke and David Lane. The duo just opened a Cajun

"All they eat is soup. I want to give them a filling meal. We're giving the mission the day off."

DAVID LANE
Cajun chef

catering business and wanted to serve the first meal to those in need. Lane, from Baton Rouge, La., supervised the boil in 20-gallon cast-iron pots cooking over propane tanks, stirring them occasionally with 4-foot-long metal spoons.

"I cook for everybody, and I've been saying that I'm going to cook for the homeless in Nash-

ville someday," said Lane, sporting a big metal belt buckle with Louisiana State University's initials prominently displayed.

"All they eat is soup. I want to give them a filling meal. We're giving the mission the day off."

Several Franklin businesses and Lane's friends and family

» HOMELESS, 4N



David Lane looks over his simmering pots as he prepares dinner for 800 homeless people at the Rescue Mission. SANFORD MYERS / THE TENNESSEAN

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DWT



Ladies of the Court get in position for a group photo last November at the Kappa Alpha Theta Bal d'Hiver held at the Schermerhorn Symphony Center. FILE PHOTOS / THE TENNESSEAN

Bal d'Hiver helps children

» DANCE FROM PAGE 1N

is very important," Binkley said. "I definitely learned through this how fortunate I am to have people in my life who care about me and will always be there for me. I also learned how spending one hour with a person can make a difference. A lot of people say they don't have time to mentor, but one hour is really so small."

Sorority gives back

Bal d'Hiver, an invitation-only debutante ball organized by the Kappa Alpha Theta Sorority Alumnae, will take place Saturday at Loews Vanderbilt Hotel. The cost to be presented is \$1,000.

"The members of the Bal d'Hiver court are an impressive group of civic-minded, intelligent young women who are in their final year of college," said Liz Hackett, co-chairman of this year's event.

"We recognize their accomplishments and their goals. The group this year is extremely impressive, and we are honored to have them participate."

More than 500 guests will attend, organizers said. They



Aurie Page Bouchard is escorted by Robert Flynn Orthwein last November at the Kappa Alpha Theta Bal d'Hiver at the Schermerhorn Symphony Center.

anticipate that Bal d'Hiver will raise about \$35,000 this year. Any amount is welcomed by

CASA, the nonprofit's Jenny McGill said.

Because of a shortage in donations, the agency is serving only about one-fourth of all the children who need its help, she said. This year, CASA will advocate for more than 2,000 kids who are victims of abuse and neglect. Last year, the number hovered just below 2,000, McGill said.

"Not only is our funding down, but our need is more than ever before. This economy only exacerbates the need because during difficult economic times, the rate of child abuse goes up," McGill said.

CASA is almost entirely funded through donations and receives a government grant of less than \$10,000 to operate, McGill said. It's the only program of this kind in Davidson County to serve abused and neglected children whose cases are pending in the court system, she said.

"Children who don't receive CASA's help are less likely to receive the services they need, such as counseling. They're less likely to be adopted or reunited with their parents quickly."

Contact Natalia Mielczarek at 259-8079 or nmieclzarek@tennessean.com.

Counseling need rises

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33 percent of her YMCA's 19,000 members were on income-based memberships. Last year, only 25 percent of members were on income-based assistance, Ellis said.

"We've had some members switch over," Ellis said. "There are a lot of people that we are helping now that you wouldn't expect to be receiving help. We've seen a lot of our previous donors coming to us for assistance."

Ellis said a key area of growth was in the Restore Ministries program, a service for members to receive individual and group counseling for issues such as depression, grief, anxiety and self-esteem.

"So many people out there are hurting right now," Ellis said. "We had to open two new rooms just to handle the counseling here."

Fain said YMCA of Middle Tennessee had 57 YMCA Restore Ministries groups operating area-wide in 2008. So far in 2009, there are 103 groups meeting throughout Middle Tennessee.

"More than half of the men and women currently benefiting from those groups are utilizing our financial assistance to take part," Fain said. "With these bad economic times, which add stress, people need to take care of themselves even more, and we want to do that in a way where people can afford it."

Add a dollar a month

In the coming weeks, however, current members can expect to see a small increase in their YMCA fees. Fain said letters went out Nov. 15 announcing a \$1-a-month increase in membership rates at all YMCA of Middle Tennessee centers.

"We evaluate our membership pricing structures each year, and in doing so typically have an annual rate increase," she said. "Rates are increased to meet increased operating costs."



Women participate in a Pilates class at the Green Hills YMCA. JEANNE REASONOVER / THE TENNESSEAN

Over the past five years, YMCA of Middle Tennessee raised rates by \$2 each year.

The largest raise occurred in 2003, when membership rates were raised by \$4.

For Lee Harlan, 42, a Green Hills resident and local YMCA member for more than 20 years, next year's rate increase is not a concern.

"If you look at all the services that are offered by the YMCA, it's such a small amount," Harlan said. "It's a half a cup of Starbucks. There's really no other health club in Middle Tennessee that can come close to what they have and at such a good bargain."

Harlan, a commercial truck, leasing and rental company owner, said he visits the Green Hills YMCA nearly every day.

"It's an escape," he said. "For me, personally, exercise helps keep the stress levels down. The worries I accumulate through the day are forgotten in the 30-45 minutes I spend on a treadmill."

"But it's also more than that. I've been a donor and I've been involved in many different programs here over the years. By helping others, I've helped myself, too."

Contact Nicole Young at 615-259-8091 or nyoung@tennessean.com.

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