



Youth Center

The newly completed St. Matthias Youth Center, opened on September 16th, 2018, is a facility for the Jr High & High School youth of the parish. It calls them of the parish to come and mingle, to play, to study and to worship together. And it gives our parish a facility along the lines of Youth Centers at other churches in the area. Check out this wonderful and long needed addition to our church facility off to the side of the parish hall and including the John Paul II Youth Room.

A Youth Center has been discussed within the parish for at least the 17 years that Sylvia Perez has been the Director of Youth Ministry. The need had always been there; other churches in the Magnolia area have their own Youth Centers, a place for young Christians to gather and have fun in a church setting. The need for a Youth Center at St. Matthias was known but it had never been given priority or funding. This year, 2018, our parents and staff said “take what we have and make it new”, and proceeded to make it happen.

On May 30th, Mary Ann Zanoff sent out a call to action that said “I have a dream” (quoting Martin Luther King). Parents, parishioners and staff responded with overwhelming support. Starting with the call to action, with minimal budget and little more than a vision, the Youth Center began to take shape. Donations came pouring in, bargains were hunted and found, volunteers spent countless hours cleaning, painting and arranging, and over the ensuing months the Youth Center gradually came into being!

The new Youth Center has a lounge area for the youth to gather and relax. It has a foosball, ping pong and air hockey tables for them to play games. And it has the brightly decorated and well equipped John Paul II room for meetings, classes, study, contemplation and much more. Future plans for the JP II room include audio-visual equipment and laptops for the youth to use in their studies.

The lounge and game area of the Youth Center is off to the side of the parish hall. Over the years this area had become a place for old equipment to go and be forgotten. It was dusty and dirty and in sad condition and it was apparent that much of the equipment stored there would never be used again. The tile floor was crumbling along with that leading to the parish offices. Early this year, when the parish had the flooring repaired, they removed the stored equipment. Suddenly there was an open,

unused area with new flooring. Mary Ann and Sylvia petitioned the parish for the use of the area and the request was approved.

Then came the inspiration and the call to action and the work and fun began. First came donations of the lounge chair cushions and the portrait of Mary. Parishioners donated the foosball and air hockey tables. There were plans to build furniture out of pallets and to cover a wall with them in the JP II room. However, studies showed that used pallets required too much work to be practical for this use. But parishioners donated the needed furniture. And one day husband and wife team, parishioners both, called and said they had purchased new lumber for the wall and they came and built the wall, negating the need for pallets. At first glance it looks like the wall is covered with pallets, but it is all new, clean wood. It is a focus wall and is very attractive.

Another need and prayer was answered when a parishioner/parent noticed that the Magnolia ISD was auctioning off no longer needed equipment from the science wing of the newly renovated Bear Branch intermediate campus (formerly 6th grade campus). Thanks to the help and diligence of this parishioner/parent and with funding from the parish we won the bid for 9 attractive and very sturdy tables at a very affordable price.

And so it went through the summer; donations and bargains and countless hours of volunteers and work crews. At times Mary Ann and Sylvia would become tired and overwhelmed at the remaining scope of the project, the need for furnishings and the work yet to be done. Then another call would come with another donation, another bargain would be found and another volunteer would show up to do work. Mary Ann and Sylvia say they felt the hand of God lifting them up and helping them through this journey.

We estimate that the furnishings, equipment and supplies that went into the Youth Center amount to over \$2000 of which the parish was asked to pay for less than \$400. The rest is the result of the tireless efforts of countless volunteers. And the result is priceless and a shining new facility for our parish.

Visit the Youth Area Project page on the parish website at <https://st-matthias.net/youth-area-project> for more of the story of the project and more pictures.