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Front Page

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Event aimed at teens draws 200
By Eliav Appelbaum eliav@theacorn.com

Photo Courtesy Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District FRESH MOVES- A group of high school students dance together while listening to music provided by a deejay during the park district's first-ever Teen Night at the Rancho Santa Susana Community Center on Friday.

The park district hosted its first-ever Teen Night at the Rancho Santa Susana Community Center last Friday, an event that was well received by about 200 local high school students.

The night featured a "Halo 3" tournament on Xbox 360, pizza and soda, a dance featuring a deejay in the gymnasium, three inflatable bounce-house structures that students could romp around in, a madcap game of dodgeball, plenty of pingpong, groups belting karaoke classics, foot-stomping to "Dance Dance Revolution" and a game of simulation tennis on Nintendo Wii.

Rancho Simi teen coordinator Dylan Gunning helped organize the event with the aid of 14 volunteers.

There were some snafus along the way- the winner and thirdplace finishers of the "Halo 3" tournament got their prizes mixed up. The first-place prize was a $50 gift card to Best Buy, with $30 and $20 gift cards going to the second- and third-place finishers, respectively.

"There are glitches here and there, but everything's running smoothly," said Gunning, 23, a 2003 graduate from Newbury Park High School who completed his studies at Cal State Northridge in the spring.

Students were also encouraged to fill out

evaluations about what they did and didn't enjoy. Those who completed evaluations before 8 p.m. got free pizza and soda.

Some features of Teen Night will likely change the next time, including improving the

Photo courtesy of Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District GAMERS- Focused teens compete with one another in a "Halo 3" tournament, just one of several activities offered during a park district event aimed at giving high school students safe and clean fun.

dance with the possibility of adding a dance contest and adding more variety to the game room. Gunning said 98 percent of the 109 students who filled out the survey said they wanted to come back to Teen Night.

"Junior high kids have the Boys & Girls Club, but for high school students there's really no place to go," Gunning said. "Much of the next one will be the same, but it depends on the evaluations."

Most of the students who were asked Friday about the Teen Night, provided positive, albeit varied, responses.

"I think this is really fun . . . and there are lots of really cute guys," said Kristy Cullen, 15, a sophomore at Royal High School. "I would totally go here again."

Dan Freidin, 16, a junior at Santa Susana High School, said he would like to see a video game tournament featuring the game "StarCraft II."

"It's pretty fun even though I lost early in the 'Halo 3' tournament," Dan said. "The tournament is good because you can play against people up close, facetoface."

Anisa Ahmad said her favorite part of the evening was the dancing. "It's awesome. It's really fun," said Anisa, a junior at Simi Valley High School. "I like dancing and meeting new people. The environment is fun, and I'd probably go again."

Some students had suggestions for improvement.

"I like the 'Halo 3' tournament," said David Miller, 15, a sophomore at Royal, "but I don't like the way it's set up. It's like a free-for-all with 16 people against each other. I wish it was more like one-on-one."

Miller said he would "definitely" come back to the next Teen Night. Sixteen-year-old Kimberly Williston, a sophomore at Simi High, agreed.

"I'd go back and I'd tell people to come because it's really fun," Kimberly said. "I love the dancing and the games and the karaoke."

Although many students appeared to enjoy the festivities, others did not find Teen Night fun.

"It's all right; it's nothing special," said Tony Alarcon, 17, a junior at Santa Susana High. "I'd make it have not as many games and make it fancier, like a prom where you get dressed up."

At the first event, teens were charged $5 for admission. In the future, Teen Night will cost $10, although students can get a $5 coupon from the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District website.

The next Teen Night will be held Friday, Dec. 7 at the same location. For more information, go to www.rsrpd.org.