

HONORS

Recreation Department earns health award

By Maci Flautt

Special to My Life

The Tunica County Recreation Department, under the leadership of Billy Willis, is being honored as an advocate for healthy lifestyles in Northwest Mississippi by the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi Regional Health Council. The Tunica County Recreation Department has been innovative in developing programming designed to educate and improve the health of young people.

In addition to extensive youth sports programming, which far exceeds those offered by counties of similar size, the department has implemented an after-school care program that includes healthy snacks, tutoring for school work, exercise options, and nutrition education. Over the years, the department has sponsored numerous health fairs and weight-loss programs geared toward families and young people.

One of the most innovative programs the department has worked to organize and sponsor are the Tunica Ten Point Coalition, which is a coalition of eight churches whose goal is to help at-risk youths. Through this partnership, the Recreation Department is able to provide programs after school.

Dr. Gene Osborn, CEO of the Tunica County Healthcare Authority, commented, "We hope to recruit new member churches and to share opportunities for programming in health-related areas."

Another innovative and unique endeavor the department is undertaking is a teen-run restaurant called Café de Rec. It operates out of the G.W. Henderson Sr. Recreation Center the third Saturday of every month. This restaurant is designed to educate 11- to 18-year-olds about cooking, baking and hospitality.

The program is guided by certified chefs and consists of a team of students who serve as the honorary chef, chef assistants, hostess, servers and junior assistants.

The program has a number of sponsoring partners including Tunica County 4-H, Boys and Girls Club, the Mid-South Food Bank, and the Tunica County Sheriff's Office.

The Regional Health Council is funded by a \$375,000 three-year grant from the W.K.

Kellogg Foundation of Battle Creek, Mich.

Get a Life! is a program of the Community Foundation of Northwest Mississippi. To learn more about the program, visit cfnm.org/ga/.

Maci Flautt, Regional Health Council coordinator, is leading the efforts of the council across the region.



Displaying the health award earned by the Tunica County Recreational Department are Keythric Merriweather (left), Emily Walton, Lanette Milam, Waccunna Coleman, Tavon Dean, Elijah Miller, Jerimiah Williams, Billy Willis, Alena Cushman, Desiree Robinson, Wacyria Coleman, Ebony Jones, Ambrea Hollins, Tangela Talley, Charity Womac and Aliyah McMullen.

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