

# COMMUNITIES

The News Tribune

Serving Lakewood, DuPont, Steilacoom, Tacoma, Fife, Fircrest and University Place

## YMCA provides Late Nite place for teens

### Program offers education, exercise, job skills

By Gina Murdach  
For The News Tribune

**Charles Carson says teens need two things the most: mentors and options.**

The YMCA Late Nite program he directs gives them both.

"Kids are smart; they know what's best for them," Carson, 25, said. "It offers a way to keep youths from becoming involved in unhealthy, unproductive lifestyles and activities."

The program instead offers healthy and productive activities, such as basketball tournaments, karaoke, exercising, job training and tutoring - in a safe environment.

Every Friday and Saturday night, an average of 80 teens of all races, shapes, sizes and origins show up. The program, founded in 1991 by associate YMCA director Phil Carter, lasts from 8 or 9 p.m.

to midnight at the Tacoma Center YMCA, Lakewood YMCA and the Tacoma Family Branch YMCA.

The program is divided into three parts: exercise and activities, job training and a learning center. Once teens secure a Late Nite membership ID, they can take part in all of them - and learn something no matter which activity they choose.

"Health and exercise are a very important part of education," Carson said. "We use basketball to teach the kids about group ethics. Basketball is also like bait; it draws the kids to Late Nite."

To help with the educational part, Late Nite staff and YMCA volunteers offer help in math, science, reading and writing skills.

"We have to convince the kids to be tutored, and it's not easy," Carson said. "One kid confessed he couldn't read or write

For more information on the Late Nite program, call one of the following YMCA branches:

■ Tacoma Center Branch, 1144 Market St.; 597-6444.

■ Tacoma Family Branch, 1002 S. Pearl St.; 564-9622.

■ Lakewood Family Branch, 9715 Lakewood Drive S.W.; 584-9622.

after 2½ years of coming to Late Nite. So sometimes it's not really tutoring anymore - it's teaching."

With the help of a \$20,000 donation from the Tacoma Kiwanis, the learning center has recently expanded to offer computer skills. The Late Nite staff is now installing computers for students to use as a study tool for SAT, ACT and GED testing, as well as training kids for the work force.

Real-world training at Late Nite includes teaching teens how to fill out job

applications, proper interviewing etiquette, communication skills and the occasional offer of an employment opportunity.

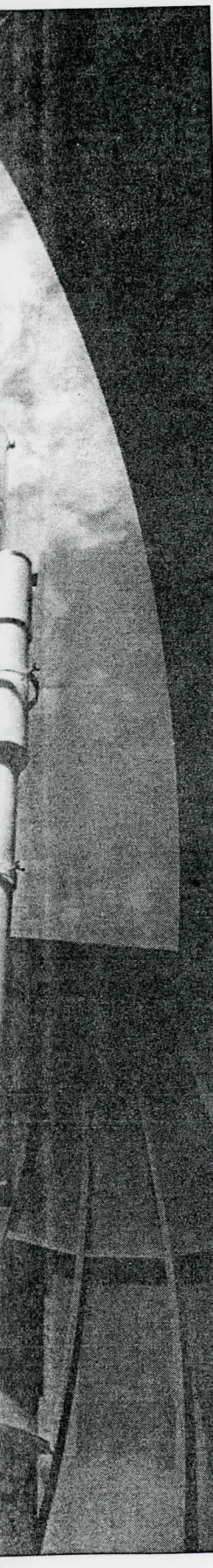
Carson said, "With Late Nite's average of 60 percent African Americans, we teach them to get over feeling like they are 'submitting to the white man' when they have to dress properly for interviews. We are trying to get them out of that frame of mind and tell them how they can benefit."

The teens also benefit from someone to look up to - especially when it's someone they can relate to, said Carson, who says he was raised on the streets. And the teens seem to agree.

"Charles is a big brother to us," said David Harris, a 16-year-old from Foss High School. "He is always there to help us out when we need him."

Demone Moore, 17, of Stadium High School agreed. "Charles has really helped me out in math. Now I'm one of the main students in class to be called on."

## Heavenly perspective



### TACOMA

#### Indoor play

The Metroplyt playground prIt's now located Center, 3513 J The indoor p to noon. Child unless the par center during The fee is \$1 For more in

### REGIO

#### M.L. King s

The annual trial Scholash King's birthd cheon.

King Coun guest speaker: lic.

Current scl Shalan Rock Mashavu Go

Also at the submitted fo The meetir Golf & Coun Bremerton. I of eight. Che sent to MLK Bremerton, Y