

Luminaries

April 29, 2019



Indian River Co., St. Lucie Co., Martin Co.



GIVING YOUTH A CHANCE BY GIVING GYAC
ROOM TO GROW

Indian River County

COVER STORY

Public invited to tour GYAC's \$3.4M expansion project

Christina Tascon

Special to Treasure Coast Newspapers
USA TODAY NETWORK - FLORIDA

From beginning to completion, it has been under a year since the Gifford Youth Achievement Center broke ground on its \$3.4 million expansion project.

The new 14,000-square-foot building will allow the center to eliminate its waiting list and serve up to 325 children each year versus its current capacity of 175 children, an 85 percent increase in the number of children being helped.

Officials report the project was built on time, on budget, and that there will be a ribbon cutting ceremony at 4:30 p.m. May 15 at 4875 43rd Ave.

Staff and supporters of the Gifford Youth Achievement Center, also known as GYAC, invite the community to come out to celebrate with them at a short ceremony, blessing, and a snip of some very large scissors. Guests will be welcome for refreshments and to tour the building to view the eight new multi-use classrooms, including a computer lab and two rooms geared toward teenagers.

RSVP at 772-794-1005 to give the center some idea of attendance.

It was through the vision of the GYAC Board of Directors that this dream come true for its students and parents. So many families wanted their children to attend the GYAC student after-school program and summer camp, that there was a never-ending waiting list.

Through creation of a strategic plan, the board recognized the need to serve more students was urgent and they devised the plan to fund the \$3.4 million expansion; with an additional \$4 million needed to cover operation costs for three years, and create an en-



Gifford Youth Achievement Center Executive Director Angelia Perry invites the public to tour the new building at 4:30 p.m. May 15 at 4875 43rd Ave. RSVP by calling 772-794-1005. CHRISTINA TASCON/SPECIAL TO TCPALM

dowment for sustainability.

Through early gifts from many generous donors, \$6.5 million has been raised to date, which includes two anonymous \$1 million gifts, the largest individual donations ever received by GYAC.

The project was designed by Edlund Dritenbas Bin-

On the cover

Freddie Woolfork, left, Lisa Holmes, Liz Melnick, Scott Alexander, Deborah Leeming, Sue Joyce, Mary McKinney and Trudie Rainone are ready for the ribbon cutting ceremony at the newly expanded Gifford Youth Achievement Center. Photo by Christina Tascon/Special to TCPalm.

kley Architects and Associates and built by Proctor Construction.

GYAC opened 21 years ago in response to a decline in the high school graduation rate of African-American students in Indian River County, after Gifford High School had closed and students were integrated into Vero Beach High School.

Graduation rates had plummeted to a reported 23 percent, which is when Dan K. Richardson, Dr. A. Ron Hudson and Dr. William Nigh came up with the idea to build a place that offered students after-school education and mentorships.

GYAC opened as a place where local children could go to be safe, get help with their homework and also enjoy recreation in its gymnasium. Twenty years later the graduation rate for African-American students has risen to almost 82 percent and many consider GYAC the catalyst for the improvement.

Not only do students receive homework assistance and support after school, adults and seniors also use the facility during the early part of the day for club gatherings and other social functions.

Christina Tascon is marketing coordinator at the Gifford Youth Achievement Center.

Luminaries

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