



## Santiam Teen Center

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To Whom It May Concern:

The Santiam Teen Center is a local 503c non-profit organization operating a free year-round program offering students 7<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> grades a fun and safe space to hang out, learn and engage with trusted adults. We are currently located at 2800 Kindle Way in Stayton, a property that we lease from the City of Stayton for that purpose, being centrally located and within walking distance of both the Stayton Middle School and Stayton High School.

Established in 2018, our mission is to provide a safe, enjoyable environment where any teenager can engage in constructive, educational, and social activities with the help of trained volunteers. Students will find opportunities for gaming, arts & crafts, cooking, board games, sports, and other activities, along with incredible, dedicated staff & volunteers to listen and interact, help with homework, job search, life skills, and model healthy social interactions.

We also serve snacks & a family style meal during our open hours. We want our Teen Center to be a home away from home – somewhere all kids will feel safe, comfortable and welcome.

Since opening our doors in 2019, we have steadily grown, serving hundreds of youth over the last four and a half years. This year we expanded our paid staff to include both our FT Executive Director and .75FT Programming Coordinator. This year alone, our daily attendance has doubled, and we are quickly running out of room in our current space, to serve the growing youth population interested in taking advantage of this valuable program.

We are grateful for the generosity of the City of Stayton, who entered into the lease agreement with us in 2018 and continues to extend the agreement for the good of the community. We also know that there have been recommendations to allow the Teen Center to continue to share the park property as plans for Mill Creek Park are implemented.

Decisions are being made which involve our organization, and we are grateful that the City of Stayton is committed to the best interest of our youth and our organization, by incorporating space for us in the Mill Creek park plans, however, we have not been invited into the conversation regarding our future at the Mill Creek Park and what that looks like.

In fact, we were about to embark on a 20K upgrade to paint, flooring, and offices for our current facilities, only to find out that those facilities might be relocated elsewhere on the

property. Had we begun those upgrades or completed them and then had to move the facility, those funds would have been wasted. Had we not had an unfortunate roof leak, those upgrades would have been already underway.

While we appreciate an awareness of how important the Teen Center is and a desire to continue providing space for us as part of the Mill Creek upgrades, we feel it's important to express our desire to be included in the conversation, so that we can voice our potential needs.

Our goal for the organization has always been to eventually build a brand new, expanded facility, hopefully on the current property, that would allow us to serve many more students, and the community. Our preliminary vision is to create a two story, YMCA like, facility that would include gymnasium space to allow for sports and activities during inclement weather, as well as classrooms/spaces that promote various activities, a commercial kitchen and communal dining area, offices and space for a mental health professional.

Our current Executive Director has been communicating with possible funders and grant resources which would help bring our ideas to fruition. Given how fast our attendance is outpacing our current facility space, and the pivotal decision to move forward on this Mill Creek Park project, we know that now is the time to bring this need forward for your consideration.

Our hope is that with the availability of the commercial kitchen and gymnasium space, that we can be a good partner to the community, who will also be able to utilize the space outside of our normal operating hours. It was our original understanding that Mill Creek Park might serve as a kind of sports complex park and we were excited to be a partner in that, knowing the community service opportunities it might provide to the youth we serve. It is our goal to be a good partner to the City of Stayton, the community, and our local youth.

We look forward to continued discussions, and a long-term partnership with the City of Stayton, as we strive to empower young adults who will enrich the community by developing relationships through positive interactions.

With Sincerest Appreciation,

Santiam Teen Center Board of Directors & Staff

Carmélie Bielenberg, President

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Jan McCoy, Treasurer

Hannah Ward, Program Coordinator

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