

Building bonds



Media - David CoxA safe space for personal growth, Lachine teens can find activities and support at the Club Zone

The Club Zone Lachine is the evolution of the youth community centre, a place for today's children and teens to engage their bodies, minds and spirits. From 3:30 pm to 8 pm daily, adolescents are given a chance to socialize and enjoy a vast array of activities in a couple of classrooms of Lakeside Academy.

The Club Zone started out as a part of the Girls and Boys club of Lachine. Many students would make the trek to the Club's former home in Carignan Park. Now that it is at Lakeside, the students don't have to travel at all, and the numbers are growing.

« Club Zone de Lachine was looking for a bigger, more functional space. I began working with their former Coordinator to put the move in place and grow their services and to work in conjunction with Lakeside and Maple Grove Elementary, » explains Daniela Scoppa, Community Learning Centre Coordinator at Lakeside.

The challenge now is to create a space that can pull the attention away from the digital world and bring adolescents into the present moment. The Zone has a good start, with a ping pong and air hockey table and a room they can decorate themselves.

The Zone leaders are looking into creating programs to be educational, developmental and social and to focus on asset and skill building.

Engaging and encouraging

The blackboard in the makeshift office, soon to be a computer room, is covered with the evidence of a brainstorming session. Executive Director Mario MJ Perron led the session with the three CEGEP students and a support teacher that run the Club Zone to come up with activities for the Zone to pursue.

« Karaoke nights », « Zen with Zoe », and « Cat's Potter Zone » are just a few of the scribbled ideas. The kids are in place, now is time to build the structure.

« We want to make this a place that the kids want to come to. The programs we want to implement have to be varied to capture their attention these days. There are great coordinators here, but I want more involvement from the community, » Perron says.

Perron, an entrepreneur and organiser, has pressed his connections in the broader community to become involved. He is trying to fill the Zone calendar with something interesting every day.

« I want to introduce the kids to all the opportunities that await them. They need to develop their own competencies, personal identity, and sense of belonging, and the Zone facilitates that, » Perron says.

Career nights with business leaders, community leaders, and tradespeople who come to speak and answer questions is one of his projects. He is hoping to teach those who come to the Zone values like social participation, leadership, and communication.

[About the club](#)

[GoFundMe campaign](#)