



February 2016

*Keeping Port Chester Youth Focused--Inside the Classroom and Out
Did Those January Resolutions Stick?*

Carver Center Keeps Teens Talking, Learning, Growing

Since its modest beginnings as an afterschool program for children whose parents worked in wartime defense plants in 1943, the Port Chester Carver Center at 400 Westchester Avenue has taken on the needs of all local families and individuals of all ages. "Afterschool," however, remains a shining jewel in its crown.



Carver's Teen Center provides a drop-in program that regularly entertains about 30 students, and on some days, as many as 60. The center's manager, Kelley Gordon-Minott, tries to create a "safe and positive environment to go to after school," where students aged 13 to 18 can "engage in meaningful conversations with adults, about their grades, academics, issues at school, troubles with teachers, real-world topics."

But the chance to connect and discuss is just a portion of the benefit to dropping in. The center goes way beyond talk, offering basketball clinics, music production workshops, swimming and personal fitness activities, college visits for seniors, and tutoring from several district teachers in history, math and science on specified days of the week. Gender- and age-specific leadership groups engage in peer support and community service.

During the summer months the center offers SAT prep, and a major effort goes to connecting teens with summer jobs and internships, including resume and interview coaching. A number of students get hired as counselors or trainees in the Carver Center's day camp, where staff receive CPR and first aid training.



A teacher by training with a master's in secondary education, Gordon-Minott is admittedly "always trying to sneak the veggies in," incorporating learning experiences and life skills into every aspect of her programs. Working closely with the school system, the center's offerings strive to support and extend what happens in the Port Chester classroom. "I want to get these kids thinking," she says, "about life after high school . . . before their senior year."