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Teens get down to business



Valley teens can pitch their skills Thursday in one-minute increments as many as 60 times. 'It won't be scary,' promises Patricia Shults.

BY PIO VALENZUELA
SPECIAL TO THE INDEX-TRIBUNE
October 27, 2015, 7:20AM



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They call themselves “Youthers,” an unofficial title for the representatives from various teen-services groups who meet once a month, thinking up ways to collaborate, stage events or brainstorm for ideas to help Valley youth. And that very type of networking is perhaps the inspiration for their latest concept – to get kids networking.

And the inspiration for the best way to do that? Speed dating.

On Thursday, Oct. 29, at Hanna Boys Center, such organizations as the Chamber of Commerce, the Boys & Girls Clubs of Sonoma Valley, Stand By Me Mentoring, Teen Services Sonoma, Sonoma Valley High School and Hanna itself, will give teens a chance to rub elbows with local business leaders – very quickly rub elbows, that is.

Teens will make a one-minute pitch about themselves and then absorb a similarly brief informational from each participating professionals – all 60 of them.

Chamber of Commerce director Patricia Shults said the speed-networking concept grew from the “youthers” get-togethers.

“This group had been talking of ways to collaborate and partner with each other,” said Shults. “We thought it would be a fun way to connect the kids with the business community.”

Each of the youth organizations invited 12 students and eight professionals to the 5:30 to 7 p.m. event, while the Chamber invited another 20 Valley businesses to take part, for a total of 60 teens and 60 adults.

“It’s fun and fast-paced. They’ll be engaged and it won’t be as scary,” Shults said. “These conversations might even potentially lead to some form of employment.”

Donovan DiLorenzo, director of teen programs at the Boys & Girls Clubs, believes

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the event will be healthy for teens, since it lets each attendee process their experiences and practice delivering a short, simple pitch to sell their skills.

“It gives teens a platform to share their experience and connect with adults,” he said.

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