

Community group opens performing arts studio for youth

By BECKY LOCK
Sun-Gazette Staff

Increasing opportunities for children is one of the goals of the Community Alliance for Progressive Positive Action, and on Monday afternoon the group unveiled its latest attempt to do so.

The nonprofit organization held an open house for its creative and performing arts studio and technology center at 1917 Lincoln Drive. The facility, which houses a digital recording studio and computer lab, is a donation from the Williamsport Housing Authority.

The community group's board hopes the new initiative will motivate students to turn away from self-destructive behaviors and concentrate on positive situations, including staying in school.

"A need became evident after the No Child Left Behind legislation. It was clear to me that we were losing too many kids," Eileen Harley, counselor in the Williamsport Area School District.

"Too many were not taking advantage of everything the school district has to offer. The school district could not address this problem alone."

The community organization has the support of a variety of local businesses, churches and public groups, executive director Loni Gamble said. The city school district and that of Loyalsock Township also are involved.

CORRECTION

The digital recording studio and computer lab were provided in kind by the Lycoming Housing Authority.

"To truly make things happen, we must work together," Gamble said. "We believe that to create a promising future, we must spend time with our youth. We must invest in them. There's so much talent in this community."

Some of that talent will be displayed for the public during a Young Artists in Action showcase June 11 at the Williamsport Area High School. About 150 musicians and singers will perform.

The crowd at the open house enjoyed a sneak preview. Ashley Ertel, Tyrielle Ortiz and Alonda Twine were among the young people who sang. One of the songs was written by Ertel, who also played keyboards.

"We absolutely love these kids. (They) are so talented," Harley said.

Part of the performing arts studio will be used by professional musicians who will offer free guitar, bass and keyboard lessons to students, Gamble said. Children and volunteers who want to learn more should call the organization office or e-mail cappa@suscom.net.

"This is not a black or a white or a minority thing," Harley said. "It's about kids who are hanging on the fringes. It's a shared vision to get kids motivated. Our overarching goal is to get students to do better in school."

Lock may be reached at block@sungazette.com.



Bruce White, 14, and Denita Pearson, 15, check out guitars that they can learn to play in free lessons offered at the Community Alliance for Progressive Positive Action's new creative and performing arts studio in Loyalsock Township.