



• ADDISON CENTRAL TEENS • P.O. BOX 1115 • MIDDLEBURY VT 05753 •

Dear Friends,

Do you remember your teen years? What activities you did, the trouble you got into, the places and people who were important to you?

For many, the landing place after school is in sports, or theater. But for those whose interests don't align with these activities, so often there is no other option. Addison Central Teens provides that alternative. Some of the best memories of teen years are made spending time with friends, outside of a structured context. ACT makes that happen, and teens are safe and supervised, while making those memories we all still cherish from that period of our lives.

As the new director here, it's my goal to shape and grow Addison Central Teens to be a place that makes teens feel safe, cared for, and like they belong. We are that landing place after school; the place where all teens can get a meal; where the stressed high school senior can breathe; where new friendships are made and old ones rekindled. On the back of this letter, I have included a note from our most recent alumna. When I tried to work pieces of it into this letter, I found I couldn't bring myself to alter her words that had brought tears to my eyes when I first read them.

During our program, from simple drop in hours, to our LGBTQ+ support group, I have been able to hear the stories of many of our teens: their joys, their woes; successes and failures. When we held a boat building workshop over the school's February and April breaks, I was able to watch teens learn skills that they never thought they would have, and grow confidence. But most of all, I've felt blessed to have daily conversations with each of these kids over snacks, pool, coloring, or just the kitchen counter. We serve kids from all walks of life, and their wide variety of perspectives are foundational to this place.

In the last year, we have been able to serve over 130 teens, averaging more than 15 per day. Since the beginning of this school year, we've already had 21 new registrations, and upped our attendance to nearly 20 teens on average every day. Our little Teen Center is thriving more than ever!

In this holiday season, as we continue to grow our diverse community of teens, and the programs we are able to offer them, I seek your help. Your gift this holiday season will support our ability to improve our after school snack program, helping provide additional access to food for teens in our community. With your support, we can take teens on new adventures, whether it's an event right here at the Teen Center, or a trip up the mountain to learn to ski. You can help us provide the support that teens need to get through adolescence, and come out healthy on the other side.

From the bottom of my heart, I thank you. Happy Holidays!

Cicilia Robison, Executive Director



Staff

Cicilia Robison
Executive Director

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Elizabeth's story:

The teen center might have saved my life. During my senior year, I was depressed and anxious and isolating myself from my friends and family. I was afraid to go to school because of the Parkland shooting and I was afraid to miss school because that meant I wouldn't be able to go to the Teen Center. I was spiraling and terrified of college because I was certain I would fail if I tried to go that route. It wouldn't be out of the ordinary for me to walk in and collapse at the counter like a sinner in church and praying just as hard. It would be equally as typical for the people there to greet me, and throughout the next fifteen minutes, turn what felt like an end of the world scenario into solutions for that very same problem. I could walk in confused as to where I could lead my life, stressed about what love is, terrified about the current political climate, and without fail they would give me; career tips and options that worked for my plan of action after high school, anecdotes and advice about communication and honesty, and hope for the future with a little bit of self reliance mixed in. It became one of the only places I felt I had enough love and support to be vulnerable and scared, not only because I knew I wouldn't be judged but because I knew they could help me and give me the tools to help myself.



I also needed the dynamic that I found there. I was being mentored by the staff in how to be a functional human being, and as soon as I was in a better state I could, in turn, be a positive role model for the people younger than me who needed to hear from the mouth of a peer that everything was going to turn out okay. They gave me queer

folks like me to share with and celebrate with. They introduced me to Dungeons & Dragons, a game my friends and I ended up loving, where I can be someone else for a few hours if I want to escape reality. They made sure everyone was fed and warm and safe, and I am struggling to put into words how much I needed that, and how much I still appreciate how they've changed my life for the better.

Thank you for supporting ACT!

