

# NEO

New Events & Opportunities



## BUSINESS PLAN

NEW EVENTS & OPPORTUNITIES

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

NEO empowers youth to make healthy lifestyle choices by providing New Events and Opportunities in a safe environment that encourages youth success and contributes to a healthier community.

## **NEO THEORY & OVERVIEW**

NEO is a 501(c)3 organization. The word neo is derived from the prefix meaning new, which inspired NEO's acronym, New Events & Opportunities. NEO is a new way of thinking around making the choice to live a healthy lifestyle with an emphasis on healthy alternatives. These events and opportunities create a safe environment which helps young people develop a sense of purpose, boost self-esteem, build skills for success, and be empowered to make the choice to live a healthy lifestyle.

NEO strives to empower youth to find their strength; giving them the ability to say no to drug and alcohol use, versus just telling them that the right thing to do is to say no. NEO believes there is an extreme and powerful difference between the two. Nearly everyone understands that drugs have negative consequences, but one thing not all youth recognize is that they have a choice. Giving a young person choice means giving them power, which is why NEO chooses to go beyond just acquiring knowledge and instead focuses on how to use your knowledge through the power of choice and influence so that young people are able to withstand traditional peer pressure to make their own healthy choices.

## **HISTORY OF NEO**

NEO began in the summer of 2008 as the youth sector of the Coalition for a Drug Free Nevada County. NEO was created to go beyond traditional substance abuse prevention efforts by actively engaging young people to make healthy choices through positive alternative activities all while addressing key root causes of substance use and abuse in fun and meaningful ways for young people. In March 2013, NEO became its own nonprofit organization.

## **MOVING FORWARD: THE FUTURE OF NEO**

Since its start, NEO has hosted an average of 70 events per year in approximately 25 different locations, drawing thousands of youth to participate in safe, drug-free activities. NEO has learned that young people appreciate these, and thrive with opportunities to feel safe and accepted. It's time to build on our success and find a permanent home for events, so that instead of supporting young people just one day a week we can be working with them every day. We are working towards opening a Youth & Community Center so that we can be helping to build self-esteem and empower youth to make healthy choices while providing healthy alternatives and a safe space.

In a 2012 survey hosted by NEO, youth identified drug and alcohol issues and lack of things for young people to do as the top two things they would change about Nevada County. In the same survey, youth identified having a safe supportive environment and just having a place to hang out as the most important things for a teen center to offer. Plans for the Youth & Community Center include an after school program, weekend events, meeting space, workshops, field trips, job training and more.

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Hosted over 300 events since our start in 2008
- An average of 7000 visits to our events annually
- 3000+ Facebook friends
- Presented at the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America Conference in Washington D.C. in 2012

## TESTIMONIALS:

*"Starting age 13 I fell into habits of smoking weed and drinking. At first not much was affected, I maintained school and other obligations pretty well, but after about a year I slipped into more extensive drug use, mainly hallucinogens such as LSD and shrooms. By my freshman year I had started using heavier substances: ecstasy, PCP, cocaine and continued to do so extensively. My school work, physical abilities, and overall productivity deteriorated exponentially, and I had only a slim thought towards stopping, although I recognized the necessity. One summer evening, I was wandering around downtown Grass Valley and stumbled upon the music in the NEO section. I started meeting people who knew how to have a fun time without getting high or drunk, and it was a new beginning for me. I gradually started associating with the NEO crowd rather than my friends that enjoyed drug use. The NEO section and the downtown music, to be frank, saved my life. I may be a rarity, however I am not one of a kind. I know others that NEO has helped and others that NEO can help."*

-Anonymous

*"In the last four years, NEO has helped me greatly to grow not only as a musician, but also as a person."*

-Kehan W.

*"I am the father of a young aspiring musician here in Grass Valley. He has played with NEO a number of times. It has been a great boon and inspiration for him. I have gone to listen to his shows and have been able to observe the scene there. I have come to really appreciate the kind of healthy and productive setting that NEO is able to create for our young people."*

-Etienne Wenger-Trayner

*[NEO] has brought so much to me, it started me playing music now I'm in 2 bands, it's always been a great safe place to hang out with friends, always stuff to do, always great music and young bands playing."*

-Julian T.

*"All I can really say is thanks for giving me an organization with a purpose that I can actually give a care about. For more and more reasons I've been finding that the message is just really.....good. Like, more than this being what the kids need, I feel like this is what I need."*

-Danny M.

*"I see NEO shirts everyday! Kids love supporting NEO and coming together to have fun in a drug free environment. I can't help but hear from people about the next NEO event or how NEO is doing something good for our community. Not only is it making good change but it is influencing others to make a change as well! Thanks NEO!"*

-Casey D.

## THE CENTER



The NEO Youth & Community Center will be a daily youth drop in center with a complete after school program for youth from 12-19 years old. On weekends the center will stay open late to provide events such as dances, concerts and comedy nights. Additionally, the center will offer workshops, meetings and classes for young people to gain new skills. It will provide the much needed safe space for young people to be during the crucial time between getting out of school and their parents coming home from work. While the Center will primarily focus on youth it will also provide all ages activities. The Center will provide a safe space for all Nevada County citizens to connect, grow and thrive.

## SITE



The proposed location for the Youth & Community Center site is a 6.15 acre area. A site of this size will allow for the implementation of extensive recreation components to appeal to multiple groups of people. Diversification of activities will draw in increased numbers of people because nearly everyone will be able to find activities that suit their interests and needs.

# OPERATIONS

## PROPOSED LOCATION & SERVICE AREA

When considering the location for the NEO Youth & Community Center there are many important factors to consider. We have examined numerous properties in Western Nevada County and only 1 site has met our needs completely, the former Meeks Lumber site located at 2391 Nevada City Highway in Grass Valley. When determining the site, the most important factor for the Center is ease of access for youth attending. The Meeks site is located within walking distance of 2 area schools, Seven Hills Middle School and Forest Charter School. It is an easy 5 minute drive from Nevada Union High School, the main high school in Western Nevada County with over 2000 students, with a school bus route passing right by. In addition, the site is within walking distance of several low-income apartments located on Sutton Way. This will provide easy and adequate access for many youth living in the apartment complexes. The public bus route has a stop right on the edge of the parking lot of the property which will create broader access to the site. The property is also located on the boarder of Grass Valley near the city limits of Nevada City. This site creates a neutral turf that will attract youth from both towns and allow ease of access regardless of which city they reside in.

The property is located within the commercial zoning requirements needed to operate a recreational event facility. Its distance from houses is ideal due to the nature of activities that will be taking place at the center. The 6+ acres that the property encompasses is ideal for the planned center activities, including a sports field and basketball court and will allow for ample parking spaces. Sites this large are very difficult to come by within the city limits of Grass Valley. While the existing structures on site will need extensive remodeling they will also provide a great foundation for the center, with the hardware building to be converted to the main center building while the old lumber building will be converted to a gym and dance studio.

There are currently no youth or community centers in Western Nevada County. Our area desperately lacks community gathering spaces. The Youth & Community Center will resolve this issue by creating an all ages space to build youth and adult relationships. The Center will serve residents throughout all of Western Nevada County. Our primary focus area includes Grass Valley and Nevada City. We will also reach out to Penn Valley, South County and outlying areas.



## HOURS OF OPERATION & STAFFING

<b>Main Building</b>
Monday-Wednesday 2:30pm-6:30pm
Thursday-Saturday 2:30pm-10:00pm
Sunday – Closed
<b>Café</b>
Sunday-Wednesday 8:00am-8:00pm
Thursday-Saturday 8:00am-11:00pm
<b>Outdoor Space</b>
Monday-Sunday 8:00am-9:00pm

Staffing is a vital piece of the Youth Center because our staff are more than just employees, they are mentors and role models who will help young people navigate adolescence. Having a small ratio of 1 staff to every 20 youth is important to ensure that staff members will be able to interact with everyone on site. In addition to that we will have an ample amount of volunteers on site as tutors, workshop leaders and mentors. All staff members and volunteers will receive ample training on asset based youth development.

According to the NEO Summer 2012 Survey, 100% of youth surveyed believe that NEO leaders are supportive and value youth. In the comments section of the survey, youth were able to explain why they believe this to be true. The comments were filled with responses demonstrating that NEO leaders are helpful, nice, they listen to the youth, support them, help them to grow as people, remain drug free and they truly care about the youth. NEO leaders are driven by their passion to help others and to make a difference in the lives of youth. A youth center is the perfect place to develop these relationships more and become a consistent positive role model for the youth.

# STRATEGIC THEORY

## GOALS:

- 1.) To create new events and opportunities in a safe environment that helps young people develop a sense of purpose.
- 2.) To use our positive influence to help youth build self-esteem and skills for success.
- 3.) To empower youth to make the choice to live a healthy lifestyle.
- 4.) To reduce youth substance abuse.

## PHILOSOPHY:

NEO provides opportunities for young people to reach their full potential and the skills and confidence to make healthy choices, successfully navigating adolescents. While the focus of NEO is to keep young people drug and alcohol free, we believe that the most effective way to do this is by addressing root causes which contribute to drug and alcohol use and abuse. Because of this we address many issues such as suicide, depression, body image, education, healthy alternatives and community responsibility. Together, these efforts combine to provide a comprehensive, multifaceted approach aimed at building assets and resiliency ultimately reducing overall drug and alcohol use.

## Key Strategies

- **Healthy Alternatives** – One of the biggest complaints that we hear from young people about why youth use drugs is that there is nothing else to do. NEO strives to provide healthy alternatives such as concerts, dances and movie nights. All while encouraging young people to follow their passions.
- **Empowerment and Personal Growth** – NEO is run for and by youth. Young people involved with our organization are empowered to take on leadership roles and give input on all facets of the organization. We strive to inspire all young people to find their passions and achieve their goals. We believe that there is a monumental difference between telling young people that the right thing to do is to say no to drug and alcohol use and empowering them, so that when faced with the choice they actually have the ability to speak out and say no. We emphasize positive body image, mental and emotional wellbeing and peer support as key aspects to youth empowerment.
- **Environmental Change** – NEO strives to change local climate to one that embraces all young people. We believe that all youth should have access to voice their opinions. Building positive youth and adult relationships and opening lines of communication is key to this. We also strive to change negative climates of bullying and intolerance to become positive and celebratory.



## Research & Development

Research in the field of substance abuse and teen health is constantly evolving. What were once highly practiced forms of prevention have proven to be ineffective. What we know now is that one-shot programs and education alone doesn't work. Researchers have changed their focus from the examination of risks associated with the negative health choices to one of protective factors. These researchers have found that asset development and resiliency building are effective ways of reducing youth substance abuse.

**Asset Development** – are building blocks or factors that young people need to grow up healthy, caring and responsible. Studies have shown that the more assets a young person has the less likely they are to abuse drugs and engage in illegal activities and the more likely they are to do well in school.

**Resiliency** – this model assumes that stress is inevitable, but even the worst experiences don't have to lead to disastrous outcomes. Resilient individuals are able to bounce back from or adapt to stressful events. Positive self-esteem, problem solving, strong sense of identity and positive role model presence are all contributing factors to a young person's resiliency.



NEO also follows the Youth Development Model's building blocks for youth success. These building blocks are based on research showing that in order for young people to grow and thrive their basic needs must first be met. The model is based on safety, relationship building, youth participation, community involvement, and skill building. Youth cannot start building skills without first having the foundation of safety and strong relationships.

## POSITIONING

There have been numerous attempts at starting teen centers in the Grass Valley area over the last few decades with little success. So, what makes us believe that we can successfully start and run a Youth & Community Center now? To put it simply, NEO is different.

### **What makes us unique?**

- We have a six year track record of hosting successful events - approximately 70 per year with over 7000 visits.
- We have a strong reputation – the large majority of young people in our area already know who we are and what we do.
- We are for youth by youth – every teen center group we have seen in the past came from adults trying to do something for young people, while their efforts are noble and sincere, there is a certain connection missing when adults develop programming for youth. Not only do youth develop a strong bond to an organization when their input is used, but we are also able to ensure that the programming is exactly what they want.
- We don't believe in "bad" kids – we have heard from multiple sources that past teen centers attracted too many "bad kids," making it a hub for negative activities, but NEO believes that all kids are good kids and our staff is trained on how to deal with negative behaviors positively. We believe that by building positive relationships with youth we will be able to handle negative behaviors well and effectively. Our staff are not babysitters, but mentors, here to guide young people on their personal journeys as they develop into productive healthy young adults.
- We won't rely on volunteers – many past teen centers relied heavily on volunteers who quickly burnt out. NEO plans on having a strong staff along with several interns and coordinators. Volunteer help is key and will be beneficial to the center, but we will always have at numerous staff on site.
- We won't just be a hang out spot – we strive to actively engage young people in meaningful activities, so that they are doing more than hanging out, but also gaining important skills and building self-esteem along the way.

### WHY NOW AND WHY NEO?

With the current state of the economy, youth are in more need of a safe space such as a youth center than ever before. Many parents are working longer hours to make ends meet, leaving youth unsupervised for longer amounts of time. Many families can no longer afford to provide their children with money for entertainment and other activities.

Thanks to the support of local organizations, NEO has been able to reach out to hundreds of youth by offering many low cost and quality events, however, the number and consistency of events is limited. With a permanent location, the scope of youth able to attend would increase dramatically. NEO has built a positive reputation with local youth and have proven that they are capable of planning and hosting events that youth relate to and want to be a part of. NEO's

unique approach of being youth run and adult guided allows them to connect with youth on their level. The youth leaders of NEO, have strong training, commitment and expertise. In a recent survey conducted by NEO, one hundred percent of the 200 youth surveyed felt that NEO leaders are supportive and value youth and ninety-seven percent believe that NEO is making a positive difference in our community.

Since our start, NEO has made great strides in improving youth and adult relationships and interactions. Interviews conducted in 2013 with various city leaders including police officers, city council members and business owners found that NEO has made a large impact on the way that youth and adults interact in our community. One interviewee stated, “NEO is huge. I’ve seen a lot of support for it. There’s been a lot of effort put into making youth feel valued and I see the results of that.”

#### WHY WE NEED A YOUTH & COMMUNITY CENTER

- **Unsupervised and unengaged teens** – Many teens are on their own afterschool with no parent or responsible adult around and with nothing to do and/or nothing expected of them.
- **Teens engaging in at-risk and destructive behaviors** – Research demonstrates that between the hours of 3pm and 6pm, youth are more likely to be unsupervised and participate in or be exposed to at-risk behaviors, substance abuse and crime.
- **Teens do not have an appropriate place to socialize** – “Hanging out” is a normal and healthy part of adolescence. It’s a time when teens have a developmental need to identify with peers and with adults. They are also seeking knowledge and skills. If a community doesn’t provide a healthy option for teens they will find their own on the streets.
- **Lack of activities specifically for teens** – Reaching and engaging teens is challenging. It is much easier to serve younger youth. Activities and programs just for teens are rare. While teens may present challenges, they desperately want to be included as a part of our community.
- **Teens want their voices to be heard** – Teens need to explore their individuality and having a say or finding your voice is critical in youth engaging with adults and the community at large. Youth often feel “why should we care, we don’t count, no one listens to us, they just tell us what to do, it’s pointless, why bother.” By engaging youth, youth show them that they are a valued part of the community and their opinion matters.
- **Teens want responsibility and leadership roles** – Teens want to learn, connect and experience. They have a biological drive to identify with others and the gain experience and mastery. If a community doesn’t provide healthy opportunities, youth will find them among peer groups, healthy or not.
- **Community voices concern about teen behaviors and safety** – Community members have expressed frustration, anger, hopelessness and many other things when teens engage in unhealthy a destructive behaviors.

- **To be proactive** – We need to take a proactive approach to keeping kids safe. We can't just sit around waiting for something bad to happen before we take action. Numerous communities have seen decreases in youth loitering and violence with the opening of teen centers.
- **To build relationships** – The Center will create an all ages gathering place, helping to build strong multi-generational relationships and a greater understanding of diversity

#### HOW LOCAL YOUTH & THE COMMUNITY WILL BENEFIT FROM THE CENTER

- It will give the community a safe and inclusive space to socialize.
- Youth will receive positive guidance and development.
- Provide a supervised, substance-free place to socialize with peers.
- Provide healthy activities and prevention programming for youth.
- Promote ownership and a sense of belonging that would show youth that they are a valued part of our community.
- Create community service opportunities for youth to give back to the community and create lasting connections.
- Provide youth with leadership roles and job skills training.
- Give youth a forum to be heard by giving them a chance to voice their opinions, ideas and concerns.
- Youth loitering & negative activities will be reduced.
- Improve youth and adult relationships.

# MARKETING PLAN

## YOUTH TARGET MARKET

The NEO Youth & Community Center's primary target market is 12-19 year olds because it's a difficult transition time in their lives and they need support and positive engagement. As middle school students transition from elementary school to high school, they face many challenges. Some will desire structure while others are ready for independence. No matter where the student is developmentally though, it's important to keep them on the right path with caring adults and opportunities for engagement outside of school<sup>1</sup>. There are many risk factors that build on each other over time through the individual, family, school and community environments. As students gain more personal freedom and course work becomes more intellectually demanding, teachers also seem less supportive, peer groups become larger and relationships become more complicated. Youth are also faced with early adult responsibilities, new relationships and physical changes. Some youth aren't ready for these changes and feel helpless and those who are ready want to handle greater responsibilities but society won't let them. While experiencing these changes youth may feel a wide range of emotions and not know how to deal with them. Changes such as family problems including divorce and marital instability, a significant loss of a loved one or friend, pressure to succeed, poor self-esteem, social isolation due to appearance or sexual orientation and new responsibilities may lead to suicide among youth. This critical time period in which youth need caring adults who can offer guidance and help young people thrive is not only limited to age but also the time of day.

Research shows that the hours after school between 3-6pm are the most dangerous hours for youth<sup>1</sup>. Although this is the case, in a 2009 survey done by Afterschool Alliance on the hours after school in California, 24% of K-12 children were responsible for taking care of themselves after school, spending on average eight hours per week after school unsupervised<sup>1</sup>. NEO wants to provide a safe environment for youth that's structured but also helps youth explore their autonomy and exercise choices.

In order to provide youth with this kind of support, NEO will engage students through programming after school as well as community weekend events. We know that success for the program is dependent on specific outcomes and we've organized our principles and processes into a coherent structure. Individuals develop bonds to a group when there are opportunities for involvement, they possess the skills needed for involvement, and receive positive feedback. Through this bond, youth will adopt the program's norms which will result in positive behavior<sup>2</sup>. Although college students are more independent and are usually busy working and attending school, they too, have few options for healthy, fun events. The Youth Center will have a "College Night" once a week to provide an open gym and place to hang out for people ages 18 to 28. They will also be offered opportunities to perform and attend weekend events, apply for internships in the youth center and attend trainings to help further their careers. Through the safe environment that we create, youth will gain valuable skills, friendships, caring adult relationships and develop a sense of purpose during this difficult transition in their lives.

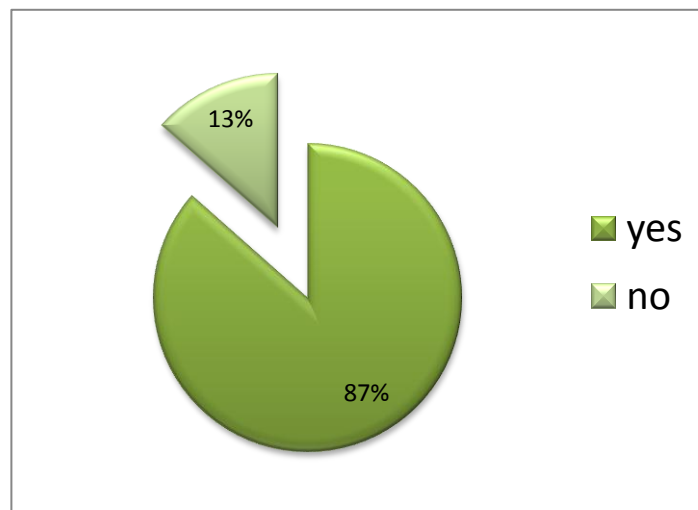
<sup>1</sup> After School Alliance. 2010. "Afterschool: Providing Multiple Benefits to Middle School Students." Retrieved November 30, 2012. ([http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/issue\\_42\\_MiddleSchool.cfm](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/issue_42_MiddleSchool.cfm)).

<sup>2</sup> Duerden, M. and A. Gillard. 2011. "An Approach to Theory-Based Youth Programming." *New Directions For Youth Development*.

## TARGET POPULATION

There are approximately 5000 youth between the ages of 12-18 living in Western Nevada County and an additional 3000 between the ages of 19-25. In the NEO Summer 2012 Survey eighty-seven percent of youth surveyed believe that we need a place, like a Youth Center, for young people to go after school or on weekends. Of the youth surveyed, forty-five percent said that they would attend the center at least a few times per week. We will strive to see approximately 150 youth per day visiting the after school program component 5 days per week and 300 youth per night for weekend events.

**Do you think we need a place, like a teen center, for young people to go after school or on weekends?**



## ADVERTISING & PROMOTIONS

When NEO launched in 2008 we took a unique approach by focusing on positive branding before actually launching the concept of healthy lifestyle choices. This branding strategy proved to be effective by building up trust and respect from local youth, so that when it became time to sell the idea of NEO they were much more receptive because they already had the positive relationship with leaders and the brand in place. NEO started by providing free concerts and entertainment at a popular street fair throughout the summer. At these events free t-shirts, rub-on tattoos and stickers with the logos and colors were handed out by the hundreds. NEO also hosted meetings to gain youth input on what they wanted to see in the community. By the following summer thousands of local youth had begun to identify the NEO logo and concept, showing great respect for the efforts.

NEO promotes and reaches out to the community in a variety different ways through advertisement and promotional methods both on and offline. Direct outreach on 6 middle school campuses and 3 high schools, is our most effective way of reaching youth. Currently NEO promotes and advertises using the NEO website, Facebook, YouTube, newspaper, radio, TV, as well as through flyers and merchandise.

NEO has built a broad Facebook presence since March 2010 (3,450 people became friends with NEO since then). Having a presence on Facebook is crucial since data shows that over 80 percent of youth between the ages of 13-24 have a Facebook account. Facebook has been a great way to communicate with the community to keep them updated on latest news and activities regarding NEO.

NEO also has a presence on YouTube. In 2011, data showed that YouTube had more than 1 trillion views or around 140 views for every person on earth. YouTube has been another great way to connect the community with NEO through short videos about NEO activities and campaigns.

While newspaper, radio and TV are mainly geared towards the adults, they are still great ways to provide important facts and statistics about NEO's mission. These methods reach people who aren't online and cater more towards the parents of local youth. NEO is frequently interviewed for local radio and television shows including KNCO, and NCTV's Café Community and Touchdown Productions. NEO also works closely with The Union newspaper with over a dozen articles about NEO in the last year alone.



## YOUTH CENTER ACTIVITIES

# After School Program

Youth are welcome every day after school to socialize with peers, receive homework help, a snack, play games and engage in enrichment opportunities. The program will be equipped with art supplies, books, calculators and a computer in order to help them with their school work. Volunteers will also be available to help tutor the youth.

In addition to having a drop-in center for youth to have free choice and help with homework, we will also have daily activities. These activities will be planned out in advance so that teens can plan accordingly. Activities could include game tournaments, craft projects, cooking, team building games, challenges, contests and more. Every month we will also have special enrichment classes in which we bring in a professional from the community to teach either dance, music, writing, or some other class the youth are interested in or could learn from.

The main priority of the after school program is to keep youth engaged during 3 to 6 p.m. when the use of drugs by bored, unsupervised teens is the highest. We ensure a safe environment for youth to hang out in and spark their interest in the fun activities we provide.



## Meetings and Workshops

Meetings are a great way for communication to flow among all of the different groups in NEO, clubs and other programs offered. Outside youth-serving organizations must fill out a room request form if they would like to use the space to meet with their members that will be approved by the supervisor of the youth center.

Workshops will also be offered throughout the year as a way to help educate, inspire and empower youth to make a difference in their lives.



## Weekend Events

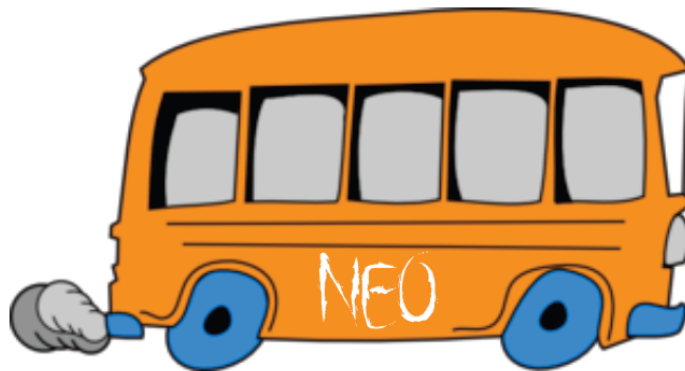
Weekend events are special events planned out by the youth and the staff in the center. The events help boost our attendance, gain community support, recruit new members and give youth something fun to do on the weekends. Weekend events are usually activities that are bigger or more elaborate than a regular after school program activity that the center offers. This includes dances, concerts, fashion shows, giant tournaments, open mics, movie nights and more. Sometimes the whole center will be transformed with decorations and other times the theme may just be focused on costumes or none at all depending on what the youth come up with.

Weekend events are another way to encourage youth and adult partnerships. Inviting community partners or planning special events for groups such as Big Brothers Big Sisters is one of the many ways we can use the center to help benefit other youth serving organizations.



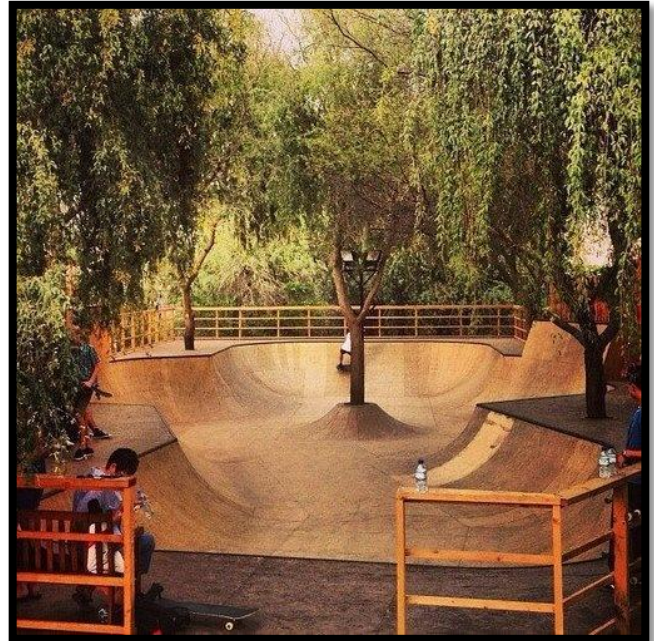
## Field Trips

While the youth center itself is a great resource, getting the teens out into the community (or out of the community) can be life changing. Through field trips we are able to provide cultural and hands on learning experiences. Local trips include community service projects, hiking, camping, trips to local businesses, theaters and skating at the Condon Skate Park. Youth have also expressed an interest in out of town trips such as ski and snowboarding, going to a roller skating rink, professional sports games, visiting college Universities and exploring cultural, theater and art performances in our city as well as others. Some of the youth may never get a chance to do these things but through the youth center and generous sponsors from the community, we are able to make it happen.





## Outdoor & Recreation Space



Being active is an important part of a healthy lifestyle, which is why outdoor and recreation space at the youth center is so important. Planned activities include a Universal Riding Park for BMX, skateboards, scooters and roller blades; and organic garden, field for sports and both indoor and outdoor basketball courts.

## Creative & Expressive Arts



Artistic expression for youth is a vital part of development. At the youth center there will be an arts and crafts corner, regular art workshops, opportunities for youth to showcase their art, a recording studio and practice space for musicians.

## Experiential Learning Opportunities



Youth job development and skill building will play an important role at the center. Providing youth with the skills needed to not only find employment, but to also be employable is something that will make a lifetime impact on youth and our entire community. Plans for the center include an onsite youth thrift store and an all ages café run by youth and young adults. Not only will these activities provide a valuable opportunity for youth, but they will also contribute to the sustainability of the youth center.



## A HUB FOR SERVICES

The Center will also bring in numerous community partners to create a hub for local services. One of the greatest barriers to services in our community, especially for youth, is transportation. By having services on site such as counseling, job training, and a recourse center more people will be able to access the services that they need.

## SAFE SPACE GUARANTEE

### CHECK-IN POLICY

KidTrax is a software that tracks attendance through scanning members in and out of the facility. It captures and maintains basic demographic information such as birthdays, gender and ethnicity and can keep more comprehensive records such as participation in government assistance programs. Information for KidTrax will be provided from the registration forms that the teens and their parents/guardians fill out.

Students will be issued the first ID card free of charge and another one can be purchased if lost. Students must keep their ID on them and check in to the teen center by scanning the barcode on their ID card at the front desk. When the teen is ready to leave for the day, they will scan their ID card again to check out. If a student forgets their ID card, the staff can manually check them in and out, but the teen is required to check in with the staff upon entrance as well as when they leave.

KidTrax allows staff to easily record how many teens are in the building at all times and helps manage the performance and measure the outcomes that are most important for the teen center and our funders.

Some of our special events such as weekend dances or concerts are open to the general public and all ages. To check in to these events, members will still scan their ID cards and non members will check in with a staff member at the front desk. The KidTrax scanner is portable and light weight and can be used on the go. KidTrax will be the most effective way to keep track of attendance at outdoor NEO events as well, such as Thursday Night Market, sporting events and the Nevada County Fair.

In order to adequately serve a wide age range of youth we will include different check-out policies. For youth 15 and under they will not be able to leave the facility without parent consent, where as youth 16 and over can check themselves out. KidTrax will allow for staff to easily identify the ages of youth on site.

### YOUTH CENTER RULES & AGREEMENTS

#### **All youth attending the center must agree to:**

- Be respectful towards oneself, peers, volunteers, and staff
- Not bring any weapons, drugs, alcohol, or tobacco to the center
- Remain sober and drug free
- Be appropriate with language and gestures
- Respect the property of others including the furniture and games in the center
- Obey all signs and regulations posted
- Speak with a staff if a problem occurs
- Try new activities at least once



## SAFETY

NEO is committed to providing all youth with a safe and welcoming space. Based on the Youth Development Institute model, building safety among the group is a top priority. If the youth don't feel safe then they won't be able to build relationships and participate to the full extent. A safe environment is one that's physically, emotionally and culturally safe.

**Physical:** The surrounding environment is comfortable, and has necessary resources to protect youth from harm.

**Emotional/Cultural:** A young person feels emotionally safe when he or she is fully accepted and valued as an individual by adults and peers.

The Youth Center is open to all youth of Nevada County. This means that we work with teens from all different backgrounds. Instead of assuming who the teens are we come to know them through dialog. Some of the teens may be homeless, home schooled, private schooled, living in single parent households, come from abusive situations, have drug addicted and alcoholic parents, have wealthy parents, come from religious households, are adopted, have a family member incarcerated, have experienced domestic violence and rape, are suicidal, have eating disorders, have large families, are physically disabled, physically harm themselves, have learning disabilities, and may have dropped out of school. A great deal can be learned about these issues directly from the youth. Some are eager to share their experiences while others will never let anyone know. This is a drop-in center but the friendships and conversations that staff have with the teens may change their lives. Though the Youth Center doesn't have the means to help all the teens that come through the door, we are able to make resources available to them. Through our procedures, agreements with the youth, positive activities, and supportive staff, we take safety seriously so that the youth are able to comfortably express themselves. NEO has built a positive reputation among the youth already and they know that we don't judge or discriminate and we won't tolerate it in the program either. We love bringing people together to share similar experiences but we also celebrate their differences. We encourage everyone to be themselves and for everyone to be accepting.

## SOCIAL & ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

NEO believes that social and environmental responsibility should be an integral part of not only running an organization, but also in what we teach the young people we work with. We are completely committed to running our organization with a strong commitment to reducing waste and energy to minimize our carbon foot print as well as using recycled and re-purposed materials.

It is our goal to make the Center as environmentally friendly as possible. This includes powering the facility with solar power, using rain water collection to power toilettes, low flow water fixtures, recycling, and composting for our organic garden. The center will also include bottle refilling stations for youth to fill up their reusable bottles. The building will be renovated with eco-friendly materials.

Helping the community through service projects is an important part of our efforts, not only because we feel dedicated to bettering the community in which we serve, but also because it has been proven that young people who participate in community service projects are less likely to use drugs.



## PARTNERS

Strong collaborations and partnerships are an important and meaningful part of NEO, allowing us to make a greater impact and expand our efforts to better serve our community.

### **Partners & Collaborations:**

- The Coalition for a Drug Free Nevada County
- Friday Night Live & Club Live
- Safe Schools Healthy Students
- Ready Springs School
- Penn Valley Union Elementary School District
- Seven Hills Middle School
- Lyman Gilmore Afterschool Program
- The High School Hangout
- Nevada Union High School
- NAMI Nevada County Chapter
- PFLAG (Parents Families & Friends of Lesbians and Gays)
- Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Commission
- Nevada County Suicide Prevention Task Force
- Partners Family Resource Center
- Mike Bratton II Foundation - The Turkey Trot
- Soroptimist International of Grass Valley & Sierra Foothills
- The Welz Family Children's Foundation
- Grass Valley Lions Club
- Caroline's Coffee Roasters
- Grass Valley Downtown Association
- Grass Valley Police Department
- The GREAT Summer Youth Academy
- The Center for the Arts
- Miners Foundry Cultural Center
- St. Joseph's Cultural Center
- Big Brothers Big Sisters of Nevada County
- The Friendship Club
- Gold Country Community Services

## MANAGEMENT TEAM

The NEO Youth & Community Center will be run by NEO Co-Founders & Co-Directors Lynn Skrukrud & Halli Ellis. The duo started the organization at the young age of 19 and pursued their college degrees all while continuing to grow and expand the organization. Lynn & Halli bring unique and individualized skills to the organization, creating a strong team.



*NEO Co-Founders Lynn Skrukrud & Halli Ellis*

### ABOUT LYNN

Lynn has spent over 10 years working in the field of substance abuse prevention and youth development. In high school, Lynn served as the Drug, Alcohol & Tobacco Prevention Commissioner for Nevada Union High School and as a Youth Board Member for the California Youth Advocacy Network, a statewide organization advocating for tobacco prevention. Through her work with the Advocacy Network, she was awarded as the California Youth Advocate of the Year and had her advocacy campaign “Turn the Target Around” featured on the national level.

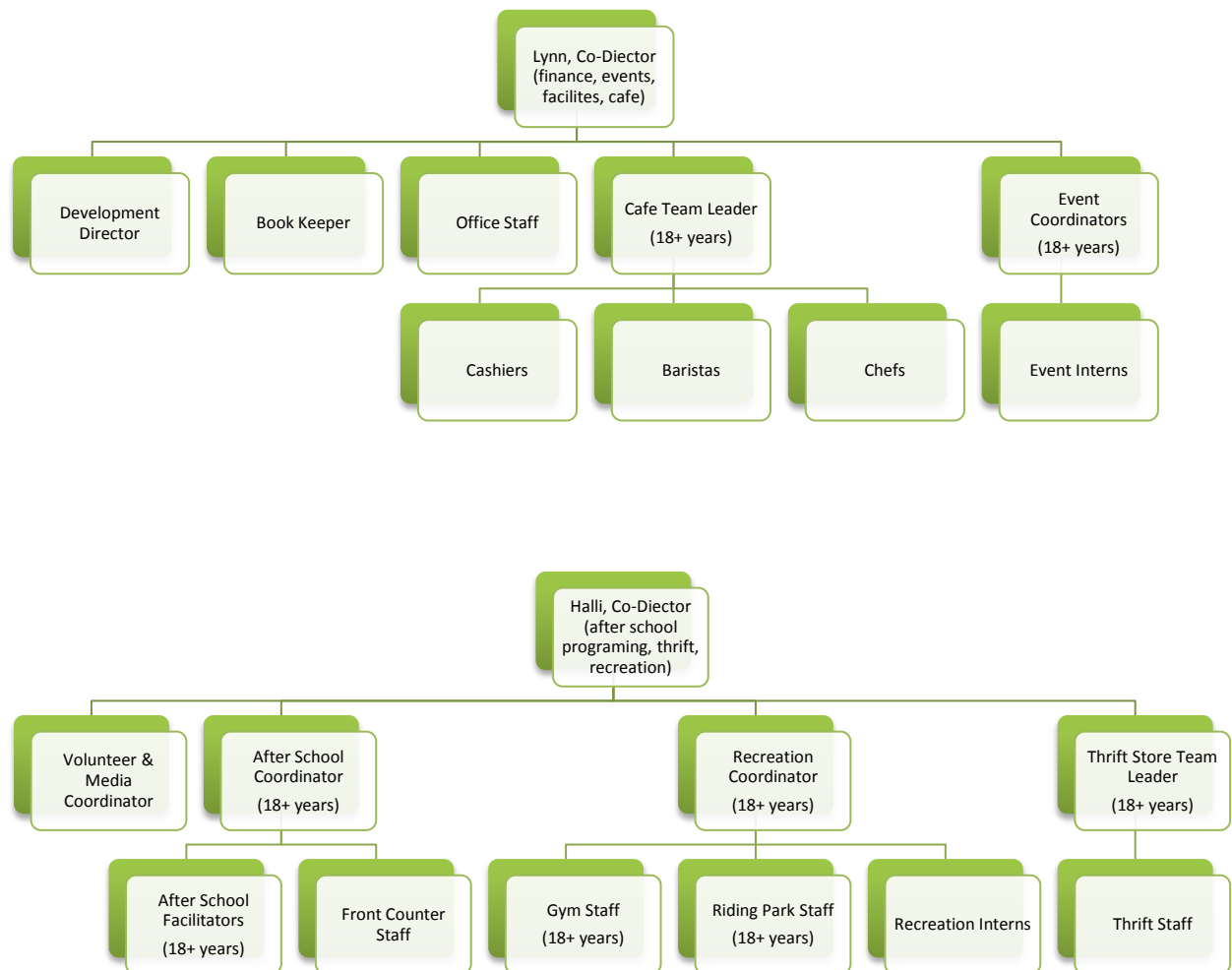
Lynn has a Bachelor’s of Science in Business with a degree in Management Studies and an emphasis in Entrepreneurship. It’s Lynn’s dream to create a community where all young people grow up healthy, happy and empowered to make healthy choices and she strives to do just that by continuing to expand NEO activities and outreach.

## ABOUT HALLI

Halli began working with youth professionally in 2005 in the Grass Valley School District Afterschool Programs. During her 6 years of employment she gained valuable insight and experience in program development and received extensive training in youth development. She was promoted to Site Supervisor within 3 years and boosted enrollment from an average of 20 students attending daily to over 60. Halli increased in-kind donations, created new programs that stretched beyond the walls of the classroom, built connections between students, parents and school staff and successfully implemented the Youth Development Network's youth empowerment model.

In 2007 Halli co-founded a dance group called the HWDA and hosted free community dances to encourage people to have fun without the use of drugs. This led to her involvement in the field of substance abuse prevention and the creation of NEO. Halli received her Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in Sociology from the University of California Santa Cruz in 2013. She took advantage of independent studies at UCSC and focused her research on positive youth development. To supplement her education and gain new skills and experience, Halli volunteered in the Santa Cruz Boys and Girls Club, the FUSE youth group, the Western Service Workers Association and the Santa Cruz Teen Center which each had their own distinct cultures to learn from. Halli continues to stay involved in youth programs such as the GREAT Summer Youth Academy and devotes her time to provide New Events & Opportunities through NEO to help youth thrive. Halli is a visionary leader who knows how to connect with people of all ages and is dedicated to creating positive community transformation.

## STAFFING MATRIX



# FINANCIAL SUMMARY

## ASSUMPTIONS & PROJECTIONS

- Purchasing the property and renovating the center will cost approximately \$5 million dollars.
- A capital campaign, fundraisers and grants will be used to raise funds for start up costs. With the capital campaign funding 75 percent of the total costs, fundraisers 10 percent and grants 15 percent.
- Our community will always have a need for a space for people both young and old to socialize and recreate.
- Community organizations will continue to have a need for office and recreation spaces.
- Low cost entertainment and recreation opportunities will continue to be considered as affordable.
- Quality coffee drinks and a café environment will continue to be considered as an “affordable luxury” for people of all ages.
- The need for quality and inexpensive second hand items for youth and young adults will continue to rise.

## SUSTAINABILITY

NEO is committed to creating a financially sustainable center that will serve as an integral piece of our community for years to come. Through our research of other youth centers we have found that it is vital to create a financially sustainable plan in order to have long term viability. Therefore, we have implemented a thorough plan for financial success. While the after school program will be free, other components of the center will have a small fee such as, weekend events and evening gym use. We will also generate revenue by renting space including nonprofit offices, event space and recreation areas. In addition, the onsite café and thrift store will bring in revenue as well. Solar power will be utilized to reduce energy costs. We will use grants to supplement programs, but our organization will not be reliant upon grants due to their long-term instability.

## IMPLEMENTATION PHASES

Opening a facility of this size will be a cumbersome project. To ensure sustainability the project will be implemented over 5 phases. Phasing will allow for the youth center staff to grow slowly over time, allowing for ample leadership oversight. The implementation phases will also allow the center to get up and going sooner. Additionally, NEO staff will be able to “test the water” and work out any kinks before opening the full scale operation.

Phase 1 – Purchase of property

Phase 2 – Renovation of main Youth Center Building

Phase 3 – Building of on-site Coffee House & Thrift Store

Phase 4 – Building of sports field, organic garden and gym

Phase 5 – Completion of Universal Riding Park and Pump Track

## BREAK EVEN ANALYSIS

Annually, the expenses to run the facility will cost approximately \$767,000. The vast majority of the expenses are directly attributed to staffing. Through facility rentals, weekend events, sponsorship and fundraisers NEO expects to break even and become sustainable within 3 years time.