



Pictured are the 65 girls and volunteers that participated Friday, Aug. 5, in the second annual Girls Night In at The Bridge Teen Center in Orland Park. SUSIE MOORE/SUSIE MOORE PHOTOGRAPHY

No boys allowed

Bridge Teen Center holds second annual Girls Night In

BILL JONES, Assistant Editor

There wasn't a boy in sight Friday, Aug. 5, at The Bridge Teen Center. The boys were out at a classic car show and getting food in Orland Park, while the center celebrated its second annual Girls Night In.

"The Girls Night In was really a celebration of inner beauty," said Priscilla Steinmetz, the founder and executive director of The Bridge Teen Center. "It's going deeper."

Sixty-five girls went deeper earlier this month, packing the program to capacity and leaving a waiting list for those who didn't sign up fast enough. At the three-hour program, the girls visited stations to get free food, play games, receive handouts, participate in beauty demonstrations and, most importantly, talk, Steinmetz said.

The whole program focused on "celebrating true beauty," and taught the girls lessons on confidence. They participated in activities like posting both negative and positive things on a mirror, and wiping off the negative ones to leave only the positives, Steinmetz said.

The program was made successful by parents from the center, who donated food, but also by local stores like Macy's and Carson's, which donated items for goodie bags, Steinmetz said. The night ended with a "girl talk" session that allowed the girls to submit questions anonymously and get answers about the difficulties many girls face today.

"It's really a struggle for girls, struggling with body image," Steinmetz said. "It's just a program we know is very essential in our community.

"All the girls felt very lifted up," Steinmetz said.

"It was really inspirational," said Amber Holup, 13, of Tinley Park, who at-

tended the event. Holup said she liked the tips for makeup and skin care, as well as the lessons on confidence.

Haily Rumbles, 13, of Lockport, agreed. She said she recently moved to the area, and has been visiting the center ever since. She said she particularly enjoyed the mirror exercise during the Girls Night In.

"It was so much fun," she said. "It was awesome. I hope they do it again."

To that end, Steinmetz said they would like to see the program grow next year. In its first year, the facility was only able to support 20-25 girls. This year it hosted 65, but Steinmetz said she would love to have 100 girls next year. The facility can support it, but between volunteers and goodie bags, it all depends on the community, she said.

"We'll need a lot more help from the community," she said. "We hope that it becomes one of our signature events we do in the community."