

Laurel Civic Association is community hub



Staff photo / Dale White

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LAUREL - Signs of life in July can be hard to find in some places of Florida.

To learn more about the Laurel Civic Association, go to laurelcivic.org. To learn more about activities Sarasota County offers at the Sandra Sims Terry Community Center in Laurel, go to scgov.net.

Not at the Sandra Sims Terry Community Center.

Even in the dog days of summer, this community center tucked deep in this unincorporated community is bustling with educational, recreation and charitable programs that attract residents from across the county.

Most of the efforts are coordinated by the Laurel Civic Association and its longtime leader, Sandra Sims Terry, who remains a daily presence.

On Wednesday, hundreds of people — from first-graders to senior citizens — took advantage of the center's offerings. Here is what happened on a busy day:

Empowering teenagers

One of the focuses of the center is helping children and teenagers gain life skills, while having fun.

John Jefferson, program coordinator for the association, kept the 44 enrollees in the Teen Empowerment program busy from 8:30 a.m. to 4 p.m.

All of the activities in the seven-week program are aimed at teaching “workplace behavior,” Jefferson stressed.

During the morning, Keiser University culinary arts instructor Crystal Culver helped several students prepare gourmet hot dogs with barbecue bean topping and homemade relish, accompanied by pasta salad, chocolate and peanut butter fudge and other refreshments, including fresh lemonade.

To practice their customer service skills, Culver's cooks also served the “stadium food” to other teenagers watching an indoor kickball game.