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City of Perris is a Designated Safe Place

The City's Teen Center, Bob Glass Gym, City Hall office building and other facilities on the campus have been designated "safe places" for youngsters between 11 and 18-years-old in need of immediate assistance. Signs identifying sites at the campus as safe places are being installed this week.

City staff members met Wednesday with Fonda McGensy, director of Safe Place in Riverside, which operates an around-the-clock residential shelter for youngsters confronting school, family and personal issues. Someone needing help can seek out City employees and request assistance. The City will call the Safe Place shelter, which will respond within 30 minutes and take the youngster to Riverside for counseling and support services. Parents or guardians are contacted and informed that their child is safe.



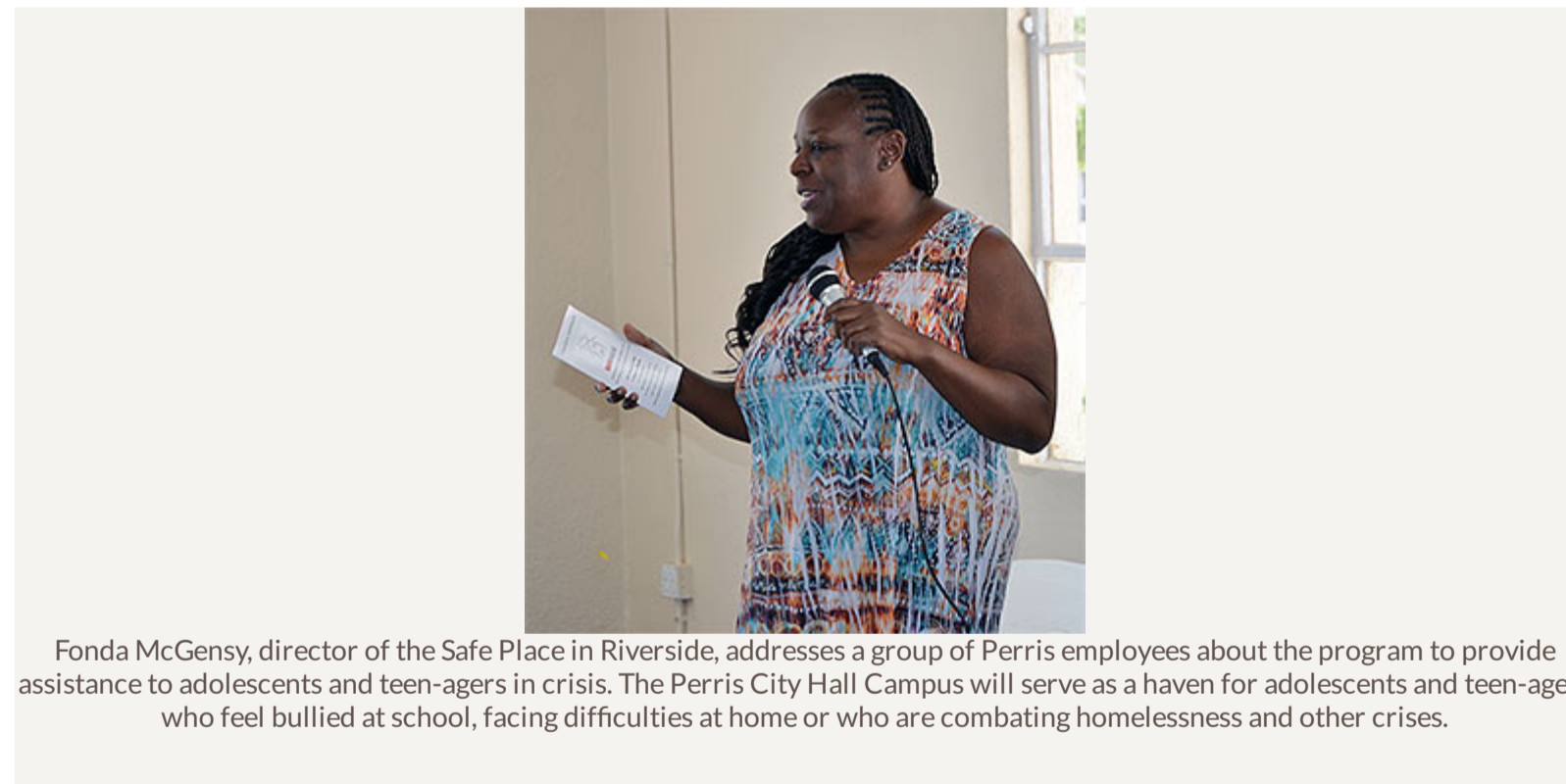
Perris City workers Spencer Campbell and Juan Rodriguez attach a "Safe Place" sign at the Bob Glass Gymnasium.

The shelter can offer a place to stay for up to 21 days. Services provided include family planning, rape-crisis and drug and alcohol counseling.

"It's another resource for the community," McGensy said.

Safe Place has operated for 25 years, she said.

Deputy Perris City Manager Darren Madkin said members of the Housing and Community Development Services departments have encountered youngster who do not want to return to their homes and are in immediate need of assistance. By working with the Safe Place, the City can assist youth in crisis and help them find a place to stay.



Fonda McGensy, director of the Safe Place in Riverside, addresses a group of Perris employees about the program to provide assistance to adolescents and teen-agers in crisis. The Perris City Hall Campus will serve as a haven for adolescents and teen-agers who feel bullied at school, facing difficulties at home or who are combating homelessness and other crises.

Several Perris staff members toured the Safe Place shelter and came away with a positive assessment.

"It feels like a home, not an institution," said Housing Manager Sabrina Chavez. "We talked to some of the kids who were staying there. They liked it very much. We want to take advantage of this program to get youngsters the necessary help."

Safe Place sites operate in several cities besides Perris. Those include Corona, Temecula, Palm Springs and other communities in the Coachella Valley. For more information about Safe Place, call 951-351-4418 or 760-343-3211 or visit the website www.operationsafeplace.org.

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