

New pool opens at Camp Fowler

Latest addition at the refuge for abused, neglected children is handicapped-accessible.

By Jeff Davidson | OF THE MORNING CALL

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In March 2006, Soilymar Centeno was called to the principal's office for the first time in her life.

There the then-eighth-grader met two police officers and a social worker who started the difficult process of moving Centeno out of what was considered an unsafe home environment. She went to a group home and now resides in a loving foster home.

Centeno is a rising senior at Northwestern Lehigh High School, is on the honor roll and is student council president.

She spoke about her life experiences Wednesday at the opening of the new Fleming Pool and Father Daniel Gambet Center.

The new facilities are located on the 43-acre patch of land known as Camp Fowler in [Orefield](#).

"At Camp Fowler I developed leadership skills and strength," Centeno told a crowd assembled to dedicate the camp's additions.

The camp is owned and operated by Valley Youth House, an organization that assists abused, neglected and homeless youth by providing counseling, residence and life-skills programs. Some of the camp's offerings are a climbing wall, miles of hiking trails, 18-hole disc golf and now the completely handicapped-accessible heated pool.

"I know the research shows that outdoor experience where you build trust is very valuable therapy," said the Rev. Daniel Gambet, president emeritus of [DeSales University](#) and long-time fundraiser for the camp and organization.

Wednesday's ceremony honored Gambet and Richard Fleming of [Zionsville](#), who was the main push behind the capital campaign that raised much of the money for the camp. Valley Youth House President David Gilgoff commemorated the two individuals in addition to the youth who inspire him every day.

"It's all about the ability to provide the help that can make a difference," Gilgoff said. "It's helping kids who can have a good life. These are kids who need help making it over the wall."



(From left) Jonathan Mecias, 13, James Rizzo, 12, and Megan Cecazzo, 15, jump into the newly dedicated pool at Camp Fowler, a therapeutic camp in Orefield for abused and neglected children. (Rob Kandel/The Morning Call / June 17, 2009)