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'ALL THEIR STARS ALIGNED'

**Skrappy's settles into new digs**  
Once-transient youth center has new board, too

By Brian J. Pedersen  
ARIZONA DAILY STAR

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Skrappy's is growing up.

The Downtown youth center, which has been transient since getting booted out of its home on Broadway two years ago, is getting settled into its new digs in the Downtown Warehouse Arts District.

"It's a building in progress," Kathy Wooldridge, co-founder and executive director of Skrappy's, said of the building at 191 E. Toole Ave., a space formerly occupied by the Museum of Contemporary Art. "We're just trying to get everything up to code."

The new home isn't the only major change for Skrappy's, which Wooldridge and her husband, Bill, started in 1995 along with kids involved in Tucson's underground punk-rock scene.

Skrappy's spent seven years under the guidance of local nonprofit organization Our Family Community Services. Now a group made up of longtime Skrappy's volunteers and beneficiaries has formed its own nonprofit, Tucson Youth Collective, to run the

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Skrappy's offers local youths a safe environment, free of violence and drugs.

"That's what they've always dreamed of," Our Family Executive Director Sue Krahe said. "We've been working with them on just this issue for the last year. They'll have their own board, their own supporters. It was just a matter of them getting all their stars aligned."

A formal "handoff ceremony" signifying Skrappy's official independence is scheduled for July 16 during an open house to show off the center's new home.

Skrappy's was forced out of its home at 201 E. Broadway in 2007 because of Downtown redevelopment plans tied into the city's Rio Nuevo project. Before securing a temporary lease for the Toole location in mid-February, Wooldridge said Skrappy's continued to operate in whatever fashion possible wherever it could find a place to work.

"We were working out of my Suzuki," she said. "Even though we didn't have a building, the youth were still doing things. We'd have our meetings at Epic (Cafe) or The Grill. And, since parks are free (to go to), we'd do art projects there."

Wooldridge said Skrappy's occupies a warehouse owned by the Arizona Department of Transportation, but not one of the 10 the city inspected in May and found numerous fire-code violations. She said the building was inspected in January or February and the group is working to make sure all code requirements are met.

"We're able to do our after-school program and our outreach programs," Wooldridge said. "We'll have concerts once we get everything up to code."

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Jesus Robles spray-paints a mural across the main entrance to Skrappy's new location in the Downtown Warehouse Arts District. The center has been minus a home for two years.

Greg Bryan / Arizona Daily Star

(slide show) More photos

IF YOU GO

- What: Open house for the new Skrappy's youth center location.
- When: 2 to 4 p.m. July 16
- Where: 191 E. Toole Ave.

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