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Teen Zone adds tutoring/mentoring program

By LINDA TRIMBLE, Education Writer 

New Smyrna Beach High School will add a new tutoring/mentoring program in January that could become a model for other Volusia high schools.

The after-school Teen Zone will be the latest addition to programs supported by the local charity Food Brings Hope that already operates at Osceola, Turie T. Small and Westside elementary schools and Campbell Middle School.

"We're delighted to be involved with it," said New Smyrna Beach High School Principal Jim Tager, who was familiar with the program from the three years it operated at the middle school in the same city. Tager moved from the middle school to the high school this summer.

Food Brings Hope was founded by businesswoman Forough Hosseini in 2007 under the umbrella of the Community Foundation of Volusia and Flagler Counties, a division of the United Way.

Its after-school programs provide tutoring, snacks, dinner, motivational activities and trips to museums, ball games and cultural activities for homeless students and children from low-income families.

In the high school's case, Tager said the program will include visits to area colleges and mentors to keep students on track toward graduation. "We're just going to believe in these kids and tell them they do have a future and these are some things they need to look at," he said.

The program is expected to start with 20 ninth-graders in January. Both Tager and Hosseini hope it will expand in future years.

"We really hope this could be a pilot program," Hosseini said.

Having Teen Zones at high schools will help keep better track of students who participate in Food Brings Hope programs as they move into higher grades, she said.

The expansion of the after-school program is one of the activities aided by a \$250,000 donation from the FKB Humanitarian Trust -- established by Hosseini's family.

That money also will be used to help send students who participate in Food Brings Hope to college, Hosseini said. The first group of those students is scheduled to graduate in 2012.