



Heidi Huber / The Fresno Bee

Yang Pao Vue, 12, left, and Alejandra Santos, 14, both from Tehipite Middle School, race each other in a fitness game during the unveiling of the Mobile Fitness Vehicle on Wednesday at the Fresno Convention Center.

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Healthy set of wheels

With its high-tech gadgets and a selection of athletic equipment to help Fresnans get into shape, the city Parks Department has unveiled a very ...

By Matt Leedy / The Fresno Bee

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Fresno's Parks Department is steering a souped-up trailer loaded with technology and sports equipment into neighborhoods where there are too few opportunities for organized activities.

The city rolled out a 34-foot-long trailer Wednesday packed with 10 laptop computers, athletic gear and a 42-inch TV screen that will guide children and the elderly through aerobics.

The recreation center on wheels is powered by rooftop solar panels. And the computers are wired to a satellite that provides Internet access and will allow the vehicle to double as a mobile command post during a major disaster.

Driving into underserved areas to provide recreation and medical help is a decades-old idea, but no other California city can match Fresno's sophisticated trailer, said Jane Adams, executive director of the state Parks and Recreation Society.

"The Internet connections, the big-screen TV, everything this has -- Fresno is taking it to the next level," Adams said.

Health screenings also will be conducted from the trailer, thanks to help from the employees of Saint Agnes Medical Center and Children's Hospital Central California.

The trailer will pull into Fresno neighborhoods without nearby community centers or computer labs, which are scattered throughout the city. The technology road show will tour Fresno much like a bookmobile.

The trailer will stop at schools, parks and open fields, where softball diamonds, volleyball courts and soccer, lacrosse and football fields can be set up.

"We can take this thing anywhere," Parks Director Randall Cooper said. "If kids don't have

access to a computer center, boom, here it is.

"Now we can do anything, anywhere in the city."

Alicia Soto, 13, doesn't live near a community center, and she hopes the trailer pulls into her neighborhood soon.

"It will get kids to do a lot of things they think they can't," Alicia said.

Grace Martinez, 60, said the trailer will be just as strong a motivator for older Fresnans.

"If nothing is taken to us, then we don't do anything," Martinez said. "If we have this, it will force us to go out and exercise."

A calendar will list where and when the trailer will be stationed.

This week, the Parks Department will show it off in Sacramento at a convention for parks and recreation departments in California, Nevada and Oregon.

The Parks Department won a \$45,000 grant from the Pacific Forest and Watershed Lands Stewardship Council to buy the Mobile Fitness Vehicle.

The council is a private, nonprofit organization established in 2004 as part of the settlement of Pacific Gas Electric Co.'s bankruptcy. It helps fund outdoor recreation for children and environmental projects.

The trailer includes an additional \$206,000 in technology, equipment and health supplies donated by a variety of companies and organizations.

Adiel Reyes, 14, looked wide-eyed at the computers, sports gear and satellite dish. The new equipment, she said, will draw children to the exercise programs, "and get kids who aren't that fit to be more active in their lives."

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Children study their next fitness move in an exercise game Wednesday. The Mobile Fitness Vehicle will stop at schools, parks and open fields. Health screenings also will be conducted from the trailer.



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From right, Andres Sifuentes, 12, Yang Pao Vue, 12, and Nancy Ramirez, after-school program coordinator, all from Tehipite Middle School, race in a fitness game Wednesday at the Fresno Convention Center.

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