

**Systemic Change Case Study**

®

**Louisville Conference Fosters Family Success**

Downtown Louisville, Ky., like many metropolitan cities, has booming areas filled with office buildings, restaurants and entertainment spaces. But, travel just a few blocks, and you can likely find impoverished neighborhoods where children have few ways to express or entertain themselves in a safe and nurturing environment outside of school.

St. Vincent de Paul Archdiocesan Council of Louisville sought out a way to ease the burden on parents to keep their children safe while they aren’t in school while also keeping them engaged in beneficial activities.

The Family Success Center was established to support those living in St. Vincent de Paul housing.

The Family Success Center’s programs are supported by two key partnerships. The first is Dare to Care, a local food bank that provides meals for children. The second is Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS).

Through JCPS, the Family Success Center is able to monitor the children’s academic performance and focus on improving areas of underperformance. They can help children strive to meet key benchmarks, like third grade reading level achievement and transition to middle school and high school.

SVdP officials have long planned a family success center for its South Preston Street campus located in the heart of downtown Louisville. The SVdP campus currently houses more than 300 previously homeless people.

“After proposing the center in 2005, the agency finally began construction in January 2014. They spent nearly $1.5 million to remodel a Preston Street building that used to house a SVdP Thrift Store,” said Ed Wnorowski, executive director of the Archdiocesan Council of Louisville.

The Family Success Center building houses a gym, art room, teen space, tech lab, homework/tutoring space and teaching kitchen.

Families are only required to pay a low membership fee to enroll their children in the after-school program. For elementary students it runs from 4-7 p.m. and for high school students it runs from 3-6 p.m.

Kendra Oatis, manager of Family and Children Programs, said that kids who come to the center after school will “typically have an hour to unwind and have a snack before doing their homework with help from a JCPS tutor or volunteer.”

In addition to homework help, children who come to the Family Success Center also take special classes on topics that interest them like art, dance or sports. Children are given a hot meal every evening before they go home. That is provided by the Dare to Care program.

The center plans to expand its services in the near future by providing early learning programs.

“Children in families that have suffered from chronic poverty and homelessness exhibit serious vocabulary and other deficits,” Nancy Naughton, associate executive director of the Archdiocesan Council of Louisville said. “The early learning program will include both parents and children in classes focusing on overcoming these issues, ensuring these children are ‘school-ready’.”

The center currently offers counseling for adults through their case management team. However, they hope to formalize a formal adult curriculum in the coming months with an emphasis on early learning and skill development.

The Louisville SVdP created the Family Success Center to fill the gap that was present in impoverished downtown Louisville neighborhoods when it comes to youth services.

Although, they are beginning their work with the families living in SVdP housing and participating in their programs, they plan to expand their services to those in need in the surrounding community within the next year.



Left: A young girl works on an art project during the after-school program at the Family Success Center.

Right: A young boy works on homework with the assistance of a tutor from the JCPS program.