

Greenwich Church's "Transformational Grant" Helps Stamford Organization

By Frank MacEachern

STAMFORD, Conn., -- A Greenwich church's generosity is helping a Stamford-based non-profit that helps homeless children and their families.

Round Hill Community Church has committed \$105,000 to Inspirica to help fund a new early childhood learning center. The church has been heavily involved in helping community programs, according to its Senior Pastor, Rev. Dr. Edward Horstmann.

"Over the years the church has had a really deep involvement in the wider community and that has been expressed through a variety of grants the church has given to local organizations," he said.



Two years ago the church decided to offer what it called a "transformational grant" to a local organization that would allow an organization to accomplish something they may not be able to do on their own, Horstmann said. Inspirica's vision of what they wanted to do attracted the church's outreach committee, he said.

"The fact that it was going to be transformative for people's lives, that this would give, especially children, the skills and abilities they will need to flourish in school and in their lives," he said spurred the church to become involved.

That money goes directly to helping children who are homeless, many of who lag educationally behind their peers, said Inspirica's Barbara McLaughlin, Director of Early Childhood and Parenting Program.

"Our children, because they are homeless, are on average a year behind educationally and so what we needed was an environment that would immediately draw them in and get them to be very excited about what they were experiencing and learning," she said.

Continued on next page . . .

They created bright, colorful rooms that features items children can look upon and touch to help draw them out and make the space a comfortable learning one for them, McLaughlin said.

The center located at 44 Franklin St., focuses heavily on reading because homeless children hear 50 percent less words than their peers, McLaughlin said.

Inspirica CEO Jason Shaplen said it's important to help parents get the skills and training needed in order to help them get jobs and housing, but reaching down to help children is vital to ensure they receive the education and support they need in order to escape homelessness. He said homeless children face many more challenges such as far greater rates of sickness, emotional problems and learning difficulties than their peers.

"If you really want to break the cycle of homelessness you have to start with these children," he said. "You have to focus on them, you have to be proactive."

The children who come to Inspirica with their family members face huge obstacles that if not addressed will see them struggle as adults, Shaplen said.

"Who are we kidding? These kids are almost certain to grow up to be homeless adults or living in poverty," he said. That prompted Inspirica to focus more heavily on children.

To view the article online, please visit: <http://greenwich.dailyvoice.com/neighbors/greenwich-churchs-transformational-grant-helps-stamford-organization/642803/>