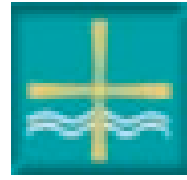


SERVING THE CATHOLIC COMMUNITY IN CENTRAL KENTUCKY FOR 135 YEARS



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Success center aids students after school

The Family Success Center is located in the former St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store on South Preston

By JESSICA ABLE
Record Staff Writer

Children served by the Society of St. Vincent de Paul now have a new facility where they can gather after school to eat a snack and get help with their homework.

The new 11,500 square-foot Family Success Center on South Preston St. officially opened at the end of September and serves as an after school youth development program in the Smoketown neighborhood. The center is open to children Monday to Thursday from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m.

The renovated building is housed in the former St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store, which relocated to Dorsey Plaza earlier this year. The total cost of renovations was \$1.2 million, all of which was privately funded, said Linda Romine, the society's director of communications.

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Record Photo by Jessica Able

Middle school students practiced a step dance in a class Oct. 27 at the Family Success Center, located on the Smoketown campus of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul.

“Not only are we helping to keep a roof over their heads and provide food, but we are playing a part in their education.”

—Kendra Oatis, former St. Vincent de Paul Louisville FSC Program Manager

St. Vincent de Paul Family Success Center aids children

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The building features a large lobby area, a gymnasium with several roll-top doors which open to the outside playground, a computer lab, teaching kitchen, homework space and meeting rooms.

Currently the center is open only to the children of families served by St. Vincent de Paul, but Kendra Oatis, program manager of child and family programs at the society, hopes that in the future other children will be able to take part in the after school offerings.

“Our plan is to eventually open up to the community by reaching out to local schools to get referrals,” she said. “We are looking to build partnerships with other community agencies and schools.”

Thirty-two families with 59 children currently live in the St. Vincent de Paul apartments on the Smoketown campus, which is just south and east of downtown Louisville. There are another 14 families with 42 children who receive services and live off-campus. In the four weeks since the center opened, 28 students have enrolled and that number is expected to grow, Oatis said.

Oatis noted that the programming at the center has been a great way of bridging the gap between the on-campus and off-campus families.

“A lot of times when we’ve had events or volunteers come, our on-campus families have only benefitted but

The Center has also been approved to host a Dare to Care Kids’ Cafe which they hope to open late November

activities include indoor soccer, step-dance class, a finance for kids class, small discussion groups, flag football and character building.

Oatis says the center allows the Society of St. Vincent de Paul to serve families as a whole.

“In the past we really were working with the parent or guardian and there was not much of an opportunity to treat the child as a client as well. This way we are able to treat the family more holistically,” she said.

The center has also recently completed the necessary paperwork to become a Dare to Care Kids’ Cafe. Oatis said they hope to roll out the cafe offerings at the end of November.

While there is currently no cost to families to use the center, Oatis envisions a nominal yearly fee in the future.

“We are looking to have a minimal annual fee, like the Boys and Girls Club, so families have some ownership of the facility and some accountability as well,” she said.

Individuals interested in assisting with homework, specifically math, are encouraged to call Oatis at 272-2138. Other volunteers are needed to serve as mentors, free-time supervisors and as music and art instructors.

Items for the center that are still needed are art supplies, elementary and young adult books, cameras, musical instruments and computer software such as Photoshop and InDesign.