

Catholic Charities brings therapy into Fairview Elementary

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United Way of Monroe County campaign highlights
Week ending 1/22/16

Highlights of the Your Donation has Power campaign

Total dollars raised: \$1,027,000 (79%).

* IU Health Bloomington Hospital is showing the strength it takes to improve our community by raising \$39,721, an impressive 57% increase over last year.

* Meadowood Retirement Community residents earned their stripes once again with \$5,475 in donations to help our community thrive.

* Staff at Girls Inc., a United Way member agency, made a strong, smart and bold investment in the future by donating \$442 to the campaign.

Impact:

Donations to United Way help make it possible for girls to participate in Operation SMART at Girls Inc. and improve their science knowledge by 84%. Girls in the "Economic Literacy" program improved their financial literacy by 73%.

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The students who need the most help aren't always a classroom's most disruptive. Sometimes they're quiet and reserved. Other times they're anxious, or easily upset.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 6.8 percent of children ages 3 to 17 have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), 3.5 percent have behavioral or conduct problems, 3 percent have anxiety and 2.1 percent suffer from depression.

"We felt like there was a big need for mental health services," said Whitney Thomas, student and family advocate for Fairview Elementary School.

But transportation to behavioral health services was a barrier for many Fairview families. Teachers knew some of their students needed extra support but couldn't make it to mental health appointments after school hours.

So Catholic Charities brought the specialists to the school.

“A lot of people don’t want to bring their children to a mental health center,” said O’Connell Case, clinical director for Catholic Charities in Bloomington. “There’s not enough resources for play therapy for small children.”

Catholic Charities, a United Way of Monroe County agency and part of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis, provided 10,320 hours of mental health services to at-risk community members last year, according to United Way statistics. Seventy-three percent of these services were provided to children.

In August 2014, the United Way agency began sending mental health specialists into Fairview Elementary School up to four days a week. Services were offered on a sliding scale of payment, and Catholic Charities accepts state-provided health insurance and commercial health insurance.

Teachers and parents referred 22 children to the program in its first year, most of whom were in kindergarten or first grade and having difficulty transitioning into life as full-time students.

“You’ve got to start when kids are young,” said Sheri Benham, a mental health therapist with Catholic Charities.

Throughout the school year, mental health therapists worked with children in school, at home and at play therapy sessions at Catholic Charities. Play therapy, or child-directed therapy, provides young patients with toys, games and other activities that help them feel comfortable and open to speaking with a professional.

“They choose what they want to do,” Benham said. “We tell them when you are here, this is a safe place where you can act out whatever is going on in your life.”

Therapists evaluated their students’ progress at the mid-point of the year and at the end of the school year, and found that their patients increased their reading skills 81 percent and had measurable improvements in behaviors at home and school, according to United Way.

The program also served as an opportunity for parents to connect with teachers and therapists to discuss their children’s behavioral issues and how to modify behavior.

“We’ve seen more parent participation, I believe, as a result of this service,” said Emma Ford, school social worker for Fairview Elementary.

Donation impact to Catholic Charities

- \$1/week provides two weeks of group mental health-based programming for at-risk children in school.
 - \$3/week provides three weeks of grief counseling for a child who has lost a loved one.
 - \$5/ week sponsors an adolescent girl in a three-month social skills and support group.
 - \$10/week covers a month of individual mental health counseling sessions for a community member in need.
 - \$20/week supplies a child and his parents with a 10-week group program focusing on social skills and parenting.
 - \$30/week provides intensive in-school mental health counseling services for an at-risk child and the child's family for a full school year.
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