ESP Kicks Off Backpack Program

The National School Lunch Program and the National School Breakfast Program provide free or reduced-price meals to 22 million children. For many of these children, school meals may be the only meals they eat. What happens when they go home over the weekend?

In an effort to end Childhood Hunger, Enrichment Services Program, Inc. has partnered with Feeding the Valley Food Bank to provide weekend meals for children. Our pilot began at the Benning Hills Head Start Center during the month of August/September and will be expanded to include more children. In a nation of plenty, childhood hunger and food insecurity continue to be problems.

Each child receives a bag of food that is child-friendly, nutritious, non-perishable and easy to eat. Backpacks are distributed each Friday afternoon. The backpack provides enough food for a child to easily assemble into six healthy meals. This helps ensure that children will have adequate food over the weekend and return to school on Monday ready to learn. Children return the backpacks on Monday morning and receive them again on Friday.

For more information on how the community can support the Backpack Food Program, please contact Tracy Belt at tbelt@espheadstart.org or 706-329-0304.
ESP Receives United Way Grant

This year Enrichment Services Program, Inc. (ESP) received an $8,000 venture grant from the United Way of the Chattahoochee Valley to help fund our Whole Family Services. ESP officially became a United Way Partner Agency.

The main focus areas of the United Way are to improve Basic Needs, Income, Health and Education of all people in the Chattahoochee Valley, which aligns with our mission of eliminating poverty through education, services, and partnerships.

As a partner agency, staff and board members attended the 2019 United Way Campaign Kickoff on August 29 at the Columbus Convention and Trade Center. This year’s theme is “Change Doesn’t Happen Alone.”

“Get Out of Town – Summer Youth Impact Tour”
ON THE TABLE ACTION GRANT

After participating for the second year in On the Table, ESP launched “Get Out of Town – A Summer Youth Impact Tour.” The week-long project provided day trips for 10 participants entering grades 9-12 in Stewart County.

The first day of the program began with a tour and overview of Enrichment Services Program. We included an Etiquette Class as part of day one, since we incorporated at least one sit down restaurant into the itinerary. The students enjoyed the Etiquette Class, all while being able to practice with a meal catered by Olive Garden. The final stop for day one was to the Coca Cola Space Science Center.

Day two was “Museum Day.” We started the day off at the National Infantry Museum, where we were able to have a full tour of the museum, including lunch and a special lesson on the Global War on Terror. We then headed to the Columbus Museum, another first for our students.

Day three was “College Tour Day” at Columbus State University and Columbus Technical College. Many of them aspire to be first generation college students, so seeing both schools up close and personal made their vision one step closer to reality.

Day four was “Adventure Day.” The students braved the Chattahoochee River and went whitewater rafting and zip lining! We had lunch at a legendary Columbus restaurant – Country’s on Broadway.

The week ended with “Entertainment Day” on Friday. We treated students to a movie at AMC Theater – The Lion King, bowling at Stars and Strikes and lunch at Chick-Fil-A.

While the activities were a big part of the week, there were many great takeaways. The students developed friendships and were able to see the world in a different light. Some of the students were also able to confide in staff about some of their needs. Although not part of the grant, we were happy to be able to assist with providing some school clothes and supplies for students in need.

Zine, 17, is a junior at Stewart County High School. When asked about her future plans, Zine stated that after graduating from high school she wants to become a traveling Registered Nurse. The Summer Impact Youth Program afforded her the opportunity to tour Columbus Technical College and Columbus State University. “Without this summer program I would have never been able to get a true feel of the nursing program and college,” Zine said.
Chattahoochee Valley Poverty Reduction Coalition

Muscogee County was one of five communities to become a funded State of Hope site during the first round of competition.

A Poverty Reduction Lab, now known as the Chattahoochee Valley Poverty Reduction Coalition, was created as a result of this award. The Coalition is funded thanks to the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services’ State of Hope initiative. State of Hope is a movement throughout Georgia to create communities where children are safe, thriving and full of hope. Its mission is to cultivate family-centered support systems by connecting, equipping and nurturing diverse community collaborators.”

The goals of the Coalition are:
• Exploring new ways of working together, engaging local stakeholder groups to act as an interdependent system to achieve shared goals.
• Harnessing evidence-based Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) methods at the system level.
• Dissemination of CQI methods to positively influence agency-level practices.
• Focusing on work-related stress, creating healthy workplaces and high-performing work teams.

The Chattahoochee Valley Poverty Reduction Coalition explores high-impact strategies to create one connected regional system of services that:
• Equips families with children 0 to 5 years of age with the resources needed to achieve financial self-sufficiency,
• Promotes economic equity, and
• Continually improves opportunities across generations.

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HR Notes from ESP

John “J.P.” Roberson joined Enrichment Services Program as Director of Operations. JP served 27 years in the military and obtained extensive experience in operations. In civilian life, JP also has operations experience in the medical field.

Kelvin Thomas joined Enrichment Services Program as the Director of Early Childhood and Family Services. Kelvin comes to ESP from the public education sector where he has more than 15 years’ experience. He has served in several positions including Pre-K teacher, Pre-K Coordinator, Assistant Principal, and Alternative School Director. He is a published author and motivational speaker. Kelvin’s motto is “Mindset is Everything.”

ESP bids farewell to Teresa Johnson. After dedicating over 20 years of distinguished service to Enrichment Services Program, she has decided to embark on a new journey. Teresa Johnson rejoined ESP in 1998 as a Center Manager. She worked in several roles with the organization, including Teacher Assistant, Teacher, Center Manager, Community Partnership Specialist, Child Development and Health Services Manager and ultimately the Director of Early Childhood and Family Services. Some of the accomplishments achieved during her tenure as Director of Early Childhood and Family Services include expanding the Early Head Start Program, expanding the service area into Russell County, and achieving National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) Accreditation at two locations.
Services in Numbers!

1,168  Children Enrolled in Early Childhood Services
24,365  Food Boxes Distributed
4,180  Households Helped Paying Their Heating Bills
16  Individuals Served Through Employment Training

“Carlos became potty-trained and I no longer had to buy expensive pull-ups for him. His vocabulary increased. He started talking more and started completing sentences. He was socializing and playing more with other children. Carlos is totally outgoing and he absolutely loves school! Carlos loves reading books, drawing and playing with his tablets. I am so pleased with the services that he received.”

— April T., ESP Customer

Make Your Annual Gift!

It’s the time of year when we think about giving – and giving back. To make a tax-deductible donation, visit our website at www.enrichmentservices.org or mail your check to Enrichment Services Program, P.O. Box 6627, Columbus, GA 31917.