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Electronic Funds Transfer

We accept credit cards and electronic fund transfers directly from your account to ours. The process is fast and secure. Visit our website and follow the instructions on our donation page to get started today.

Prayer Support

We believe that our ability to do what we do comes from the grace of God, providing our team with wisdom in making decisions and guiding our daily activities. Praying for us daily would be a great encouragement to our team.

Women’s Ministry: Meeting the Unique Needs of Women



One of the core values of Family Empowerment Centers is the belief that all people matter to God. As God is no respecter of persons—and longs to be in relationship with all of His creation—we believe that all people are welcome to learn, grow, and receive encouragement along their journey.

As in many urban contexts, we find that women carry a unique burden in that they often shoulder the financial and parental load in single-parent households, or work long hours alongside their husbands in order to provide for the needs of a growing family. They become the protector and peace-keeper in homes plagued by addictions or abuse. And they serve as the rock and driving force that holds the family unit together.

Over the years, Family Empowerment Centers has been a source of refuge for some women, and a place of respite for others. Endeavoring to meet the unique needs of women in our community has presented some challenges, requiring flexibility and a prayerful commitment to adjust to the most pressing needs. At times, we’ve offered a bilingual Mom & Tots group, and in other seasons we’ve gathered informally for conversation, prayer, and encouragement. Recently, we’ve sensed a call to equip women with the fundamentals of understanding the Bible, cultivating a deeper faith, and developing healthy relationships with others.

During our fall semester Bible study, a diverse group of intergenerational women studied ways to have a deeper relationship with the Lord and how that requires some ‘training’ on our part. The study brought together women from all of the Centers programs, including staff, interns, ESL students, S.A.Y. Yes! volunteers, women from our worship service, and others from the community. It became a place where the women could openly share how God is working in their life, a place to laugh together, celebrate together, cry together, and pray for each other.

As we look forward to resuming our Bible study, which focuses on the life-giving power of community, we are praying that God will continue to knit together an even stronger bond between the women in our community!

Sponsor Spotlight

We gratefully acknowledge the following agencies for their contributions to support our ministry:
Bloomington Church & Children’s Hunger Fund - Christmas presents for the S.A.Y. Yes! Afterschool Program!
Little Moments Ministries - Tickets to the UIC Flames Basketball game!
Loss & Pavone, P.C. - Annual Benefit 2014 Platinum Level Sponsor!
Make It Better Foundation & Scarves With A Purpose - Winter coats, scarves, gloves and hats for the FEC community and S.A.Y. Yes! Afterschool Program!
North Suburban Church - supplies for food baskets during the holiday season!

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The Official Newsletter
of the
Family Empowerment
Centers

January 2014

Celebrating 10 Years of Ministry in Chicago

In 2014, Family Empowerment Centers will reach a milestone: we’re turning 10! To say that we will celebrate 10 years of service to the Rogers Park community of Chicago is a wonderful achievement—one that would be impossible without the support of so many faithful friends and partners. This milestone is one we celebrate together.

It has been a journey filled with financial ups and downs, and emotional highs and lows. As we reflect in this edition on how far we have come, we offer praise to God for our partners and the ways in which the Center’s programs and services have steadily expanded over the past ten years. We humbly recognize that God is faithful to bless and sustain this ministry, **and that YOU have played a direct role in this achievement!**

Community Context

While the neighborhood has undergone some changes in the past ten years, Rogers Park still remains one of the most diverse communities in Chicago. The ethnic composition of the 65,000 residents falls almost equally one-third African-American, Hispanic, and European American. With a large influx of refugees and immigrants settling in Rogers Park it is quite common to hear any number of the 80 languages spoken while walking along city streets. In addition to such wonderful ethnic and cultural diversity, Rogers Park, is one of the most economically diverse neighborhoods as well. With roughly 25% of all residents recorded as either falling below poverty or above the \$200,000 threshold, the remaining 50% fall within traditional middle class income range.

Community Needs

Along with this incredible gift of diversity come some pretty significant challenges. Poorly funded public schools are unable to adequately provide for the individual and academic needs of students, resulting in graduation rates as low as 61%. Like many neighborhoods across Chicago and the state of IL, drugs, gangs, and intense social pressure vie for the attention of many youth. Many dedicated and hardworking parents experience the strain of laboring in jobs paying far below minimum wage simply because they lack the English proficiency or technology skills necessary to secure a more financially viable option, however, we know that God is bigger than all this and that He has a good, unique and beautiful purpose for every resident of Rogers Park!

The Center’s Commitment

Since 2004, Family Empowerment Centers has served according to the following heart-beat: “Glorifying God...Loving our neighbors...Strengthening urban families.” As we engage life with our neighbors—those God places in our path, in our programs or who benefit from our services—we seek to build relationships that convey hope, lead to the empowerment of the individual and family unit, and, ultimately, guide people to the truth that God loves them. Throughout the year, we will share stories of lives that have been impacted by the Center’s presence over the past 10 years. We invite you to join us in celebrating the great things God has done, is doing, and will continue to do in Rogers Park through this little ministry called Family Empowerment Centers.

Staff Contacts

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Brandie Hayes
ESL Director
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S.A.Y. Yes! Afterschool Program & Bible Club:
Dania Castillo & Danielle Alvarado
Co-Directors

Schedule of Events

Bible Club (for youth)
Mon. 4:30-6:00pm

English as a Second Language Class
Tues. & Thurs. 6:30-8:30pm

S.A.Y. Yes! Afterschool Program
Mon. 3:45-4:30pm
Tues.-Thurs. 3:45-6:00pm

Women’s Bible Study
Wednesday 6:30-8:00pm

Worship Service
Sunday 10:30am–12:00noon

10 Ways to Support FEC as we turn 10

1. **Like us on Facebook.** Stay up-to-date with FEC happenings and events and help us reach 1,000 Likes!
2. Double the impact of your gift by partnering it with a **Corporate Employee Match Program** at work. (Check with your Human Resources department for details.)
3. **Join our "Ten-fold Campaign."** In honor of 10 years of service, we're asking 100 families to commit to pledging \$100 a month.
4. Participate in our **5K Race in July.**
5. **Invite** a staff member to speak at your business, church or gathering. We love to share!
6. **Host a fundraiser** in honor of Family Empowerment Centers. (Give us a call...we have plenty of ideas!)
7. As a family, **sponsor a student** in the S.A.Y. Yes! After-school Program with a \$400 monthly pledge.
8. **Volunteer** your time & talents-daily, weekly, or monthly.
9. Find out what we're all about and see our programs in action! **Attend a Vision Tour.**
10. **Join** our Board of Directors or Special Events Committee.

Bonus: **Become a monthly prayer partner.** Simply send your name to office@familyempower.org to begin receiving updates.

Getting your tax papers in order? 2013 Giving Statements are available upon request. Please contact Susan at 773.262.0760 or susan@familyempower.org

A Life Impacted and Giving Back

As we reflect upon 10 years of serving the Rogers Park community, a sea of faces flash of people who have been impacted by our programs or services. One of those people is Brenda.

Shy in front of the camera only, Brenda is one of the most compassionate people you'll ever meet. On any given day, Brenda can be found sharing the hope of God with people on the street, bringing a warm meal to those housebound with sickness, or making herself available to serve anyone in need in whatever capacity.

Our relationship with Brenda began 10 years ago when she attended a community prayer meeting hosted by the Center. A single-mom raising a teenage son, Brenda feels blessed and grateful by the level of involvement, support and commitment shown to her as a single mom on behalf of the Center.

As a means to give back, Brenda is on a mission to raise \$10,000 for various projects around the Center, including a new floor for the multipurpose room. Roughly a third of the way toward her goal, Brenda has raised about \$3,000 to date. Brenda plans to host three fundraisers this year, including a **Pancake Breakfast** on Saturday, February 15, 9:00am. Save the date and join the fun. Be sure to follow us on Facebook for more details!

ESL is an Opportunity to Serve Others

"(English teaching) can be an opportunity to bear witness, to minister, to serve the disadvantaged ... English teaching itself becomes a form of Christian mission."
(Donald B. Snow)



At Family Empowerment Centers, we thank God for the opportunity to bear witness, minister, and serve the disadvantaged through our English as a Second Language program. This past year, students from Central and South America, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia have enrolled in our classes. Not only do these people have a need to learn the English language, but many of them are in need of friendship, and most importantly, a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Through our ESL program, it is our desire to meet those needs.

Celebrating 10 years in 2014 provides an opportunity for us all to look back at the work God has done, as well as look ahead at how we can continue to bear witness in the Rogers Park community to the non-English speakers in our midst. This past year, our **ESL program doubled in enrollment** and added a children's care program. 92% of our students saw an increase in their mid-year evaluation scores. Deep relationships have been formed between students and teachers. And several students have been attending FEC's worship service on Sundays. God has been doing remarkable things through the ESL program. As we look ahead, we would love to see more students join our program, continue to form relationships with those students, and make Christ known to them as well. Eventually, we'd love to expand our program to offer citizenship and GED courses, as well as have a structured English program for children in the community. With as much as God has done in this program over the past 10 years, we can only imagine how much more He will do over the next 10 years!

God's Provision for the S.A.Y. Yes! Afterschool Program

God's provision is always abundant and often comes in unexpected ways.

Over the past ten years, the Center has witnessed countless ways God provides for program and community needs. Most recently, two wonderful opportunities arose through which God blessed many families by meeting tangible needs.

With this winter being exceptionally cold, many of our kids and parents from the S.A.Y. Yes! program began the winter months in light winter jackets. God saw this need and responded using the **Make It Better Foundation** as the vehicle to provide. Through the Warming Hands and Hearts initiative, the Make It Better Foundation donated heavy winter coats to our S.A.Y. Yes! program children, their siblings and parents! Their generosity did not end at heavy coats as they also donated hats, scarves, gloves and blankets, too.

For the second year in row, **Bloomington Church** sponsored a Silent Light Christmas party for the students in the afterschool program. What a blessing this was as our sponsor generously provided gifts for all of our S.A.Y. Yes! students and their siblings! The Center supplied deserts, arts and crafts projects, and arranged for musical entertainment for our families. A special treat was offering family portraits beside a decorated Christmas tree. Thanks to **Candid Photos by John** for donating time and free digital copies to families. The hearts of parents of S.A.Y. Yes! students were moved to donate food, creating an impromptu minipotluck which was more than enough for all to eat and enjoy fellowship.

With many families in our community facing economic hardships and below zero temperatures; God's provision is not only abundant but it is ALWAYS right on time!



Envision Teams Help Expand Ministry Efforts in Rogers Park

Family Empowerment Centers has been extremely blessed by our involvement in the Christian and Missionary Alliance's Envision program. Through Envision, volunteer teams come from all over the United States and Canada to serve our community, growing in their understanding of their call to faith and action in the world around them as they do so.

The number of Envision teams hosted by Family Empowerment Centers has steadily increased each year, and we have seen a record number of repeat groups—a positive affirmation that the one-week urban immersion experience has a powerful impact on the teens and adults who participate. As we celebrate 10 years of ministry in the Rogers Park neighborhood of Chicago, we are set to host a record number of teams this year, with eight teams already committed to serve in the spring and summer of 2014! We are incredibly excited to see what God will accomplish through this outpouring of effort. Please join us in praying for these teams as they prepare to come and serve with us in Chicago.

With so much help coming this summer, we will, of course, be involving teams in what have become traditional efforts like sports camps for children and our annual Family Fest block party, in which we rely on team members to implement activities (such as the building of hundreds of Pinewood derby cars for the Pinewood Grand Prix,) and supervise the dozens of local youth who participate in our summer long sports camps.

As we celebrate our 10 year anniversary, we look forward to introducing new events and activities this summer like **our first ever 5K race in July!** Many of these events and activities would not occur without the continued support of Envision teams being willing to take time and come to Chicago to serve alongside Family Empowerment Centers.

