Hearts In Hands Community Center

Hearts In Hands (HIHCC) is a 501c(3) not-for-profit with the mission of providing programs to at-risk children and their families, primarily in the manufactured home communities along the Route 322 corridor between Downingtown and HoneyBrook. In general, children in these communities have poorer academic performance, are more likely to be required to attend Extended School Year (ESY) programs, and are less in control of their physical, emotional and social selves.

The programs HIHC provides are designed to address all aspects of child development – the physical, intellectual, emotional, social and spiritual components of growing well-rounded young people and then adults. Some programs focus more heavily on one specific aspect, like both boys and girls running clubs jointly run with the YMCA or the teen “Club IRV 305” (where teenagers form their own government and plan and execute a project that is beneficial to the community). All of the programs, however, work toward the goal of “Building Stronger Youth Communities”.

In the past 3 years, Hearts In Hands has become much more structured and rigorous in its operations, implementing a budget, reviewing it bi-monthly in our Board meetings, and modifying expenses throughout the year based on actual revenues received. Our entire staff is comprised of volunteers, and pricing for our programs is sensitive to the communities we serve. Even with program prices that are much lower than for comparable offerings in the towns and townships in our general area, we do offer scholarship discounts to families without sufficient means to afford sending their child/children. Most of the revenue for HIHCC currently comes from individual contributions, events and fund-raisers we put on, support from a few churches who share our passion for the under-served in the area, some corporate sponsorships, and a few small grants.

We are currently in the midst of our largest and most comprehensive program of the year – Summer Camp, which runs Monday through Wednesday of the last 2 weeks in June and the second through fourth weeks of July. Camp addresses all five of the aspects of child development mentioned above, with particular emphasis on academics (both a literacy specialist and a math specialist deliver age-appropriate instruction to minimize the “summer slide” and prepare the children for a better start to the upcoming school year), and on drown-proofing all of our campers (HIHCC pays to certify the life guards, who then have a summer job once camp is over).

We have structured our budget so that money from grants and corporate sponsorships goes directly to programs. Each $500 allows us to add one new program to our annual offerings to the communities. (This covers the costs of materials and supplies, outside instructors/speakers, snacks for participants, etc.) Programs “waiting” for a sponsor include sewing club (jointly with the 4H), babysitting club (babysitting certificate, again jointly with the 4H), and Lego club (learning teamwork while building fun projects). Were we fortunate enough to receive a grant of $1,000, we would re-start our after school homework and tutoring program for children in grades 3 and up – the higher cost for this program is the result of needing certified teachers in key subject areas.

Hearts In Hands will continue to look for ways to positively impact the lives of children in the communities we serve, and in so doing, to improve the quality of life in these communities. We are confident that a grant from the Zelinda LeBoutillier Charitable Foundation Fund will help us in that mission.