NORMA DeLONG EDUCATION AWARD
2015-2016

CHAPTER NAME: JA of Starkville

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EDUCATION CHAIRMAN: Caroline Hearnsberger

POSTMARK ON OR BEFORE:
MARCH 15, 2016

POPULATION CATEGORY: 15,000-29,000

COST OF PROJECT: Budgeted $1,200 per year

NUMBER OF ACTIVE MEMBERS INVOLVED: 40

NUMBER OF ACTIVE CHAPTER MEMBERS: 63

NUMBER OF PEOPLE SERVED: 25 students, 8 teachers, 1 administrator, and approximately 52 caregivers. There is also an unquantified impact on the entire community as the Center serves as a recruiting tool for Mississippi State University. Parents of children with disabilities agree to take jobs in the area because of the services offered by the Center.

Follow outline exactly in making award presentation.

I. How was the need for the project/program determined? (100 words or less, DOUBLE SPACED; WRITTEN IN THE SEQUENCE AS LISTED BELOW) Send one digital photo per entry either email or on disc.

II. Summarize Project —1000 words or less
Include the following:
1. Complete description of project and how it was carried out.
2. Population of area
3. Number of Active members in Chapter
4. Number of members planning and hours spent in planning
5. Length of actual program/seminar, etc.
6. Number of Chapter members attending
7. Age range of participants
8. Utilization of NAJA Resource Center (if applicable)
9. Number of people served.
10. Public Relations information for project.

III. Project Evaluation — (300 words or less, DOUBLE SPACED; WRITTEN IN THE SEQUENCE AS LISTED BELOW)
1. Feedback from participants
2. Impact on community
3. Applicability of program to other communities
4. Worthiness to present to other Chapters
5. Plans to expand into the community and/or presentation by other organization(s)
6. Plans to repeat program/project
Norma DeLong Education Award Nomination

Introduction

Junior Auxiliary of Starkville provides comprehensive support to the T.K. Martin Center for Technology and Disability’s Project Impact. The T.K. Martin Center’s Project Impact focuses on infants, toddlers, and preschoolers with developmental delays, Project IMPACT (Insuring Mississippi Parents’ and Children’s Tomorrows) provides evaluation and intervention services to maximize the developmental potential of Mississippi children. Through the years, JA of Starkville has provided volunteers one morning every two to three weeks to assist the teachers with providing the children enrichment activities. When the Center hosts events for families, such as graduation, JA volunteers help with everything from getting the children ready to serving snacks. Additionally, we support the Center’s outreach through volunteering at their annual Fun Run.

How was project determined?

We wanted to find new ways to support the Center and hone their efforts to what would be most important to them. Through this evaluation it was determined that the Center needed: 1) continued volunteer support in the classroom 2) financial support to fund educational programs through grants and funds as the teachers are too overwhelmed with classroom duties to apply for grants and outside funding and 3) assistance in educating the public about the Center. With our active member base, we determined that we could set-up an educational endowment for the Center to achieve two goals: publicizing the Center and raising imperative funding. The planning for this took 22 members about 15 hours in meeting as a group and with the Mississippi State University Foundation to set-up the T.K. Martin Center Endowment for Excellence Fund.
Project Summary

To fully fund the educational endowment (which will exist in perpetuity and always be available to the center), we have to raise $25,000 which we are doing through a 700 person mail out. This portion of the project was provided by our 18 provisional members who sent out the letters and return envelopes. The letter provides a personal story of how one of our life members’ family was impacted by the T.K. Martin Center, a publication piece developed by a provisional member is also included. The publication material educates each recipient about the impact of the Center. Thus far, we have found that recipients of the letter feel inspired to give after learning more about the Center.

Also included in education and fundraising, was a fashion show including the children from the Center. This fashion show was held at a local boutique owned by one of our members. College students modeled the clothing and each had a young student (ages 11 months – 4 years old) accompanying her. This event brought parents of the children, community members, college students and more together to support the Center. Additionally, guests at the show learned more about the Center and its mission.

Many of the students at the Center create beautiful art work which aids in their educational development– in an effort to bring their beautiful creations to the public, we collected pieces to auction off at our Kentucky Derby Fundraising Event. These efforts took a total 50 hours and 27 members to carry out. We have committed to making all of these annual initiatives.

The teachers’ burden of fundraising has been removed through this project so they can focus more on teaching and educational enrichment. But financial support is only one piece of the puzzle. We continue to provide volunteer, hands-on support in the classroom for children 11 months to 5 years old. Time in the classroom is meaningful to our volunteers and the children. We have expanded this to also including out-of-the-class activities, such as a pottery painting
field trip. The children painted beautiful, unique pottery pieces – some to take home and some to auction at the Kentucky Derby Charity Event.

The public has become more involved with our efforts now that we have something more tangible to communicate (the endowment). Discussing with the public our mission to enhance educational programs at the Center has been great outreach for both the Center and our chapter. Our social media efforts have been ramped up to educate the public about the Center and JA’s work with them. We also released a press release about the endowment that was shared widely in print and social media.

**Project Evaluation**

Through the financial and volunteer support, we have served approximately 75 people directly in one year. This includes teachers, children, and family members. That is just the direct impact of our efforts. The letters educating potential donors and supporters of the Center reached 700 people. The Center serves the community in many ways and one such way is as a recruiting tool for MSU. Having a service that helps children with disabilities is an important resource for many considering a move to Starkville. It is difficult to quantify how many are benefitted from the Center’s existence and success, but it is far reaching.

The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. The director and teachers are thrilled with us assuming the fundraising role for them and also show appreciation for the time we spend with the children. Often the teachers have difficulty providing as much one-on-one that’s needed so we are honored to help in that area.

There are Centers such as this in other communities served by JA groups and we feel strongly that other chapters can provide this same support. An endowment is really special in that it is always available as the principle amount gets reinvested every year. We feel this is important in keeping children’s services available to every family in our community. We would be honored to share this project and how we maintain its success with other volunteers. It is one thing to write a
check, but it is quite another to really be immersed in the organization and provide the sweet children with love and support. Combining these two pieces of the project has been a natural fit and we are proud to say we will continue these efforts next year and beyond.