



Young Philanthropists: Banding Together to Make a Difference

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By Jenna Davlin

Cindy Thayer heard enough accounts; it was if she was there in person.

A boy, a kindergartner, saw a little girl getting bullied on the class playground. Armed with the recently-obtained knowledge and confidence of how to handle the situation, the boy stepped in and lent a helping hand.

“He learned it in Compass to stand up straight and say ‘Hey, stop doing that, that’s not nice,’” said Thayer, assistant director at Compass for Kids. “And the bully went away and the little girl was so happy, she was in Compass, too. And the kids came up and told us about it the following week, and the teacher agreed and said he learned through Compass how to stand up to bullies.”

Building up social/emotional skills is an important element for Compass for Kids, and the organization is helping elementary students in new ways, including the Parent Teacher Home Visit Project – a program funded by Young Philanthropists last year. Like the kindergartner standing up for his peer on the playground, Young Philanthropists operates under the mantra that more good can be done when working together.



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Starting in 2006, Young Philanthropists is a collection of more than 125 philanthropically-minded citizens of all ages and backgrounds who want to make a difference in a bigger way. Pooling their resources together, the group has been able to award \$69,000 in grants. Another \$10,000 is planned for this year’s grant.

When I first became a member of Young Philanthropists, I had the opportunity to serve on the Grant Committee. This not only allowed me to see firsthand all of the needs in our community, but also how I could make a difference.

I remember the year we chose Mini O’Beirne Crisis Nursery to receive the grant. I knew that many lives would be touched by this grant but after hearing the positive impact it had, I was hooked. More than 900 families received diapers and formula, and more than 100 families received bus tokens or taxi fare.

While those in Young Philanthropists have different interests and goals for the community, the collective mission is to help nonprofits that focus on child care education and development. We’ve been able to nurture a wide variety of organizations in the area — 11 different programs in the 12 years.

Over those 12 years, the impact has tremendously grown. We've been able to reach the point where our grant evolved from giving an organization a helpful boost to funding entirely new programs. Last year's Compass for Kids programs is a prime example. This brand-new program is bridging the gap between teachers and elementary school students and their parents by providing two in-home visits a year.

Parent Teacher Home Visit Project stems from an initiative that started in California but has taken hold nationwide. The positive outcomes are numerous. By going into the home and discussing hopes and dreams with the students, students have shown better attendance, better behavior and better reading and math scores — and parents have shown better attendance to special school functions. Teachers are showing students that school can be a positive force in changing their lives at an early age.

In the past, Young Philanthropists has funded other projects dedicated to helping children, whether it's introducing engineering challenges to K-8 students through LEGO League with the Boys and Girls Clubs of Central Illinois, or purchasing diapers and formula for families that need it the most. We're committed to helping youth in Central Illinois and putting them on the best track to succeed.

It's easy to become involved — it's \$125 a year to become a new member. That's officially less than a yearly Netflix subscription, but it's a significant bump to helping our endowment fund grow.

When talking about Young Philanthropists with others, there are always a few key points I make sure to mention. One, your annual membership goes toward the grant given away each year. Two, there are several fun events that you can attend, great both for networking and meeting people who believe in the same mission, "connecting people who care with causes that matter." Lastly is the focus of the grant. By supporting the development and education of children, we are preparing them to be great community members, maybe even YP members!

We're currently accepting applications for our 2017 grant and encourage all Sangamon County nonprofits serving children to apply before the November 2 deadline. Applications need to be submitted online and can be accessed via www.CFLL.org.

It can be daunting tackling issues alone — that's why we're banding together to help make a difference. I hope you will join us!

— Jenna Davlin is the steering committee chair for Young Philanthropists. To join or learn more about Young Philanthropists, contact the Community Foundation at 789-4431, info@CFLL.org, or www.CFLL.org.