

2018 LGFCU Excellence in Innovation Award Project Evaluation

Project ID	HS-7
Title of Program	Daymaker Program
Program Category	
Submission Date	6/1/2018 2:16:27 PM
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Implementation Date	1-Mar-17
FLSA Designation	Non-exempt
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Description of Productivity Improvement

The Daymaker program is a partnership between the Gaston County Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and Daymaker to sponsor children so that they are provided gifts on their birthdays. Due to confidentiality the names of foster children are protected by assigning them a nickname, which is randomly populated by the Daymaker system. Additionally, no identifying information is included in the description. A generic description is provided, although specific gift requests are included based on the child's interests. The Gaston County Daymaker Program is designed to enhance services provided to children in the foster care system. Currently, over 350 children are in foster care within Gaston County. With societal issues like the opioid epidemic tearing through communities it is anticipated these numbers will continue to rise.

Unfortunately, many children entering foster care lose their connections to friends, family, school, church, and other valuable social connections. These support systems are often unable to be preserved due to the tremendous shortage of foster parents, resulting in many children being placed outside of the county. This small token is a way to remind children they are loved by the community and gives the community a way to support the children in foster care. Providing gifts is also a valuable retention tool for foster parents and assists family members who may be caring for a relative in foster care.

The intent of the program was very simple; to improve the lives of children in the care of Gaston County and bring awareness to the needs of foster children within the community. While nothing can replace the loss children in foster care endure, the Daymaker program may help in making their birthday a little brighter.

Description of why this project was initiated

The Daymaker program was initiated to improve the lives of children in foster care. The Partnership with Daymaker began after Gaston County DHHS identified an opportunity to do two things: improve the lives of children in foster care and increase awareness within the community. The Daymaker program gives the community a way to support foster children, even if they may not be able or willing to become a foster parent. Supporting foster children and foster parents requires a community effort and the Daymaker program is one way support can be provided.

Increasing numbers of children are entering foster care all over the state, which is similar to what is being seen within Gaston County. Over the last three years, foster care numbers have increased within Gaston County and currently approximately 350 children are in custody. There are a multitude of variables contributing to this increase, but the opioid epidemic is playing a huge role in the increasing numbers. As foster care programs all over the state are stretched to their maximum capabilities, it becomes increasingly difficult to retain foster parents and match children with families within their communities. Challenges facing the foster care system are anticipated to continue, although major efforts are being made to improve recruitment and retention. Providing support to caregivers and reminding children in custody the community cares for them is one benefit of the Daymaker program. This additional support is one way Gaston County is helping foster parents and enhancing the care being provided to children.

Quantifiable results (sustainability, cost savings, cost avoidance and/or a higher level of service).

Indication of what resources were used and what was done with any accrued time savings

The Daymaker program became operation in March of 2017. Since becoming operational the program has had 363 donors donate 765 gifts worth \$12,309.76. The support from donors enhances the services being provided to children within the custody of DHHS, without costing the county any additional expenditure. Additionally, the program promotes an environment of donating and taking care of the vulnerable members of our community.

The program continues to grow, with donations being received weekly. This program has the ability to serve children for holidays such as Christmas, which may be the next evolution of the program. At this time sustainability is dependent on the generosity of the community. Current data trends indicate sustainability is viable, as more and more donors are coming forward to sponsor children.

Other descriptive information

Imagine a foster parent working full time and caring for three foster children from three different families. Caring for three children is difficult for any parent but can be even more strenuous when children have gone through the trauma of being removed from their homes. The County relies on foster parents to help children deal with the loss of family and friends, which is difficult for even the most veteran parent. In this scenario each child comes with their own specific traumas, requiring the foster parent to be able to adapt to each child while assisting them through the grieving process. As you can see, being a foster parent requires a tremendous amount of dedication and time. Being able to support families while they care for children in custody is crucial and essential in retaining families' long term. The Daymaker program is a tool to provide families support, while also reminding children they have connections to the community outside of the foster home.