

Dane Co. Exec. Parisi: Dane County adds second office to help Madison's southwest side

Posted on Thursday, Aug 17, 2017

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Today, Dane County Executive Joe Parisi announced the opening of a new Joining Forces for Families (JFF) office to strengthen community-based services, help families address their basic needs, and maintain healthy neighborhoods and communities on Madison's southwest side. The new location at the Elver Park Neighborhood Center, housed under the Wisconsin Youth Company on McKenna Boulevard, will serve as a dynamic resource tool for the Madison neighborhood situated on Moraine View Drive. A contract verifying the lease for the new office is expected to be approved by the County Board this evening.

"Joining Forces for Families has existed in Dane County for nearly 25 years and provides critical resources by molding itself to best fit the needs of local neighborhoods," County Executive Joe Parisi said. "Improving JFF's presence on Madison's southwest side will allow more families to get the services they need while strengthening the community to which they belong."

The Joining Forces for Families team serving this region of Dane County will be comprised of local non-profit organizations, neighborhood police officers, school social workers, representatives from faith-based organizations, and a school family/community engagement specialist. Previously, this JFF team was based in Middleton. The team agreed to split their time between the Middleton office and this new location following growing requests to serve Middleton Cross Plains Area School

District families residing on Madison's southwest side. The team's presence will complement the JFF office currently operating on Russett Road.

JFF team members and their collaborative networks work with neighborhood and community residents to support activities identified as priority needs within the area. These types of initiatives include mentor and reading programs, afterschool activities, community get-togethers, parenting classes, and support groups in local neighborhoods.

JFF teams also address the needs of families and children who come to their attention. They can respond to basic requests for food, clothing, shelter, housing, and transportation or to more comprehensive needs like child and family matters, mental health, or alcohol and other drug issues. All efforts work toward negating child maltreatment, youth homelessness, juvenile crime, and child poverty.

Since the inception of Joining Forces for Families, critical resources have been decentralized to provide for better access and more responsive services tailored to the specific needs of neighborhoods and communities. JFF teams stabilized over a thousand families in their living situations in 2016. Its focus on early intervention has also prevented many families from getting involved in the court and shelter systems, resulting in a substantial saving of resources. Overall, JFF's efforts and partnerships have improved neighborhood environments and enhanced collaboration across Dane County.

Joining Forces for Families began in 1993 when community social workers were assigned to two Madison neighborhoods and Stoughton to facilitate the development of community teams. Their success ultimately led to several expansions of the JFF program. Following today's announcement, Joining Forces for Families will have ten urban offices and seven rural site locations.