

Friends and Homework After School

Agency: Volunteers of America, Dakotas

Program: Kids Campus

Service: Provides Hawthorne and Lowell Elementary students with after-school care in a central location at Bowden Youth Center. The program is a partnership with Youth Link, which provides similar services to middle school students. Kids Campus activities include: transportation, tutoring, homework assistance, academic enrichment, supervised activities, art programs, cultural events and field trips.

Need: There are over 31,000 children ages 5-14 in our four county area. And 74% of SD children ages 6-12 have both parents working outside the home.

Impact: Research shows that children who participate in quality after school programs have better school attendance and higher academic achievement. This is especially true for at-risk youth. Eight students currently attend Kids Campus.

Enter into the small room in the corner of the former elementary school and children are silently reading to themselves. Staff members sit one-on-one with students, helping quietly with homework. This is a scene that could be found at any grade school during the day, but this is in the late afternoon, long after students have said good-bye to another school day.

“I love being here with my friends,” shares Olivia, a fifth grader who is in her fourth year at Kids Campus. “And Ashley (the staff in charge of this location) helps me with my homework every day.”

Here at the Bowden Youth Center, a refuge for teenagers after school and during the summer, Kids Campus also makes its home for grade school students. Focusing on school preparation and learning activities, Kids Campus is open to kindergarten through fifth graders every day after school and during the summer.

“Olivia had been attending a Volunteers of America daycare before she started school,” explains Malissa, Olivia’s mother. “They recommended Kids Campus when she was in kindergarten, because it would be a good way for her to interact with children her own age.”

Four years later, Olivia still enjoys attending Kids Campus everyday. “I get help with my math homework, and we get to take field trips. Last week we went bowling!”



Scholarships, which are made possible through Sioux Empire United Way and 21st Century funding, have helped Malissa when dealing with financial difficulties. “It’s wonderful that she can come here, have homework help, go on field trips, and be with friends. It’s also very helpful to have the financial assistance.”

Along with the academic support, Kids Campus also focuses on social development. Staff members role model appropriate behaviors and teach respect of others. The children and their families are also invited to participate in activities at Bowden Youth Center, like an annual Thanksgiving dinner and Christmas party.

So, while the room for Kids Campus may be smaller in size, the results of the program are everlasting. And the children who attend here every day will benefit from the program for years to come.