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Holston Home For Children Provides Child Care

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PHOTO SPECIAL TO THE SUN

A group from The Children's Center, a daycare program within the Holston United Methodist Home for Children, take part in an "umbrella parade" as they learn about the letter "u." Holston United Methodist Home for Children is one of a number of local agencies and organizations that receives United Way funding.

The Holston United Methodist Home for Children operates with the purpose of providing a safe, quality and stable child care environment.

Holston Home was founded in 1895 by Elizabeth Wiley as an orphanage and, since that time, has helped more than 8,500 children. The agency's mission statement is to provide "hope and healing for a brighter future by sharing the love of Jesus with children and families struggling with life's hardships."

The facility, which is headquartered and has its main campus in Greeneville, offers a variety of services, including residential and group care for more than five dozen children.

These children attend the Beacon School on campus, where they receive individual instruction to help make up deficiencies in their academic progress.

One of the goals of Holston Home is to find permanent families for children in care through foster family care, adoption or return to their rehabilitated homes.

Holston Home also operates two daycare centers in Greeneville — the Children's Center near the Greene County Fairgrounds and Small Miracles on West Main Street.

With the help of funding the Holston Home receives from the United Way, it is able to offer these daycare services to more families throughout Greene County.

The funding the Holston Home receives from the United Way enables the organization's Early Childhood Ministries to "provide quality, affordable childcare services for the families of the Greeneville/Greene County community," with these services provided for children ages 6 weeks through 5 years, according to the organization's application for United Way funding.

"Our hope is to expand infant care for the upcoming year based on need and contingent upon adequate funding," the application states. "The goal of our programs is to provide a developmentally appropriate environment that contributes to the social/emotional adjustment of the children as well as to the stability/security of their families."

Kathy Meredith with Holston Home said the facility's daycare centers operate on a sliding scale and fees are income-based, meaning there is not a flat rate charged for any certain age. She said the United Way money is used to fund scholarships, which cover the difference between the agency's fee and what a child's parents have the ability to pay.

"What we do with the United Way money is we look at the parents' income and see where they fit on that scale and their fee," Meredith said. "If it's a lower income, their fee is lower. What we do with the United Way money is, basically, use that as a scholarship to help the parent with a lower childcare fee and with that scholarship money pay the rest of their fee."

As an example, Meredith said Holston Home's fee for an infant may be $170 per week. She said if a family is making less than $23,000 per year, United Way scholarship money may be used to reduce the family's daycare fee to around $118 per week.

"So, without the United Way funding for the scholarships, we would just have to say, 'We charge $170 for infants.' A lot of people, especially in this area, can't afford that," Meredith said. "Without it, we would kind of be going back to that one fee per age or whatever, and not being able to help as many families out the way we do."

Meredith said approximately 75 to 80 percent of the children in Holston Home's two daycare centers qualify for free and reduced meals, meaning there is a considerable number of lower-income families in need of such assistance.

"We try to help more lower-income families get quality child care," Meredith said. "That's one of our goals so that everybody can get that quality child care for their kids. If we didn't have that United Way funding, then we would have to go back to that 'just one price per age group.'"

Holston Home is seeking $46,000 in United Way funding in the 2016-17 fiscal year, which begins on July 1. The organization received $40,000 in the 2014-15 fiscal year, and the same amount in the 2015-16 fiscal year.

There are more than 900 United Methodist Churches across several states involved in the Holston Conference, and much of Holston Home's funding comes from churches in the Holston Conference, as well as individual donors. The State of Tennessee also provides funding through contracted care.

Holston Home operates on an annual budget of around $1.2 million. This year, the organization served more than 200 Greene Countians. It employs more than 170 people, most of whom work in Greene County, and received assistance from nearly two dozen local volunteers this past year.