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Helping Meet Childcare Needs: The Children's Center

BY CAMERON JUDD
GREENEVILLE SUN STAFF

Anyone who ever has passed by 119 Fairgrounds Circle in Greeneville has seen an unobtrusive, neatly kept and fenced single-level building complex with a colorful, well-furnished playground area outside, often with children enjoying play and recreation under the careful supervision of adult staff members.

The place is The Children's Center, one of the Early Childhood ministries of Holston United Methodist Home for Children.

Holston Home as a whole has been part of the faith-and-service life of Greeneville and Greene County for many decades, and The Children's Center is one part of the Holston Home ministry that came about through a desire to find new and needed avenues of ministry.

As Holston Home itself tells it on its website: "In 1985, Holston Home began looking beyond its campus to help communities care for their children. We were concerned about the need for quality, affordable childcare for children of working parents and especially for children from low-income and single-parent families."

A direct outcome of that desire to look "beyond the campus" was The Children's Center. Though the Children's Center has been around long enough now to be a familiar and established part of the Greeneville community and landscape, when compared to the long tenure of its parent institution, the center is a relatively new branch of a tree with deep historical roots.

Holston United Methodist Home for Children was founded in 1895 when Mrs. E.E. Wiley, a widow, took in her first homeless child. Since that humble beginning, Holston Home has helped more than 8,000 children.

Holston Home declares itself "proudly affiliated with the Holston Conference of the United Methodist Church, an area that covers all of East Tennessee, the western-most 17 counties in Virginia, and a little bit of territory in North Georgia. In that area, more than 873 United Methodist Churches make up the Holston Conference."

With 170 employees in service locations in Greeneville, Johnson City, Knoxville and Chattanooga, and a Family Service Center in Bristol, Virginia. Holston Home is in the ministry of helping children.

The Children's Center carries out its part of that mission by helping parents who are striving to give their children a good raising, but require child care so they can carry out their jobs. That undeniably helpful purpose is a key reason the United Way is pleased to have the Children's Center on its list of supported agencies and programs.

Here's some very good news indeed: The Children's Center offers scholarships.

Says Children's Center Program Director Kathy Meredith, "United Way funding helps us continue to provide quality, affordable childcare services in our community. We focus a lot on helping low-income families who otherwise could not afford childcare. Daily programs at both centers include learning activities, one hot meal and two snacks. We are so grateful for the United Way's support!"



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE CHILDREN'S CENTER

The Children's Center helps fill family childcare needs for families of children such as these.



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Activities based on an established curriculum are a daily part of learning activities at The Children's Center.

Holston Home's Early Childhood ministries now serve more than 120 pre-school children each workday. Its classrooms are staffed by bachelor-level teachers and led by experienced early-childhood directors. The daily program is built upon an established curriculum.

Each of Holston Home's centers has been awarded a Three-Star Rating (the top rating) on the Tennessee quality-rating system.

The Children's Center makes it easy for parents to make contact and learn about services and scholarships. A simple PDF application is available at www.holstonhome.org/early-childhood-ministries.

Information asked on the application is minimal and simple, focused on identifying the applying parents/guardians, the relevant facts about the child or children who would be served, the times childcare would be needed through the week, and the annual gross income of the family.

The latter ensures that the Children's Center practices good stewardship and properly targeted application of resources and services.

Also on the website is an email contact link: www.holstonhome.org/email-contact-form.

Information about The Children's Center and its sister program, Small Miracles, also located in Greeneville, is available on the website.

The address and phone number of The Children's Center is:

The Children's Center
119 Fairgrounds Circle
Greeneville, TN 37745
Phone: 423-638-5589

Support of the United Way, whether through workplace giving or individual donation, goes to help keep the Children's Center and many more programs and agencies functioning for the good of the local community and its people.