

Meadowbrook Center for Learning aids those struggling academically

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ROCHESTER — When students are having a hard time with their schoolwork, it's not only frustrating for them, it can affect the whole family.

"If you stand out in school as being different, it's very painful," Meadowbrook Center for Learning Executive Director Karen Miller said. "And it's not just the student. It's the family, too."

Many families spend months trying to work it out on their own, resulting in exhaustion, frustration and stress for everyone involved.

The good news, according to the center's assistant director, Yolanda Udell, is that help is available at the Meadowbrook Center for Learning, 411 Woodward Ave. in Rochester.

"Often, families come in frustrated because they have been spending up to five hours a night

working on homework," Udell explained.

The center is a nonprofit organization that strives to remove barriers to learning by teaching and tutoring children and youth, and by promoting community awareness and understanding of learning styles and learning differences.

When the center opened in 1988, it employed a handful of tutors to assist 20 students. Today, approximately 26 tutors — including an occupational therapist, a speech pathologist and two educational diagnosticians — assist nearly 100 kids, ages preschool to college, each month.

"When (students) are working with a tutor ... the relationship is better, and it's less stressful than a parent and child spending five hours a night trying to work on a homework assignment," Udell explained. "So it really alleviates some of that stress in the family."

"It's a safe place. It is a sanc-

tuary," Miller said of the center. "I think people have found that if they need help, they can just ask."

Students are referred to the center by teachers, counselors, special education consultants, social workers, clinical psychologists, private education centers, professional associations for learning disabilities, and state agencies. The nonprofit then matches each student with a tutor, who works with the student regularly on a one-to-one basis, using an individualized program based on the student's learning strengths.

"What sets us apart is that this is one-on-one tutoring and we are not a franchise," Miller noted. "There is no cookie-cutter approach to individuals, so the programming is developed for the needs of the individual."

Udell said tutors cover everything from reading and math to German and Spanish, from biology and chemistry to language arts

and more. They also offer speech and occupational therapy and provide remediation for kids who have learning disabilities or attention disorders and those who are on the autism spectrum or who have emotional issues. The center hosts

a variety of special workshops dedicated to ACT/SAT preparation, writing college application essays, handwriting assistance, anti-bullying courses and more. It also provides free outreach programs — to

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students who are designated by teachers as needing assistance — at Hart Middle School and Avondale Academy, thanks to funding from grants.

"(If a student is struggling in school), it affects other aspects of a child — it affects their self esteem, and it affects their ability to participate in class. If they lack certain skills in the classroom, it will affect the child in other ways socially," Udell said. "That's another thing

that tutors try to help and work through with the children — giving them the self-esteem and the confidence that they need, which is sometimes part of the problem that keeps them from being successful."

The center relies on donations and fundraisers to support its scholarship fund, which helps families in need pay for a portion of tutoring services — which run \$55 an hour.

"We really don't want to turn anyone away due to their inability to pay," said Udell. "Everyone pays something, but we are able to cover half or whatever amount we need

to, so they can cover the balance. They aren't paying the full amount, and that is helpful to many, many families."

The center is hosting a wine tasting fundraiser to support its scholarship fund on Friday, May 30 at Piechnik's Greenhouse & Garden Gate in Oakland Township. Tickets cost \$50 each and include wine tasting, food and entertainment. There will also be a silent auction. For more information, call (248) 656-3806 or visit www.meadowbrookcenter.org.

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