

CHILDREN GIVEN 'SAFE HAVEN' FROM CRIME

WOLO TV

COLUMBIA, S.C.

03-Feb-2011

It's a new day for the residents of Hammond Village off Marlboro Street in North Columbia. For single mother of two, Tasha Jones, it's more than a ribbon cutting. That's because her two girls, Shakira and Amiya, are participating in a program offered at the new Columbia Youth Safe Haven.

"If kids are on the street, they're doing some of everything and half the time it's negative. We need a positive place for our children," said Jones.

The after-school community center, located in the heart of the neighborhood, targets at risk youth and provides academic and personal development support, forming a blend of cops and community. The goal is to teach the kids to reach for the stars, become trailblazers like those before them. Tasha Jones sees a difference in her girls.

"I like it because it teaches me about education," said Shakira.

"The best thing I like about it is they take us places so we can learn new things," said Amiya.

To further the cause of the five-month-old program, Safe Haven officials were presented with a \$300,000 check from the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation.

The effort is a collaboration between the city of Columbia, the Housing Authority, Benedict College, Richland One Schools and the residents of Hammond Village. The Columbia Youth Safe Haven is one of nine sites nationwide to receive funding from the Eisenhower Foundation. The foundation is funding these Youth Safe Havens through a nine million dollar grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice.