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Tuskegee youth program receives \$108,000 grant

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The Tuskegee Youth Safe Haven and Police Mini-Station celebrated a \$108,000 grant award from the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation on Thursday, an event that featured the program's participating families, mentors, and all those who helped make the program what it is today.

First opened in 2005, the safe haven is an after school program that operates throughout the school year to assist participants in maintaining or improving their academic achievement, according to the program's website. It also aims to prevent participants from becoming involved in the criminal justice system.

Tuskegee was one of only 20 cities in the nation to be given the grant money. Other cities included Oakland, Calif.; Baltimore and Des Moines, Iowa.

Alan Curtis, president of the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation, said when it looks at applications, the foundation tries to identify programs that exhibit the most need. He added that the organization also likes to branch out to smaller cities and Tuskegee has a history that made it an ideal pick.

"Tuskegee obviously has this history behind it that makes it a special place," Curtis said. "We wanted to build on that as well."

Tuskegee University, the Tuskegee Housing Authority, local law enforcement and area agencies all contribute to the program's various interventions, according to the website. These include family development, life skills training, educational reinforcement, mentoring, physical activities and health and nutrition training.

Raven Mitchell, an 18-year-old student at Alabama State University, started going to the safe haven when she was a junior in high school. She said assistance was something she found plenty of with the program.

"Anytime I needed help, I could go there," Mitchell said.

Mitchell said she got help with everything from writing a paper to school supplies. She has since helped out the younger children in various areas such as mastering computer programs and homework.

Macon County Sheriff David Warren said he is "absolutely thrilled" about the program. He said it addresses needs in an up close and personal way, giving the youth "more, better choices."

"In my line of work, I'm confronted with the challenges young people face," Warren said. "If you're concerned about children and young people and making a difference, this program is a godsend. It gives us a chance to be proactive and not reactive."
