



Hartford Middle School lands mentoring grant

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CANTON — Hartford Middle School's community shows a need and a desire to make a youth-mentoring program work.

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Based on that reasoning, officials with the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation decided to send a \$100,000 grant to launch a Youth Safe Haven Program inside the middle school at 1824 Third St. SE.

The project at Hartford Middle School is one of 10 Youth Safe Haven sites the Washington, D.C.,-based foundation has established nationally.

Along with academic tutoring, various community groups are bringing an array of activities for participating youths.

The objective is to provide positive activities during the late-afternoon hours for the Hartford students.

"It is in the genesis," said Eddie Banks, director of field operations for the foundation's Youth Safe Haven and Police Ministration Program. "All the pieces are in place and they have begun to move."

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The program funding cycle started Jan. 31 and concludes Dec. 31. The Greater Stark County Urban League is the local fiscal agent for the grant.

WHAT IS IT?

The thrust of the project is to expose the youth living in impoverished areas to more positive activities once school lets out for the day. The goal is to improve academic performance and reduce school truancy.

One component is having two Hartford Middle School teachers provide tutoring.

"They were doing it for free," Principal Sandy Womack said. "With the funding, we are able to give them a stipend."

Local resident Lester Sanders is the local Youth Safe Haven Program director. Sanders attended Hartford in the early 1990s. Hartford's enrollment during the 2010-11 school was 241, down from 289 in 2008-2009.

WHY CANTON?

"We asked the Urban League and the schools to select the one they thought was best," said Alan Curtis, president of the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation. "These programs really work through the ingenuity of local people. The combination of need and excellence in local staff led us to think this program would work."

The foundation obtained funding for the program from two federal agencies: The Department of Justice and the Department of Education.

Milton S. Eisenhower, whose name the foundation carries, was a brother of President Dwight D. Eisenhower. Milton Eisenhower also was president of three major universities.

During the course of the project here, foundation officials intend to monitor results. Student grades will be a prime indicator of its success rate, according to Banks.

"We have the will and the way to continue that funding," Banks said during a Tuesday ceremony marking the grand opening of the program at Hartford Middle School. "We want to go back to the funders. The foundation never stops going after funding. Evaluation is a very important part of what we do."

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