

After School Program Feels Like Family

Agency: KIDSTOP

Service: Provides a free after-school program for low-income children ages five to fourteen. Services are also provided from 12:30 to 4:00 during the summer.

Need: According to local and national law officials the highest level of incidence for crime, drug, sexual, and alcohol related activities among middle students is between 3:30pm and 6:00pm on weekdays. And an estimated 28% of children in South Dakota take care of themselves after school.

Impact: 166 children attended KIDSTOP during the school year. Children who attend an after school program miss fewer days of school, have better homework completion, better school behavior, and higher test scores.

For many families finding something for their children to do after school is a struggle. Many SD families work, and are not able to meet their children at home after school. Meanwhile the cost of child care is too high for many families to be able to afford to place their child in a safe, quality care setting.

KIDSTOP is a program that is the answer for many Sioux Empire families. The program offers FREE after-school services for low-income families. It is located in central Sioux Falls in First United Methodist Church.

“I don’t know what I would have done without KIDSTOP,” says Teresa. “KIDSTOP helps keep Tony off the streets while I work.”

Students are provided assistance with their homework, get to eat a healthy snack, and complete various art projects and other activities. Studies show that kids who attend a quality after school program have better peer relations, emotional adjustment, conflict resolution skills, grades and conduct in school compared to their peers who are not in after school programs.

“Coming here gives me something to do,” says Tony. Tony’s been coming to KIDSTOP since he was in kindergarten. He’s now a fourth grader. “They help me get my homework done, and we get to collect points for things and then buy stuff.”

Part of KIDSTOP rewards the kids for completing their homework, listening to others, behaving well, and eating healthy snacks. The students can then “purchase” prizes after they hit 25 points.

“When Tony started attending KIDSTOP, we were at a different place in our lives, things were rough,” says Teresa. “He used to come home, so proud because he had used his points to buy us shampoo or toothpaste, he would say, ‘Mommy, I’m doing my part.’ He really liked being able to contribute.”

Aside from completing homework, and earning points to buy prizes, KIDSTOP provides kids a place to belong. Thanks to the Sioux Empire United Way, 25-30 children are able to attend KIDSTOP daily.

Which gives peace of mind to parents like Teresa, “Tony really belongs here, it feels just like a family.”



Tony, at right uses the computer at KIDSTOP.