

TOP STORY

New office means new horizons for Southern Indiana's Youth Link

ERIK HACKMAN erik.hackman@newsandtribune.com

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Jerry Leonard talks about the new office and what the new environment will bring to the organization during Friday's grand opening ceremony.

Provided by Youth Link



JEFFERSONVILLE — Finding help for children in school can be a struggle, but with the help of Youth Link, that search has gotten easier.

Youth Link, founded in 1991, started as committees in Clark County schools. Organization officials eventually were able to make the resource into a nonprofit and wanted to have more flexibility.

To have that flexibility, they opened a new office at 1740 Williamsburg Drive in Jeffersonville to better help children, parents and schools. A grand opening celebration was held Friday at the new location.

The nonprofit offers tutoring for children struggling with their academics, camps during school breaks and mental health resources with the help of Centerstone.

“We’re not geared to one particular level, the only requirement is your student has to be enrolled in the school,” said Jerry Leonard, Youth Link’s executive director. “We believe every student needs to have barriers removed.”

They work with 18 schools across Clark and Floyd counties and they service students from grades 1-12.

They help any child that needs it, and they have a philosophy of leaving no child left behind.

“Our philosophy is every student every child needs some kind of support and we’re there for them regardless of any status,” Leonard said. “As long as you’re a student and need a place to go, we’re here for you.”

One service that Youth Link needs help with is their 321 Read service. It is a program that matches volunteers with a first-grader who is struggling with reading.

After the volunteer is matched with a student, they follow that student throughout all of first, second and third grade.

“First we will do some training with you that gives you different ways that you could work with the student,” Leonard said. “Then you’ll start to read with them or they’ll read with you for 30 minutes a week during the school year.”

Every time the volunteers meet with the children, they will bring a new book for the kid they are assigned to so they can build up a library at their home.



The staff of the Youth Link office includes full-time and part-time volunteers.
Photos provided by Youth Link

Youth Link is looking for more volunteers for the 321 Read program. The program has a three-year timeframe and the organization touts it as more of a mentorship than a tutorship.

“I hear the staff say they feel like it’s more than just I’m here to tutor, I’m there to provide support to the teacher,” Leonard said. “That’s the thing, we’re not there to be instead of, we’re there to support the current staff that’s at the schools.”

To apply to become a 321 Read volunteer, go to youthlinksi.org and click on the blue ‘How Can You Help’ tab.