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INMED's Renovated Family & Youth Opportunity Center Wows the Community

Sterling, VA: Exclamations of surprise and delight reverberated throughout the hallways and into the new resource rooms of INMED's Family & Youth Opportunity Center as children checked out their new after-school space, which was renovated over the summer. "I can't believe this is all for us," said a third grader from Rolling Ridge Elementary School as she perused the new computer lab.

Ilona Korzha—Sprint Corporation's Counsel, Financial Practices, Consumer Protection and Litigation—who chairs the Opportunity Center's Board of Trustees, was stunned by what she saw. "I am in complete awe of the transformation," she said. From the music studio lined with shining guitars, and new computer lab stocked with state-of-the-art desktops, to the new reading and research library, along with a large multi-purpose room that will accommodate skills development activities, support community workshop activities and parenting education classes, "the Center is truly an incredible place for kids and adults to learn and grow," she added.

The recent transformation is the result of INMED's expanded programs that will focus on science, technology, engineering, arts and math (STEAM) to narrow the opportunity gaps for at-risk children, as well as provide families who reside within the low-income communities of Loudoun County with essential educational resources and programs. In parts of Sterling, as many as 6 in 10 children are economically disadvantaged and educationally challenged. For many of these children, there is no affordable option for after-school activities, leaving them without support and limited adult supervision during non-school hours, making them more vulnerable to risky behaviors such as crime and delinquency. INMED's Family & Youth Opportunity Center is designed to provide educational program services and resources that Loudoun families need to raise healthy, responsible and resilient children, build a sense of community, and achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Children who are referred to INMED's after-school academic enrichment program now will not only receive the usual personal attention to ensure homework completion and academic improvement, but may also enjoy guitar and piano lessons in the new music studio, dance lessons and yoga in the multi-purpose room, research assistance and tutoring in the new computer lab, along with an array of favorite books to enjoy from the new library. Low-income adults seeking assistance with job readiness can improve competitiveness in the current market with resume-building and online application skills, along with certification and technical training program referrals, delivered through the Center's workforce-development resource programs, while sharpening their networking and interviewing skills during the job fairs that take place at the Family & Youth Opportunity Center in the fall and spring.

Saturdays at the Center are just as fun-filled as the weekdays, when the focus shifts to adult income-generation programs, such as cooking classes that culminate with a food management certification and floral arrangement courses, that deliver entrepreneurial opportunities, along with language arts

activities (ESL for beginner and intermediate levels) and additional parental education workshops that cover financial literacy, early child development, nutrition and healthy family dynamics.

“Our main purpose for redesigning the Center and enhancing the current roster of educational programs is to create an exciting and stable environment that will inspire our program participants to excel and succeed at their life goals,” says Executive Director Cecilia Capece. “We’re using all our academic resources to encourage children to explore their options and act on opportunities that might not have been possible elsewhere.” Incentives will also be provided to encourage participation and competition. At the conclusion of the school year, for example, the top three after-school students who demonstrate grade improvement, have read the most books for their grade level, or produce the greatest number of book reports, will be rewarded with one of three prizes featured in the library (a telescope, a Kindle or microscope) to enjoy over the summer.

INMED invites any individuals interested in volunteering for our after-school program (as an activity instructor or student tutor) to schedule a tour of the Center to experience the excitement first-hand. “Becoming actively involved with our non-profit Center is one of the best ways to make a lasting impact in the community and provide a rewarding experience for yourself,” says Capece. To schedule a tour or for more information, contact Cecilia Capece at 703-729-4951 or email ccapece@inmed.org.

About INMED:

INMED Partnerships for Children is an international humanitarian organization that has improved the lives of millions of children and families in 100+ countries for more than 30 years. Headquartered in Sterling, Virginia, INMED has been serving low-income communities in Loudoun County since 1994 through a number of programs that provide at-risk families and families in crisis with services to help them increase their knowledge of child development and parent/child interaction education, prevent homelessness and regain housing stability, and improve their parenting and financial skills. More recently, INMED added the after-school academic enrichment program and summer camps, skills development and job readiness services, and workforce development programs. The INMED Family & Youth Opportunity Center officially opened its doors in Sterling, VA in late 2014.

Photos:



Caption: INMED teacher’s aide Yahaira Hanon escorts children off the bus to start their first day of INMED’s after-school program at the Family & Youth Opportunity Center in Sterling.



Caption: INMED intern Rita Kailani directs third- and fourth-grade students to the PBS Kids web site in the new computer lab at INMED's Family & Youth Opportunity Center in Sterling.



Caption: Children in INMED's after-school academic enrichment program at the Family & Youth Opportunity Center were eager to select books to enjoy in the new reading and research library.



Caption: From left: INMED Administrative Assistant Melissa Alvarez, INMED Program Director Maria Vasquez, Sterling Rotary and Northern Virginia Diaper Bank coordinator Susan Mullen and INMED Volunteer Coordinator Erin Lewis display a sampling of back packs and diapers that they collected for low-income families over the summer, which will be distributed via INMED's Family & Youth Opportunity Center in Sterling.



Ilona Korzha, Chair of INMED's Family & Youth Opportunity Center Board of Trustees, displays the little aprons used for the kids' cooking class, one of many new STEAM academic enrichment activities offered by INMED's after-school program for low-income and academically challenged children.