



Community steps up to meet Rainbow Room's needs

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by Kathleen Thurber

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Looking at the carts full of clothing, cleaning supplies, diapers and other materials stacked in the middle of the Rainbow Room on Wednesday, staff and volunteers said they're glad word is getting out about their cause.

"The more awareness we can get out, the better," said President of the Community Partners Board Lorri West.



The room — which stocks emergency supplies for Child Protective Services workers to provide to families — is meant to help keep children in their homes.

When CPS case workers are called in for an investigation, said manager of the Rainbow Room Robin Tinsley, often the child is safe in the home but parents don't have the means to provide appropriate bedding, clothes, diapers, food items or other supplies.

Rainbow Room supplies items to hold the family over until they can be connected with social service providers, Tinsley said, and they're able to let families stay together.

Wednesday, the Uptown Business and Professional Women's Club dropped off bags filled with items they'd purchased to help refill some of the dwindling supplies.

That donation followed several others after groups said they heard about the room during Child Abuse Awareness Month. This week, Macedonia Baptist Church, Target and a group of high school students at Midland Christian School dropped off items, which Tinsley said is significantly more activity than they see in a typical week.

"It's amazing in here," said Tiffany Blakely with the Business Professional Women's Club, who accompanied several others to donate items.

Mona Bethany said they first heard of the Rainbow Room a few years ago through one of their members and hoped by partnering with the room, they could help other women in the community.

"If women are stressed the children are, too," Bethany said.

Added Debrah Gann, "We are women helping women and that's our primary goal."

So after donating in 2009, the group decided to dedicate some of its funds to the room again this year and spent one afternoon last week hitting stores to gather supplies CPS said were needed.

"We had a blast," Bethany said.

Open to the area's about 30 caseworkers, Tinsley said the Rainbow Room isn't meant to provide continuous supplies to families but only to help them meet kids' immediate needs through basic supplies or safety needs such as car seats.

"A lot of times they don't have funds for this stuff," Tinsley said, adding before the addition of the room, case workers often would provide supplies with funds from their own pocket.

The room is run by the Community Partners Board, which takes donations and helps purchase items because CPS, a state agency, cannot accept donations.

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Questions about donations or volunteering can be directed to 686-2259.