Grant gives girl power program an edge on inclusion

By Doug Livingston
Akron Beacon Journal/Ohio.com

So far this millennium, obesity is up 29 percent and suicides have tripled for American girls, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Robyn Cutler couldn’t stand still and watch another generation of girls fall. The avid runner saw that in their formative years, another generation was preparing to take a wrong turn on social media — even as a focus on state testing left teachers with less time to prepare girls for the emotional rigors of life.

So, Cutler imported the national Girls on the Run program to create safe places for local schoolgirls to “get their heads on straight.” The confidence-boosting program, which uses exercise to forge relationships with mentors and peers, turned 12 this year.

But Cutler didn’t slow down to celebrate. She’d been noticing the distance widening between haves and have-nots in her program; girls in need seemed to be finishing further behind, if at all.

As the tone in America became coarser over the past two years, she said, the disadvantages of poorer girls — older shoes, missing socks, no money for bras or deodorant — became fodder for girls who’d become more apt than ever to judge.

“What we’ve found with our girls is the playing field isn’t always equal,” said Cutler, who raised a little more this year.

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Grant helps give local kids healthy smiles

By Emily Mills
Akron Beacon Journal/Ohio.com

Since 1957, Good Neighbors has been providing food to those in need in the community.

But in recent years, its volunteers noticed that people needed toothbrushes and toothpaste, which aren’t covered under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP.

So the organization, which has seven locations in Summit County, began distributing them to the community about three years ago, Good Neighbors volunteer manager George Camilletti said.

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Health programs, arts get boost from recent grants

In 2018, the Millennium Fund awarded grants totaling $43,750 to 31 nonprofits, bringing its cumulative grantmaking total to more than $750,000. The following grants were awarded this year:

ACCESS, to provide meals, clothing, health assessments and academic support for children at the shelter, $2,000

Akron Children’s Museum, to provide free tickets to the museum for disadvantaged children in Greater Akron, $1,000

Battered Women’s Shelter, to support enrichment activities for children at the shelter, $2,000

Birthcare of Medina County, to provide diapers for infants and toddlers in need, $500

Bright Star Books, to provide books for young children who receive services from Summit County WIC clinics, $1,000

CASA Board Volunteer Association, to provide warm winter pajamas for abused and neglected children in foster care, $2,000

Child Guidance & Family Solutions, to provide trauma counseling for Bhutanese refugee students at Jennings Community Learning Center, $1,000

Children’s Concert Society of Akron, to support scholarships for live concert performances at the Akron Civic Theatre for Akron Public Schools students, $500

Christ Child Society of Akron, to provide essential newborn items and child safety literature to mothers of at-risk babies, $1,000

Dancing Classrooms Northeast Ohio, to celebrate students’ achievements in the agency’s ballroom dance residency program at the annual Colors of the Rainbow Team Match event, $1,500

Dreams Academy, for an eight-week mentoring program for African-American males ages 7 to 15 that teaches problem solving, etiquette, academic, financial literacy and entrepreneurial skills, $2,000

Family Promise of Summit County, to purchase linens, toiletries and diapers for homeless babies and children, $2,000

First Congregational Church of Akron, for the Peanut Butter & Jelly Program at Mason Community Learning Center, which provides students in need with healthy food for the weekend, $1,500

GASP: Guardians Advocating Child Safety and Protection, to support child safety activities, including child identification kits, community outreach programs and educational materials, $1,000

Girls on the Run Northeast Ohio, to provide running apparel and supplies for girls in need so they can train for the program’s signature 5k event, $1,000

Good Neighbors, to provide toothbrushes, toothpaste and floss to children in need, $2,000

Good Samaritan Hunger Center, to distribute food to children at Findley Community Learning Center, $1,000

The Illusion Factory, to support free children’s theater performances for Akron Public Schools students, $1,250

Limitless Ambition, to provide Summit County girls in foster care with Dream Kits, an educational curriculum that increases self-esteem, promotes academic achievement, and cultivates leadership skills, $1,000

Medina Community Police Activity League, to support after-school field trips that foster positive relationships between police officers and students in Medina County, $1,000

OPEN M, to provide gifts, school supplies and food to children in need during the holiday season, $1,000

Proyecto Raices, to provide transportation for students in the Proyecto Raices program, which provides a safe space for Hispanic children in Greater Akron to celebrate their culture while engaging in educational and artistic activities, $2,000

Rape Crisis Center, for the Heroes 4 Hope program, which helps prevent teen dating violence by educating middle and high school students about healthy relationships, $2,000

RePlay for Kids, to support a workshop where volunteers in Summit County can learn how to adapt toys for children with disabilities, $1,000

Ronald McDonald House Akron, to provide a home away from home for families with children receiving care at Akron Children’s Hospital, $2,000

South Street Ministries, to support an after-school enrichment program for elementary school students in the Summit Lake neighborhood, $2,000

Stewart’s Caring Place, to purchase craft supplies, toys and books for the Kids Room, a place where children affected by cancer can relax, play and learn coping skills, $1,500

Victim Assistance Program, for the “Kids Need a Firm Foundation” picnic for children who have witnessed or been victims of violence, $1,000

Victory Gallop, to support an eight-week winter fitness program for children with special needs to increase their agility and promote healthy behaviors, $1,000

Weatherwane Community Playhouse, to provide theater class scholarships for children from low-income families, $2,000

The Well Community Development Corporation, for a one-on-one mentoring program for fourth-graders at Mason Community Learning Center, $2,000
The Akron Community Foundation has added a new text-to-give option to donate to the Millennium Fund this year. People can text “Millennium” to 41444, and they will receive prompts to make a donation on their phone.

Read the full story on Ohio.com at www.akroncf.org/ABJ/Good-Neighbors.

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to get the neediest girls each a bag of running essentials.

These Adelaide bags, named after a girl who’s become the symbol of the national youth empowerment program, will support a couple dozen of the 2,200 local girls participating this year in Cutler’s program, which is one of 31 sharing $43,750 in grants from the Millennium Fund for Children.

Started in 1999 when the Akron Beacon Journal asked donors to give their last hour of pay in the 20th century, the Akron Community Foundation has amassed $1 million in the fund while handing out $752,000 in small grants to local programs. With the little bit of help, they’re making a big difference in children’s lives.

Help from mentors

In the fall and spring for 10 weeks at a time, a couple thousand girls meet for 75 minutes after school with teachers and mentors called “coaches” in the Girls on the Run program. Six hundred people volunteer in Cuyahoga, Lake, Lorain, Medina, Portage and Summit counties.

The structured courses help girls grow with the guidance of caring adult women. An outreach component introduces them to the reciprocal power of giving by collecting blankets for Akron Children’s Hospital, donations for the Ronald McDonald house or washing cars in Rootstown to help ACCESS Inc., a women’s shelter.

Every lesson is all about being active.

Groups of about eight to 15 girls figuratively and literally run through the program’s lessons. Girls might read a social media post or mock text message then run laps to let the words settle as they breathe deep and find their stride, all in a safe space where they can sweat without a care.

After a few laps, they engage each other and a coach with a preset question, exploring a wide range of formative topics (like healthy eating, honesty, gratitude, gossip, bullying, peer pressure and more). Was the message healthy? Do I get and give healthy messages? What exactly is healthy?

Photo: Jeff Lange/Akron Beacon Journal

Read the full story on Ohio.com at www.akroncf.org/ABJ/GOTR.

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“...they need toilet paper, soap and laundry detergent, none of which is covered under SNAP. “To me, it’s ridiculous.”

Each month, the food pantry in Goodyear Heights, which gets about 80 percent of its food from the Akron-Canton Regional Foodbank, provides groceries for about 1,100 families, providing a roughly four-day food supply for recipients once a month. It also provides hygiene items because of the lack of government assistance.

The American Dental Association recommends getting a fresh toothbrush every three or four months and more often if the bristles are frayed. Camilletti said adults and children are given toothbrushes and toothpaste every other month, unless people ask for them more often, giving out about 3,000 brushes a month.

This year, Good Neighbors was awarded $2,000 through the Millennium Fund for the Children’s Dental Health Project to provide toothbrushes and toothpaste to kids.

With the $2,000 grant, Camilletti said the group can provide kits to about 1,500 kids in a 15-month period. The group plans to purchase 2,380 units. Because some families receive support from the organization more than three months, with an average length of 3.8 months, some children will receive more than one kit.

The program is one of 31 sharing $43,750 in grants this year from the Millennium Fund for Children. Started in 1999 when the Akron Beacon Journal asked donors to give their last hour of pay in the 20th century, the Akron Community Foundation has amassed $1 million in the fund while handing out $752,000 in small grants to local programs.

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Read the full story on Ohio.com at www.akroncf.org/ABJ/Good-Neighbors.

George Camilletti; Photo: Karen Schiely/Akron Beacon Journal

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WAYS YOU CAN GIVE

Thanks to your generosity, the Millennium Fund has more than $1 million in assets. Gifts of any size make a real and lasting difference in the lives of local children. Here are a few ways you can give before year-end:

**Gifts of Cash/Check:** Postmark your gift by Dec. 31 or donate online before midnight by texting “Millennium” to 41444 or by visiting [www.akroncf.org/give/Millennium](http://www.akroncf.org/give/Millennium).

**Gifts of Stock:** Gifts of stock allow you to avoid capital gains taxes while giving you a deduction for the full fair market value. Initiate transfers by Dec. 14 to ensure year-end processing. Learn more at [www.akroncf.org/StockTransfers](http://www.akroncf.org/StockTransfers).

**Gifts of Retirement Assets:** If you are age 70 ½ or older, you can donate up to $100,000 from your IRA without paying taxes on the distribution. Learn more at [www.akroncf.org/IRA](http://www.akroncf.org/IRA).