

Submission to Carl B. and Florence E. King Foundation

PRIMARY AGENCY CONTACT INFORMATION

Name of Agency: Trinity River Mission, Inc.

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Tax Designation Status: Non-profit 501(c)(3) Employer Identification Number: 75-6055203

Amount Requested: \$30,000.00

Annual Operating Budget: \$ 639,001.00 Fiscal period: 6/30/06 – 7/1/07 (current)

Project budget and fiscal period: \$ 164,065.00 for Believe and Achieve program for 7/1/06 to 6/30/07

Budget amount raised to date and fiscal period: \$ 10,000.00 for Believe and Achieve program for 7/1/06 to 6/30/07

Organization’s mission, goals and history statement: Trinity River Mission (hereafter “TRM”) is a 501(c)(3) volunteer-based community learning center serving the intergenerational education needs of children, youth, and families in West Dallas. TRM began in the early 1960s as an outreach ministry of Lovers Lane United Methodist Church to help in the relocation of Native Americans from Arizona, New Mexico, and Oklahoma. In 1988, TRM became an independent 501(c)(3) organization. Since 1988, TRM’s focus has been *to promote literacy, augment academic skills, and develop educational success among children, youth, and families, with the understanding that language proficiency and educational achievement opens doors to satisfying jobs and productive futures.* TRM services the needs of all children without regard to race or ethnicity. At present, however, TRM’s program participants are overwhelmingly Hispanic because of the agency’s location in West Dallas.

The purpose and GOALS of all programs at TRM are:

1. Becoming an educational support system for Hispanic children in the public school system
2. Tutoring English literacy to facilitate learning in all English speaking classrooms
3. Modeling educational values and tasks that will motivate students to stay in school.
4. Coaching students to seek Higher Education which will earn better jobs with opportunities for further learning and advancement

TRINITY RIVER MISSION PROGRAMS:

Homework Help

The earliest contact the Mission has with the children is through Homework Help. The Homework Help program is conducted at the Mission each day from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday. This program has grown from an average of 65 students per day to 200 attendees. Children, from 1st grade through 6th grade can utilize the computer lab after they complete their homework with the help of 40 volunteer Homework Helpers. Some of the local high school students also assist the younger students with their subjects.

Adult and Family

Monthly parent committee meetings provide opportunities for Trinity River Mission to communicate with parents about upcoming events, support for Trinity River Mission and various other topics. Speakers from the school district, counselors and collaborating agencies, provide vital information for parents to be effective decision-makers for their families. Each family meeting addresses such topics such as child safety, children’s health and nutrition, consumer information, and preparing students for college. Adults and parents are encouraged to support their child’s education and to develop communication with their child’s school.

TRM also hosts collaborative efforts to educate adults in the community in English as a Second Language and GED preparation through DISD and Avance.

Tutor Power Hour

Volunteer tutors receive twelve hours of literacy training from the TRM Program Director. Each tutor is assigned two students. Each student meets with his/her tutor for an hour each week. The students and volunteers form strong bonds while working together. Tutors concentrate on developing literacy skills in reading and writing. The most strategic element in keeping children in school is to reduce certain risk factors. Risk factors stem from low self-esteem. Children know when they are being “labeled” or judged as

inferior students. After receiving a tutor and literacy improves, so does self-esteem, overall school performance and test scores. Students are taught strategies for reading, writing and discover the excitement of learning.

Believe and Achieve

The BELIEVE AND ACHIEVE youth leadership and scholarship program that supports, motivates and encourages middle and high school students to graduate from high school. Through a partnership with Big Brothers Big Sisters, tutors and mentors are screened, and then matched with the students. The tutors/mentors work with their student from seventh grade until graduation, encouraging them, tutoring them, and helping them complete the requirements of graduation. These tutors/mentors provide a bridge for the parents, who often have little knowledge of how high school operates, to be able to navigate the Dallas Independent School District system. Students are encouraged and helped to get into Magnet Schools and academies, and to apply themselves fully by engaging in extracurricular and volunteer activities. Each student is also required to participate in an annual service learning project that builds transferable leadership and workplace skill sets. After completing all requirements of the program, students who graduate high school are provided a \$4,000 scholarship for continued education. College Connection is a recently new program that supports Believe and Achieve. It provides the Believe and Achieve students with an Alumnus of the program to give continued support and encouragement.

Currently, 120 students are enrolled in the program, 55% have a mentor, 98% of the students enrolled have remained in school, and 31% have participated in college preparation forums and/or exploratory trips. 75% of the seniors enrolled will graduate.

Computer Lab

All students (all ages) have access to Trinity River Mission's COMPUTER LAB before and after scheduled tutoring sessions and every afternoon during Homework Help. Supervised access to the Internet provides current information needed for research projects and papers. Adults use the computers during English classes on weekdays. From first grade, students are taught how to operate a computer using Microsoft products.

Summer Programs

Self-esteem building and enrichment programs are offered to younger students in the summer. Junior and senior high school students are offered activities that keep them reading and discovering new subjects. Middle and high school students also have recreational field trips and other enrichment opportunities.

Description of the Community Need Addressed by Trinity River Mission:

The community TRM serves is predominately minority. According to the 2000 Census the community is 86.8% Hispanic (all groups), 10% African-American, 2.9% White, and .3% other races. The community's high school dropout rate for all groups is over 80%. Of the 4,531 total persons in the community, over 934 are school-aged children and youth. Ninety-five percent (95%) of the community is low-income.

The most pressing problems facing the community's youth at present are (1) the outrageous and ever-increasing drop out rate (80%), (2) the low-literacy level, (3) low percentage of English proficiency among Hispanic residents (less than 5%). These factors, coupled with the fact that less than 5% of the parents in the community have completed high school, make it almost impossible for parents of TRM participants to advocate for their children in school or to define "life success" in terms of high school graduation and higher education.

Given these facts, **the focus of this proposal is to seek \$30,000 in support for the Believe and Achieve program at TRM for our 2006-2007 fiscal year**, each of which is designed specifically as intervention and prevention programs focused on encouraging high school graduation and college enrollment. Jointly, the programs are designed to attack the high school drop out rates and high risk behaviors such as gang involvement, substance abuse, and teen pregnancy that often result in incarceration or some type of interaction with the juvenile justice system.

TRM program activities are supported by studies such as "Beyond ABC: Growing up in Dallas County" (Children's Medical Center, 2002), which demonstrate that the lack of after school and summer programming for children and youth poses a safety threat not only to children, but to the larger community. There are an estimated 218,473 or 53.57% of all children in Dallas County who can be identified as economically disadvantaged. Many of these youth between the ages of 13 and 17 remain unsupervised during those critical after school hours. These youth are in need of counseling, academic support and guidance to alleviate the enormous risks of becoming involved in substance abuse, juvenile crime and early sexual behavior. Though many Dallas Independent School District schools offer after school programming, the majority of the programs are for children in pre-kindergarten through sixth grade. Few services are available for youth ages 12 to 19. The most recent study by the Center for Disease Control (2001) indicated that of the then 160,000 youth age 13-17 in Dallas County, 64,000 (or over 40%) were in need of supervision, guidance, and/or therapeutic and other support services. Many of these youth are located in grossly underserved, poverty stricken areas of Dallas. The West Dallas community served by Trinity River Mission is one of those areas.

Statement of how TRM will evaluate the results/effectiveness of the project: In 2003, TRM implemented a new Comprehensive Program Evaluation Plan that identified program effectiveness (especially as it relates to the prevention of school drop-outs). The evaluation plan is professionally designed and administered, based on research-proven methodology and is designed to be culturally sensitive. The plan adds valuable information on the ability of programs to change or motivate behaviors that will cause students to adopt education as a priority and behaviors that are pro-social. Through relationships with the schools the children attend, staff and volunteers are able to gauge the academic performance, behavior while in school, and ultimately, high school graduation.

Impact: Kids stay in school and become increasingly less likely to dropout the longer they attend educational support programs at Trinity River Mission. When kids stay in school and graduate, the community impact includes:

- increased tax revenues
- decreased juvenile crime & associated costs to taxpayers
- decreased substance abuse
- decreased teen pregnancy
- decreased welfare costs

TRM's Philosophy on Drop-Out Prevention: Changing mindsets within populations of poverty require building relationships. TRM provides consistent academic support that helps youth see themselves in larger dimensions. TRM guides youth through the expectations of school and social interaction in the early grades. In Middle and High School, the agency maintains the academic support, but adds mentors to create new supportive relationships. TRM assigns grade level projects that help youth plan, predict outcomes and see tangible products of their combined efforts. The agency leverages their graduation from high school by providing scholarships so that they continue on academically. Throughout their years here at the Mission TRM children see each other grow, struggle and succeed within the relationships they build with TRM staff and volunteers.