

2024 State Legislature Earmark Narrative

Benjamin E. May's Family Resource Center (BEMFC)

Amount: \$350,000

Project Summary: To provide stability and sustainability to a community center for Pacolet and surrounding communities.

Narrative:

A family center in Pacolet, SC started as a dream when Spartanburg District 3 announced they would combine their two middle schools into one new location. Vivian Teamer, an alumni of the Benjamin E. Mays Consolidated School, saw an opportunity for the community. She wanted the building of the soon-to-be closed Middle School of Pacolet, formerly the Benjamin E. Mays Consolidated School, to be donated to the community for a community center. After years of discussion, feasibility studies, and meetings with the community, her dream became a reality. In March of 2022 the Benjamin E. Mays Family Center was incorporated and received their 501c3 designation. A board of directors was formed, and they established both vision and mission statements. They worked to distill town hall meeting notes and community survey results to develop four pillars of focus based on what community members expressed as needs for the community. Those pillars of focus are economic Mobility, Education, Family and Parenting Supports, and Health and Wellness.

When we requested a state earmark, we established three goals to accomplish with the funding; Develop partnerships in the community, provide services in all four BEMFC focus areas (Education, Economic Mobility, Health & Wellness, and Family & Parenting Supports), and develop lines of communication with the community. We felt these were critical areas of development to bring stability and sustainability to this fledgling organization. We have been successful in accomplishing all three goals.

Goals:

1. Develop partnerships in the community.
 - a. BEMFC has worked hard to develop partnerships with individuals, nonprofits, associations, and businesses locally and across the state.
 - i. We have partnerships with several local churches in Spartanburg, Cherokee, and Union Counties. New Beginnings Church in Pacolet, Green Bethel Baptist Church in Cowpens, Riding for Jesus Cowboy Church in Pacolet, Brown's Chapel Baptist Church in

Pacolet, Montgomery Memorial Methodist Church in Pacolet, Gethsemane Missionary Baptist Church in Gaffney, Montgomery Chapel Baptist Church in Pacolet, Pacolet Mills Baptist Church, New Salem Zion Church in Pacolet, Mark Hill Baptist Church in Jonesville, and others. We have maintained at least one local pastor on our board of directors since the inception of the board.

- ii. We have partnerships with businesses in our community and across three counties. Vulcan Materials Company (a founding sponsor), Pacolet IGA, River Bend Aggregates in Pacolet, Pop's Garage in Pacolet, Rick's Tire Shop in Pacolet, The Clock Drive-In in Pacolet, Siemens in Spartanburg, The Beacon Drive-In in Spartanburg, Hodge Flooring in Spartanburg, Brown Packing in Gaffney, and others.
 - iii. We have partnerships with foundations who impact our community. Spartanburg Academic Movement, Spartanburg County Foundation, United Way of the Piedmont, Fullerton Foundation, Spartanburg Regional Foundation, Children's Trust, and others.
 - iv. We have a partnerships with Schools and colleges in our community. District 3 Schools (who donated the building to the organization), Spartanburg Methodist College (through interns), USC Upstate (through interns).
2. Provide services in all four BEMFC focus areas (Education, Economic Mobility, Health & Wellness, and Family & Parenting Supports). We have successfully engaged the community in all four of our pillars of fucus. You will notice that some of the programs and services overlap covering more than one focus area.
- a. Education: In partnership with SC works we have offered workshops designed to help unemployed and under-employed community members successfully navigate work force issues. We have offered mental health forums and workshops. Through our partnership with Spartanburg Academic Movement and District 3 schools we have offered Strengthening Families, Family Solutions training, and mentoring for elementary students. Through partnership with Hello Family, we offer Triple "P" (Positive Parenting Program).
 - b. Economic Mobility: In partnership with SC works we have offered workshops designed to help unemployed and under-employed community members successfully navigate work force issues, Job and resource Fairs, and referrals to job readiness programs. In partnership

with Return to Work we offer volunteer opportunities that keep employees connected to work and receiving a paycheck while on medical leave. We offer a computer lab for the community to use.

- c. Health & Wellness: Through our partnership with ReGenesis Health Care we have a mobile medical unit at the center once a month. We have established a fitness center in the facility for seniors. We run a walking program in the center for the community. We have offered mental health forums and workshops. We have hosted Community Health Worker training at the facility. We have offered support groups for substance abuse, mental health and veterans at the facility. Through our partnership with Emerge we offer counseling services at the facility at no cost to the participants.
 - d. Family & Parenting Supports: Through our partnership with Spartanburg Academic Movement and District 3 schools we have offered Strengthening Families, Family Solutions training, and mentoring for elementary students. Through partnership with Hello Family, we offer Triple “P” (Positive Parenting Program). We offer focus groups for parents to discuss community needs. We offer an emergency food pantry and referrals to other food sources for those who need ongoing food support. We are a Foodshare distribution site offering delivery every two weeks of fresh fruits and vegetables. We provide a food distribution of 140 boxes at Easter, Thanksgiving, and Christmas to the community. We provided post hurricane support after Helene, provide over 3000 meals to the community and respite in a safe temperature-controlled environment for two weeks following the storm. We open a clothes closet for community members to get free clothes two times a month at no cost. Through our partnership with Emerge we offer counseling services at the facility at no cost to the participants.
3. Develop lines of communication with the community.
- a. We have developed several means of communicating with the community. We use Facebook as one means to communicate. We have over 700 followers for our Facebook page. We have a website with a calendar and a list of events. It also details our programs and services. We have a newsletter that we distribute in print and on our website. We maintain an email list that we use to push out communications about upcoming events and needs. We are connected with a number of local churches who share our events with their congregations. We place flyers around the community in places where people gather or go frequently.

Benefit to the Community:

The center has provided tremendous benefit to the community. One of the most obvious benefits to the community was our support for the community after the hurricane. We opened our doors within 2 days of the event and kept them open for 10 straight days. We allowed the community to come to the center for respite from the heat and to charge their devices. We provided a safe space for their kids to play and rest. We provided more than 3000 meals for the community during that time. We also provided assistance with completing FEMA applications. We have provided job fairs with more than 144 participants and with employers reporting more than 120 potential hires. We have provided the community with more than 150 counseling hours at no cost to the community. We have given the community more than 5650 boxes of food during the holidays. We have provided more than 660 Grab & Go lunches to students during the summer. Walkers in our walking program have walked more than 300 miles, helping our community become more fit. We have provided free clothes to more than 160 families through our clothes closet.

Thanks to the earmark we are off to a great start. We have already done so much to help our community stabilize and begin to grow. We will do so much more in the future. We have plans to add a GED program, to increase the number of kids receiving mentoring, to add more job readiness services, to expand our counseling services, and to start early child education services. We are excited to see all we can do as the community continues to embrace the work at the Benjamin E. Mays Family Resource Center.