

Daily Record

Child care groups bring compassion to the table

Furniture bought with grant from Gannett to aid 4 families

BY MINHAI HASSAN
DAILY RECORD

MORRISTOWN — With hammers, acrylic paint and plenty of wood on hand, nearly 20 directors of various child care centers put on aprons and got to work building and decorating furniture for needy families.

Thanks to the effort of the Morris County Child Care Directors Association, four at-risk families living at Homeless Solutions will each receive a 2-foot tall birch wood table and matching chairs. The furniture will go to four families consisting of single mothers with young children. Because of confidentiality, their names were not released.

The participants, who gathered Monday afternoon at the Family Services of Morris County building on

Elm Street, started out by polishing the wood with oil to darken it. The tables and chairs were bought from IKEA and made possible through a \$2,500 grant provided by the Gannett Foundation. Gannett is the parent company of the Daily Record.

After polishing the wood, the volunteers painted wooden hearts, flowers, trains and butterflies, among other objects, that would be attached to the sides of the chairs to give them more life.

Sheria Proud, a director at the Salvation Army in Morristown, was busy polishing the wood.

"Did I miss a spot?" she asked her workmates.

After polishing it some more, she then sat down to paint a train in orange and black.

Artist Karen Titterton



KAREN MANCINELLI / DAILY RECORD

Betsy McKeever of Morris Plains Cooperative Play School, from left, artist Karen Titterton, and Katherine Henckler of Presbyterian Church Nursery School build and decorate children's tables and chairs for four families living at Homeless Solutions.

lead the presentation.

"It's just thrilling to see them come together and better each other through activities like this," she said. "It's fantastic to see this kind of collaboration."

Diana Grisi, director of the Mountain Lakes Country Day School, was busy throughout assembling the chairs. She used an Alan wrench to screw in one of the legs.

"It's a nice way to do something that actually gives back," she said.

Marianne Lomauro, an associate executive of the Lakeland Hills Family YMCA, who had been sitting at the same table as

Grisi, described her as "the brave one with the tools." Lomauro and the others painted butterflies and other objects.

Betsy McKeever of the United Way, said she and her workmates decided to go along with a "planes, trains and automobiles theme." After they polished the wood, they painted the corresponding pieces and attached them to the sides and the backs of the chairs.

The exercise was part of the Caring Capital program of JumpStart, which runs various activities to help at-risk families. The program's president is Susie Schub, who was also at the work-

shop.

Last year, employees from the Morristown Memorial Hospital's Children's Center helped build benches that were later put in a garden at the Goryeb Center.

At the end, all four sets of table and chairs were assembled and the participants feasted on crumb cake to celebrate Titterton's birthday.

Overall, Schub said she was happy with the turnout and expects the families will be pleased once they receive the furniture.

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