

Exploring Asylum Hill – Spring St Family Center

I had the opportunity to tour the Village Spring Street Family Center at 105 Spring St recently with Lynn Webber, the Coordinator of the Family Institute, and it's really amazing all of the programs and services they have. To really explain everything available there would take much more time and space than what's available here, so I'm going to list a few and focus on two.

The Early Childhood Learning Center takes up much of the first floor with nearly 30 children between 3 and 5 years of age.

The Parents as Teachers is a home visiting program offered through

Stronger Families Stronger Futures Prenatal and Early Childhood Home Visiting Network, to help build parental resilience and knowledge of parenting and child development.

Parenting Education Program (PEP): The Parenting Education Program (PEP) helps parents or caregivers and their child adjust in a healthy way after divorce or living apart.

Fatherhood Engagement Services: Our Fatherhood Engagement Services work to help strengthen father-child bonds and enhance the level of involvement of fathers in their DCF case planning, provision of services, and positive parenting.

Supplemental Needs Services: offers assistance through a food pantry as well as clothing, furniture, and other items needed for families in crisis.

The first of the two that stand out are the Supervised Visitation program that provides both trained supervisors who are present when DCF separated families begin visitations toward reunification, and a truly welcoming “living room” space in which to come together. The rooms are appointed with comfortable, soft furniture gentle lighting and some art on the walls as well as books, toys and playthings to keep the children busy. They are appointed to succeed.

The second of the two is the Words Count program built on extensive developmental research that shows the importance of language development in brain development and likewise the importance of vocabulary especially in the early years for proper language development. The Words Count program, offered through *Stronger Families Stronger Futures Prenatal and Early Childhood Home Visiting Network*, is the first of its kind to use LENA System that allows the child to wear a special audio monitor that records both words spoke to and by the child as well as other electronic sounds. Even cooing by the baby can be analyzed to accurately measure the speech and variety of words both heard and spoken by the child in a particular day. The monitoring can be repeated on a regular basis to track progress.

All of this is to say that the Spring Street Family Center is an excellent partner in Asylum Hill committed to helping neighbors become the best version of themselves possible.

