Do you ever just need someone to talk to? I know I do. Especially if I am upset, bothered or facing a stressful decision. As I reflected on the needs of the children and families we serve, I noticed that they need a listening ear too. Over the last few years, more and more families and children have come into my office to “talk.” What starts out as a casual conversation often becomes a time to really listen and really care. It makes me wish that I had four ears! But since this is not a reality, I reached out to the faith and education communities for help. To make sure kids and families have a listening ear, I made arrangements to have two students working on counseling degrees and two local pastors coming to be the counselor/chaplain—so that someone is here to listen five days a week. In fact, many of the kids and parents are setting up regular appointments for a listening ear to guide them through the every day struggles and the major stressors they face. It is so wonderful to see an “idea to help” become a “reality of help.” To help facilitate these efforts, we decided to include a counselor/chaplain office in the new addition to give us a “safe place to listen.” It is amazing that this opportunity to serve came at the very time we were designing our addition. This is truly a miracle! The kind we see every day at Friendship House. It is because of your regular support that we can address the needs we see in the lives of children and families.

Thank you for allowing us to serve.

Sincerely,

Rev. Matt Lundgren, Executive Director

PLEASE CONTACT FRIENDSHIP HOUSE FOR MORE INFORMATION.
406.259.5569
WWW.FRIENDSHIPMT.ORG

After a long anticipated wait, we broke ground for our Kitchen and Classroom addition project on Monday, March 2nd. Surrounded by board members, families, students, donor’s and dignitaries, we turned the first shovel of dirt. In approximately four months, I hope to report on the completion of this project. Look for photos in the fall newsletter and an invitation to an open house to help us celebrate! We were thrilled by the community’s support in recognizing how this investment in our facilities helps serve kids and families. Thanks to your generosity, after we are done building, we will be able to better serve children and families in our programming with an expanded kitchen, a handicap accessible bathroom, a counselor/chaplain office, and an additional classroom. Not only will we be able to serve better, we will be able to serve more! If you would like to help us with a donation toward this project, we have enclosed an envelope for your gift. We have raised 80% of our goal.
**DRESS-A-CHILD**

This past Christmas, we went over the top to make sure the kids in our program were dressed, blessed, and warm! Thanks to partnerships with Pilgrim and Mayflower Congregational, First Baptist, and American, Trinity, Messiah, King of Glory, and Peace Lutheran Churches and partnerships with the Billings Gazette, Dillard’s, and Slumberland we were able to provide each child in the program with a tangible blessing. Students received complete outfit- socks, underwear, pants, shirt, shoes, belt, sweater, winter coat, mittens, hat, and snow boots. Additionally, each child was provided with a toy from a wish list they created. Then kids in the program were provided with 10 days worth of food to eat over Christmas Break-when otherwise they might not get enough. Finally, kids in need were provided with new mattresses and box springs as well as blankets. We truly have a generous community and we are honored to be the conduit to make sure we care for our children! To get involved in this or other efforts throughout the year, email us at FHCS@Friendshipmt.org.

**IN THE CLASSROOM**

As a child, did you ever feel like you didn’t belong, or the world was against you and nobody cared? These feelings are common for many students around the world. In fact, as the world becomes more connected through the Internet and various media, these feelings become amplified. Students still need to connect, not only with their peers but with their teachers. They also need to truly connect to educational content in order to reach academic goals and become active citizens.

At Friendship House this is a critical issue. Connection is the key to motivating students to work together, participate in discussions, and complete homework and tutoring. I recently took over the role as the Teacher of our 3rd and 4th grade classroom. It has been an amazing experience. As I got to know each of my students there was one student who had a barrier that I could not break through. On the playground he did not play with other students. He would not answer simple questions from me like, “How was school today?” In the classroom he would shut down and not participate in group discussions or put forward any effort into tutoring. This was an issue for me; I needed to connect with this student. I started my mission by sitting with him at supper; I had found out that he goes to the same elementary school I went to. I took this information and started by telling him about what school was like when I went there, I would talk, he would eat. I would ask questions, he would be silent. This happened for about two days; however, on the third day I asked how school was and he answered “good”. Was this working? I asked myself. The following day I asked how school was and he told me a long story about being in a skit at school. Later that following day he asked me for help tutoring. Barrier Broken! Since this week of breaking down barriers, this student has become one of the hardest workers in my class. He participates in our class meeting, and often the first to share. One connection leads to another, and it is so exciting to see the success that comes from it. —Cassi Kutzler, Student Services Coordinator/Teacher

**LEGO ROBOTICS**

In a partnership with Exxon and the Billings Public Schools Career Center we launched a Lego Robotics program with the young inventors in our program. Students designed, programmed, built, and turned loose their robotic creations! It was exciting to see the three creations move across the gym floor, accomplish tasks and move back to their creators. In this process the students made friends with their mentors and fellow robot trainers. It is because community members and businesses investing in our program that we can provide access to challenging and exciting new career paths for our students. If you or your business has an idea and some time to share, please contact us.

If your congregation, civic club or small group would like to hear an update on our work or opportunities to partner on exciting projects, please contact Matt to make arrangements at (406) 259-5569.

**VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT**

Dianne Shumaker is an amazing volunteer. Twice a week she comes to Friendship House and spends the afternoon working with our first grade students. She serves snacks, helps with homework, reads to kids and makes friends. With a smile on her face and willingness to get her hands dirty on the playground or in the garden, Dianne shows her love to the kids. When asked why she volunteers, she replies, “I loved raising my kids and grand kids and if I can help out, I figure, why not?” Every day volunteers like Dianne are making a difference by investing in children. If you can help, please call us at (406)259-5569.

**HOUSE BAND**

Making beautiful music... in the future we hope! Eagle Scout candidate Will Goodridge decided to do his project at Friendship House. His dream is to make rock stars out of our kids- think “School of Rock”- by connecting kids from low-income families to gently used musical instruments. Will also recruited his dad, Tim Goodridge, the promoter of the Magic City Blues Fest- a local Blues Festival held in our neighboring South Park to arrange for professional musicians to come to our program to provide music lessons with the instruments. We are still seeking donation of instruments like guitars, drums, basses, harmonicas, microphones, cables, and music stands. If you want to make a musical dream come true, feel free to drop off or send us some instruments.

Make a joyful noise... all the earth! -Psalm 98:4.

**DONATION OPPORTUNITIES**

Thrivent Members, direct your Thrivent Choice Dollars to us! Gainan’s Shoppers, direct your Helping Hands Dollars to us! Thank you!

Facebook Page
Find us on our Facebook page: Friendship House of Christian Service.