

Project Outreach offers respite care catered to children's unique needs

By Jessica Bruha Transcript Staff Writer | Posted: Sunday, October 11, 2015 9:20 pm

One night out of the month for four hours, Danielle Stickney Broach gets to see the faces of children they serve through Project Outreach light up with happiness.

Project Outreach is a respite care program for parents and caregivers of children with unique needs. Right now, they meet once monthly on either a Friday or Saturday at St. Stephen's Church, 1801 W. Brooks St.

"We bring such joy to them," Broach said. "It just gets a piece of my heart."

Broach has been director for Project Outreach for almost four years and was a nurse with the program for two years prior to that. For four hours, children play with developmental toys, go to the park, do crafts or occasionally have a special session, like the upcoming Fall Carnival.

While Broach and her team of four staff members and volunteers are packing in a fun-filled night, it's a night that allows parents to have a break.

"We have a couple that drive from Tinker to here, and their kids have been coming for probably four or five years. Her husband is in the military and she homeschools her kids, so this is really the only break she ever gets," Broach said.

The program partners with Norman Community Service, which brings high school students needing to do community service into the mix and has been a great source of volunteers. Broach said she feels like it helps both groups.

"I feel like some of them come and see these kids and then are a little bit more thankful for what they have," she said. "I think (Project Outreach kids) like having the high school kids come around, just because they're more their age. So it's kind of someone for them to look up to."

Some students majoring in education at the University of Oklahoma volunteer, but as the program



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Members and staff of Project Outreach, a respite care program for parents and caregivers of children with unique needs, enjoying an Easter session.

continues to grow, so does the need for volunteers.

“There’s a huge need for respite care,” Broach said. “I think the next closest one is Yukon, so there is no other program like us that is free.”

Her goal is to get two sessions going every month, but funding is also an issue.

“I have enough kids that I could sign up for it,” she said. “We just always want to stay free for our parents because most of our parents are on the lower end of the income spectrum.”

Project Outreach began as an outgrowth of Norman Day School for handicapped children. Norman residents and parents of special needs children saw the need for a place for the children to socialize, interact and belong.

After legislation passed requiring public schools to provide services for children, it turned into a respite care program to better serve the needs of parents and children. Today, the program serves approximately 20 to 25 children each session, from birth to age 21.

For more information, visit unitedwaynorman.org.

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