



"To have those parameters for what's quality and have somebody come along beside you and help support you...YoungStar has been very helpful and I would encourage others to do it."

*- Janice Ross, Director
Milwaukee Rescue Mission Child Enrichment Center
North Division Neighborhood, Milwaukee*

Meeting a Community Need

Child Care as Part of a Larger Purpose

Before she became the Director of [Milwaukee Rescue Mission Child Enrichment Center](#) (MRM) in 2015, Janice Ross had a history in early childhood. She started out as a school psychologist, ran an in-home child care for 8 years and worked at a licensed child care center before moving to the MRM Child Enrichment Center full-time. "We saw a need in the community for quality child care," said Janice. "We applied to be part of YoungStar right away." MRM is more than just the MRM Child Enrichment Center. It is a larger organization that offers families basic needs assistance like food, shelter, counseling, and job training, among other programs. The child care center is an important addition to these larger programs, noted Janice, since many of the families MRM serves through their programming remain in the area once they are no longer accessing services, or as they continue to. It made sense for MRM to offer a high quality child care option in their community to continue offering support to families in an area where there are not many options for quality care. "We wanted to be able to be one of the only 4 or 5 Star centers in the area," emphasized Janice. This initially meant working to increase staff members' training and Registry levels, then focusing on preparing for a formal rating by making sure that classrooms were set up in a way to promote best practice. Separation of interest areas in the rooms was a big change the center made. A teacher in the one-year-old room told Janice that since these changes, the children have been engaging in a larger variety of activities. Thanks to their efforts, MRM Child Enrichment Center is now at a 4 Star, and is working to complete their formal rating to eventually reach a 5 Star.

Full Service for Families

The MRM Child Enrichment Center falls under their "[Equip](#)" program, the purpose of which is community outreach, and following up with clients who have been through the different programming options they offer. In an effort to increase family engagement the center recently hired a Community Liaison who will be doing more to engage families in the child care program by eliciting their feedback and letting them know what related programming is available. "The purpose here is really to be full service for the families," stated Janice. "They can start when they are an infant and hopefully the parents can engage too. We really have big dreams for this area." YoungStar has been a part of those dreams, added Janice, not only improving their visibility as a center, but also affirming the practices that they are succeeding in and offering an outside perspective of areas they can improve upon. Their Technical Consultant, Lashon Smith, came to them as a partner, asking from the very beginning what their goals were and working with them to reach those goals. For MRM Child Enrichment Center moving forward, until they are ready to go for a 5 Star, and even once that is achieved, it's about "continuing to be on top of providing best quality care and best practices."

Wisconsin's Stars are Shining

YoungStar informs parents, recognizes quality providers and brings resources and support to programs committed to improving quality. But what it's really all about is helping Wisconsin children shine bright.