



For Immediate Release
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Silver Dollar City Foundation's *Care For Kids* Expands Mentoring Programs, Targets Family Needs

(Branson, Mo 9/15/08) Following two years partnering with area schools and youth ministries to meet the needs of kids, **the Silver Dollar City Foundation's *Care For Kids* program launches its third year expanding the mentoring programs, all part of the Foundation's half-a-million dollar commitment to kids over a five-year period.**

"The first priority of *Care For Kids* is targeting physical needs, because if a child is hungry or cold, if a child can't see the board, he's distracted in the classroom and can't learn. So taking care of those physical needs is our first priority," said Silver Dollar City Foundation President John Baltes. "We added in-school mentoring programs to support the emotional and mental needs of kids, and because of the positive response, we're expanding those programs this year and putting out the call for more volunteers."

School administrators say they could use hundreds more mentors, who provide positive role models, assist kids having trouble keeping up with schoolwork, and help build self-esteem in kids, Baltes said.

To meet physical needs, the Foundation has given over \$130,000 to 14 area school districts and four area youth ministries for the 2008-09 school year. *Care For Kids* funds have helped provide wheelchairs, clothing, eyeglasses, dental care, food and emergency supplies following fires and tornadoes, and even helped save a child's life by providing gas money to a family in need of specialty medical care outside the area, Baltes said.

To facilitate the mentoring programs, the Foundation works with area churches, training volunteers to take part in programs the schools identify as important to their individual needs. Over 120 volunteers from 61 area churches were certified through the training program and worked in the school districts during the past school year, Baltes said.

Mentoring options include "Book Buddies," where volunteers read books with a student who may need some extra help or attention, and "Lunch Buddies," where a volunteer has lunch with a student once a week. The school administrators choose or design programs to meet needs at their individual schools.

“And next, finding that a child who is hurting often has a family hurting as well, we’re expanding our focus over the long term to also include family mentoring,” Baltes said. The Foundation is developing programs for family mentors which involves additional training with seven area family outreach ministries.

Volunteer training sessions are scheduled for September 23 and October 21. For more information or to sign up for one of these training sessions, call 417-336-7058.

The Silver Dollar City Attractions help support the Foundation with funds raised through an ongoing ticket donation program offered to partner businesses and tourism-related neighbors of the Silver Dollar City properties. Every dollar generated through this program, totaling hundreds of thousands of dollars, goes back to help children of the Ozarks through programs and grants.

“The vision of the Silver Dollar City Foundation is to serve God by bringing families closer together, and through our combined efforts with schools, churches and ministries, we will Care For Kids for many years to come,” Baltes concluded. Anyone interested in more information about *Care For Kids* should call him at 417-336-7077 or visit

www.silverdollarcityfoundation.com.

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Editor’s Note: For more information on the *Care For Kids* program, or for contact names within the schools or organizations, please call Silver Dollar City Publicity at (417) 338-8207, or email Martha Bohner at mbohner@silverdollarcity.com.

Care For Kids targets kids in 14 school districts serving Stone and Taney Counties, plus provides support for Youth Ministries Young Life of Stone County, K-Life of Stone Count, K-Life of Taney County, and the Lives Under Construction Boys Ranch.

The Silver Dollar City Attractions are part of Herschend Family Entertainment Corporation and include Branson properties of Silver Dollar City, Celebration City, Showboat Branson Belle and White Water. The Silver Dollar City Foundation, which administers the program, has been in existence for more than 10 years, providing grants to support youth and adult ministry programs, marital and parenting seminars, and helping to meet needs within Stone and Taney Counties.