



For Immediate Release
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Silver Dollar City Foundation Extends *Care For Kids* Program in Area Schools for 5 More Years

Schools Receive \$140,000+ for This Year

(Branson, Mo 9/14/11) **The Silver Dollar City Foundation announces it will continue the *Care For Kids* program for an additional five years, with more than half a million dollars in funding donated so far to meet physical, mental and emotional needs of kids in area schools.**

The announcement, made at the Care For Kids school year launch event September 12 on the Showboat Branson Belle, was accompanied by a distribution of \$142,800 - checks for \$10,200 to each of the 14 school districts serving Taney and Stone Counties, presented by Foundation President John Baltes. This brought the total Care For Kids has donated to schools to \$567,000 since the program was launched in 2006.

This year's Care For Kids donation of \$7,200 per school district was joined with an additional \$3,000 per district – a donation from Woodland Hills Church in Branson. The church's pastor, Ted Cunningham, serves on the SDC Foundation's Board of Directors.

“We are pleased to extend Care For Kids for another five years because we know how much those funds help kids in need – providing clothing, eyeglasses, wheelchairs, medical care, food, school supplies and emergency supplies,” said Baltes. “School teachers and counselors see such needs but cannot spend school funds to meet them, so we partner with the schools and provide the funds to help. Nearly 2,000 kids have been helped by Care for Kids in the past year alone.”

The first priority of *Care for Kids* is targeting physical needs, because those are the things that require immediate attention. “If a child is in pain or homeless or hungry, too cold to concentrate or can't see or hear, he can't learn. So we want to take care of those physical needs first, and we give the schools these *Care For Kids* funds at the beginning of the school year so they can act immediately to meet those needs,” Baltes said.

Another benefit is that as school administrators reach out to kids and families to meet needs, a relationship of trust is formed, said Kirbyville School counselor Leanne West, who described how providing funds to help pay an electric bill changed the relationship with the family of a student. “Care For Kids has, time after time, given my caring words legitimacy. The foundation allows me to meet immediate physical needs, which garners the opportunity to address long-term emotional and

psychological needs as well. Relationships that could take years to develop are actually established in months, and these relationships have the potential to foster positive lasting change,” West said.

Targeting the emotional and mental needs of kids is a second component of the program, added four years ago with in-school mentoring programs. 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 250 volunteers from 77 area churches have been 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.

School administrators say they could use more mentors, who provide positive role models, assist kids having trouble keeping up with schoolwork, and help build self-esteem in kids, Baltes said. Volunteer training sessions are scheduled for September 22 and October 13. 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. Additional fundraisers, such as Silver Dollar City’s White Glove Christmas Gala, set for November 4 this year, also provide funds to the program.

“The vision of the Silver Dollar City Foundation is to prepare the hearts of kids to become men and women with Christ-like character,” Baltes said. For more information about *Care For Kids*, call 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. The Silver Dollar City Attractions are part of Herschend Family Entertainment Corporation and include Branson properties of Silver Dollar City, Showboat Branson Belle and White Water. The Silver Dollar City Foundation, which administers the program, has been in existence since 1996, providing grants to support youth and family ministry programs, and helping to meet needs within Stone and Taney Counties.