



Article Side

The St Vincent de Paul Phoenix Dream Center Becomes a Reality by [Steve Zabilski](#)

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The St. Vincent de Paul Phoenix Dream Center is an activity center built into the family dining room for children attending St. Vincent de Paul's Family Evening Meal that provides a designated space for children to engage in enriching activities like art, crafts, tutoring, reading and science experiments. Carlos, a first-grader, has been attending the Family Evening Meal with his grandmother and three siblings. Carlos' unstable home life hindered his ability to learn and caused him to be held back in school.

Carlos was withdrawn and resistant to any help at first, but made improvements as volunteers continue to work with him on a nightly basis to help him open up and develop friendships.

Seeing the work that was being done in the Family dining room, the usually shy and unhappy Carlos asked the Family Evening Meal manager Allison, if he could help.

"Carlos, we are very lucky because people are building it for us!" said Allison, Family Evening Meal manager. "But I want to help," Carlos insisted. "Carlos, do you know how to use a hammer?" asked Allison, taken aback by Carlos' initiative and enthusiasm. "YES!" Carlos said excitedly.

Carlos did not do any hammering, but Allison arranged a painting day for the children in Family Evening Meal so everyone could be involved.

Rosa and her two siblings come to St. Vincent de Paul's Family Evening Meal with their mother and grandmother each night. Her mother works full-time, but doesn't make quite enough to pay for all the household expenses and put food on the table too. Without St. Vincent de Paul, Rosa and her siblings would go to bed hungry each night.

Rosa hopes to become a nurse when she grows up, despite the challenges she faces. "I want to help people and make money to help my mom too," she says.

The Dream Center recently opened and is complete with a reading library, tutoring stations, learning computers and space for arts and science projects, the Dream Center is designed to help children like Rosa and Carlos succeed in school and achieve their dreams.

Thanks to a generous donor, Mike Parker, and his family who dedicated the center to their grandmother, Ana Maria Manta, the Dream Center is open weeknights during the Family Evening Meal. Volunteers assist students with homework and lead educational projects as well. With the dedication and enthusiasm for learning that Rosa already demonstrates in the Dream Center, her ambition to become a nurse is a step closer to reality.

You too can make a difference in someone life and learn the benefits of volunteering.

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