

Small nonprofit, big difference

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For 35 years, without many headlines or much fanfare, a small nonprofit has been making a big difference in the lives of families and in the social fabric of the East Metro's northern suburbs.

These days, Northwest Youth and Family Services helps more than 4,000 individuals and families every year with services that include employment programs for at-risk youth, a mental health clinic for all ages, community social workers, juvenile delinquency intervention and summer camp and day treatment programs for youth.

On May 3, the community gathered to say thanks. (The Pioneer Press, through its community outreach efforts, has been one of many longtime supporters of the agency.)

We congratulate Northwest Youth and Family Services and its staff for rallying a strong base of community leaders who believe in its important work and in its efforts to perform - in the private sector - work that supports and complements the work of government.

More than 300 north suburban residents and businesspeople packed the Midland Hills Country Club in Roseville to celebrate its work. The crowd included law enforcement representatives, legislators, area mayors and other elected officials.

What does the community get for its support?

For one thing, help in addressing the achievement gap in our schools. Jerry Hromatka, Northwest president and CEO, highlighted several approaches it uses: mentoring and tutoring to help in the short term, and efforts that encourage young people

to think about college and careers for the long term.

The agency's programs also touch both our youngest citizens and our elders. There's a pilot parenting program, geared toward identifying children who need extra help to

equip them for success in kindergarten. And there's a senior chore program designed to match young workers with seniors who need help to remain in their homes.

It's connections like these - even those made over a pile of leaves in a senior's yard - that strengthen the community's fabric. We're glad Northwest Youth and Family Services is here to help knit us together.