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Southtown
YOUTH PROGRAMS
FAMILY CENTER



Celebrating
TWENTY YEARS

Rev. James L. Gordon 1108 South 15th Street
Director / CEO PO Box 725 | Mount Vernon, IL 62864

Phone: 618 242.4077 or 618 244.7195



"Caring Because Children Are Our Future"

Beginnings



Reverend & Mrs. James L. Gordon

One man on a mission in a small community in 1986 sparked new life in Mt. Vernon depressed Southtown area. Southtown opened the neighborhoods first youth center. Southtown provides youth recreation and help to organize community residents which helped spring board programs from tutoring classes to housing demolition, weatherization and new housing construction programs. The result has been over 15 million dollars in programs and services to over 10,000 youth and their families.

Southtown is grateful of all the support its received over the last 20 years form its many friends and partners such as Governor Jim Thompson, Jim Edgar, George Ryan and the current Governor Rod Blagojevich. Emil Jones Jr., President of the Illinois Senate, Former Senator William Bill O'Daniel, Jesse Madison, Dr. Terry Solman, and the members of the Illinois African American Family Commission, Mr. David Whitaker and Chicago Area Project, Congressman John Shimkus and Senator Richard "Dick" Durbin, Sr. Kevin Settle and District #80 Schools, Dr. P. E. Cross former Regional Supt. Of Schools and Bryon Cross Supt. Of Schools, Mrs. Alice Harris, Larry Carrico and Rent One. The late Rev. William Lash, Rev. W. Ronald Lash, Mr. Cleo Holt, Mr. Joe Hotze, Rend Lake Collage, People National Bank and Mr. Bill Bonan, Mr. Hunt Bonan, Mr. Sam Mateer, Former Mayor Rolland W. Lewis, City of Mt. Vernon and Mayor Mary Jane Chesley. Illinois Power company, and Energy Assistance Foundation, S. I U. Carbondale, Mrs. Linda Baker, Mr. Howard Peters, The Illinois Department of Human Services, State Boards of Education and Children and Family Services. These are just some of the many supporters and partners who have helped make the many successes at Southtown possible.

Our real strength centers on Gods grace, volunteers, staff, parents and community supporters. There is still lots to do and Mt. Vernon has shown us what we can do with all our many friends and supporters. We will keep growing and helping make a difference in the lives of the youth and families that need us.

Over the Years

Milestones of Southtown Youth Programs Center

1987-2007

- 1987** Southtown began its “Lower the Risk Programs” at 1703 South Ninth Street.
- 1988** Southtown moved the “Lower the Risk Programs” to 1116 South 15th Street after purchasing a building from the Church of God. A child care center was added to the center.
- Southtown Joined the “Affordable Budget Coalition” and helped get funding for IRAPP which helps low-income residents of Illinois pay their utility bills.
- Started a “Weatherization Program” to help low-income residents.
- Co-wrote the first “Housing Rehab” grant with the city of Mt. Vernon for \$290,000.00.
- 1989** Helped establish the “Southside Ministerial Alliance”. Southtown holds a “Job Fair” in cooperation with Illinois Power Company. Many youth received summer jobs as a result.
- 1990** Southtown moved the “Excel in Education” tutoring program to the gym of the Kenneth Martin Center with 115 enrolled.
- Southtown began the annual program honoring the memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Southtown conducts its first community needs assessment.
- Southtown establishes a “Crime Prevention Program” and holds a march from Southtown to the courthouse steps for a rally against crime.
- Southtown establishes the “Shoes for Kids Program” to help school children purchase shoes for school.
- 1991** Governor Jim Edgar and his wife Brenda visits Southtown Youth Programs.
- 1991** Attorney General Rolland Burris holds a press conference with Rev. James Gordon, Director of Southtown Youth to encourage people to get involved with the youth.
- 1992** Southtown holds a workshop on the seriousness of Aids. Southtown opens a new wing at it's 15th street site to serve infants and toddlers.
- Southtown opens a new site at 10th and Newby (the old Burger Chef building) to serve teen parents in its T-PEP, “Teenage Parent Education Program.”
- US Rep. Dick Durbin visit's the youth at Southtown to encourage youth to stay in school.
- Governor Jim Edger visits Southtown and holds a press conference and praises the programs at Southtown Youth Programs.
- 1993** Mt. Vernon Police establish foot patrols in cooperation with the Southside Crime Watch Program started by the Southside Ministerial Alliance.
- 1994** Southtown begins evening child care at 903 Salem Road from 3:00-11:00 p.m.
- The Shoes for Kids Program purchases 56 pair of shoes in one weekend.
- Southtown helps establish the “Minority Business Association.”
- The Governor’s DCFS Advisory Council meets in Mt. Vernon, Rev. James Gordon, Director of Southtown Youth Programs serves on the council.
- Governor Jim Edgar appoints Rev. James L. Gordon of Southtown Youth Programs to the Governor’s “African American Family Commission.”
- Southtown begins “Operation Get Down” a male awareness mentoring project to improve opportunities for black males.
- 1995** Governor Jim Edgar visits Southtown.
- Southtown Youth “Shoes for Kids” program purchases shoes for 96 children in one weekend.
- The Governors “African American Family Commission” tours Southtown Youth Programs and hold its meeting in the Mt. Vernon.

- 1995** Rev. James Gordon and Shirley Gordon meet President Bill Clinton. The President said Southtown is doing extraordinary work in Mt. Vernon.
- Southtown Establishes the “Freedom Awards” to honor residents in memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.
- Governor Jim Edgar reappoints Rev. James Gordon to the Governors DCFS Advisory Council for 4 years. Council tours Southtown Youth Center and holds its meeting in Mt. Vernon.
- Southtown Youth begins its plan to build its own gym and youth family center.
- 1996** Southtown youth begins holding “Summer Recreation Programs” at Horace Mann School.
- Southtown helps the City of Mt. Vernon establish “Minority Affairs and Human Relations Commission.”
- 1997** Congressman John Shimkus visits the STYP “Summer Recreation Program.
- Rev. James L. Gordon director of Southtown Youth Programs is elected chairman of the Governors “DCFS Advisory Council.”
- 2000** Governor George Ryan reappoints Rev. James Gordon to the Governors DCFS Advisory Council through 2003.
- Congressman John Shimkus and Illinois Attorney General Jim Ryan visit Southtown Youth Center to announce the DOT Kids Domain Act.
- 2001** Southtown establishes a computer training program for youth and parents.
- 2003** Southtown establishes the city wide “Soul Food Dinner” honoring Black History Month.
- Rev. James L. & Shirley E. Gordon are honored by the NAACP for their work in the community.
- Southtown assist in getting 42 new homes built in the Southside area and continued to work toward 50 more homes in the South side area.
- 2004** Rev. James L. Gordon, Director of Southtown is one of 200 pastors in the USA invited by the White House to Washington, DC to a Faith Based Conference.
- 2004** Southtown begins construction of its “Family Center.” The center includes a gym and movie theater.
- Southtown begins “Operation Stand Up” a female awareness mentoring program.
- Southtown begins to offer business development classes to minorities and women.
- 2005** Governor Rod Blagojevich reappoints Rev. James Gordon, Director of Southtown to the Governors African American Family Commission.
- Southtown begins its “Learn N Serve” project to give youth a chance to experience national and local community service.
- Southtown moves into its million dollars plus “family Center.”
- Southtown begins partnership with Dist. #80 Schools to provide Pre-K programs on site at the Family Center.
- 2006** New post office opens on the south side on Mt. Vernon. Southtown community committee, volunteers and staff work many years to improve the area and draw many things to the area.
- Southtown host the city wide “Soul Food Dinner” in celebration of Black History Month in the new Family Center.
- Emil Jones Jr., President of the Illinois Senate and Jessie White, Secretary of State visit the Southtown Youth Programs youth and parents.
- Southtown youth establishes the “Family Center Basketball League” for youth.
- Southtown expands its Pre-K programs.
- Southtown Youth is honored by AT & T with the 2006 “Beyond the Call” award for its community commitment.
- 2007** Southtown Youth Program is chosen to host the live broadcast to the Governor Budget Address. It was one of the largest turn outs in the state at the Southtown site.
- Southtown Youth Program celebrates 20 years of service to the community.

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The McCluskey Family

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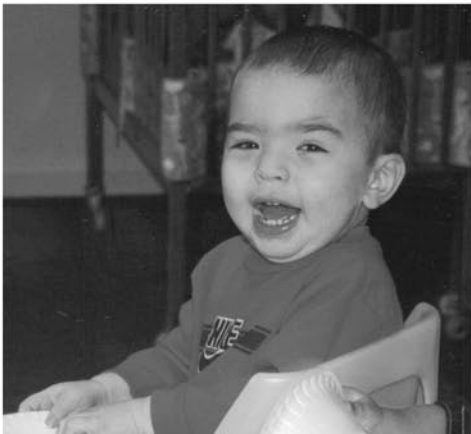


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