



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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St. Francis Neighborhood Center Awarded \$250,000 Challenge Grant

On March 1, The France-Merrick Foundation awarded a \$250,000 Challenge Grant to the \$4M *Count on Me* Capital Campaign project to renovate and expand St. Francis Neighborhood Center by 2019. The award states that the Foundation will match the full value of donor gifts, effectively doubling donations. The first \$250,000 must be raised by the organization to access the challenge gift. A formal fundraising committee of high-level volunteers is assembled to raise 25% of the campaign goal, or \$1,000,000. The grant award is expected to encourage and accelerate greater giving this year from individuals, corporations, and foundations whose gifts will be matched. Fund will support additional classrooms, art studio, kitchen and café, multi-purpose room, media lab and library, outdoor activity space, and renovation of the existing building which is an historic property. Contributions equal \$52,000 raised in matching funds to date, and nearly \$800,000 for the total campaign.

“The driving reason to expand the building is to shape a future for children in need, many of whom are on a waiting list to enroll in youth programs and cannot due to the building’s space limitations,” said Campaign Co-Chair and Board Vice President, Kevin Apperson. “We ask that you support this worthy effort at a time when gifts will be doubled by France-Merrick until March 2018.”

With the campaign goal achieved, the Center will increase educational program capacity to serve from 100 to 200 underserved children in youth programs. Program demographics show 76% of children belong to single-mother households earning less than \$25,000 annually.

“There is hope here. Youth program outcomes show all children improving in Math, English, behavior, and school attendance,” said Executive Director and Campaign Co-Chair, Christi Green. Total capital funds raised toward the match total \$50,000, and a grand total of more than \$800,000 raised for the campaign. To participate, individuals can donate online at www.stfranciscenter.org, or contact SFNC’s capital campaign manager, Angela Wheeler, at the coordinates listed above.

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About St. Francis Neighborhood Center

St. Francis Neighborhood Center (SFNC) is a 501(c)3 community-based organization located in the underserved neighborhood of West Baltimore City, Reservoir Hill. It is the oldest child enrichment nonprofit in Baltimore. Founded in 1963 and incorporated in 1972 as a neighborhood nonprofit corporation, it is independent of any church affiliation. Today, the Center is part of the positive transformation in a community that has long been known for its high crime rate and the City unrest in 2015. The mission of SFNC is to end generational poverty in the Reservoir Hill neighborhood by offering programs (at no cost) for children, individuals, and families related to academic excellence, self-esteem, self-improvement, and strengthening connections to the community. In Reservoir Hill, SFNC is the only organization delivering wrap-around services, community programs, and resource events to the area's diverse population of 40,000 residents at no cost.