

The Tangelo Park Program

The Tangelo Park Program, Inc. (TPP) is a community-based initiative that promotes civic commitment by private, public, and community organizations. With the financial backing of Harris Rosen, of Rosen Hotels and Resorts, the program has the collaborative support of four Tangelo community organizations: Tangelo Park, Elementary School, the Tangelo Park YMCA, the Tangelo Baptist Church and the Tangelo Park Civic Association. The Tangelo Park Program Advisory Board addresses Tangelo Park's educational, social, and economic interests.

Tangelo Park is a model community that assures quality childcare programs, parent effectiveness training, and post-secondary education or training opportunities at no cost to the community. All funding goes to the program with no need for salaries, materials, or other costs. All participants give freely of their time and expertise and monthly meetings operate with a shared decision model.

Program Background

The community of Tangelo Park is located approximately one-quarter mile southeast of Orlando's International Drive tourist area. From the late 1980s through the early 1990s, Tangelo Park characterized a typical urban community with low socioeconomic demographic problems: overt drug problems, poor school attendance, declining test scores, and high school dropout rates.

The Tangelo Park Program began as a result of a grass roots program that attracted local media attention and attention from local government, civic groups, and Mr. Harris Rosen, a local hotelier. In 1993, after a successful effort to reclaim their neighborhood from urban blight and drug dealers, Tangelo Park community leaders met with Mr. Rosen and the Orange County School Board Superintendent to discuss the possibility of a scholarship program for Tangelo residents; together they established the Tangelo Park Pilot Program.

Mr. Rosen provided the financial backing for the pilot project and collaborated with community leaders to establish an advisory board with the continued support of the Tangelo Park Elementary School, the Tangelo Park YMCA, Tangelo Baptist Church, and the Tangelo Park Civic Association. With financial support guaranteed by Mr. Rosen, the Tangelo Park Program oversees the fundraising, educational needs, and scholarship distributions for its citizens—ages 2 to 22. At no cost to its citizens, TPP offers:

- pre-school opportunities for every Tangelo Park two-, three-, and four-year old;
- parenting classes and vocational or technical opportunities for parents with children in school;
- full tuition, room, board, and living expenses for every Tangelo Park high school graduate who is accepted by a vocational school, community college, or public university in the state of Florida

Support Organizations

Formation of the Tangelo Park Pilot Program reinforced the relationship between the community and both its inner supporters and outside participants. Two levels comprise the Tangelo Park Program Board: a legal board of officers and the Community Advisory Board (CAB)—a

functional board of persons directly involved with providing services to the Tangelo Park community. The CAB organized the community's agencies into one body with one agenda:

Tangelo Park Civic Association

The Civic Association's initiative in the early 1990s united the Tangelo Park community. Currently, the Civic Association provides up-to-date information about community events, initiatives, and concerns, and serves as a proactive facilitator and liaison for the community.

Tangelo Baptist Church

The church supports the spiritual life of the community, actively participates on the TPP Advisory Board, and assists Tangelo families to access educational and social services. The church established an instructional center to help students succeed on school levels and with important examinations such as the Scholastic Aptitude Test.

Tangelo Park YMCA

The YMCA complements the Tangelo Park Pilot Program with educational, emotional, recreational, and civic activities and provides instructional programs for suspended students. The organization also features teen programs and summer enrichment programs.

Tangelo Park Elementary School

The school provides early intervention classes for two-, three-, and four-year old children through community-based day care, a Head Start Program, and a Pre-Kindergarten program, and also provides support services for parents, day care providers, and Pre-K teachers through the Family Service Center. In addition, the Head Start program offers a food pantry and provides assistance for public utilities and referrals. The community provides transportation to these programs.

The school also provides tutors and mentors, addresses drug prevention issues, and provides workshops that address parental issues. The parent education programs also assist parents to find jobs and enhance their parenting skills.

Outside Agencies

The development of the Tangelo Park Pilot Program enabled the community to facilitate and utilize individual volunteers and organizations that provide their services pro bono. Their services comprise television spotlighting, preventative health care screenings, computer lab services, legal services, and community college and university resources. The University of Central Florida's Colleges of Education and Health and Public Affairs have provided the research and documentation of Tangelo Park achievements.

Tangelo Park Program Accomplishments

Throughout its history, the Tangelo Park Program introduced endeavours that enhance the educational success for students—two to twenty-two—in Tangelo Park: Two-Three- and Four-Year-Old Program, Parent Leadership Training Program, one-track education from elementary school through high school, the UCF National Science Foundation grant *Bringing Engineering to Tangelo Park* and the Cornell University *Alternative Spring Break* since 2008.

Two day care centers have grown to ten, providing children an educational experience since 1996. TPP succeeded in passing into law 627.70161 Family day care insurance—a law that prevents insurance companies from canceling a homeowner's policy solely because a house is

used as a family-run daycare center. The majority of students who participated in the Two-Three- and Four-Year-Old Program enter elementary school on or above track.

The Tangelo Park Elementary School has achieved top ratings in the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test school. Tangelo high school students--99-100%--earn a regular high school diploma; grade point averages are increasing and are predicted to exceed 3.0 in the coming years. The proportion of students moving out of the Tangelo Community has decreased from an average 32% during the first five years to 12% in the years thereafter.

Of those students in Tangelo who go on to four-year schools either directly or through community college, 77% achieve a degree--far above the expectation for a community of this socioeconomic level. Of those who go on to graduate school 83% complete their programs. Tangelo students who enter community college complete their associate degree at the rate of 32%--again above the nation average. High school graduates entering vocational programs complete at a rate of 83%.

Crime in the neighborhood is down over 63% showing a continuous decline over the past several years. The Orange County Sheriff's Office has acknowledged that the Tangelo Park Program has reinforced the relationship between their office and the community.

Residents of Tangelo Park with the University of Central Florida representatives presented poster presentations that promoted the Tangelo Park Program at the Sloan-C International Conference on Asynchronous Learning Networks (ALN) in Jacksonville, Florida, and in Washington, DC. Parent Leadership Training Program graduates have conducted the training program in the Parramore Community in Orlando.

Several Walt Disney World Community Service Awards have been awarded to TPP as has funding from The Orlando Magic and the Edyth Bush Charitable Foundation. WMFE-TV Channel 24 featured TPP on its local series entitled, "Family Works."

In 2013, the Alumni Association formed with a celebration of graduates of the Rosen Scholarship Foundation awards. The members have subsequently created a mentoring program. An Alumni Survey gathered data on past alumni and currently on graduating high school students, who accept the Rosen Scholarship.

Tangelo Park Programs

Three programs that greatly enrich the Tangelo Park community developed from the Tangelo Park Program. These programs are necessary for the Tangelo Park children to claim their legacy of educational opportunity.

Tangelo Park Child Care Program: Two-Three- and Four-Year-Old Program

Tangelo Park's early childhood program is the substance of the Tangelo Park Program's achievements. These children develop their fine and gross motor skills and cognitive and social skills, enabling them to transition into Pre-K and Kindergarten already reading, writing, and doing simple mathematic skills. When they enter elementary school, they are fully ready to begin first grade. The University of Central Florida has provided computers with printers and software to each childcare center.

Parent Leadership Training Program

Out of a series of successful parent effectiveness classes grew the Parent Leadership Training Program that maximizes parental involvement in their children's lives. The initial program graduated parent leaders who have subsequently presented the program in the Parramore community, another Central Florida community.

In addition to the Rosen Foundation's Scholarship endowment, Mr. Rosen has also incorporated a basketball scholarship in the Tangelo community; the YMCA bears his name. Rosen associates formed a volunteer initiative with Junior Achievement to spend time in the Tangelo Elementary School to raise awareness in the students about community and careers. The steady increase in achieving educational opportunity is reassuring to its supporters and its investor.

Tangelo Park: A Model Community

The Tangelo Park Program offers a positive replica for other communities. From its inception, the Rosen Foundation's Scholarship endowment has provided the opportunity for educational achievement. Identifying and investing in effective programs is a winning strategy. As Tangelo Park has developed its program, results show that assistance to high-risk families can yield a long-term return on investment through lower crime rates and educational gains.

Professor Lance Lochner of the University of Western Ontario completed a comprehensive economic impact study of the program estimating that the approximate return on investment to society for the approximately ten million dollars invested in Tangelo is seven to one.

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