

# THE OASIS PROJECT

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## Oasis tutoring project looking to expand to more schools in Lake Country

Donna Frake, Now Media Group Published 11:41 a.m. CT Feb. 11, 2016



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Just about halfway into the school year, Jan Frans can see her vision realized and reflected in the faces of students at Cushing Elementary.

Frans, a retired educator, created the Oasis Learning Center in the fall of 2015 at Cushing Elementary School in Delafield, to tutor students in need.

Delafield, like all of the Lake Country area, labors under a false impression of abundance in all areas for all its residents.

'In fact, 13 percent of the students in this community are under-resourced and are living at or below the poverty level,' the Oasis Project website notes.

'Multiple grants for hiring tutors for these children have been denied due to proportionate resources around this area.'

## A vision

Oasis Project Founder Jan Frans has a vision to deal with that issue.

'When kids are struggling in school they need a boost. A lot of people in the Lake Country area can afford to hire a tutor for their children, but if you are just able to afford the essentials, you can't do that,' she explained. Frans is working to help those in need.

'This is the first phase of the Oasis Project, she explained.

'Hopefully, it will develop into a multifaceted project serving the needs of under resourced people in Waukesha County,' she said.

'We have approximately a dozen teachers, all professional educators; most are retired, but some come after a full day of work after school and tutor. I believe we are serving 27 children right now,' she said.

Though it's early to know the full impact of the tutoring, Frans is optimistic.

'We're getting pretty good reports back. Soon we hope to have some data that shows their achievement, but we have anecdotal data so far from some of their teachers that the children we are serving are showing a greater level of confidence and making greater strides in the classroom because of their confidence level.

'We were told of a student who just carries herself differently, and is not afraid to come to class because she has her homework done. The support they have gotten is really making a difference,' Frans said.

### New confidence

One of the Oasis tutors told her of receiving a note from some fifth-grade girls.

'It was all folded up the way fifth-grade girls do, and the note said 'to our favorite Oasis teacher. Where would we be without you?'

'In the beginning of the year, the kids were tentative, now there are a couple of girls I was told come skipping down the hall on the way to Oasis.

'It's just a happy place. They have to do their work, but as they find out they can do it with the support they are getting, they are excited,' she shared.

Oasis tutors take direction from teachers and the reading specialist and work on specific skills with the students. Oasis tutors keep a written record of the work they have done with the children.

'We don't have our own agenda, we only care about helping children make progress academically and there's a lot of emotional support that goes into it too,' she added.

## Earning prizes

Frans said the tutors keep a prize box stocked with treats and little books, puzzles, hats and mittens.

'After they are done with their tutoring session, they get to go and pick a prize,' she said. The parishioners at Grace Church in Delafield also help fill the box and also donate food items like granola bars and cheese sticks for the children.

'Some kids come to school hungry,' she said.

Tutors work with students during lunch time from 11:30 to 1 p.m. and from 3:45 to 4:15 p.m. for after-school sessions.

The Oasis Learning Center would like to expand its sphere of influence and is looking for more teachers who want to work on the project.

## Filling the need

Beyond the qualified educators, there is another key factor necessary to make it a success.

'The most important thing to me to expand is a principal that really wants us there,' Frans said.

She has seen the enthusiasm with the staff at Cushing and with her teams of tutors.

'Last summer, I spent most of my time recruiting teachers and was pretty amazed at the immediate buy-in that I got from my teaching friends. I knew they were benevolent people or I would not have asked them.

'They want to level the playing field, and that's pretty much what we're about. My vision going forward is to continue what we're doing at Cushing, but if there are other schools, and I know there are, even though this is the Lake Country, there are pockets of poverty and I know that there is a need there,' Frans said.

'The Cushing staff could not be more welcoming. They appreciate the extra hands and hearts that are coming in to support the kids.

'We're just there to serve,' she added.