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After-school efforts receive boost

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WILMINGTON -- Jaden Roane, 8, likes playing kickball in the gym. Aniya Brooks, 7, likes making paper animals. Elijah Thomas, 8, likes shooting rockets.

East Side Charter School Principal Will Robinson likes knowing his students have a safe place to go before and after school.

"There are going to be mentors, whether we like it or not," he said. "Either on the street there are going to mentors, or we're going to do it here, in a safe and caring environment."

That is why he celebrated Friday as officials announced Delaware is one of three states to receive money from the Michigan-based Charles Stewart Mott Foundation for after-school programs.

The \$195,000 grant, to be paid over three years, will help fund the Delaware **Afterschool** Alliance, a statewide collaboration designed to improve the quantity and quality of after-school programs in Delaware. The Family & Workplace Connection will administer the grant.

The state Department of Education, Department of Health and Social Services, Division of the Arts, Delaware First, and the United Way of Delaware have provided matching funding, bringing the total to \$390,000.

East Side opened in 1997 as the first charter school in the country to be founded with the assistance of -- and located within -- a public housing authority's property. It opened as a kindergarten through third-grade school and now serves prekindergarten through eighth grade.

The **4-H** Cooperative Extension runs East Side's after-school program, which serves about 70 students, including 8-year-old Patryk Wilson.

"I like to play lots of games," he said, rattling off some of his favorites such as Monopoly and Clue.

Pauline Addison's grandchildren attend, too.

"I don't know what could be done without them," she said of the programs.

Nancy Wilson, the state's deputy education secretary, said the grant will help improve the quality of and access to after-school programs statewide, noting more than 460 programs already are serving 11,383 children.

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