

Organization description

Founded in 2012, TUFF Start is a growing nonprofit organization that advocates for disadvantaged and underserved youth, whose early childhood was often compromised by obstacles out of their control. It is our goal to keep students off the streets and empowered with the tools that will put them on the path toward long-term success. From our early roots as after-school football training camps, we have evolved into a comprehensive program fostering each student's social, intellectual, academic and physical development. Today, TUFF Start serves 87 middle school students at our Enrichment Center, offering one-on-one engagement after-school, three hours per day, five days per week. Through our carefully designed TREAT curriculum, TUFF Start students spend a part of each day focused on: tutoring, reading, enrichment (life skills instruction), art and culture, training to build mental and physical strength. Additionally, we offer 50 high school students the opportunity to attend College Tours every summer to visit potential colleges, encouraging each student to believe in and work toward a future in higher education.

Intended use of the requested funds:

The requested funds will be used for scholarships for Margate Middle School students to attend our After-school Enrichment Center which is located just across the street from Margate Middle School. Open 40 weeks per year (coinciding with the public school year schedule), the Enrichment Center is a safe environment that provides students with regular homework help and opportunities to build on their athleticism, develop healthy eating habits, and learn the art of making better choices through leadership and life skills, etc.

The heart of Tuff Start's after school program is TREAT. From August through June, students participating in TREAT receive each school day:

- Tutoring to ensure that all daily assignments are completed, and additional assistance as needed.
- Reading and literacy assistance, expanding their reading and comprehension capabilities as well as their understanding of financial literacy, computer literacy, health literacy, and more through community partnerships.
- Enrichment activities and group projects that focus on critical thinking, life skills, STEM, and college and trade school readiness.
- Art and culture opportunities designed to encourage students to consider alternative perspectives, diversity, and inclusion in new and different ways.
- Training to develop talent in students and student athletes. Beyond physical training, TUFF Start prioritizes leadership, sportsmanship, community and school involvement, attitude, healthy body image, and self-confidence.

Needs statement:

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Public benefit:

The T.R.E.A.T. Program is designed to provide structured activities for Middle School students that will maximize their out-of-school time. These hours are typically between 3:30pm to 6:30pm. Through a variety of program components, youth realize the reality of poor decision-making and negative choices. Youth see incidents such as police pursuits, gang violence and drive-by shootings and do not realize the consequences of criminal behavior. Today's youth have developed a respect for criminals and the misconception that life in the criminal justice system is glamorous. This misconception commonly has been delivered by television or results from the youth having friends and family members who have been through the jail system.

The T.R.E.A.T. program is a diversion program geared toward those youth who have begun a negative lifestyle or are on the verge of heading down the wrong path, such as chronic absenteeism, continuous disruption to classroom learning, alcohol, drugs, and gangs. We understand that keeping students off the streets and on the “field” of life, by offering constructive activities reduces the likeliness that students will engage in risky behaviors and activities. The T.R.E.A.T. - Tutoring, Reading, Enrichment, Art and Training activities have a sole purpose of diverting youth from the criminal justice system by teaching life-skills and providing structured activities during unsupervised hours. By keeping youth off the streets and occupying their time offering them fun, creative and productive activities intended to stimulate their minds, bring a sense of self-awareness and encourage productivity. It is known that students who regularly participated in after-school programs generally surpass their peers in academic performance. They also exhibited notable improvements in work habits and behavior. Studies have shown that chronically bored youth are more likely to engage in criminal activities. We set out to give students proper guidance, and constructive avenues to direct their energy and attention.

Outcome statement:

We understand that Students who regularly participated in after-school programs generally surpass their peers in academic performance. They also exhibited notable improvements in work habits and behavior. Studies have shown that chronically bored youth are more likely to engage in criminal activities. We set out to give students proper guidance, and constructive avenues to direct their energy and attention. TUFF Start students are 93% more likely to graduate high school than their peers and 89% more likely to enroll in college.

Funds from the City of Margate will afford additional students with the opportunity to Maximize out of School Time, by having a safe and productive place to be after school. Every scholarship granted gives a student access to our 40-week program. Our program encourages a focus in the below areas, every day afterschool, Monday through Friday, ultimately spelling out T.R.E.A.T throughout the week.

- Mondays- Tutoring (homework help, standardized test preparation)
- Tuesdays- Reading (literacy and comprehension)
- Wednesdays- Enrichment (intro to STEM)
- Thursdays- Art (exposure to culture)
- Friday- Training (physical and mental)

How results will be evaluated:

Ultimately, we believe the success of TUFF Start programs is evidenced by our students’ increased success in all aspects of life. We have years of qualitative and anecdotal support to demonstrate success, and recently implemented quantitative outcomes and measures that will provide the data to prove that our system is effective. During the 2018-2019 school year, TUFF Start will serve 100 students through the TREAT program at the Enrichment Center. Participation in TREAT will help students improve their academic performance, improve their life skills mastery and reading proficiency, and complete their high school education. To measure success in these areas, we will:

- Track report cards with an expected outcome of 85% of participants will maintain or improve GPA.
- Deliver pre- and post-tests to measure participants’ Life Skills mastery and

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reading proficiency. We expect 75% will improve in both areas.

- Monitor graduation rates of program participants with the expectation that 90% will earn their diploma within five years of their first enrollment date in ninth grade