

Local & Insight



INSIDE

SOME MILITARY DISCHARGES MEAN NO BENEFITS AFTER SERVICE ENDS. 8A

Georgetown nonprofit nabs \$10,000 donation due to relations with family

BY CLAIRE BYUN
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Friendships are important. Especially those that reach across time, distance and age.

The Village Group – a nonprofit based in Georgetown that provides after school and summer programs for children – scored a \$10,000 donation that stems from a 40-year-old personal relationship.

Montie Mills-Meehan, whose mother was a friend of the group's executive director Ray Funnye, donated the money, which will be used to help the 10-year-old organization grow.

The Village Group provides any child – regardless of financial ability – literacy programs, after school care and aviation industry courses for future careers.

"As we grow, we have a

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I'M A BIG BELIEVER IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND DOING EVERYTHING TO STRENGTHEN PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES. FUNNYE'S WORK IS THE NEAREST AND DEAREST TO MY HEART.

Montie Mills-Meehan, benefactor

need for some administrative help, or people who can help with programs, people who can help organize events and all kinds of things," Funnye said. "A lot of opportunities are coming our way."

The donation will go toward building capacity and growing the organization's programs, Funnye said. Last year, 230 children were enrolled in the group's summer program, and Funnye hopes the money will help

more Georgetown County children in need.

The donation partially stems from Funnye's friendship with Frieda Smith, a Myrtle Beach native who died several years ago. Funnye worked at the Smith family car wash for many years, but he always stayed in contact with Smith during his other careers.

Funnye visited Smith during her last few years.

"She and I had this real special bond to encourage

each other and just be friends," he said.

Mills-Meehan, benefactor and Smith's daughter, said Funnye's relationship with her mother and the positive programs by The Village Group were all the reasons she needed to contribute to the organization's success.

Making early childhood education programs accessible to everyone – regardless of race, financial background or family stability – is important for the development of well-rounded children, Mills-Meehan said.

"What could be more positive than to give every opportunity that's possible to the next generation?" she said. "What could be more important than your children?"

The Village Group is funded through grants, donations and businesses partnerships, Funnye said. Horr Georgetown Technical

The Village Group offers after school, summer programs for kids

Organization is self-funded through donations, partnerships

Donation stemmed from 40-year friendship



Courtesy of Ray Funnye

Ray Funnye (left) with Frieda Smith. The Village Group – a nonprofit based in Georgetown that provides after school and summer programs for children – scored a \$10,000 donation that stems from a 40-year-old personal relationship.

College, Burroughs and Chapin Family Fund and Santee Electric Cooperative are some of the major sponsors, but personal gifts – such as Mills-Meehan's \$10,000 donation – are important for the growing organization, Funnye said.

"Basically we are in-be-

tween the youngsters and the future," he said. "We are conduits to get our young people where they need to be."

To learn more about The Village Group, or to volunteer, visit www.thevillagegroup.org or call 843-240-0534.