

# Hoops and Homework Centers in Framingham reopen with ‘super duper excited’ students



7-14-20

FRAMINGHAM — Oliviana DeSousa got up out of her chair and walked over to the nearest adult.

“Look!” The 6-year-old said as she pointed to her latest arts-and-crafts creation. “Can you help me?”

It was a red robin, crafted out of red paper, glue and some googly eyes.

DeSousa’s artwork was nearly perfect but just needed one slight adjustment. The head needed to be pushed in just a little more.



BUY PHOTO

HIDE CAPTION

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At the Interfaith Terrace Hoops and Homework location in Framingham, Raengel Tejeda, 12, looks at a beetle on Monday, July 13. [Daily News and Wicked Local Staff Photo/Art Illman]



BUY PHOTO

HIDE CAPTION

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At the Pusan Road Hoops and Homework location, Oliviana DeSousa, 5, works on a project on Monday. [Daily News and Wicked Local Staff Photo/Art Illman]

Luckily, Jayne Acevedo, the Center supervisor, at Framingham’s Hoops and Homework Center, was there to assist.



BUY PHOTO

HIDE CAPTION

5/6

At the Interfaith Terrace Hoops and Homework location, site supervisor Dahiana Acevedo works with Cristal Garcia, 8, on her journal on Monday, July 13. [Daily News and Wicked Local Staff Photo/Art Illman]

That is just one example of the hundreds of small and large instructive interactions that happen nearly every day at the center.

Founded in 2012, the non-profit organization was created to be an after-school program for the underprivileged youth that live in Framingham's South Side. Children, thanks to generous donors, can go to the center to get help with homework, learn new subjects, read books and play with friends outside.

Monday was the first day that the campus reopened its Pusan Road location since the global coronavirus pandemic forced the staff to shut it down in March to help reduce the spread of COVID-19. Last week, they opened up their campus on Interfaith Terrace.

DeSousa was one of about 10 mask-wearing youngsters who were making arts and crafts Monday afternoon.

Acevedo said the children are very excited to be back.



BUY PHOTO      HIDE CAPTION      6/6  
At the Pusan Road Hoops and Homework location in Framingham, teacher Ila Acevedo takes the temperature of Brian, DeLuca, 5, on Monday, July 13. [Daily News and Wicked Local Staff Photo/Art Illman]

"I'm happy to see the kids," Acevedo said. "They couldn't wait"

To adhere with state and Centers of Disease Control guidelines, students and staff get their temperature checked at the beginning of the day and are required to wear masks at all times. Surfaces are also cleaned after every use, as are puzzles and board games, according to Health Consultant Judy Wester.

Parents are also required to fill out a daily questionnaire, specifying if their child had any symptoms, whether they live in the home with someone who has the coronavirus or if someone in the home recently visited another country.

The center has also reduced the number of students it serves at a time, according to the founder Herb Chasan.

It can now only have 10 kids in a building at once, he said. Regularly, they serve around 30.



BUY PHOTO      HIDE CAPTION      3/6  
At the Interfaith Terrace Hoops and Homework location, Jean Lucas De la Cruz, 8, works on his journal on Monday. [Daily News and Wicked Local Staff Photo/Art Illman]

In the four months that the center was shut down, volunteers still worked to provide services to children and stay connected through social media.

According to volunteer Deya Nira Cruz, a Snapchat group was created to serve as a book club during quarantine.

Even with those measures in place, the four months the center wasn't physically open was disastrous for the children and parents, Chasan said.

Children could no longer easily get help with homework or learn new subjects. Parents did not have a place to drop off their children for the day when they went to work. Some apartments became crowded since youngsters weren't out of the house. And youngsters who were outside were at a greater risk of getting into trouble.

Center supervisor Dahiana Acevedo said the program is essential since the children often struggle to accomplish homework since their parents often don't speak English. The program also is beneficial because it is educational and helps encourage academic enrichment.

"It gives them something to do," she said. "Half of these parents don't have transportation to take them to other programs during the summer or after school, so it's good to have them here."

Crisaly Cupid 11, said she was "super duper excited" the center was open again. She said she wasn't very productive during the four months the center was closed.

"Here I get help with my homework and the people around me are super duper fun," she said.

An extreme amount of cleaning is required to keep the site safe and virus free.



BUY PHOTO

HIDE CAPTION

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At the Interfaith Terrace Hoops and Homework location in Framingham, site supervisor Dahiana Acevedo wipes down desks before students arrived on Monday, July 13. [Daily News and Wicked Local Staff Photo/Art Illman]

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