



I have yet to meet a Mom or Dad who does not want their child to “fit in” with the other children at preschool. At our center, Thompson Child Development Center, we are forever mindful of the diversity of backgrounds that enriches our early childhood community of 100 children, their families and of course our staff. Our center’s families lead a multitude of lifestyles including children with *very young* (14yrs.old) Moms, children whose parents and extended family members are all recovering and sadly sometimes relapsing substance abusers and children whose families sleep in cars. We have kids whose parents are published illustrators, bank vice-presidents and agency executives. In fact, we often borrow from the Yellow Pages tag line “If it’s out there, it’s in here!” It is this mix of humanity that encourages us to design our program to be welcoming and inclusive. We dream of the world that our children will someday (very soon) lead and we hope that what’s in here, will significantly impact out there.

It is this fitting into a center with such a wide definition of “fitting in” that the impact of Dignity U Wear is most considerable. New clothes make you feel new! I have watched Moms’ select outfits for a new job after incarceration, Dads get shoes and dapper, manly clothes that made them want to spruce up their hair and smell good and Grandmas’ raising their children’s children get all decked out for the Pre-K graduation ceremony in Dignity U Wear clothing. Having decent clothes to wear allows many of our parents the opportunity to participate with pride in center sponsored family activities. Research shows that early participation in a child’s school can lead to a lifetime of parental involvement... an indicator of success.

Of course the children love the clothing and their excitement over receiving new socks and underwear is as thrilling as getting a new dress. When Dignity U Wear shipments include several of the same outfits, you can only imagine how special an entire classroom of girls feel to be wearing the same thing! Fitting in is so important when you are four years old!

I’ll end with a recent observation of Dignity U Wear in action. One of our parents was involved in a domestic dispute and wound up spending time in jail. Dad brought the 6 month old to the center earlier that day because he knew her teachers would lovingly care for her until arrangements for her supervision during Mom’s absence could be made. Mom was released and came straight to the center to pick up her daughter from whom she had been separated for three days. It was close to 5:00 p.m., the height of pick up time when the lobby and classrooms would soon be filling with parents. Mom’s attire was disheveled and completely inappropriate (pajamas). We quickly ushered her down the hall where extra Dignity clothing is kept. She was given clothing to change into, clothing for the baby because she did not know if she would be able to go back home to get clothes, time to regroup from her ordeal and then, on her own, walk into the classroom and reunite with her baby. To the unknowing, there was nothing unusual. Had she stayed in those pajamas, this family’s situation would have been noticeable. Dignity U Wear helped them to fit right in. This family is not needy, but they needed us then. Thank you Dignity U Wear for allowing us to support families with dignity and decency.

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