



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 23, 2024

**COFI PARENT LEADERS, ILLINOIS STATE SENATOR KARINA VILLA AND
ILLINOIS REPRESENTATIVE BARBARA HERNANDEZ CELEBRATE OPENING OF
AURORA PARENT POWER CENTER**

The Center, which received \$250,000 from Senator Villa's office, will be a free community resource for parents and families and will pilot peer-to-peer mental health, financial literacy and other programming

AURORA—Community Organizing and Family Issues (COFI) and its Aurora Branch of POWER-PAC IL (Parents Organized to Win, Educate and Renew) hosted the opening of the Aurora Parent Power Center on Saturday, January 20. The Center will be a six to nine-month demonstration project to show how free, peer-based, parent-to-parent mental health programming and similar programs can support parent and family well-being.

“The Parent Power Center is a longtime dream of the Aurora Branch,” said Nelly Paredes, COFI Parent Leader and Parent Power Center Coordinator. “Many of us have the experience of being a new parent or resident in Aurora and know how important it is to have an open and welcoming space for support groups, peace circles and education classes. We’re excited our dream is finally a reality and we can help more parents and families.”

The parent-led project started three years ago. COFI parents in Aurora started conducting surveys during the pandemic to investigate what needs and support the community needed. After receiving 460 responses from parents and community members across Kane County, parents identified mental health as the most significant need for the community.

During this time, parent leaders also began meeting with and sharing their vision with Illinois Senator Karina Villa (D-25th District) and Illinois State Representative Barbara Hernandez (D-50th District). In late 2023, they announced the Center would receive a legislative add-on of \$250,000 from Senator Villa’s office.

“COFI is a movement created by the powerful voices of parents within our community, who strive to improve our schools, provide community support and give parents the tools to become leaders. The opening of the Parent Power Center will be essential to support those with mental health needs and I am very excited to see the amazing work they will do for families in the 25th District,” said Senator Villa.



“The Parent Power Center is an important addition to the Aurora community. We need more spaces like this to ensure parents and families have a space dedicated to their emotional well-being. Thank you to the parent leaders with COFI and POWER-PAC IL for bringing this idea to Aurora and pilot testing it this year,” said Representative Hernandez.

Many COFI parent leaders who will lead the pilot programming at the Center are trained and certified in different peer-to-peer models such as NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness) Peer-to-Peer and Parent Cafés. Additionally, with POWER-PAC IL’s Elgin Branch and the Kane County Health Department, parent leaders in Aurora have already been facilitating emotionally safe groups for parents and community members and [earned an award](#) in December.

Parent leaders will also serve as Children’s Savings Account (CSA) Ambassadors to encourage parents to enroll in the State of Illinois’ First Steps program by offering a small match. Illinois First Steps is a program that COFI parents organized for and established in 2023, with the State Treasurer’s office, that provides Illinois parents a one-time \$50 deposit into a 529 college savings account for their newborn child.

The Center will be open to the community on Mondays and Wednesdays from 9-11 a.m., as well as Tuesday and Thursday evenings, through the spring. A list of upcoming programming will be available [here](#). For questions about the Center’s programming, email parentpowercenter@cofionline.org.

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CONTACT:

Jacqui Guillen

jguillen@cofionline.org