

TRIUMPHS

Library in Cass church is a welcome haven for kids

By KIM NORTH SHINE
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As the Rev. Faith Fowler sees it, Detroit kids have known enough losses in the last few years.

"They have had so many. The loss of recreation centers, the loss of schools, for the homeless, the loss of homes," Fowler said last Thursday as she stood in the just-opened library inside her Cass United Methodist Church.

The Cass Community Library is a much-needed gain to make up for the children's losses, she said.

"We have to stop and realize what happens to kids when the city struggles," Fowler said. "We have to show them that we still care."

Fowler's church also provides services such as food and shelter to hungry and homeless people, education for the jobless and help for mentally ill people through its Cass Community Social Services.

Wayne County Prosecutor Kym Worthy was among the community leaders who attended the library opening, which included the cutting of a ribbon stretched across the door.

The library is located in a small room on the second floor of the church at the corner of Cass and Selden.

It's a project of coffee seller Starbucks and the Books for Kids Foundation, a charitable organization that promotes literacy for low-income children.

It's the first such library to



BASHAUN RUCKER/Detroit Free Press

William McDuffie-Connor, 12, holds "Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?" at the opening of the children's library at Cass United Methodist Church. He plans to stop in every Sunday after church.

open in Michigan and the 13th to open nationwide, in five cities and the District of Columbia.

"Starbucks wants to create an inviting and attractive, challenging but nonthreatening place for Detroit's children to visit," company marketing manager Diane DeForest said in a statement.

Starbucks provided the paint, furniture, rugs, bookshelves and more than 2,000 books, most of them collected by southeast Michigan customers over the holidays.

The library will provide story times and other activities and also lend books like any other library.

It is there for the obvious

reasons — to teach and to stimulate imaginations — but it is also "a safe place for these kids to go," Fowler said. "It's so much more than books and bookshelves."

Within minutes of the ribbon cutting, children scanned the shelves for favorites or grabbed whatever caught their eyes. They sat on colorful beanbags and velvet lounge chairs.

A group gathered around Detroit Lions player Donte Curry as he read whatever books the kids brought to him.

Across the room, William McDuffie-Connor, a 12-year-old seventh-grader from Longfellow Middle School, had zeroed in on a favorite "I

Spy" book.

William may soon know one of the losses that Fowler speaks of. His school is on the Detroit Public Schools closure list.

So he's excited about the library "because mine could close."

"I know I'll come here on Sundays after church," he said. "But I hope I can come here a lot more."

Though William was grateful, he did have one suggestion for the library.

"It would be nice to have some computers," he said.

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The Rev. FAITH FOWLER, Cass United Methodist Church