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## Hammond Elementary Offers Morning Program to Reconnect Families

iMom, an initiative of Family First, is strengthening families one breakfast at a time

By [Deborah Bostock-Kelley](#) [Email the author](#) 5:00 am

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In an age where technology is pushing families further and further apart, iMom strives to reconnect the family unit.

iMom, an initiative of [Family First](#), a nationwide non-profit based in Tampa, offers a breakfast social where parents and children can eat, exchange ideas and re-bond.

"iMom is for any parent who wished their children came with an instruction guide," said Roberta Maier, a longtime iMom member and mother of a 9 year old son, and 7 year old daughter.

According to Family First's website, the focus of iMOM is to equip mothers with information, ideas and encouragement to positively impact their children.

"iMom is a school breakfast program open to all grades," explained Family First school programs assistant Kaleigh Cunningham. "It has been primarily in the elementary schools nationwide, but just recently we have the teen curriculum for middle school and high school. It is open for all ages and grade levels."

Kaleigh explained that videos and everything needed to get the program into a school is online for easy access.

"We have an eight-step process on iMom.com that will walk you through how to become a leader," said Cunningham.

Friends introduced Theresa Houser, iMom morning leader to the program at a Family First annual banquet and she immediately thought to introduce it to her children's school.

Though she did not know how iMom would be received by the PTA and administration, the response was overwhelmingly positive.

Theresa launched iMom at her son and daughter's school, Hammond Elementary, 8008 N Mobley Rd., Odessa, in October 2010 for its parents and has seen a steady attendance of 15 to 20 families at each meeting.

Meeting days vary from month to month, based upon the school calendar, but the 7 a.m. meeting time is always the same.

"The whole goal of iMom is to strengthen families," Houser said. "It's a morning program for moms and their kids, but it's actually open to all family members – aunts, uncles, grandmas—"

Partnered nationally with the PTA and typically a mix of working and stay-at-home moms, the iMom format is similar across the nation in its 356 chapters

in 34 states, with 14 chapters just in Tampa:

"iMom has all the programs for you online so you can pick which one you want to do," explained Houser. "We have different topics whether it's 'encouraging your kids, 'standing up for others,' 'peer pressure,' 'internet safety' – there's all kinds of topics presented through a video or me talking or asking the kids and moms questions to get them to participate."

Afterwards, the families receive a discussion card with a few questions that the moms and their kids sit and talk about.

"The discussions going on with the moms and their kids and that time together is the most important part of iMom," Houser said. "We also have time coupons that the kids can pick out – *Mom you have sit down and read a book with or bake cookies or whatever it is.* The kids can take them home and present them."

Houser tries to keep the topic of the iMom meeting in line with Hammond Elementary guidance counselors' monthly theme. Whether it is patience, courage or good manners, the iMom meeting complements their subject.

"One of the reasons I like to go is you learn from other families," Maier said. "Theresa herself – her whole family is involved. Theresa's family is the poster child for iMom."

iMom is strictly a morning breakfast with no current plans for expansion outside of school.

"This is such a protected time of family," Houser said. "That is the sole purpose of iMom. We don't want to take away from that."

**Meetings are scheduled at Hammond Elementary on February 14, March 5 and April 12 at 7 a.m. To learn more about iMom at Hammond Elementary or to start an iMom at your child's school, visit [www.imom.com](http://www.imom.com) or visit Facebook and like the iMom community page.**

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