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Art Institute students redesign rooms at ChildNet



Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale faculty and students from the School of Interior Design with Emilio Benitez

Special Marketing Section

ChildNet hosted a ribbon cutting and tour on Feb. 9 to unveil the latest creation of interior design students at The Art Institute of Fort Lauderdale. In September, ChildNet, the private nonprofit organization created to manage the child welfare system in Broward County, contacted the local college to seek their artistic assistance with redesigning areas at the agency's Plantation corporate office that are most used by families and children. With a nominal budget of \$4,000, Emilio Benitez, ChildNet's CEO, challenged interior design students with transforming two lobby areas and four visitation rooms into a more functional and inviting space.

"This is the first place children come when they are removed from their homes so it is very important that it reflects a kid friendly, upbeat and welcoming ambiance," said Benitez.

Elizabeth Glenn, architect and instructor at the Art Institute, oversaw the project with eight students and coached them on managing client relations. "This project afforded the students a unique opportunity to apply all they have learned to a real-life project while helping Broward County's most needy families and children," said Glenn.

Erika Obando, a senior at the college, was honored to start her career with this project as a foundation. "This was not only fulfilling from a designer's perspective - as we got an opportunity to see our proposed concept come to life - but more importantly, it gave us an opportunity as a group to give back to the community in a very meaningful way."

After the redesign:

