



# The Programs of Thames River Community Service, Inc.

**Kathy Allen, Director of Services and Operations**

For many years Thames River Community Service, Inc. was comprised primarily of the Thames River Family Program (TRFP) which began operations in 1992. TRFP is a residential transitional living program for families headed by single women and their children. During the two years that they reside at TRFP, the residents work at developing goals and acquiring life skills needed to move from the program to permanent housing.

In 2000, we became one of three agencies in the State to be funded for a Beyond Shelter Program. This program provides up to one year of follow up services to families leaving shelters and transitional living programs for permanent housing. The Housing Support Coordinator works to develop relationships with area landlords. The Coordinator assists families to locate safe, affordable housing, build landlord relationships, mediate landlord/tenant issues, and obtain resources necessary to achieve and maintain housing stability.

The Supportive Housing Program was established in 2008. This program's two case managers partner with nine families to provide comprehensive, individualized services and permanent, safe, and affordable scattered site housing units. Heads of household in these families have mental illness and/or chemical dependency, histories of trauma/domestic violence, are homeless, and have incomes at or below 50% of the median income of this area.

Most recently, in October 2009, we began sub-contracting with the Thames Valley Council for Community Action (TVCCA) to provide services for a Rapid Re-housing and Homeless Prevention Program. Rapid Re-housing, according to the definition from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, is for "individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness (residing in emergency or transitional shelters or on the street) and need temporary assistance in order to obtain housing and retain it". The Homeless Prevention aspect of this program focuses on providing homelessness prevention assistance to households that would otherwise become homeless—many due to the present economic crisis. Assistance may include temporary rental assistance, help with security deposits and utility deposits as well as temporary utility payments, moving cost assistance, and motel and hotel vouchers for a short period of time.

In each of these programs there are faces of those who are receiving supports. This newsletter depicts one family's story in each of these four programs and their struggle towards self sufficiency, making life changes, and preventing homelessness with the help of the program in which they are participating.

## Thames River to Benefit from "GoodSearch"

"GoodSearch" is a search engine which donates half of its revenue to the charities and schools designated by its users. You use "GoodSearch" as you would any other search engine. Because it is powered by Yahoo!, you get proven search results. Just type in "GoodSearch" and then type in Thames River Family Program as your preferred charity. You can also shop on-line. "GoodSearch" provides a link to "GoodShop" where you can get coupons and specials for more than 1,300 stores. Or you can go to "GoodShop" directly.

On behalf of the families at **Thames River Family Program**, thank you for using "GoodSearch."



## A Family In Transition

Jada is a 24 year old mother of two young sons. She and her boys moved into Thames River Family Program seven months ago from the Covenant Shelter in New London.

From the beginning, Jada has been determined to take control of her life and to break the cycle of poverty, instability, and disappointment in which she had grown up. While at the Covenant Shelter in New London, she received her General Education Degree (GED) by taking on-line courses. She moved into Thames River Family Program where with the help of her Family Advocate, Elaine Epply, and Child Advocate, Shanda Easley, she began addressing the issues in her past and the impact all of this has had on her life. Jada is learning to put the past behind her and has continued to move forward with her goal of stability for herself and the boys, independence for herself, and permanent housing when she leaves Thames River Family Program.

Today, she is employed and is enrolled at Three Rivers Community College. Her boys are thriving and Jada is a respected member of our community of women pursuing goals of self sufficiency and control over their lives.

## Beyond Shelter

For many years "Linda" and her two granddaughters lived in Norwich until a fire destroyed their house and they found themselves homeless. Having nowhere else to go, they sought refuge in an area shelter.

The family was immediately referred to the Beyond Shelter Program. Hattie Fairbanks, our Housing Support Coordinator, began assisting them with re-housing (finding safe, affordable housing) and helping them transition from the shelter into their new place. Several afternoons were spent looking at available opportunities and within two weeks of the referral they found a suitable apartment in the area of their choice.

The next step was for Hattie to negotiate the rent and terms of the lease with the landlord. Three weeks after the initial referral was made the family was able to move into their new apartment.

"Linda's" family will continue to receive services for up to a year through the Beyond Shelter Program to help support their housing success. Thus far, they also have been referred to various other community resources such as an energy assistance program. Additionally, the Beyond Shelter Program's Coordinator has been able to help the family recoup their losses from the fire with donations of house wares that included dishes, pots and pans, bedroom furniture and bedding. "Linda" and the girls are doing well and grateful to be in their own place once again!



*Our sincere thanks to United Way's Day of Caring volunteers from Pfizer who spent a day painting interior hallways!*

## Home At Last

Heather and Patrick have been together since high school. They have two children together. Both have battled issues with their medical and mental health and together they've been homeless. But a year and a half ago, their lives changed.

This family became one of nine who were accepted into our new Supportive Housing Program. Working with their case manager, Evelyn Alladin, they have emerged from being homeless to having an apartment that they can call their own. But they have gained much more. With Evelyn's support, they have advocated for services for their children at their schools, they have stabilized their mental health, and taken care of medical issues that had been put aside during their period of instability. They also are working with Southeastern Employment Services to find suitable employment.

With many of the families in this program, housing has been lost because of bad debt, inability to pay rent, and/or violations of their leases. Therefore, learning to budget and pay bills in a timely manner and acquiring good tenancy skills are key components of the Supportive Housing Program. Heather and Patrick have not only been successful in this area, they are excellent tenants. They have taken a modest apartment, fixed it up, and made it their home. The pride and care that they have shown in their place has gained them the respect of their landlord. They have recently negotiated with her on their own to move to a larger apartment which is more suited to their family's needs. Both Heather and Patrick have attributed the strides that they have made over the last year and a half to the support of their case manager and the help of the Supportive Housing Program. We wish their family well!

