

Thames River Had "Hope"

Each year for sixteen years, Thames River children have been fortunate to have an intern from the University of Notre Dame who spends 8 weeks during the summer working with the children in our program. This past summer, our intern was Hope Rosenfeld. Hope had the opportunity to learn about our program while planning age and developmentally appropriate activities for our kids. Each year the children look forward to having the student spend time with them. This experience complements our Child Development Programming.

The children truly enjoyed their time with Hope. Their summer of activities culminated in a Talent Show in which almost all of our children participated. It was followed by an "Ice Cream Social" to bid farewell to Hope who was returning for her fall semester at Notre Dame.

By the end of the summer it was apparent that Hope had learned a great deal about our program and the work we do to support our families. She left our community with gifts from us and fond memories of a wonderful summer. But she left a gift for our moms as well: a letter that she wrote telling them how much she enjoyed being with their children and commending them on the job that they are doing raising them. This letter was confirmation to our families that they can rise above their past and learn to create a better future for their children. Hope's letter follows:

Hope's Letter to TRFP Mothers

To the Women and Children of Thames River Family Program,

It seems like just days ago I was writing my original letter of introduction, yet here I am eight weeks later. Every last one of you has touched my life in a special way. You may not realize it, but everything from a conversation about your life or a wave when we cross paths in the hallway made me ecstatic and comforted.

You all have taught me so much. Your children are truly amazing! It is their big hugs and smiling faces that made me excited to come to work each day. It was an easy transition and warm welcome from both the residents and the staff the moment I stepped into this building. You are all truly amazing and I will forever cherish my time here this summer!

I wish all of you the best in the future. You are all such strong and admirable women. Follow your dreams and always remember the faith and confidence I have in everyone here. I hope that one day my own children will be as fabulous and kind as yours.

Lots of love ,

Hope



Hope is surrounded by Thames River kids.

THAMES RIVER COMMUNITY SERVICE, INC.

Agency Wish List

Housewares for Apartment Move-Ins

New dish sets/glassware
Silverware and cooking utensils

Pots and Pans

Linen supplies:

Towels
Wash cloths
Shower curtains
Twin sheet sets/comforters

Family Entertainment Passes

Norwich Bowling & Entertainment Center
Norwich Ice Rink
Groton Bowling Alley
Groton Skating Rink
Regal Movie Passes
Monster Golf (Groton)
Ocean Beach Arcade/Mini Golf Passes

Children's Museum in Niantic
The Garde Arts Center - Holiday performances

Miscellaneous

SEAT bus passes
Gift Cards for:
Family Dollar Store
Big Y
Stop & Shop
ShopRite
Wal-Mart

Local family restaurants
Gas Stations
Payless ShoeSource

Agency Needs

Large clothing armoire with doors
Vacuums for resident use
Wet/Dry Shop vacuum

Monetary donations are always appreciated.

Thames River Benefits 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 and GoodShop."

THE PROGRAMS OF

Thames River Community Service

Families Creating Self-sufficiency

WINTER • 2011

Family Program • Beyond Shelter • Homelessness Prevention/Rapid Re-housing • Supportive Housing

You Create Hope

Dear Friends,

During this season, we celebrate Thanksgiving, Hanukkah and Christmas. It is a time of peace, joy and love. We eat great feasts, exchange gifts and express our caring for one another. There are many among us, however, who do not do these things. They only experience loneliness and isolation. These are our brothers and sisters who are homeless.

Every two years in New London County we conduct a Point in Time Count, which numbers those homeless who are both sheltered and unsheltered. The results for 2011 show that 288 people were without homes and of these, 86 (30%) were children. This is unacceptable in one of the richest states in the richest country in the world. Children are traumatized by homelessness. For them and for all those who are homeless, we must do better.

I believe ending homelessness is an ethical issue. It is also an economic issue. I have written before about "Million Dollar Murray" (*The New Yorker* magazine, February 2006). Murray was an individual from Reno, Nevada who was helped by two policemen over 10 years. Murray consumed \$1 million in health and human services during this time and at the end of ten years nothing was different. He was still homeless. It costs more to have a person homeless than it does to house them.

Thames River Community Service is a leader in our state and region in ending homelessness. We provide a home and



Give a Holiday Gift...

You can make a contribution to **Thames River Family Program** as a holiday gift for a friend or loved one. We will gratefully acknowledge your thoughtfulness to the recipient. Or you can have family and friends do this for you and we will acknowledge both of you!

supportive services to over 280 men, women and children who were formerly homeless. There is a new hope that is born at Thames River. Those who haven't worked in years are now employed. Those who experienced eviction after eviction have now broken that cycle and are maintaining their housing. Those who have lost their children are now reunited (70 reunifications). The truth that tomorrow can be different from today is alive and well at Thames River.

It is thanks to you that all these things happen. The good things that happen at Thames River happen in partnership with you. Your generosity has brought an end to hunger, homelessness and hopelessness for those we serve. We thank you and we ask for your continued support during this difficult financial time locally and nationally.

May all the blessings of the season be yours.

Peace,

Thomas J. Hyland, Executive Director



Visit Us on Our Website and Facebook

Want to learn more about Thames River Community Service? Our website features information on each program, ways you can contribute and upcoming events. Our Facebook page shares achievements of residents of Thames River Family Program, awards from area foundations and news about upcoming events. Both have links to other area agencies involved in ending homelessness in the region.

Please "Like" us on Facebook and stay informed. Share posts with your friends, family and community organizations and spread the word about our programs, achievements and more. Be part of the solution!

Please visit our website @ www.trfp.org to learn more about Thames River Community Service, ending homelessness, and to donate. Donations can be made by MasterCard, VISA, or PayPal. Please also email astrida@trfp.org to send us your email.



A United Way Member Agency

Kids Making Great Strides at Thames River

Kathy W. Allen, Director of Services and Operations

In recent years, more of our mothers have come to us with histories of trauma as a result of past experiences with domestic violence. Quite often this trauma has led to alcohol or drug abuse and in many cases mental health issues as well. All of these have been contributing factors to the families' homelessness. The children also suffer through cognitive delays, as well as behavioral, social, and emotional problems. Over the years we have seen the benefits and the necessity of providing programming that addresses the impact that children's experiences have had on them. This newsletter will be dedicated to the work that we have been doing on behalf of the children of Thames River Family Program (TRFP).

In an effort to address the needs of the children in our families, we have developed specific Child Development Programming. This programming provides support for children's special needs, their mental health wellness, and parent/child communication.

Children with Special Needs

We have an increasing number of children with special needs that include autism, developmental and cognitive delays, and behavioral, social, and emotional maladjustment. For these children, group and individual family meetings are held to address such topics as appropriate and non-violent conflict resolution. Mothers and their children receive support in dealing with emotional and/or physical outbursts that can be triggered by everyday events and assistance with crisis management. Through trainings and work with TRFP's two Child Advocates, mothers are educated in identifying service providers from which their children would benefit including counseling, emergency psychiatric assistance or arranging for treatment in partial hospitalization programs. The Child Advocates also assist mothers with learning about and accessing the various services within the school system that can address children's individual needs.

Children's Mental Health Wellness

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, children are at greater risk for developing mental health problems when factors such as physical abuse, emotional abuse or neglect, poverty, frequent relocation, and exposure to violence occur in their lives. With 75% of TRFP children having mental health issues, we provide training for mothers and their children that promotes mental health wellness. Mothers learn to recognize and identify behavioral warning signs in their children which may indicate the need for early professional intervention.

Mothers learn about recognizing and understanding feelings, infant and child development, brain development, nurturing parenting routines, effective non-violent discipline, and ways to build self-esteem and self-confidence in children. The children themselves receive training in these areas as well.

Parent/Child Communication

We have determined that 85% of TRFP children have experienced domestic violence. In order to break the cycle of domestic violence, the programming supports parent/child communication. Families work on problem solving, resolving conflicts peacefully, listening well and transforming criticism and blame into compassionate connections. Mothers and their children receive training on open, honest, and healthy communication in order to prevent isolation, keeping secrets, and the old habits of don't talk/don't tell that can perpetuate domestic violence. Families explore healthy values and choices and learn how to have a realistic, honest and healthy view of themselves.

As a result of the work that we are doing through this programming, we are learning that the cycle of abuse and neglect can be broken. We are seeing that once mothers understand how their trauma has resulted in their children being at risk, they are in a better position to begin the work to identify warning signs of any behavioral issues that may occur, even with children as young as 5, as a result of their past experiences. There is no better way, however, to see the positive effects that Children's Programming has on TRFP children than to view the level of functioning of children after being a part of this community of mothers pursuing goals for themselves and their families. The first signs of change happen as soon as 9 months after children move into the building, when an assessment that we do with our children showed an improvement in functioning this year of over 11% for children ages four and up.

The most significant change, however, can be seen when a family leaves TRFP. It is evident when a mom emerges from the program with a renewed sense of self and has identified specific goals that she is pursuing aimed at making a better life for herself and her children. It is evident in children who previously only screamed and yelled at their mother because that is what they saw in the home, but who now treat their mother with the respect she deserves. It is evident as you see that mom and her children spending quality time together, camping and participating in youth football.



Halloween Fun



Wilma with her boys at the 2011 Thames River Talent Show.

A Thames River Family

Wilma and her three school age sons moved into TRFP from the homeless shelter operated by Thames Valley Council for Community Action (TVCCA) and located above us on the Uncas on the Thames campus. Prior to entering the shelter, Wilma and her boys lived what seemed to others like a "normal" life. Wilma's husband worked, she was a stay at home mom and they lived in what Wilma refers to as the "apartment of her dreams". She says that in theory they were a family, but the truth was Wilma's husband was extremely abusive to her. She lived this "lie" for several years before deciding finally to take her boys and leave her husband.

Slowly, after living here for a while, things began to turn around for this family. In addition to working with her Family and Child Advocates to begin re-building her confidence and feelings of self-worth, Wilma began seeing a counselor, something she had said she didn't think she'd ever do. Because she was afraid that her boys would eventually repeat the cycle of abuse that they had witnessed, she also enrolled them in therapy. Together they did family therapy as well. The boys also went to summer camps and participated in baseball and football programs. As a family they have gone camping, attend church regularly, and participate in community activities. Wilma enrolled in nursing classes at Three Rivers Community College and started working part time as a Certified Nurse's Assistant.

Today, Wilma and her boys are on a path to success. She is a confident woman who is in charge of herself and her family. Her three boys have made remarkable progress and now treat their mother with the respect she deserves. Through the work the family has done in therapy, in addition to TRFP's Children's Programming, Wilma has the skills to recognize the signs and symptoms that may indicate that the children are experiencing trauma related behaviors. She also has the skills to communicate effectively with them and find the appropriate resources to help them.

Wilma talks freely and openly to other women at TRFP about the life she left and the life she has now. She speaks about what she has learned about herself from being at TRFP and working with her advocates and how she now believes that she can do anything she sets her mind to do. She tells others who may still be struggling that they too can achieve the goals that they desire if they're willing to do the work.

Recent Funders to Child Development Programming

Bishop's Fund for Children
Episcopal Diocese of Connecticut
BJ's Charitable Foundation
Elizabeth Carse Foundation
Catholic Campaign for Human Development
Chamber of Commerce of Eastern CT Foundation
Chelsea Groton Foundation
Citizen's Bank Foundation
Community Foundation of Eastern Connecticut Women and Girls Fund
Eastern Federal Bank Foundation
Liberty Bank Foundation
Edward and Mary Lord Foundation
George A. & Grace L. Long Foundation
People's United Community Foundation
Rotary Club of the Stoningtons
R. S. Gernon Trust
Olga Sipolin Children's Fund
Swindell's Charitable Foundation
Wireless Zone Foundation for Giving



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Thames River Community Service is a participant in Leave a Legacy Connecticut, a statewide public awareness effort to promote charitable giving through wills and estates. Leave a Legacy Connecticut urges you to leave your mark on the community by making gifts from your estate to your favorite nonprofit organizations. By remembering nonprofits in your estate plans, you can help improve the lives of future generations of Connecticut residents.

Interested individuals are encouraged to discuss their intentions with financial and estate planners. When you make a charitable bequest, there is no end to the good you can do. For more information, please call **Laura Hobart at 860-887-3288**.