



Success Stories & Stories of Need

Health For Friends

Thanks to United Way funds, Health for Friends has been able to hire a new daytime dentist. Earlier, we restarted the evening extraction clinic for emergencies. The need for dental care in our very low income patients is extreme and every day we have to turn away people who need dental care. Sadly, their health and their careers are damaged by untreated dental infections, broken and missing teeth. This year, with United Way of Norman funds, we have been able to get hundreds of needy patients out of pain in our emergency extraction clinic. With the new dentist, we will be able to provide general dental care for those who have no other place to go.

On behalf of those patients who depend on us, please accept our appreciation for all you do.

Sincerely,
Maurine Garton, President
Health for Friends
Board of Directors

On the financial assistance of our school supply program:

"The ABC School Supply Program has impacted my family by helping us through this transitional time for our family. It is a great relief to know of this source and its' use. I hate having to ask for this but it sure is nice in times like these."

On the dignity our school supply program provides:

Without the United Way of Norman's ABC School Supply Program "I would not have been able to purchase school supplies for (my son) this year. I am sure he would have been laughed at."

Bridges

"I'm 28 years old now and working full time, and going to school part time to finish my degree in crime victim survivor services. I am very emotional when it comes to talking about this unique and much-needed program.

One day I woke up and realized I couldn't even graduate high school. So I got the Norman Transcript and figured out when enrollment was and registered with the other students. I felt odd. The people I had seen as lower classmen were now in my grade and I felt older because I had to deal with issues that none of them ever had. It was very intimidating and as I sat down to enroll I admitted to my counselor that I was an independent student and he told me about your program.

To be honest, the first year was rough. But I knew I had a place to go to talk and a safe person to talk to. My counselor admired my hard work and introduced me to people who helped me with money for food. For the holidays you gave me gifts and I felt like a special person for the first time in a long time for doing nothing but going to school. I worked very hard and maintained a good GPA.

The highlight of my Bridges (ILSY) experience was the Bootstrap award. I still have the plaque and it hangs in my home as a reminder that I can do anything if I really want it bad enough.

Today, I am successful, I am intelligent, and I am a kind person. Today, I am a graduate of not only high school but the school of hard knocks, and like my plaque says, there is nothing I can't pull myself out of by my 'bootstraps'." (*fyi: the Bootstrap award was started by Jim Agar and is given to the child that is not necessarily the best student, but has grown the most throughout their time in the program. They also receive a \$2,000 scholarship.*)

Center for Children and Families

The money raised by the United Way of Norman helps fund programs across the community, including the Neighborhood Centers run by the Center for Children and Families, Inc.

Neighborhood Centers provide activities and positive role models for children during out-of-school time. This important step could affect children for the rest of their lives, by keeping them off the path that leads to school dropouts, crime and unemployment.

Joey is one of the children who feel special at the Neighborhood Centers at Kennedy Elementary. He loved to play games and hang out with the adults who were always excited to see him.

Recently Joey was waiting in line for the Neighborhood Centers to start. As he approached the door, Joey was turned away.

"We're too crowded but please come back next time," said the adult at the door.

The Neighborhood Centers aren't the only program where needs of children are rising. CCFI reports increases in many of their programs. The agency depends on funding from United Way of Norman to operate.

"The United Way allows us to offer our unique services that fit what our community needs," said Linda Terrell, CCFI Executive Director.

Bethesda

A prepubescent girl was sexually and violently assaulted and raped by a step-father. She did not report immediately for fear of reprisal by her mother. When she did report her mother protected the step-father. She ultimately called DHS herself and was removed from the home. She was referred to Bethesda and her mother was referred here for counseling and for treatment with her denial and effect on her daughter. After a year of therapy she made great progress and had been reunited with her daughter. The step-father was prosecuted and sentenced to prison. During court Bethesda staff supported the daughter and helped her gain sufficient strength to testify and confront her attacker and respect herself again.

Court Appointed Special Advocates

Every CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) has an impact on the case to which he or she is appointed. However, it's particularly inspiring to see that impact in action in the courtroom. The volunteer was called to testify in the non-jury trial regarding the termination of the mother's parental rights to her child. The mother had virtually abandoned the child when she was sixteen months old, leaving her with a relative and making no attempt to care for her. Years later, when the child became court involved, her mother was located and made occasional insignificant attempts to be reunited with her child. During her trial, the child's CASA volunteer told the court exactly what she had witnessed throughout the years. That the mother had made extremely feeble attempts to become involved in her child's life, that the child expressed the extreme anxiety at the thought of ever returning to her mother, and that the child's sole source of love and security was her foster mother, who, over the course of several years had made astounding progress in overcoming the child's severe emotional barriers. Due in large part to the CASA volunteer's testimony, the child can now feel the security of having a permanent and loving home-the home of the family that loves and cherishes her. This foster family will soon become her adoptive family and this child will be out of the court system and will be looking forward to a bright future.

Community After School Program

CASP was contacted by an elementary principal regarding a family in need. This family of two children and their mom were living in a hotel while mom attended school and worked to support her family. With such limited resources, there was no money left for providing after school care. The children were often left at school until well past the final bell. CASP was able to utilize United Way of Norman scholarship dollars to provide this family with after school care for the two children and give their mom peace of mind while she worked to secure their futures.

Food and Shelter for Friends

Kelly was accepted into Food & Shelter for Friends' transitional shelter program and completed interviews and assessment to determine the family's needs. Kelly had been living with family members who were involved in criminal activity. It was an unsafe situation for her three children and she soon found herself homeless. Kelly worked very hard to move into Food & Shelter for friends. She saw this as an opportunity to change her destiny; to improve life for herself and her children. Kelly was already in school and fairly close to completion at the Moore-Norman Technology Center when she moved in. She was receiving Temporary Assistance in Needy Families (TANF) to help her get by. She continued to struggle financially after moving in. She had an expensive car payment and was not willing to give it up because it was almost paid off. After living at the shelter for seven months, Kelly graduated from the technology center and immediately got a job at a hospital in Oklahoma City. Shortly after she started working, she received her Section 8 housing voucher. She moved out of the shelter into a nice, affordable home that is close to her children's school and their daycare. Kelly just recently paid off her car. We see her frequently because she continues to volunteer at the shelter, and she is extremely interested in helping out current residents. She has stated that she wants to give back. She is also thinking about becoming a foster parent. Kelly continues to take the necessary steps to improve the lives of her children. Her proactive approach to her situation has been integral to her success.

Health for Friends

Susan is a 52 year old white female who is single. Susan came into Health for Friends for her yearly female exam. Susan had not had any type of health maintenance for the past ten years. During this visit a pap smear and a clinical breast exam were administered. During her breast examination the doctor discovered a lump about 4 cm wide on her right breast. She was referred through project woman for follow up treatment. Susan's lump was confirmed as cancerous and she soon received there surgery and treatment she needed to eradicate the cancer from her body. Thanks to the intervention of Health and Friends and Project Woman, Susan was able to receive care without a mountain of medical bills she could never pay. Susan is back to work and able to be care for her grandchildren and family.

Mary Abbot Children's House

Brian is a seven year old boy who was brought to Mary Abbot Children's House after an allegation of sexual abuse by his mother's boyfriend. Brian's mother met men regularly on the adult websites and asked her latest boyfriend, Tom, to watch Brian after school. Brian came to fear going home after school, because he knew Tom would be waiting for him. When Brian told his mother, she beat him and called him a liar. Brian came to the Abbott House after a concerned neighbor reported suspicions. He talked with a forensic interviewer and told his story only once rather than to multiple people at many different locations. He was listened to and believed. The team members worked diligently during the investigation, finding him a safe place to live and treatment services to help him heal. Now he feels safe to come home from school.