

Dream to Soar



No one truly knows what a difference they are going to make in some ones life. Everyday there are dedicated child welfare staff who work one on one with children that society has given up on. These children who have been abused, neglected and taken from their homes find themselves lost in a system feeling lonely, unworthy and without hope much less grasping the possibility of a dream.

We are celebrating our one year anniversary of our new group home treatment program and have already started to see the positive outcomes this new program has achieved. We can proudly document that our run- away rate has decreased by 25%, hospitalizations have been reduced by 75% and our police involvement has decreased by 40% - but the proudest achievement and what keeps us focus on our mission is watching a client turn their life around.

Every newsletter we like to feature a client that has turned their life around and is able to move on to either a less restrictive program, foster care or independent living. We had the pleasure of sitting down with a young man (who would like to be called Randy M after one of his favorite football players). He is one of the first clients who has "graduated" through all three phases of our new program.

This young man shared very openly that he grew up in Chicago where gang life was the only life. Randy was thirteen years old, in a gang, carrying a gun and then the inevitable happened...he was shot.

Randy was taken out of his home and placed in a Residential facility. He was angry, scared and lonely. It was hard for him to adjust and often times made it very difficult for their staff. When asked if he remembers a moment when he wanted to change his life his reply was "I just got tired of the stress of being a bully and gang banger". "I had a staff member named Roy Molsby that kept trying to get me involved in sports and at first I didn't want to but he kept encouraging me and eventually I joined track". "I liked that sports got me to think of other things". "My favorite sport to play is football. Some day I would like to play for the Atlanta Falcons". I tried to talk him into playing for my favorite team, the Green Bay Packers but he wasn't buying it.

Because of the incredible care he received, Randy was able to transition to our group home living program and after one year is able to move on. When I have asked the clients moving forward what was one lesson they could share that they will take with them they have all replied "it's all about

picking your battles and that it's okay to agree that you disagree with someone." Many staff have touched Randy's life in ways they probably don't realize. "I would like to thank Ryan Woodard, Ray Broom and Chris Morecraft at Shady for always making me feel comfortable". "I would like to thank Mike Roelke and Angel Neal at College for always understanding me even when I would blow up". "Don't stop what you are doing, 100 kids can come through here and they will need someone like you, it got me through it".

It's time to move on and with that comes a sense of sadness and uncertainty but also offers new possibilities and the chance to soar. We have no doubts this young man will soar. Randy is moving on to a transitional living home and starts college this fall. He would like to be a social worker if football doesn't work out. Whatever his journey leads him, he will take a part of all those people who told him he could dare to dream and actually soar.



"Don't stop what you are doing, 100 kids can come through here and they will need someone like you, it got me through it."



Gifts that make a difference.

We have always had the privilege to work with community organizations that have one vision in mind, to make a difference in the lives of our children. The Biltmore/Oaksbury Moms Network has provided Easter Baskets for every client in our Group Home Living Program for the past four years. This group of special moms take the time to customize each basket with loving care and thoughtfulness as if they were creating a memory for their own children. Our clients have actually shared that when they received their basket it felt like they were home. It's often those memories we take for granted that make the most impact. Many heartfelt thanks to these moms.

This past year we had the opportunity to talk with the Elgin Junior Service Board about the services and programs we provide. They were so moved by our mission that they wanted to help us out in some way and help us out they did! This group spent weeks soliciting for donations that we could incorporate in our program based community activities which allowed our children to participate in fun activities throughout the community such as bowling, eating out at a restaurant, working out at a fitness center, movie theatre tickets and a special pool party at the Elgin Country Club. What a gift to feel like any other kid.



The Biltmore/Oaksbury Moms Network



Elgin Junior Service Board presenting their donation to Larkin Center staff.



Once again we were fortunate to partner with Christ Community Church for their Super Saturday in June. This Super Saturday we painted the inside of our Orientation/Training center. This center provides 40 hours of orientation and 40 hours of job shadowing to all new employees so they are familiar with program protocol, agency policies, mandated state policies, CPR certification, CPI crisis management and first aid. We also provide training for our Volunteer Mentoring/Visiting Resources Program and continued training opportunities for management.

This Super Saturday provided an extra blessing this year because Christ Community wanted to reach out to those staff members who provide direct

care to our children. We were asked to provide a list of twelve staff members who were in need of something that would make their lives easier and one less burden to worry about. There was a staff member from each program chosen. The recipients of the blessings were Pita Betancourt who asked for much needed baby items for a client, Cathy Tiberi who needed a ride to the airport, Megan Czachorski requested a night out with her husband since she was due with their first baby any day, Robert Failla requested a bicycle so he could ride to work and be good to the environment and Angel Neal who was in desperate need of a car so she could get to work safely since she travels from Rockford everyday. The blessings were presented to some of the recipients during a luncheon provided by our master of ceremonies, Papa John - after the work was done of course.



A Christ Community staff blessing presented to Ms. Angel Neal.

"Thank you for caring about us because not a lot of people do."

"It's a little bit scary to know people care, but I'm getting used to it now."

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Helping Hands Pitching In

Our very own Leadership team came out on Super Saturday and pitched in at our College Group Home with some elbow grease and support for our staff. Our Executive Director, Mr. Dennis Graf aka "Vacuum Cleaner Man" was willing to tackle the upstairs while Elaine Scott, Martine Lyle and Cyndie Zabilka scrubbed the kitchen. Group home supervisor Mike Roelke and HR Director Jim Helm made the dining room and living room beautiful, right down to the baseboards.

Patrick Phillippi has been responsible for implementing many home

improvement projects throughout several homes at The Larkin Center. Patrick along with the "Love Thy Neighbor" ministry at Willow Creek Church have made it possible to install new windows and two bathrooms at our Creekside Group Home. Patrick's wife Sharon created a special color palette throughout the entire house including hand painted flowers in the girl's master bathroom. A new bathroom was installed at our Shady home and just recently the upstairs bathroom at our College home received a new shower stall and vanity. Patrick's sister Ann Quint donated funds to purchase the



Left to right: Cyndie Zabilka, Martine Lyle and Elaine Scott



Mr. Patrick Phillippi.



There are many ways you can lend a helping hand!

Every Second Saturday of the month a group of volunteers come to The Larkin Center with paint brushes in hand. From 9:00 a.m. to Noon there is painting and repair done on one of our group homes. Be a part of making our homes feel like home.

"I want to thank you for all the support and encouragement you gave me threw out my stay here at The Larkin Center."

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new shower stall and also donated Bears tickets to our golf outing. What keeps our mission sustainable are the many people and organizations that invest their time, expertise, helping hands and warm hearts.

In February we were approached by Sharon Patek who made it possible for us to give a presentation to the board of directors of The Porsche Club of America, Chicago Region. We were chosen out of several other non-profit organizations to be awarded proceeds from their 2011 Concours Events. There are currently over 3,000 Porsche enthusiasts in the Chicago Region, many of whom participate in driving, concours and social events which raise funding for non-profit organizations. For their next event check out their website: www.pca-chicago.org.

Our next door neighbor the Larkin Avenue Baptist Church of Elgin, Pastor Richard Sanders, reached out to us with another organization called Herd Racing. This racing team brought out a racing boat, goodie bags, DVD of the movie "We are Marshall" and tickets to their next race where they proudly displayed our agency logo. The church provided a cook out and fellowship which made our children feel special. The church is also providing monthly socials for our SST Group Home children which will include a hands on activity and also let our boys play basketball any time they want which has been a blessing not only for the boys but for staff too!



Herd Racing's Bumble Bee Mascot

Seeds of Hope



On April 10, 2011, The Larkin Center hosted their 13th Annual "Cheers for Children" Brunch in a very picturesque setting on the grounds of Elgin Community College. One hundred and twenty guests enjoyed a variety of food choices as well as an opportunity to bid on a number of live and silent auction items and a chance to purchase raffle tickets for a one-week stay in St. Maarten. Among our guests attending the brunch was Jack Shales of Shales McNutt Construction. A special Thank You to Jack for being this year's Major Event Sponsor.

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Throughout the afternoon, guests were busy perusing more than sixty items on our silent auction tables. They included a variety of lovely themed baskets, overnight stays, sports memorabilia, wine tastings and beautiful jewelry. We had a spectacular display of items due to the overwhelming creativity and expertise of our Admissions Director, Martine Lyle and her sister, Michele Anderson. Thanks to long time supporters of The Larkin Center, Roberta Nauman, Chuck Cassell, Dallas and Delores Ingemunson and Friends of the Fox River, we offered canoe trips, stays in Lake Geneva and Door County, Cubs tickets and an original watercolor which were among the items sold to guests during our live auction.



Honorary Chef, Juan Ortiz at Napolitano's



"I refuse to ever be hurt again. I refuse to give up on life or myself. I refuse to feel sorry for myself. What I've been through has made me a stronger person."



Mary Peabody Winner, project CREATE inC.

Left to right: Jenny Steagall, Jill Calcagno, Wanda Dees and Jarene King

This year we were fortunate enough to have eleven different Chefs participate and serve a specialty item from each of their restaurants, including our honorary Chef, Juan Ortiz from Napolitano's restaurant in South Elgin. Our keynote speaker was David Kaptain, our new Mayor of Elgin and our very prestigious Mary Peabody award was given to project CREATE inC. This award was given to a wonderful team of women who have dedicated their mission to our Park Row Group Home.

Rounding out the day all of our guests were delightfully entertained courtesy of Gordon James on keyboard. If you haven't heard him, Gordon also plays at the Unitarian Universalist Church of Elgin. Thanks to Roberta Nauman for introducing Gordon to us, and a special Thank You to all of our sponsors, guests, committee members and volunteers who made our annual brunch a great success!



Left to right: Jeff Turner and son, Michael Hull, Dave Hassan, Mark Martell and assistant, Juan Ortiz and assistant, Wendy Wessel and John Pilafas.

Hit the shot you know you can hit.

Our 17th Annual Golf outing was held on Monday, May 23rd at Mill Creek Golf Club set in the gentle rolling hills of Geneva. Guests were invited to experience a course created with beauty and challenge and to play a game at a level that would test their shot-making abilities. Thanks to this year's committee members, we had a variety of sponsors who supported the event and contributed to the overall success of our outing. Wells Fargo was our Event Sponsor and our Masters

Sponsor for 2011 was Thrivent Financial for Lutherans. We added more contests this year and also offered our guests an opportunity to purchase an all-in-one contest packet at registration complete with Mulligans, contest chances and a scratch-off score card for an opportunity to win cash. Golf Pro Dewey Lewis from Cog Hill joined us again and did a fantastic job of raising money for our agency. Michael McGuire of J. Krug & Associates, Inc. and Jim Wheeler, PGA Teaching Professional assisted us by offering a putting



Left to right: Michael McGuire and Jim Wheeler



analysis as well as the basic fundamentals of set-up and golf swing. "Woody" from Woody Buick GMC in Elgin provided us a beautiful 2011 Buick Regal for our hole-in-one contest as well as prizes of other golf related items at all the other par 3 holes.

Hole in one swing!



Our own Guy Larson was a lucky hole-in-one winner of a set of Callaway RAZR X Irons, Congratulations, Guy. We offered a number of silent auction items that appealed to all age levels as well as family-friendly items. Donations of an overnight stay at The Geneva Inn in Lake Geneva, tickets to a Bears vs. Minnesota Vikings game, four box seat tickets to a Chicago Cubs vs. San Francisco game, a one week condo stay in Las Vegas and a baseball hat signed by none other than "Mr. Cub" Ernie Banks, were just a few of the fabulous live auction items that guests were eager to bid on. We received rave reviews regarding the choice of venue and we are looking forward to next year's "Scramble for Kids" golf outing. Many thanks go out to everyone who helped make this a very prosperous event.



Our hole in one prize from Woody Buick GMC



Mr. Dewey Lewis raising money for The Larkin Center children.

"Why am I using a new putter? Because the last one didn't float too well".
- Craig Stadler -

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Summer always means one thing, school is out! The Larkin Center School finished the 2010-2011 school year with a bang hosting events and honoring achievements. This summer we will look back at the exciting ending to the spring quarter and look ahead as to what's to come in the fall for the 2011-2012 school year.

Everyone played a part in this year's Spelling Bee and was a first ever all school activity. Students competed for classroom prizes of gift cards to local restaurants. Each class had a representative to compete in spelling from a list of age and skill appropriate words, but the entire class practiced and proved to be a team effort by showing their support and rooting for their classmate.

The kids performed their talents at the school talent show in acts including singing, dancing, and even had everyone laughing to their favorite jokes. They did an amazing job and the audience was very involved and encouraging. It was heartwarming to see the students in the audience motivating those on stage that had a little bit of stage fright.

The kids' scientific creativity was outstanding in this year's science fair. There were 8 booths set up with different experiments where they displayed what they learned in the classroom, explored it, and took it to the next level. They presented what they learned about auto engineering, tested absorption using different paper towels, took fingerprints and

identified them, took attendees' blood pressure, did a little mystery taste testing of fat free and regular crackers, and even proved the power of air pressure by lifting the weight of a person on a board.

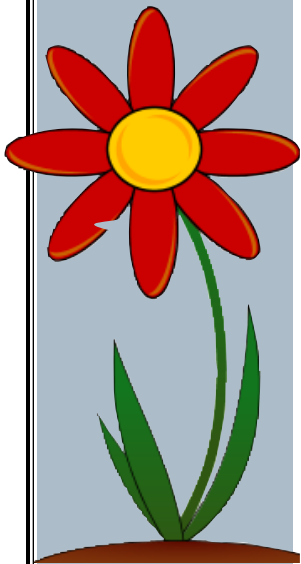
We are very proud of our recent graduates and students who excelled this year! Every classroom presented their students with awards including Academic Honors (3.0 and 4.0 GPA), Behavior Honors, Sports Awards, and Personal Accomplishment Awards.



The Larkin Center's Executive Director Dennis Graf, Larkin School Principal Richard Howard, and Board Member Jack Hein spoke during the ceremony and gave the kids great motivation to continue on to reach their goals. We are pleased to announce that two out of the three high school graduates announced that they have been accepted into college and will be attending this autumn. Congrats! We wish them the best and look forward to their success.

Larkin Center School is thrilled to announce the following programs which will be available this upcoming school year thanks

to the funding provided from DCFS (Dept. of Children and Family Services). A new eight-computer lab has been installed for the beginning use of all Larkin Center School students during the fall of the 2011-2012 school year. This program offers a complete curriculum online for students in K-12, as well as enhancements such as Discovery Education, Brain Pop, and online subject specific tutorials. The program will also allow those students who are part of The Larkin Center residential program to be involved in credit recovery remotely at their specific group home. Larkin Center School will also begin to offer a specific classroom with a component of outreach to the community to develop job-training experiences with the cooperation and support of STEP (Secondary Training and Experience Program) for students that have completed their high school credits and remain in Special Education as a result of Transition to employment and adult living. They will participate in school-based jobs, community job shadowing, and volunteer work; building upon a personal resume enhancing their confidence and self-image so that securing employment in the community is possible. With these programs their opportunities to learn will continue to expand and our students will be better prepared for work life.



"Forgiving does not erase the bitter past. A healed memory is not a deleted memory. Instead, forgiving what we cannot forget creates a new way to remember. We change the memory of our past into a hope for our future."



One step at a time.

The Stair System is what The Larkin Center School uses to measure the students' behavioral and academic improvement throughout the year. This System progresses from Stair One through Stair Four and finishes at High Stepper, when we usually begin communicating with school districts about transition back to the student's home school. BRAVO is the special rewards program that coincides with the Stair System and is used to be an incentive tool to motivate students towards a positive progress. We have found that emotionally challenged children respond well to earned activities and that this leads to establishing more positive behavior creating patterns of success. The BRAVO committee at the school (run by teachers, therapists, and support staff) plans periodic celebrations both in and out of school such as Ice Cream Socials, board game tournaments and Halloween and Christmas parties. Typically 25-30 kids earn these activities. They also plan trips such as those made to the Marcus Theaters, the Bowling Alley or the Shed Aquarium for students who have excelled in making behavioral and academic progress and have earned points to move up in our Stair System. This year the Shed Aquarium trip was for the highest point earning students and was meant as an exclusive reward, eight kids made the requirements. We're always looking for ways to add more rewards to expand the opportunities the kids will work toward, meanwhile improving their self management of behaviors.

Thanks to the support from the Dunham Fund, we have successfully completed the installation of a new chiller system and repairs to the existing chiller system. The continued support from grant providers has greatly helped us to continue providing services to children in need.



We would like to recognize those dedicated staff who are celebrating monumental anniversaries. Thank you for your continued service!

Thirty Year

Ward, Larry
Taylor, Mark

Twenty Year

Kennon, Melvin E.

Fifteen Year

Potter, Michelle

Ten Year

Johnson, Suzanne L
Kraakevik, John
Smith, Karen
Clark, Terry
Steven, Theresa

Five Year

Lewis, DeAngela
Thomas, Ronald
Betancourt, Guadalupe
Weidner, Arthur

One Year

Morecraft, Christopher
Roelke, Michael
Robinson, Fred
Huebner, Jessie
Traudt, Lindsey
Arens, Andrea
Smith, Kylee
Fleming, McLaughon III
Woodard, Ryan
Hoban-Martinez, Mary



"I refuse to ever be hurt again.
I refuse to give up on life or myself.
I refuse to feel sorry for myself.
What I've been through has made me a stronger person."



Upcoming Events

Help The Larkin Center Provide Direction to Hundreds of Children and Adults.

The Larkin Center invites you to join the fun by participating in the next community event. Any level of participation is encouraged.

Join us as a guest or get involved with a volunteer team to make it happen. Join in the fun! There is an event or volunteer program for everyone.

Call The Larkin Center's Development Department at 847-695-5656 ext. 263 or 217.

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Larkin Center's 2011 Giving Tree

Yes, we start this early to get ready for the holiday season! Help fulfill the holiday wishes of nearly 200 Larkin Center clients and families. We are asking our community businesses and groups to get involved in this worthwhile program. Your participation is so very important because it provides our children and families with food for the table, warm winter coats and gifts to open on Christmas morning. If you are looking for an interactive, charitable holiday program that requires virtually no effort on your part, please call Claudia Van Delinder at 847-695-5656 X217 for further information on how you can participate.



Thank You Donors

These organizations and foundations have provided much needed funding and we would like to acknowledge their support and extend our gratitude for sharing our mission.

Elgin Cosmopolitan Club- received \$2,000
Residential Nurses Program

Bethlehem Lutheran Church- received \$500
Activity Therapy

Fidelitors Charities of Elgin- received \$1,250
Bed frames and mattresses

United Way of Central Kane- received \$15,000
Community Counseling and Services

Ms. Lisa Wienecke- \$2,000 - received \$2,000
Educational Services



Our Adult Program believes in giving back to the community in a significant way.

Many families are unable to provide a gift to celebrate a special occasion for a loved one and through the efforts of our Adult Program and the organization "Party in a Bag" it becomes a reality. Throughout the year our Adult Program raises funds through a recycling project, private client donations and the infamous "Feed the Cow" fine collection. Last year when volunteers came out to clean out the basement of our Summit facility, one lonely ceramic cow who lost an ear was left behind. We adopted this cow and now he serves as a reminder that certain behavior will cost you a fine so our mascot the cow must be fed.

Over \$300.00 has been raised and has provided six birthday parties, care packages to our soldiers, funding for earthquake victims in Japan and a donation to the Red Cross.

Who would have thought one lonely, one eared cow would have been the catalyst for so much giving.

