

LISTENING EAR

Volume XII. Issue 2

July 2008

The mission of Listening Ear is to provide citizens of Michigan with human services and affordable housing that satisfy, support, and promote the dignity and well-being of those in need.

REASONS YOUNG PEOPLE BECOME HOMELESS

- They are left behind by a parent..
- They are running from abuse.
- They are kicked out of the family home.
- They are youth in foster care or court placement who may be aging out of the system.

Dear Readers,

It is tough being a young person on ones own. It is nearly impossible to get an apartment without credit or references. It is very hard to stay in school or get a job without experience, transportation or support. Few homeless youth know how to budget or prepare food.

Listening Ear was fortunate to be one of a dozen Michigan providers awarded a five year grant in 2004 to support Transitional Living (TLP) for homeless youth and young adults. We are reapplying to provide services for another five years.

This spring, Erin Rubingh, the TLP Case Manager, has focused on building the life skills of youth in the program. Youth are encouraged to take part in weekly group activities including meal preparation. Each youth is given the chance to follow a budget, plan a meal, shop for food, cook and share their meal. Youth practice money management and decision making while their self reliance grows.

Donald Schuster
Executive Director

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TRANSITIONAL LIVING PROGRAM

Succeeding on one's own



Erin Rubingh says homeless young people that receive support and work toward goals can be self-reliant in less than two years. "We take one step at a time. Most youth this age have an adult to support them. There is a lot to learn to succeed on one's own."

Like thousands of young people across the nation each year, 17-year-old Leann * could not go home. She and her mother were in constant battles. She never felt safe around her mom's boyfriend. To get out of the house she would go to her boyfriend's.

Last winter, Leann learned she was pregnant. The boyfriend is long gone. Her mother threw her out and said she is not moving back.

Leann slept on various couches until she had worn out her welcome. Finally, someone told her about Listening Ear's Transitional Living Program (TLP). The TLP program offers youth a safe place to set and work toward goals. It serves older, homeless youth ages 16 - 21 years old in Isabella or Clare Counties and surrounding areas. Youth working toward self-sufficiency, in an atmosphere of self-help, are provided guidance, financial assistance and a range of services for up to 18 months.

TLP Case Manager Erin Rubingh, B.A.A., notes that each youth comes in with different levels of maturity and skills on which to build. Some homeless youth enter the program with unmet medical needs, have histories of being abused and neglected, and, many have had inconsistent parenting.

**Leann is a fictitious composite.*

Continued on page 3.

We are thankful for these endowment contributors (gifts made since the last newsletter). . .

MORE Generous Donors.
Many thanks go to...

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE TREATMENT FUND

- Janet P Adams
- Elizabeth Jackson, M.S., R.D.
- Albert Kaufmann Jr.

LISTENING EAR CRISIS CENTER FUND

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CONSUMER NEEDS & DREAMS FUND

- Laura Faber
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- Michael Libbee & Kristin Sheridan
in memory of Katherine Utterback
- Mr. & Mrs. Russell Logan
in honor of Laura J. McBride
- Barbara J. Vos

- **Strong Family Safe Children** in Clare County awarded \$5,000 and in Isabella County granted \$10,000 for Child Sexual Abuse Treatment Services.
- **The Mt. Pleasant Area Community Foundation** for the gift of \$2,900 for 2-1-1 start-up costs.
- The Family of Gerald Bauer - **Sally A & I. Gary Conn** - that made a Memorial gift for the Adams Street home.
- The Family of Sandra Hall - **William & Betty Ann Douglas** -that made a Memorial gift for the Weatherhead home.
- **CMU's Student Social Work Association**, made up of students majoring or interested in the social work, who sponsored Movie Night for the Child Foster Care program's monthly recreation event. Thanks also go to **Jenna Trainor, CMU Intern**, who helped to organize the spring activities. The program is also grateful for the generous gift of \$300 made by the **Mt. Pleasant Eagles Aeries 4463 toward an activity called Do the Dishes**, and the food contributed by **Fazoli's** to help toward the monthly recreational, arts and cultural outings.
- **The Faith Weavers of St. Mary in Mt. Pleasant** who 'adopted' a TLP family for a year and helped a young mom with \$512.19 toward utilities, baby safety gates, diapers and formula, and spring clothing. (See page 3)

Need Help with Rent or Utilities?

With rising gas prices and increasing food costs, some families may need help with rent and utilities. Kathy Tarrant, Crisis Center Director, says that "There are several organizations that may be able to help people in Clare or Isabella Counties with housing costs – including those about to be evicted.

The first step, she says, is to make contact with the Department of Human Services (DHS). Be sure to ask what ID and paperwork items you must bring with you. DHS may give you a written decision about what, if anything, they may be able to offer. Keep this paper to use during the next steps.

Next, call Listening Ear (in Isabella County call 772-2918 or in Clare County call 386-2774). Crisis Center staff may provide you with more help options. "Each referral given might have different rules and requirements. Call each agency first to find out whether you need an appointment and what you need to bring (like proof of income) to the appointment."

It is worth noting that HUD just announced that stimulus payments (tax rebates being issued by IRS) do not affect a family's eligibility or level of HUD rental assistance benefits. Tarrant also adds, "Not all helping organizations have money all the time – funds run out."

(See back cover for more housing information.)

Growing into self-sufficient adults

The Y.E.T.I., or Youth Empowerment Team Initiative, are teens from the agency's Child and Family Services programs who help to plan youth activities, volunteer and give their perspective on programs. The effort models the Positive Youth Development approach promoted by the federal Family and Youth Services Bureau which suggests that helping young people to achieve their full potential is the best way to prevent them from engaging in risky behaviors. When youth have the chance to exercise leadership, build skills, and get involved in their communities, they gain self-confidence, trust, and practical knowledge that helps them grow into healthy, happy, self-sufficient adults.

In some parts of the world Y.E.T.I. means that legendary wild man. At Listening Ear it refers to a group of youth consumers who grow while giving back.

If you wish to have your name removed from the general newsletter mailing list, please notify Donald Schuster, Executive Director, Listening Ear, PO Box 800, Mt Pleasant, MI 48804-0800 in writing or email dschuster@listeningear.com.

**TRANSITIONAL LIVING PROGRAM
SUCCEEDING ON ONE'S OWN**

Continued from page 1:

With her baby due this summer, Leann was grateful that she'd found help at last. She told Erin, her Transitional Living Program (TLP) case manager, that she had nowhere to live and no money (she used the last of her money for baby toys and a pair of new earrings) but that she was determined to get a high school diploma.

"Transitioning homeless youth into independent self-sufficient adults is no easy task," says Erin. "It is remarkable to see how much responsibility some of these youth have shouldered."

Erin works with each youth to develop their own plan for success and helps connect them with community resources. TLP youth must agree to follow the rules and be willing to use the five level system of achievements and rewards.

Now at level three, Leann is learning life skills like budgeting and bank accounts. She has a part time job, plans to reenroll in school after the baby is born, and, has signed up for a class to learn about taking care of a baby. Leann said, "Before TLP, I didn't have the faintest idea how to finish school and still pay for food, rent, heat, and all the things my baby will need."

One special TLP young mom and her child were fortunate to have become the first "Adopted Family." The Service and Justice Committee of the Faith Weavers of St. Mary made a year long commitment to help as this single mom makes progress toward her goals. Their gifts to date have helped toward utility and items for the child. Contact Erin at 773-6904 Ext. 294 if your group is interested in helping homeless youth make a new start.

GRANT SUPPORTED TLP

The Transitional Living Program (TLP) at Listening Ear is supported primarily with federal grant funds along with some local funding from the United Ways of Isabella County and Clare County. The program also is grateful to the many helping agencies and businesses that contribute and donate their services.

Congress created the TLP for Older Homeless Youth as part of the 1988 Amendments to the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act. Listening Ear was awarded a five year grant in 2004 from the Department for Health and Human Services Administration for Children, Youth and Families to establish the first Transitional Living Program service for homeless youth in mid Michigan.

The federal Family and Youth Services Bureau requires TLP's to provide homeless youth, including pregnant and parenting young people, with up to 18 months of stable, safe living accommodations and support services that help them develop the skills necessary to move to independence. At Listening Ear, residential services are provided through licensed foster care families or through supervised apartments.

Skills training must include basic life skills such as consumer education, budgeting, using credit, housekeeping, menu planning and food preparation, interpersonal skills to establish positive relationships, make decisions, and manage stress, educational advancement (GED, college or post-secondary training, and, career counseling and job placement. Support services must include mental and physical health care, and, education, information, and counseling to prevent, treat, and reduce substance abuse.

Listening Ear is currently preparing a new TLP grant application to request funding for the next five years. Feel free to share your experiences or request information by emailing Jcussans@listeningear.com.

THANK YOU TO THESE UNITED WAY DONORS WHO SELECTED LISTENING EAR DURING 2007...

- | | | |
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KUDOS! ALSO GOES TO LISTENING EAR PROGRAM DIRECTOR MARK ELLIS WHO LED THE UNITED WAY DRIVE. LISTENING EAR EMPLOYEES PLEDGED \$11,438 DURING 2007 FOR THE UNITED WAY OF ISABELLA COUNTY.

AGENCY UPDATES

Listening Ear is pleased to welcome new staff and announce changes in the roles of some staff. Welcome to **Christine Candelaria**, Part-Time I Mental Health Technician for the Crisis Center, who transitioned from CMU volunteer to paid staff.

The March 2008 AIRS News issue, a nationwide publication of the Alliance of Information & Referral Systems, Inc., recognized **Stephanie Fritz** and **Kathleen Tarrant** of the Crisis Center for having been designated Certified Information & Referral Specialists.

Teagen Lefere, having completed the MSHDA Links to Home Ownership counselor training, is offering free home buyer education, financial management education, and, foreclosure prevention services. Call (989) 773-6904 Ext. 228 for a day or evening appointment. Also see www.michigan.gov/mshda for rental assistance and more housing resources.

Check out the updated webpage at www.listeningear.com! Contact nwanek@ListeningEar.com with comments.

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-FOCUSING ON WHAT PEOPLE CAN DO 24 HOURS A DAY-

JULY 2008 ISSUE

Listening Ear Crisis Center
107 E Illinois, P.O. Box 800
Mt. Pleasant, Michigan
48804-0800
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FAX: (989) 772-5339
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