

Listening Ear is pleased to welcome new personnel and congratulate those who have made advancements

**Congratulations to:**

- Marin Wood was promoted to Assistant Program Director at the Lynnwood home in Residential Services Central.
- April Higgins, B.S. Foster Care & Certifications Worker successfully completed the nine week Child Welfare Training Institute Pre-Service Training.
- Carol Banks, B.S.W., LBSW, Child Foster Care Team Leader, successfully completed the Department of Human Services Mi-Team Train the Trainer training.
- Matthew Main, B.S., Mental Health Technician/2-1-1 Call Specialist in the Crisis Center, who received his Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and Sociology and Substance Abuse Education: Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment Minor from Central Michigan University;
- Julia Sabo, B.A.A., Mental Health Technician/2-1-1 Call Specialist in the Crisis Center, who received her Bachelor's Degree in Family Studies and Substance Abuse Education: Prevention, Intervention, and Treatment Minor from Central Michigan University; Julia completed her internship in the Crisis Center and was hired in December.

**Welcome to:**

- Lucinda (Cindy) Croke hired as Assistant Program Director at the Clare home in Residential Services Central.

If you wish to have your name removed from the newsletter mailing list, please write:

**Executive Director, Listening Ear**  
**P.O. Box 800**  
**Mt Pleasant, MI 48804-0800**

or, email dschuster@listeningear.com.  
 If you want more information about us, please visit our website at www.listeningear.com or see www.guidestar.org.

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RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

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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.

April 2013  
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# Listening EAR

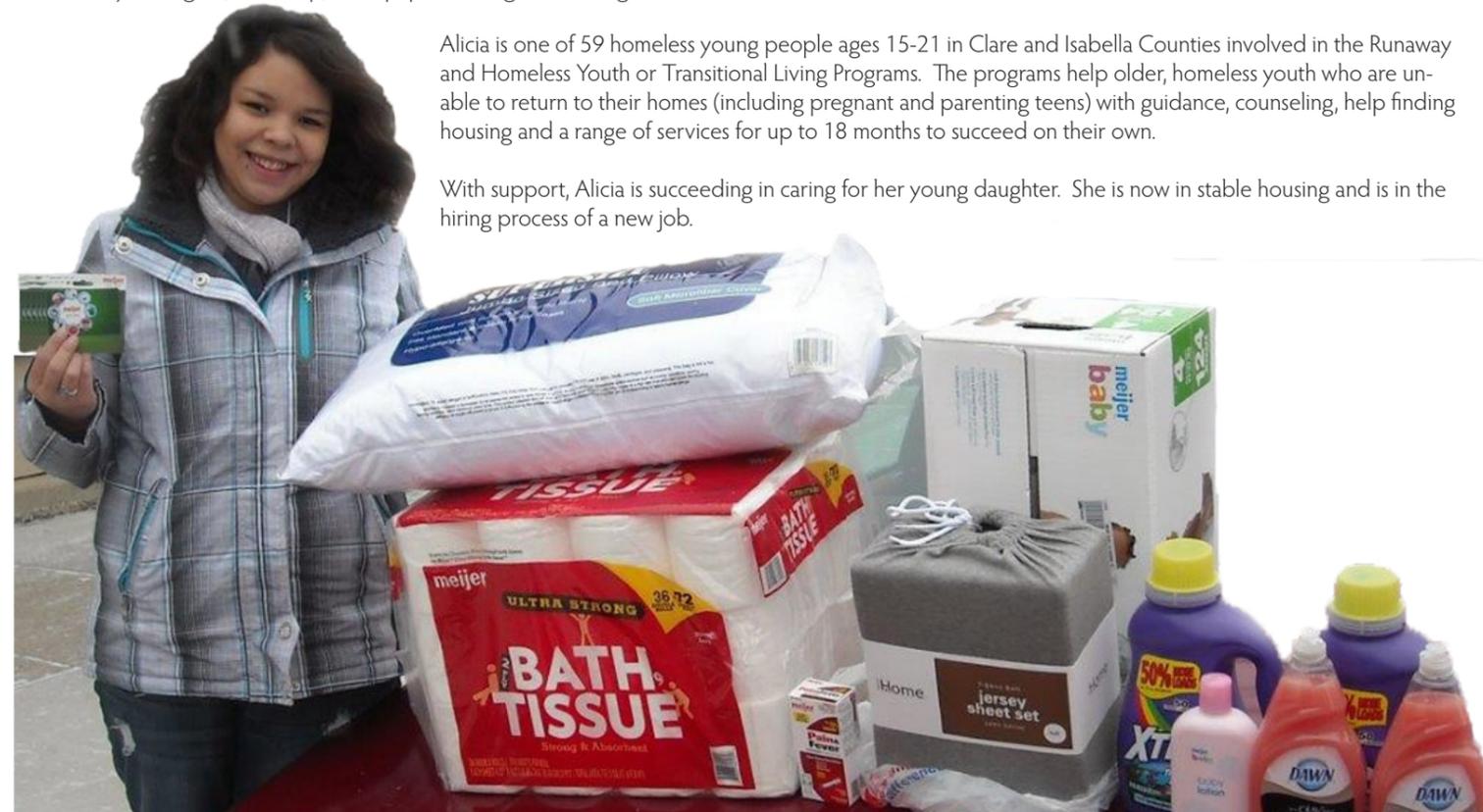
## GRATEFUL

It is tough being on your own - especially when you are homeless and have a young child. Alicia, served by the agency's Transitional Living Program, was grateful to receive these gifts for herself and her young child during the holidays. Thanks to a contribution from the Mountain Town Society of Kapnismologists c/o The Smokers Club, two young families received needed household and baby items during the holidays.

The club requested that their gift benefit young people with children. Using their generous gift, Listening Ear was able to purchase sheets for Alicia that will fit a recently donated bed. She also received a pillow, baby lotion, baby cough medicine, diapers, laundry detergent, dish soap, toilet paper and a gift card for gasoline.

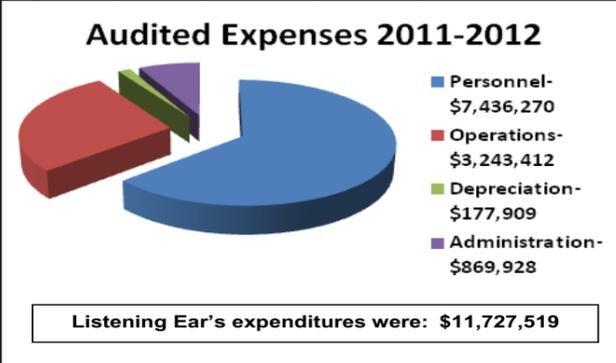
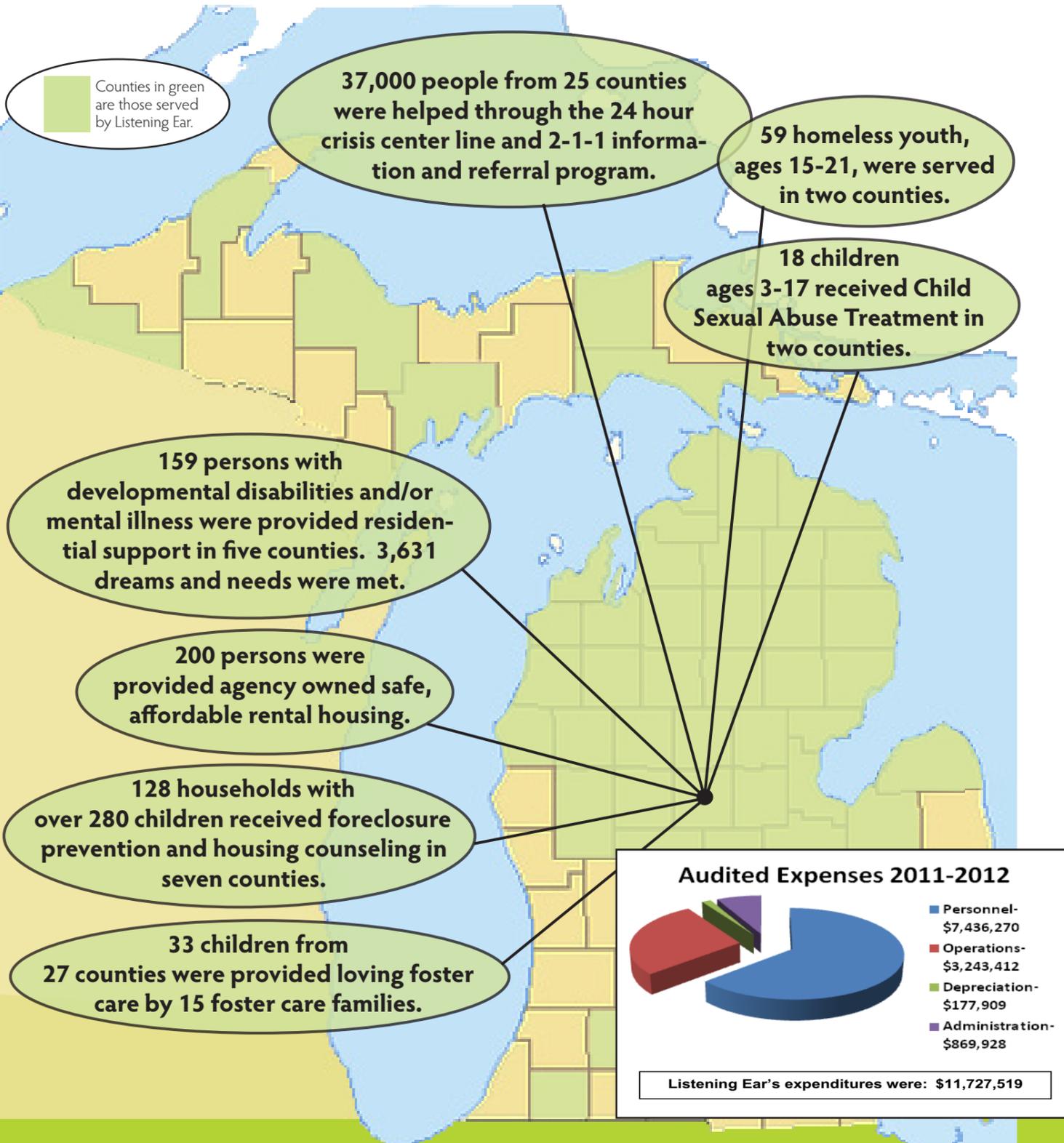
Alicia is one of 59 homeless young people ages 15-21 in Clare and Isabella Counties involved in the Runaway and Homeless Youth or Transitional Living Programs. The programs help older, homeless youth who are unable to return to their homes (including pregnant and parenting teens) with guidance, counseling, help finding housing and a range of services for up to 18 months to succeed on their own.

With support, Alicia is succeeding in caring for her young daughter. She is now in stable housing and is in the hiring process of a new job.



# LISTENING EAR ANNUAL REPORT

Last year 38,000 children and adults from 46 Michigan counties were provided a variety of services by 400 caring employees



## My foster care experience

This is my story as a foster child. I hope it helps someone understand me better about how I feel about foster care. Since the age of 3 I've been in foster care. There have been a few times I thought I was going to be adopted, those promises always fell short. I heard adopting a child is such a powerful, emotional experience that it's hard for parents to put it into words.

Becoming a foster parent must be a rewarding experience. The hardship children go through including me is unbelievable and I cannot imagine the emotional distress we go through. It's nice to know there are caring individuals out there willing to help. As a young child growing up in foster care, I had some fun times, but most of the time I was sad and depressed. I felt like no one understood my feelings or cared about me. I was angry at the world for taking me away from my parents. I was three-years-old when I was placed into foster care, and missing my parents was the hardest thing I ever had to deal with. Since then, I've been placed with several families and group homes. I really wanted a family to love me, over the years, I was placed into some really good homes, and they would eventually give up on me. My feelings became numb after failing so many times.

When I met my current family, I was thinking a lot about how this family is going to be different than every other family. They have a pretty big home, and I instantly fell in love with their two dogs. I knew right away that this home felt like how home was supposed to feel. I couldn't wait to be placed there. I wanted them to be my family. I'm the happiest I've been in a long time, I couldn't ask for better parents. They love me, even though I not their real child.

(Written by a youth in foster care)

## An Incredible Foster Care Family

Ruth Brandon and Marie Fretz became licensed as child foster care providers three years ago. Because of their own past experiences, they wanted to help kids feel welcomed as part of a family. Fostering is a way they can give back to those that helped them earlier in life. Since becoming foster parents, Ruth and Marie have taken in 14 youth. One youth has been with them almost three years. Many of their fostered youth who have since moved on, continue to keep in contact and visit when they are in the neighborhood. Marie stated that, "They are still family. Your job doesn't stop when they turn 18. The most rewarding thing is when one of our kids is able to overcome their adversities and turn their lives around." Ruth and Marie are strong youth advocates. Children participate in after-school activities and family outings (such as going to the water park, camping or trips to Frankenmuth). Ruth and Marie recognize the importance of children keeping ties with their biological family, when appropriate. They consider their work to be a team effort with parents. Parents have expressed gratitude that their children were able to become part of the Brandon/Fretz family.



Listening Ear has 16 trained, licensed child foster care families in 8 counties. If you are interested in providing loving, nurturing care to children, contact April Higgins at (989) 773-6904 Ext. 229.

## We are thankful for these supporters!

(Gifts made since the last newsletter)...

### LISTENING EAR CRISIS CENTER FUND

- Anonymous
- Betsy Banta
- Mt Pleasant Community Counseling
- Ross & Shelly Rapaport
- Debra Smilo, PhD, PC
- Lori & Todd Swarts
- Earl & Georgann Schuster in honor of Don Schuster
- Blaine & Sharon Stevenson
- Kathy Tarrant
- William & Dorothy Theunissen
- Don & Sally Wiper in honor of Don Schuster
- James & Carol Wojcik

### CONSUMER NEEDS & DREAMS FUND

- Laurie Booth
- Dykstra & Phyllis Heinze
- Jane Kipp
- D Jean Powell
- Richard & Carol Tacket
- Richard Young

### CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE TREATMENT FUND

- Anonymous
- Norma Bailey
- Ed & Nedra Fisher
- Dykstra & Phyllis Heinze
- Danny & Barbara Heller-Burstein
- Ronald & Marcia LeClear
- Martha & John Mater in honor of Michael Libbee & Kristin Sheridan
- Debra Smilo, PhD, PC
- Ronald & Margaret Vredevelde in memory of Sheri Vredevelde
- Sherry Wentworth

### SCHUSTER FAMILY ENDOWMENT FUND

- Donald Schuster
- Sanda Wiper

### GENERAL DONORS & GRANTMAKERS - Thank you to:

- The Leppien Foundation for the grant toward operating the Crisis Center
- The Rollin M. Gerstacker Foundation for the grant toward empowering youth with activities and recreation
- Mt. Pleasant Optimist Club for the grant toward empowering youth with activities and recreation
- Nancy & John Eaton for the gift toward Holiday baskets for Transitional Living Program youth
- Robert & Marilyn Bienz for the gift toward Holiday baskets for Transitional Living Program youth
- Mountain Town Society of Kapnismologists (MTSOK)/Smokers Club for the gift for Transitional Living Program youth
- Timon Tesar for the gift for Crisis Center operations
- Paul & Carolyn Buiten made a gift to the Crisis Center

### PHIL A. LANGLOIS ENDOWMENT FUND FOR LISTENING EAR

- Anonymous
- Gregory & Cecilia Bator
- Brian & Julia Becker in memory of Phil Langlois
- Dr David & Colleen Bremer
- Timothy & Teresa Coscarelly
- Mark & Patricia Cwiek in honor of Theresa Cwiek
- Robert & Catherine Janson
- David & Linda Kolenbrander
- Jeanette Langlois
- Kevin & Melissa and Mark & Anne Langlois
- Michael Libbee & Kristin Sheridan
- WE Martin Foundation
- Carol Meixner
- Jackie Randall
- Terry & Marcia Stacy
- Donald Schuster in honor of Jan Strickler
- VFW Joe Ulsh Post 8215
- Nancy & Frank Wanek

Phil Langlois was a kind friend with a big heart and so are his friends and family. Just eighteen months ago his friends and family helped establish the **PHIL A. LANGLOIS ENDOWMENT FUND** at the Mt. Pleasant Area Community Foundation. Because Phil was a builder of homes and apartments, it is fitting that the first grant from the fund will impact housing for our neighbors in need.

Last year, 75% of the families who reached out for our support through our Housing Foreclosure Prevention program were able to keep their home and the rest were able to find an affordable place to live. This outstanding rate of success was due in part to the work of our Housing Counselor Teagen LeFere. The program offers information about repayment plans, loan adjustments, legal assistance, financial counseling, consumer education and access to "Step Forward Michigan, Hardest Hit Funds" from Michigan State Housing Development Authority. Through the guidance offered, households are able to have open communication with the lenders with access to legal assistance.

According to Donald Schuster, the Director of Listening Ear, "I believe Phil would be honored to help those in need of stable housing, knowing this program keeps families together and neighborhoods intact." Phil's kindness lives on through this legacy endowment and we are all thankful that this first grant is ensuring people have an affordable home. Phil's friends and family have really made this legacy endowment happen. As one homeowner states, "if it wasn't for this program and support, I would be living in my car, or worse."