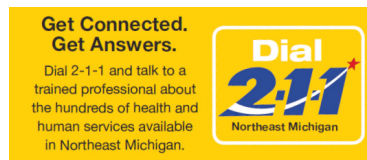


Listening Ear Crisis Center
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Listening Ear is pleased to welcome new personnel and congratulate those who have made advancements —

Congratulations to:

- Jenny Case, Assistant Program Director in Residential Services North at Kresnak, completed CPR, First Aid and AED instructor certification.
- Karen Elkins, R.N., Director of Residential Services North, attended seminars entitled Calming an Overactive Brain, The Impact of Technology on Professional RNs and How to Promote Safe Patient Care Assignments for continuing nursing education.
- Jenny Jacobs, promoted to Program Director at Prairie Creek for Residential LE South.
- Kristie Birchmeier for obtaining Licensed Professional Counselor licensure.
- Sara Sroufe for obtaining certification in Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT).

Welcome to:

- Mental Health Technician/2-1-1 Call Specialists John Lyons, B.S. completing his Master's Degree at CMU and to Megan Width completing her Bachelor's Degree in Psychology at CMU.
- Marissa Pratt, Tavon Watkins and Adrienne Hargo-Thiacos - Transitional Living Program Interns and Amanda Phillips - Runaway Homeless Youth Intern.
- Tamika Williams - Foster Care Intern and Brooke Maxson - Foster Care Intern/Temporary Foster Care Aide.
- Shanay Nicewicz, Assistant Program Director at Prairie Creek for Residential LE South.
- Jessica Ellis, Assistant Program Director at the Isabella AFC home for Residential LE 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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- 2 • Letter from the Director
 • Natural Helpers
- 3 • Supporters
 • Natural Helpers
- 4 • Agency Updates

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.

December 2013
 Volume XVI, Issue 3

Listening EAR

A Healer Honored

A few weeks ago, Listening Ear was informed that Valerie Stephens was entering hospice care due to the progression of cancer. She shared a healing wish, which follows. "Valerie, Guy, and family deeply appreciate that so many wish to support us with prayers and in other ways. The fortunate fact is that we are blessed and our needs simple. We have thought of something that people could actually do that would touch Valerie. Please make donations in honor of Valerie Stephens to: Listening Ear's Child Sexual Abuse Treatment Endowment Fund."

Since Valerie's request was made, over 60 thoughtful friends answered her wish with a generous donation to the Child Sexual Abuse Treatment Endowment within the Mt. Pleasant Area Community Foundation. Her many friends had numerous comments about Valerie and her family's final request. Words written by friends Peter & Angela Haddad sum it up, "Your courage and grace enlightens us to the power and beauty of spirit that we all must strive to access in our lives. Here, in this most solemn of moments, you actually offer an amazing gift to us - that we may do one small act to bring some measure of joy and satisfaction to Valerie in her final weeks with us. We do so with the greatest admiration, respect and appreciation."

Valerie Lynne Stephens of Mount Pleasant, Michigan died of cancer with her family at her side on the morning of November 19, 2013. Valerie served central Michigan as a clinical psychologist in private practice for 25 years and seems to be healing others even after her death. She was a true advocate and healer of others. She leaves a legacy for which we, and the children who will be healed, are very grateful.



Valerie Lynne Stephens, PhD

A list of donors that answered Valerie's call to service is on page 3.

INCREDIBLE COMMUNITY

Dear Readers,

Why we help others is a tough question to answer. It may be our faith, the influence of our parents, a special moment in our lives or maybe we are just a natural helper. Helping others came naturally to Valerie Stephens (featured on the cover.) Gracious in both life and death, her friends and family honored her by supporting her passion.

For me it was a combination of my mother's history of service, my on-going faith and the profound realization of what Mother Teresa said, which is "Love is service in action." As you read the stories about the four different Listening Ear employees highlighted in this newsletter, you will see "love in action" and a glimpse of just a few of our special employees. These are committed, passionate and skilled staff and the strength of Listening Ear. I believe that if the people we serve and support feel that deep sense of caring from our staff, they will realize they are joined with someone who is committed to help them and that may prove to be the difference in their lives.

I am deeply proud to work with such a caring group of people and am inspired each day by the work they do. With their dedication and your support, Listening Ear is able to build a community that is "Always There."

Sincerely,

Donald Schuster, LMSW
Executive Director

BUILDING A COMMUNITY THAT'S *Always There* Meet Four "Natural Helpers"

My Faith Is Strong... Meet Jane

"Each person has a gift to share with this world and my greatest gift is listening to others, especially people with disabilities who do not speak", according to Jane Kipp. "My faith is strong since childhood and it leads me to help others." "For the last 25 years I have been blessed to work at Listening Ear and support people with disabilities in a group home in Harrison."

Jane is known for her positive attitude and making each day fun. Jane states, "I laugh a lot and it seems others laugh with me." "But it is the people I support in the group home who are my greatest teachers." According to Jane, "each person has a special way they communicate and if you really pay attention, help them feel safe and loved, the person will teach you what they are saying even if they do not speak." Jane concludes, "this is very rewarding work and Lord willing, I will continue listening and serving others."

Fulfilling Work... Meet Sharon



Sharon says "we try to wrap the youth with loving foster parents..."

Listening Ear has 17 incredible child foster care parents and four foster care workers serving over 30 foster youth each year through mid and northern Michigan. Sharon states, "Often times, we hear from doctors and teachers who have known the child for years take notice of how the child is improving in their new foster care home. I feel a sense of accomplishment and am recharged every time I see a child's success." Sharon who has worked for Listening Ear since 2005, said, "It's very inspiring to me to see how our foster parents advocate for the youth placed in their care with such ferocity in order to get the best services offered. I'm so proud to work with such great foster care parents."

Sharon sees progress with the children she works with, but also the changes by some of the children's biological parents. "It's just as rewarding to see the child's biological family begin to make repairs in their lives once the burdens of such intense challenging behaviors have been alleviated by voluntarily placing their child into our foster care program. I am so proud of the children, foster care parents and the biological parents working together to meet the child's needs."



Jane says the people she supports are her greatest teachers.

"It's incredibly fulfilling to see a foster youth flourish in a loving foster home," stated Sharon Mikowski, a Listening Ear foster care worker. "We try to wrap the youth with loving foster parents that are supported by our training, frequent contacts and encouragement."

A Promise Made... Meet Sara



Sara says "I get to see their amazing resilience..."

"About 15 years ago, after going through some very difficult times and struggling to find strength and faith, I made a promise to myself and God. If I could make it through this difficult moment, I promise to focus my life on helping others who were going through difficulties," said Sara Sroufe, a therapist for the Child Sexual Abuse Program.

Sara also credits her patient parents for her commitment to helping others. "Some people ask me how it is that I could work in a program for children who are victims of sexual abuse - it is so sad after all. But I feel that I am very fortunate to be able to join with children and their caregivers because I get to witness their healing, and often I get to see them as they shift from being victims to seeing themselves as survivors. I get to see their amazing resilience and see their transformation into confident young adults and that is why I do what I do," Sara said. An employee of Listening Ear for over a decade, Sara has recently become a certified trauma focused CBT therapist. "Sexually abused children are fortunate to have such a skilled and committed therapist," according to Donald Schuster, Director of Listening Ear.

A Natural Healer... Meet Erin

"I have been helping others since childhood," stated Erin Rubingh, a case manager for the Transitional Living Program that focuses on supporting homeless youth. "In middle school I volunteered weekly at the Red Cross Food Pantry and was voted a "natural helper." I was lucky to have loving parents who believed in serving others."

Erin said, "Young people need someone they can speak with who will listen. The young people I see are often abused, neglected, distrustful and lack parental support." Erin has worked with homeless youth for over five years at Listening Ear. She states, "When you start listening and supporting the youth, you find they blossom and succeed." One of the first youth she helped years ago still stays in contact with her. The young man was homeless, had no parents in his life and was bouncing from place to place. "He was very motivated and it was an honor supporting him. With Listening Ear's support, he finished high school, attended college and today is a Police Officer. We spoke recently and he is now married with two children and a home of his own." Erin is a "natural helper" that takes great pride in helping homeless youth succeed in life.

We are thankful for these supporters!

(Gifts made since the last newsletter)...

LISTENING EAR CRISIS CENTER FUND

- Anonymous
- Betsy Banta
- Kathy Tarrant
- Nancy & Frank Wanek in honor of

PHIL A. LANGLOIS ENDOWMENT FUND FOR LISTENING EAR

- Joseph Bohrer & Patricia Brand
- Pamela Burke
- Monica & Malcolm Fox
- Albert & Linda Kaufmann
- Carol Meixner
- Wesley Skinner in memory of Janice Skinner
- William & Janet Strickler

Thank you to these GENEROUS DONORS

- CMU Communications Class 401, Rose Arndt, Donald Schuster, Michele Chapman and Mary Fussman made a gift to the Weekend Recreation Program.
- John and Cleo Leppien made a generous gift to the 24 hour Crisis Program and Transitional Living Program.
- The Rollin M Gertacker Foundation helped to upgrade our conference center as an emergency housing and evacuation site.
- Isabella Bank made a generous three year pledge to support homeless youth in the Transitional Living Program.
- A gracious pledge from Don & Marilyn Price for the Weekend Recreation Program in memory of Al & Millie Thomas.
- Living Program.
- Fraternal Order of Eagles Aerie 4540 toward the Foster Care Holiday party.
- Robert & Marilyn Beinz and Nancy & John Eaton made gifts supporting the Transitional Living Program Holiday baskets.
- Firstbank made a generous three year pledge to support homeless youth in the Transitional Living Program.

CONSUMER NEEDS AND DREAMS FUND

- Linda Vos-Graham

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE TREATMENT PROGRAM FUND

- Page Olsen & Company
- Caryn Mehler in honor of Debbie Robb

The following made gifts to honor Valerie Stephens, PhD.:

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