



HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE CENTER

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Keeping Kids Connected

Last spring The Center Foundation was selected to join in a unique new project, PA Youth In Transition (PAYT) part of the 'Connected by 25' initiative to reengage high school drop-outs and assist youth aging out of foster care. PAYT is a collaboration among the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Labor & Industry, Public Welfare, the Pennsylvania Workforce Investment Boards, PA Career Link System, the PA Partnership for Children, and PA Youth Councils.

This kind of project is greatly needed both in Delaware County and across the country.* Rachel Schendler, YPSN program manager, who recruited and trained the TCF PAYT team said 'I was amazed by what I learned by listening to the teens themselves - one young mother who was pregnant at thirteen said she started having sex at twelve because her friends did and no one told her not to.' Ericka Johnson, Melissa Michel, and Kelly Bradley (*left to right above*) interviewed other teens who had dropped out of school, their families and local agencies in an effort to map resources and identify deficits for out-of-school youth in Delaware County. Kelly said the project inspired her to take and pass her GED. She is now a student at the Pennsylvania Institute of Technology in the Pharmaceutical Technician program and "loves it!" After the teams presented their initial results in May at a community forum Kelly was one of five young people statewide invited to speak at the Pennsylvania Dropout Prevention Summit in Harrisburg in November. We hope to continue the project, including having the teens visit area high schools to present their persuasive case personally to other teens to stay in school.



WomenCare Match Spotlights Then and Now

Joy Smith and Susan Garrison 1998

Stacey Jeffries and Ruth Leach 2008

Joy Smith and Susan Garrison were matched in the first formal WomenCare 'class' in 1998 when Joy and her son L.J. were living at the Women's Alternative Center in Wawa.

Joy's main goal was to further her education to take care of L.J., a feisty, friendly four-year-old and her pride and joy. She was in customer service training at Path-Ways PA, and then enrolled at the Pennsylvania Institute of Technology. She graduated with her Associates Degree in Medical Office Technology in June 1999.

Joy and Susan had lots of fun introducing each other to different kinds of food as well as more serious work like prep for Joy's driver's license, which she also obtained as one of her accomplishments.

Joy moved back to Philadelphia but came excitedly to Susan's law office five years later to tell her of L.J.'s scholarship to Chestnut Hill Academy. He is now an over-six-foot tall junior there, excelling in both schoolwork and sports. Joy has worked at St. Christopher's Hospital for three years. She says "the mentoring really changed me ...and just keeps going... I learned to set goals.. and keeping doing it and passed that on to my son, and we do it together." L.J. hopes to go to law school and will intern at Susan's law office this summer.



Ruth Leach Mentor and Stacey Jeffries, Partner, met in March 2008. Stacey, proud mom of four-year-old Leah, came to WomenCare looking for support as she finished an intensive outpatient recovery program and started to look for employment.

Ruth was just the person to fill that need. They soon realized Stacey needed help dressing for an interview and also workplace clothes. Program Manager, Jane Todd, led them to Wings For Success, a West Chester nonprofit partner providing appropriate attire and wardrobe guidance. She arranged for Stacey and Ruth to go for a fitting in April.

Stacey reported back that it was "awesome, and it was fun having Ruth there with me" getting two pairs of shoes and a new interview outfit plus one for a "Wings" Professional Makeover Day. Stacey was thrilled to have her hair styled, and get make-up tips and accessories giving her a new look. Stacey couldn't have attended these events without the support of Ruth, who provided transportation, encouragement and emotional support.

Several interviews later, along with more shoes and a much needed pair of glasses, Stacey and Ruth celebrated Stacey's new job as a receptionist for Motel 6. Stacey was soon made full-time. Stacey loves being matched with Ruth saying "I talk to her about everything." Ruth says, "Stacey's such a great person. She's picked herself up and she is moving forward." The team is now working on looking for apartments and for programs to help Stacey obtain her high school diploma.



*According to statistics, 2.8 million Americans between the ages of 16 and 24 years are not connected to school or employment. 2005 Pennsylvania Department of Health data showed the teenage pregnancy rate in Delaware County at about 37%. Of these pregnancies 801 children were born to mothers between 15 to 19 years of age; 24 children were born to mothers under the age of 15. Five of Delaware County's school districts have graduation rates lower than the state average.



Notes from the Executive Director

Hope you enjoy this quick read of some highlights of our work the last several months:

- dropout prevention and reengagement work
- life skills training on nutrition, paper and time organization, and stress management
- mentor/mentee recruitment, training and orientation, and support group meetings and YPSN activities and outings
- events like One Hour Wonder and Summer Celebration—for the second year in a row 100% of our seniors graduated!
- marvelous matches and successes
- creating a computer primer for participants
- the updated 2008 Delaware County Women's Resource Guide.



Thanks so much to all who made it all possible.

Porscha Dickerson joined The Center Foundation as a summer intern from Neumann College. Porscha is a junior at Neumann and expects to graduate in 2009 with a Bachelors degree in Computer Information Management. During her time at The Center Foundation Porscha tested and set up donated computers for some of our WomenCare partners and created a resource list and computer booklet including tips for internet safety for children. She also developed a survey to identify partners and mentees who need computers and their primary uses.



Dominique Kidd came to us from Widener University where she is currently a senior studying Communications with a concentration in Multi-Media and Graphic Arts. Dominique was a big sister in the Big Brother/Big Sister program for two years and says that she has a passion for photography and poetry writing. Dominique's skills were well used in interfacing with the teens to edit, design, put together and distribute our latest YPSN summer newsletter.



Eric Boland is a senior at Widener University with a concentration in Psychology and a minor in Management. He is also a Resident Assistant in charge of 300 students. This fall Eric completed the research and development of the new updated and revised 2008 Delaware County Women's Resource Guide complete with websites. He also developed and designed an online participant survey on the effects of the economic downturn. He hopes to work in the field of Industrial or Organizational Psychology and Consumer Behavior after graduation.



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THE CENTER FOUNDATION

220 N. Jackson Street, Second Floor
Media, PA 19063-2807
P: 610-565-6171 F: 610-565-3684
mail@thecf.org
www.thecenterfoundation.org

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