Lifeline

QUARTERLY PUBLICATION

CIRCLE OF CARE

WINTER 2022 V. 40 #4

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A WORD FROM THE PRESIDENT

I called my son this morning on my drive to work. He was at his apartment in Waco packing items before venturing up to OKC for the weekend. As we talked, I reflected on how far he's come. Koby came to live with us when he was placed in foster care at 9 years old. Sometime during that first year, as we drove around the outskirts of Amarillo, he asked, "I wonder what juvie I'll go to?" You see, Amarillo has two juvenile detention centers and as we passed one of them, this is what came to his mind. Honestly, I was taken aback. "Juvie?" I asked, "Why would you think you would ever go there?"

What I discovered was that the idea of being locked up at some point just seemed normal to him. I affirmed to him this was not an option and that I would not be okay with that possibility. Instead, I proposed he had a bright future ahead full of education and success.

Koby is now finishing up his first semester at a trade school. He completed his Construction Trades certificate while in high school and is now pursuing an education in plumbing and pipefitting technology. By the age of 21, my son should be a licensed plumber with an education in plumbing and construction trades. And guess what? He never made it to juvie!

As we enter this holiday season, I'm reminded that Koby's story is similar to so many others out there. Through your generous support, we can change that narrative for so many. That momma in our Pearl's Hope program can see a brighter future, find stability, and experience success. That young adult in our Preparation for Adult Living program can see a future of educational, career, and relational success. That individual struggling with mental health can see hope and healing through our counseling services. And that mom or dad who recently lost their child into DHS custody? Our Parent to Parent program can mentor and help them unfold a future of reunification, restoration, and hope! For every child placed into foster care in Oklahoma, we can provide safe, loving homes that help these children and their parents see a brighter future ahead.

Koby is a hard worker and he has always had the potential to avoid pitfalls, he just needed someone to show him a better future was possible. I've loved watching his future unfold, especially these last few months.

Will you consider giving a gift today so a positive future can unfold for a child just like Koby? Will you continue your partnership with us and invest in bright futures for countless Oklahomans? Thank you for your support and partnership. You are a catalyst to see brighter futures unfold all around us and I am forever thankful for you!

K. Howard

Keith Howard
President & CEO

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Our Team

Open your phone's camera and click the QR code to view.

TOGETHER AGAIN DARLA'S STORY

> "She's very independent and self-sufficient, but has incredible support from friends and family. That's so important."

This October, a group of approximately 40 people gathered at She Brews Coffee House in Tulsa to celebrate and pray. After a challenging period apart, a family was about to be together again.

Darla is the newest client in the Pearl's Hope program. A single mother of four, she battled substance abuse for years and struggled to get sober, even when it put her family's stability at risk. The US Department of Health reports that more than eight million children in the United States live with a parent who struggles with substance abuse, which can cause significant disruption to attachments, social life, and finances. Due to her substance abuse, DHS removed two of Darla's children from her home. Thankfully, however, Darla had a support system in place, including family and mentors who were there to help when she needed it. Some friends agreed to take temporary custody of two of her children. Blessed with people who refused to give up on her, she entered the Pearl's Hope program in September, where her commitment to change was immediately evident.

"She's very independent and self-sufficient, but has incredible support from friends and family. That's so important," Marissa Pirckle, her Pearl's Hope case manager, explained. "She's very eager. She works hard and gets the kids to school every day. She's leveraged the support from others to help change her life."

The Pearl's Hope staff was able to help Darla find employment and a program to deal with her substance abuse. She's put in the work to improve her physical, emotional, and spiritual health. Because others refused to give up on her, she refused to give up on herself. "I'm being the person I always wanted to be but was never able to due to my addiction," Darla says.

By maintaining her sobriety and displaying independence, Darla was able to prove to a judge that she was ready to welcome her kids back into her home. That's why on that October afternoon, Pearl's Hope staff, families from her local church, DHS, and many others gathered as Darla's family was finally reunited.

Her story shows how a beautiful story can unfold when families in crisis are surrounded by support. Darla wants everyone to know how grateful she is for each person who helped her get to this point and provided her the opportunity to be the best version of herself. She plans to stay in the Pearl's Hope program for the full two years to secure a better future for her and her family.

Darla's name has been changed for this article to protect her privacy.

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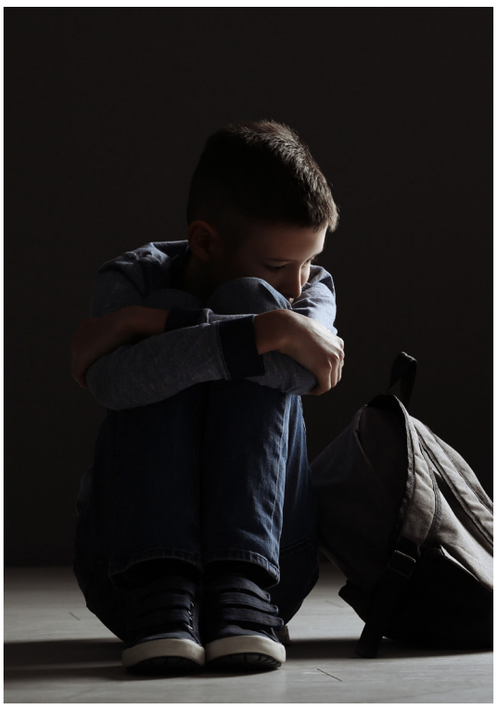
ABOVE & BEYOND ETHAN'S STORY



The Stephen's family describes how Ethan screamed for the first 48 hours he was in their home. They had no training in caring for a child with special needs. Yet they refused to give up.

Ethan entered foster care when he was just three years old. The Stephens family, his first foster parents, describe how he screamed for almost the entirety of the first 48 hours in their home. Due to his autism, Ethan struggled to walk, speak, and eat. He resisted physical touch.

Even though the Stephen's had been through extensive training to be a certified Circle of Care foster home, they had no specific training on caring for a child with special needs. To say that they were overwhelmed would be an understatement. Yet the Stephens refused to give up.

They researched autism and found educational material that helped them understand what Ethan was going through. They found expert advice that gave them strategies to help Ethan feel safe and secure. They reached out to the Circle of Care foster care staff to locate a physical therapist to help Ethan develop his body and motion. In short, the Stephens did whatever it took to make sure their home was a place Ethan could grow and feel loved.

Recently, another foster home opened up with parents who possessed knowledge and experience on how to care for kids with special needs. The Stephens made the difficult choice to continue to do what was best for Ethan and helped him transition to this new foster family.

Today, Ethan is a happy 5-year-old who loves school and enjoys riding the bus. His communication skills are improving all the time and his fits are rare. He even loves hugs!

Circle of Care is proud to provide the best training available to make sure every foster parent is prepared for the challenges of caring for children who have experienced trauma. When needs arise, we strive to go above and beyond, just like the Stephens, to care for every child in our homes. Your generosity has an enormous impact on families like the Stephens and kids like Ethan.

Ethan's and the Stephens names have been changed for this article to protect their privacy.

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Everyone has a story...

Circle of Care's Annual Friends of Children Banquet

2023 Host Cities:

Oklahoma City
Woodward
Enid
Tulsa
McAlester
Tahlequah
Ardmore

If you are interested in helping at any host location, contact Shannon Davis at (405) 219-9327 or at shannon.davis@circleofcare.org.

THE FUTURE IS UNFOLDING

A young girl, at an arts and crafts festival at her school, stood in enraptured silence watching a vendor fold origami paper squares. Cranes, owls, foxes, and frogs gradually emerged with each fold of the paper. Turning to her mother with shining eyes, the girl said, "Mama, that's magic!" Overhearing her excitement, the vendor said to her, "Come sit down and I'll teach you this magic." So the young girl sat at a table and painstakingly tried to follow the instructions for folding a square of paper into a cat face. After a while, the girl looked up from the pile of discarded attempts in front of her and exclaimed, "Mama, magic is hard!"

For our clients at Circle of Care, every day can feel like an exercise in trying to do hard magic. Changing long-held beliefs and habits is difficult but necessary, and our clients show us every day how courageous and committed they are to unfolding a safe, healthy, and spiritual future for themselves and their children. Whether it is a foster parent learning to look behind a child's troubling behavior to the trauma responses causing it, a 19-year-old preparing nervously for his first job interview, or a single mom planning the first sober family Christmas for her children, the kind of life change that Circle of Care clients engage in daily is truly inspiring.

The reality is, there is no magic to it -- it simply takes someone coming alongside to say "You can do this" and then it's just daily hard work, a willingness to change unhealthy mindsets, and a stubborn grip on a vision of a better future. Last month, Circle of Care celebrated its 105th year of helping children, youth, and families unfold a better future. Who among those first brave, big-hearted Methodists, who saw orphans in need and started the Methodist Children's Home in 1917, could have envisioned Circle of Care as it is today: a statewide agency providing foster care services across the state and serving families in multiple communities from nine offices and locations.

Over a century ago, who could have envisioned an organization with multiple programs, not only for children in need of a safe place to live but also for young adults aging out of foster care, single moms working to stabilize their lives, individuals and families in need of mental health services, and even mentorship for parents who have had their children removed from their care and need support as they navigate the difficult road of reuniting with them.

As you read our client stories in this edition of the Lifeline, know that, with support from Circle Care staff, donors, and volunteers (with support from YOU!), they are unfolding a beautiful future, unique to each of them, and full of the magic of real life-change.

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HONORS & MEMORIALS WINTER 2022

Circle of Care sincerely appreciates the following, who support this ministry through the Honors & Memorials program.

IN MEMORY OF

Patricia Meadors
Gregory Meadors

Jerry R. Babbitt
G.W. & Cheryl Lowry

Buster Cockrum
Don & Jean Lewis

Wilburn & Jean Terrell
Marjorie Long

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Delbert Clancy

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O.D. & Mattie Nutting, Jr.
Clark Nutting

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Nancy Muegge

Bob Scholander
Virginia Chaffin

Dave Blakeburn
Mary Jo Blakeburn

Jerry Perryman
Rev. David & Paula Severe

Jerry Perryman
it was a blessing & honor to know him
Bryan & Heather West

Don L. Rodolph
G.W. & Cheryl Lowry

Gladys Rene Nutting
Clark Nutting

Charlie Nicholson
David Hitchinson Cressman

JC & Norma Chandler
Clayton & Rhonda Edwards

Zelma Wade Tharp
Ken & Marty Tharp

Jerry Perryman
Nancy Harris

Clare & Myrtle Williams
my parents
LaVere Bishop

IN HONOR OF

Nancy Griffin
to celebrate her retirement
Becka Redding

Miguel @ The Flying M Ranch
T.N.T Sunday School Class
Fairview FUMC

Karl Skalnik
Cheryl Skalnik

Dale & Jenny Wood
Sammie Harris

We regret any errors or omissions. Help us correct our records by writing Circle of Care, 1501 NW 24th Street, Suite 214, Oklahoma City, OK 73106, or by calling us at (405) 530-2078.

GIVING IN HONOR & MEMORY

To set up your gift, please contact Jaclyn Barnes at jaclyn.barnes@circleofcare.org, or send a check with the remittance envelope included in your Lifeline.

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Tulsa, OK 74127
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