



# SUCCESS STORIES

## FOCUS AREA – HEALTH

### **Goodwill Industries of KYOWVA Area Inc.**

Counties Served: Cabell, Lincoln, Mason, Wayne

#### **Student Seeks Empowerment**

United Way's funding has significantly contributed to the success of Goodwill Counseling and Therapy Services, as demonstrated by the remarkable progress of a rural high school student overcoming severe social anxiety. Initially, they struggled with a depressed mood, concentration issues, excessive guilt, racing thoughts, irritability, and excessive worry, compounded by avoidant behaviors, particularly in social settings. These symptoms were largely due to past bullying experiences that had severely affected their self-worth and social interactions, making daily life a significant challenge and leading to feelings of guilt and worry over perceived distance from family and friends.

The individual was committed to treatment and began their comprehensive therapy journey with a dedicated therapist. Key interventions included exposure therapy to reduce fear and avoidance in social situations gradually, psychoeducation to help the student understand and manage anxiety, and encouragement to utilize support systems from family and friends. Because of these interventions, the client regained a sense of control and empowerment in social situations, showing noticeable improvement in functioning in public environments like stores.

Moreover, the client developed effective coping skills to manage daily anxiety and improved their ability to engage with family and friends, enhancing their overall social interactions. While the client continues to face anxiety challenges, they are now equipped with the tools and strategies to navigate difficult days, demonstrating significant resilience and progress.

## FOCUS AREA – EDUCATION

### **Mason County Library**

Counties Served: Mason, Gallia

#### **Shy Child Blossoms**

E. H. began attending as a very shy child, attached to her mother and reluctant to participate. By the end of the spring session, she was animated, taking turns as leader and making friends. The summer session continued to see her blossoming and engaging with both children and adults.

### **Big Brothers Big Sisters**

Counties Served: Cabell, Wayne, Mason, Lawrence

#### **Match for the Ages**

In 2003, Big Sister Jennifer was matched to her 9-year-old Little Sister Laiken. During her childhood, Jennifer helped Laiken with schoolwork, building confidence, and navigating relationships. As Laiken entered young adulthood the relationship continued. Today Laiken is 25, married to a member of the US AirForce and they, along with their 2-year-old son, are stationed in Japan. She was overjoyed when Jennifer came to visit her overseas, supporting her transition to living in another culture, being a young mother, and making new memories along the way. The power of a mentor is not limited to time, age, distance, or definition.

## FOCUS AREA – EDUCATION

### **Big Brothers Big Sisters**

Counties Served: Cabell, Wayne, Mason, Lawrence

### **Big Sister Supports Youth**

Jessenia is 12 years old and one of nine children. She struggles greatly at school, and is often in trouble for various behavioral challenges. Her Big Sister, Haley, has been by her side through it all. In fact, Jessenia is currently on home confinement awaiting space at a behavioral in-patient assignment. Haley sat next to Jessenia at her hearing, ensuring she had the emotional support she needed and helping her navigate a complicated judicial system. Big Brothers Big Sisters has been able to work with her assigned probationary officer to ensure that our office location is an approved visitation center so Jessenia can continue to have contact with her big sister. These stories remind us that while we can't prevent all ongoing issues with our enrolled littles, we can make sure that no child must face their challenges alone. We can, collectively, ensure that every child has a caring, consistent, and supportive adult like Haley in their lives.

## FOCUS AREA – FINANCIAL STABILITY

### **Tri-State Literacy Council**

Counties Served: Cabell, Mason, Wayne, Lawrence

### **Woman Regains Confidence**

Adult learner C.H. enrolled with the Tri-State Literacy Council in March 2023. C.H. was 40 years old and married with adult children at the time of her enrollment. C.H. had left school in the 10th grade. During her school years, C.H.'s learning disability was incorrectly diagnosed as an intellectual disability. C.H. worked a number of minimum wage jobs over the years before deciding to return to the classroom.

C.H. worked in another adult education classroom with little success before enrolling with TSLC. C.H. was initially assessed at a 4th grade equivalency in both reading and math. Throughout her enrollment, C.H. faced a number of personal tragedies including a medical emergency with her daughter and the death of her father and sister. However, C.H. let nothing stand in her way. She continued to work diligently toward her goal and make reading and math levels gains at every assessment.

C.H. choose to focus on one subject at a time, and in March 2024 she passed the last subject area and received her diploma. C.H. immediately enrolled at Huntington Jr. College in the Medical Assistant program. In June 2024, she stopped by the Learning Center to let us know that she had passed her first semester of school. Her next semester includes Anatomy, she's nervous but with her determination, motivation, and work ethic, TSLC staff are certain she will succeed.

C.H. is a success story, not only because of her impressive accomplishments, but also because of her attitude. In class, C.H. helped and encouraged other learners, and we are certain she will continue to meet her goals.

### **Field of Hope**

Counties Served: Gallia, Lawrence, Mason

### **Young Girl Sets Goals**

Field of Hope helped a young girl with autism. She was a mute until she was 3 years old. Staff said she was such a light to their group of kids and didn't even know it. The first day of summer classes they did a lesson on goals: how to set them, what to do if you find your plan isn't working and so forth. She set a goal to catch 10 fish this summer, and she had never caught a fish or went fishing in her life. With the Field of Hope having a pond on the property, fishing was one of their activities. The end of the program came and she didn't catch 10 fish but she was able to make it to 6! This was an amazing accomplishment, and she planned to still try to reach her goal by fishing with her dad.

## FOCUS AREA – FINANCIAL STABILITY

### **Sojourners Care Network**

County Served: Gallia County

#### **Family Connected with Services**

One couple entered the Sojourners shelter in February, and the young mother had lost her own mother and the couple's 2-year-old son in a car accident in December. Their 3-year-old daughter was thrown out of the car, still secured in the car seat and was found by the guardrail with metal in her face.

While at the Gallia unit, the staff helped this family address the medical, financial, and emotional needs arising from this horrific accident. The toddler had skin graft surgery and saw a surgeon on a regular basis to make sure the graft was growing with her skin. The young mother's main concern was that her daughter was having night terrors and is dealing with this regularly.

They were connected with mental health services and Integrated Services for Behavioral Health worked closely with them to find an apartment. In March, the family was able to move into an apartment, which was so important for the stability and healing of the family. The Gallia Manager transported the young woman to God's Helping Hands where they obtained a bed, bedframe, dresser, dining room table and chairs, a TV and some other household items for their apartment.

## FOCUS AREA – BASIC NEEDS

### **Branches Domestic Violence Shelter**

Counties Served: Cabell, Lincoln, Mason, Wayne

#### **Woman Gets Hearing Aids**

Tori came to Branches later in life. After the death of her husband, Tori began to see a rapid decline in her health and ability to hear. She was forced to move in with a family member. Almost immediately that family member began physically and financially abusing Tori. After arriving at Branches, advocates were able to leverage case management to prioritize getting Tori the hearing aids that would change her life and her chances at success. After a few months, advocates were able to assist Tori in finding new, accessible housing free from the financial and physical control of her family member.

#### **Woman on way to Independent Living**

Abby was facing physical abuse so violent that she suffered a traumatic brain injury – this injury often makes it very difficult for Abby to be able to communicate with others and to control emotional outbursts to things. This has landed her in the position of being labeled difficult to work with and she often feels unsafe to seek services. After yet another violent incident at the hands of her abuser, Abby was able to come to the shelter where her case manager is able to make referrals and arrange benefits on Abby's behalf. Branches staff said they believe that Abby will soon be able to live independently with the care she needs.

### **Children's Home Society**

Counties Served: Cabell, Lincoln, Mason, Wayne

#### **Grandmother Gets Help**

A 72 year-old grandmother raising four grandchildren was referred to the Children's Home Society for assistance. Two of the grandchildren have special needs and one is non-verbal. The grandmother has no respite resources to assist with the care of the children and taking them to the store with her is an exhausting, all-day endeavor. Her monthly income does not support the purchase of enough food to feed four rapidly growing adolescents/teenagers. The Children's Home Society food pantry was able to stock this family's pantry, refrigerator/freezer with a month's worth of groceries. This resource not only alleviated the physical burden for her to go to the store, but also relieved her food budget for the month, allowing her to use those dollars on other necessities.

## **FOCUS AREA – BASIC NEEDS**

### **Backpack Buddies**

County Served: Lawrence County

#### **Young Mother Feels Cared For**

During a recent clothing giveaway, Backpack Buddies were able to ask for volunteers and one of the agencies in their community reached out and said they could help. It is a wonderful group of ladies who are struggling with addiction and are in a recovery program.

Early on a Thursday morning as Backpack Buddies were preparing for their Back-to-School Clothing Giveaway, these ladies came to help. As they began working, one of the girls approached the director of Backpack Buddies and said she wanted to say, "You gave me hope when no one else did or even seemed like they wanted to."

As it turns out, this woman brought her daughters to a previous giveaway event because her children had nothing for the school year. As they began talking she said, "You gave me hope that someone cared about me and my kids when my own family did not."

From Backpack Buddies: "We may not always see or hear the success stories but I truly believe that we are changing the lives of children and families in our community."

### **Cridlin Food & Clothing Pantry**

Counties Served: Cabell, Wayne

#### **Elderly Couple Makes Ends Meet**

Cridlin has an older, very sweet couple, on social security, that comes and visits the food pantry each month. By the time they pay their bills, medicines, car payment, etc., they simply cannot make their dollars stretch as far as they need to. They are so grateful for what Cridlin provides them. They told staff that if it wasn't for Cridlin, they wouldn't have had any Christmas last year. They saved the new underwear and socks and some of the hygiene products Cridlin gave them for Christmas presents for their children. They go around to yard sales and bring the "leftovers" they find as a way to pay Cridlin back and thank them. It allows them to keep their dignity and keep receiving the supplies they so desperately need.

#### **Other Successes**

A mother told Cridlin staff her daughter wouldn't go to school because she had no feminine hygiene products to wear when she needed them. Cridlin was able to provide these. A gentleman told staff he had been washing his clothes with bar soap. Cridlin was able to provide him with laundry detergent. Another gentleman told staff he had been washing his hair with dish detergent. They gave him shampoo.

From Cridlin: "There are many guests we know that are embarrassed about their hygiene and we are able to provide them with what they need to restore their dignity because of the Safety Net Grant from United Way of the River Cities. The United Way and the Safety Net Grant has been crucial in providing these basic needs to those most in need in Cabell and Wayne counties."

### **Gabriel Project**

Counties Served: Cabell, Lincoln, Mason, Gallia

#### **Young Woman Becomes Caretaker**

In April, Anna received emergency custody of her 9-week-old niece. Anna works part-time as a home health aide and receives minimal income. She was able to borrow a crib but quickly realized that she needed more essential items for the baby than she could afford to purchase. The baby's CPS caseworker suggested Anna contact the Gabriel Project for help, one of the many public agency referrals they receive each year. The Gabriel Project provided Anna a new, safety-compliant car seat, formula and diapers. Because of this new car seat, Anna was able to return to her part-time job and transport the baby to/from subsidized day care. "I couldn't believe you gave me a new car seat!" Anna said. "Thank you. You are amazing." Anna is now seeking permanent custody of her niece. The Gabriel Project will continue to assist this new family with diapers and other baby items as needed."