

Adoption • Chemical Health Assessment & Outpatient Treatment

In-Home Services • Foster Care • School Based Services

Outpatient Mental Health Services

Residential: *Treatment Cottage, Boys Program, Teens in Transition, & Next Step*

Girls Program & Teens in Transition

I.T.A.S.K.I.N. Center: *Stabilization Shelter Unit,*

35 Day Evaluation & Detention Center



NORTH HOMES
Children and Family Services

March Newsletter, 2016 * North Homes Children and Family Services

The North Homes

Connection

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A letter from Jim Christmas

We found 2015 to be another busy and productive year for our Agency and our mission. The most notable developments include: purchasing a new administrative building, relocation of our administrative and support services, renovations at the ITASKIN Center allowing the opening of a 13 bed residential treatment unit, the expansion of our Bemidji Office/Clinic, the opening and development of our camp program, as well as the overall growth of our many existing programs. In addition, we completed the rigorous re-accreditation process by the Council on Accreditation. This assessment occurs every four years and reviews our entire organization on standards of excellence established nationally through the COA.

Undoubtedly, the year was one of significant growth. However, perhaps our largest accomplishments were in infrastructure enhancement. By that I mean the “fine tuning” of existing programs and systems. For example, we are fully up and running with our electronic medical records and our risk

President & CEO

management initiatives have been stepped up to reduce the need for physical intervention in order to keep kids safe. Further, our facilities received remodeling in order to reflect a welcoming environment with competent professionals and caring providers. These efforts, and much more, are all measures of our commitment to continuous quality improvement.

As always, none of this is possible without the amazing staff and foster care providers who work tirelessly to improve the lives of those less fortunate than ourselves. I am extremely proud and grateful for their on-going dedication to children. I would also like to thank our Board of Directors for the valuable role you play in the function of our Agency. Specifically, a special thank you goes to Lana Bjorgum for her 9 years of service on our Board of Directors.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jim Christmas".

North Homes' Foster Care Provider named Foster Parent of the Year

Claire Coder has provided professional foster care since 1999 and has a wealth of experience working with youth with mild to moderate mental health and behavioral disorders. In addition to raising her own children, she works full-time at the school as a para-professional. Claire is a single, Native American Elder whose life experiences and humor make her an awesome foster parent. She is witty and is a true advocate for any placement that has come into her home. She is nurturing and structured which is a difficult balance to maintain, especially since she bears the role of both dad and mom. She is able to see strengths in children who have not had success in other placements. This has allowed for youth to feel successful and empowered. When it comes to kids and helping others in need, Claire is a natural. It is in her character to take care of those unable to care for themselves. She has enriched the lives of those that have come into contact with her whether it is at school or those young people that have needed a loving, stable home. North Homes thanks Claire for her commitment to youth.



*Claire Coder with
CEO Jim Christmas &
Case Manager Amy Lindahl*

Correctional Worker of the Year: Andy Walsh

Andy joined North Homes in 2009, as a Youth Counselor. Since that time, he has assisted in the creation and licensing of five DOC licensed residential programs, in addition to working as direct care staff, Case Manager, and most recently, DOC Programs Supervisor, overseeing the staff and programming of four programs in Grand Rapids, MN; Boys Program, Teens in Transition, Next Step and Secure Detention.

Andy is a dedicated and motivated employee, investing many hours into the structure and programming of these programs. He takes his job seriously and has a drive to provide the best care to the youth we serve. He is creative in his approach, and continuously works to better the programs; researching new group ideas, coordinating with community resources, receiving numerous recreational donations, and assisting with the restructure of day-to-day programming, as the population shifts. He is a great team player, easily approachable, and an

effective problem solver/troubleshooter.

Andy's programming vision is to provide high quality care, while allowing youth to live the most normal childhood or teen years, as possible. He is enthusiastic about introducing the outdoors to our residential programs (hiking, geocaching, snowshoeing, skiing, biking, boating, fishing, ice fishing, camping) while still educating and incorporating life skills, making learning enjoyable and realistic. Andy treats every youth equally, but individually. He understands there is no "cookie-cutter" way of working with our youth and works to pass this emphasis on to the staff he supervises.

November was National Adoption Month

This year's Adoption Month's initiative, "We Never Outgrow the Need for Family," highlighted older youth waiting to be adopted and the needs they face. In Minnesota alone, 513 children in foster care are in need of adoptive families.

Throughout November, North Homes held several events to celebrate National Adoption Month. "Finding Home," by the independent film company, Dock Street Productions, was shown free at the Zeitgeist Theatre in Duluth, a Family Matching Event for all prospective parents interested in adopting children from foster care was held in Grand Rapids and a coloring contest for adopted children was offered. Each child who participated received a gift.

With a grant from Minnesota DHS, North Homes is able to provide adoption services, at virtually no cost, to qualified families pursuing children available for adoption within Minnesota's foster care program. If you want to learn more about the Minnesota Waiting Children Program, **please contact Ashley Malterud in Adoption at 218.760.1812.**



Addiction & Criminal Behavior Program offered by North Homes

North Homes Chemical Health Program and ITASKIN Center's Secure Unit have teamed up to provide the Addiction & Criminal Behavior Program. This 12-18 week program is designed to address the co-occurring issues that result in chemical health and criminal behavior issues. The program is heavily focused on four main areas: substance abuse, criminal behavior, mental health and socialization. This four-phase program helps to ensure that specific milestones of recovery are met throughout the duration of the program. Phase 1 focuses on education and beginning to make honest effort towards change. Phase 2 focuses on the process of beginning change and determining what will work for a particular individual. Phase 3 focuses on understanding thoughts and behaviors, as well as establishing sound support systems. Phase 4 focuses on building a strong foundation for recovery and reintegration back into the community. This unique program provides a therapeutic foundation to youth in a secure setting in hopes to reduce recidivism rates and allow for personal growth outside of a high risk social network. **Referrals can be made to Mindy O'Brien, DOC Residential and Secure Programs Director at 218.322.4138 or mindy.obrien@northhomes.org.**

January was Sex Trafficking Awareness Month

To date, North Homes has provided Safe Harbor services to 10 youth who are at high risk or have been confirmed as being sexually exploited youth.

In addition to providing services to the youth, each Safe Harbor Support Service Specialist also works to provide outreach in our communities by being involved in multidisciplinary teams attempting to bring awareness to working with sexually exploited youth.

In honor of Sex Trafficking Month, North Homes co-sponsored an event at Zinema 2 on January 26th in Duluth, MN. There was a panel discussion and a free showing of "With Impunity", a film on men and gender violence.

Our Safe Harbor team is working passionately on the topic of prevention and education of sexual exploitation. For further information, please contact Kaitlyn Beise at 218.576.3282.

Blind Joe Sings at the ITASKIN Center

Blind Joe, of Grand Rapids, and recent contestant on the blockbuster music competition, The Voice, made time in October to visit with residents at the ITASKIN Center. Both youth and staff enjoyed his music and were inspired as Joe shared his message, "Follow your dreams, and be awesome at anything you do." It was a wonderful afternoon for everyone.



Intensive Residential Treatment Program Updated!

We have added 13 beds to our capacity at the ITASKIN Center. Our Intensive Residential Treatment Program has been relocated to the front of the building allowing for separation of our Intensive Resident Program students while integrating a therapeutic milieu.

The Intensive Residential Treatment Program is for boys and girls ages 12-18, and is an intensive program with a short length of stay with specific individualized goals. Components include: mental health treatment, family assessment, trauma focused care, chemical dependency education/treatment, on-site school, and DBT skill groups.

For more information, please contact Connie Ross at 218.327.3000.



How can you help a child in need?

North Homes Children and Family Services is a non-profit, 501c3 organization. In order to continuously improve our programming to the youth and families we serve, we accept tax deductible donations and memorial gifts.

If you would like to help the at-risk youth and families we serve, North Homes Children and Family Services accepts a variety of donations, big or small. Donations can come in the form of cash donations, memorial gifts, pledges, or through items such as clothing or other items. For more information regarding giving to North Homes, please contact Wade Chiodo, 218-327-3000 or via email at wade.chiodo@northhomes.org.

“Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.”

North Homes was excited to participate in *Give to the Max Day*, a day set aside in November for Minnesotans to donate to their favorite nonprofits. With generous donations from our community and a matching sponsor, \$955.86 was raised to build our fishing program for youth in care.



North Homes' Staff Give Back

“Doin’ Time to Save the Babies”



Recently our Duluth Office Administrator, Melissa Vatsndal, represented North Homes and spent time in the slammer. As a part of *The March of Dimes Jail & Bail*, she worked hard collecting bail to be put toward March of Dimes’ mission to improve the health of babies by preventing birth defects, premature birth and infant mortality.

“Each Step Forward is HOPE”

North Homes’ Bemidji staff volunteered at Bemidji’s 9th annual “Run/Walk/Skate for Suicide Prevention. The event is for people who have lost a loved one to suicide and provides a time of hope and healing, as well as provides education and awareness and receives tremendous community support. All proceeds from the event benefit the Beltrami Area Suicide Prevention Program, which provides community-wide education and training to raise awareness and teach prevention to area students.



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