



# Golden Girl Gazette-Herald

Golden Girl Group Home

## From Our Executive Director Renee Harrison

It had been a miserable day. It had started bad and just seemed to be getting worse. My lower back ached and I had a headache the size of Texas. There was a six inch high stack of papers that needed my attention. My floor was littered with Golden Girl tee shirts from girls trying to find the right size. My office was a mess. Of course, so was my house and my van. At home I knew I had at least a dozen loads of laundry waiting for me. I sat in my office wallowing in self-pity. I just wanted to escape from everyone and everything. I wanted to go home, hide in my bedroom, watch some mindless TV and take a long hot bath.

I knew this wasn't possible as I was already running late for our annual Thanksgiving Dinner. As I drove to the local church who had donated their fellowship hall for our use, I knew that I would need to act happy and grateful. I didn't feel happy. I knew that after the dinner we would sit in a circle and tell what things we were thankful for in our lives. As I parked my decade old van the brakes squeaked and there was a terrible grinding sound. *I'd be thankful for clean laundry and a van with brakes that don't squeak.* I walked inside wondering if it was possible my head would crack from my headache.

I fake my way through dinner while glancing at my watch every ten minutes. I wondered

if just this one year I could sneak out early and not participate in expressing my gratitude to the residents and staff. The girls were already in their seats and I realized it was too late to make a graceful exit.

One of our older girls said she would start. She said she was grateful for Golden Girl and named some of our staff members who had helped her. The next girl talked about how thankful she was for her independence and her boyfriend. Sitting beside her was Alecia, a new employee who had lived at Golden Girl ten years earlier. Alecia said she was thankful for her children and then she began to cry. She expressed her appreciation to everyone at Golden Girl for giving her a home. She looked across the room at me and with twin rivers of tears on her face said, "I love you Momma."

From that moment on the entire atmosphere changed. Girl after girl expressed their love and appreciation for their families, each other and Golden Girl. Many of them told of past abuse and neglect. Most of them said that they were thankful for their difficult past as this had made them a stronger person. Some spoke of struggling with substance abuse and expressed gratitude for their sobriety. Some spoke of lost family and loved ones. All of them spoke of the love they now felt in their lives.

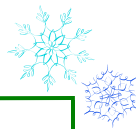
One fourteen year old said she was grateful we had given her boundaries. This sometimes demanding, always dramatic, non-stop talker told us that she was thankful we told her no when she needed it. She said, "I may not act like it at the time but I know when you set limits for me you are telling me you love me. I've been in dozens of foster homes but this is the best place I've ever been."

I sat there in awe of the courage these young ladies showed in telling of their past and expressing gratitude for a home and someone that loved them. As one beautiful young lady told of a horrendous past and how she survived, I realized that the girls had been talking for almost two hours. This young girl ended by saying, "All of the rapes and beatings were worth it because it brought me here. Now I have a home and people who love me." As she said these words I was filled with humility.

I drove home in silence, rehearsing in my mind all that had been said. I was overwhelmed with gratitude. As I drove into the driveway of my messy house, with a dozen loads of laundry waiting, the brakes in my van squeaked. As my husband and kids greeted me asking if I brought home any food I knew I was truly happy. Then I realized it. My headache was gone.



# Thank You



Christmas for me has not always been as  
Bright as it is this year.

It is fun to be around people who care and help  
And make things so clear.

For some reason all I ever looked forward to  
Were presents under the tree,  
But now I'm looking forward to appreciating the  
People who care about me.

So, thanks to the people who willingly share,  
You have given me more than I have ever  
Had anywhere.

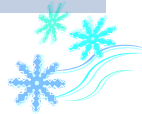
*Stephanie*

(A former Resident)



Program Director Cil Ross with Stephanie

# Tax Credit



Golden Girl Group Home has tax credits  
available from the West Virginia Neighborhood  
Investment Program. The tax credits will be  
given to individuals and businesses who donate  
\$500 or more to the girl's home. The  
donations will go toward helping the girls  
participate in recreational programs. For tax  
credit vouchers and more information please  
call Nikki Thomas at 606-615-5678.

# Community Service

## The Good Samaritan Dinner

The girls at Golden Girl work closely to serve the  
less fortunate in their  
community. It is  
important for the girls  
to learn how to "give  
back" and "make a  
difference" in the lives  
of others. During the Christmas season, the girls  
helped serve at "The Good Samaritan" dinner



where families came to  
receive a warm meal and  
kind words. This  
experience and others  
like them help the girls  
realize that they can be

an asset to their local community and, they also  
become empowered and  
fulfilled in the process.

Even though the girls at  
the home are  
continually in need  
themselves, they still  
find it rewarding to "share their hearts".



If you  
have a community  
service project and  
would like our help  
please call  
Nikki Thomas at  
606-615-5678.



# New "Extreme Makeover Project"

The West Virginia Nursery and Landscape Association have chosen Golden Girl Group Home for their next "Extreme Makeover" project. The association is excited to launch the new project in April. The "Extreme Makeover" will consist of gardens, sitting areas, and a multipurpose room for the girls to meet together for various activities such as: dining, exercise, slumber parties, and awards ceremonies. More details of the makeover will be revealed as the development progresses. This project will be highly publicized and will recognize all businesses and individuals involved. If you, your business, or the company you work for, would like to help by giving or volunteering please contact Nikki Thomas at 606-615-5678.



## Elaine Cline



We are so proud of our staff who work closely with the girls to see that they receive the care, love, and nurturing that they need to thrive and grow. We are especially excited about Elaine Cline who received the West Virginia Child Care Worker of the Year Award for 2009. She received this award at the annual Child Care Association Conference. Elaine has worked with the girls at Golden Girl for over 11 years and, formerly was a concert pianist and a teacher. She is loved and respected by both the girls and staff at the group home and we are blessed to have her on our team!



*Golden Girl*  
GROUP HOME  
Share Your Heart

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