

GOLDEN GIRL GAZETTE - HERALD

Golden Girl Group Home | *Winter 2023*

A
LETTER
FROM
OUR CLINICAL
DIRECTOR,
Julie DeMattie



798. That number has impacted my life in ways I think about it every day - it is the number of girls served by Golden Girl Group Home over the last 40 years. 798 young girls that came to us in need of a safe place to live, trustworthy adults to care for them and a community that would help protect and support them. Each girl, bringing her own history and life journey, becomes a part of the Golden Girl Family as she walks through our doors. Our amazing staff offers support to each girl as they try to make peace with their past, find purpose in their present and discover hope in their future.

Last month, to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Golden Girl, we invited all of our past girls to come home for a family reunion. With excitement, we made plans to help welcome our girls back to see their Golden sisters and the women who helped raise them. To help commemorate the occasion, and in honor of our 798 girls, I wrote each name and the year they entered our Golden Girl family on wooden hearts, to be placed in a jar on the welcome table. What started as a cute idea ended up being one of the most impactful projects of my life. For weeks, each evening, I would reflect on each girl as I wrote her name. Having worked at Golden Girl for 28 years, I have had the privilege and honor of working with 704 of our girls. As I held each girl's heart in my hands, I prayed over them, with memories bringing both smiles and tears. I was touched by the impact they have made on my life but wondered - had we had made enough of a difference in theirs?

As the girls responded to their reunion invitations, they had the opportunity to share thoughts and memories about their time at Golden Girl. Reading through their responses touched my heart and humbled me, "Golden Girl helped me understand that I can be loved and I deserve it", "Golden Girl took me out of a situation no child should ever have to be in", "It gave me a place to grow and heal", "It gave me a family when I didn't have one", "They showed me that my trauma didn't make my life, I do", "It was the first time in my life I had women who supported and cared about me", "Made me the mother, grandmother and wife I am today", "GG gave me a fighting chance at breaking generational trauma", "They kept me safe, supported me, & loved me when I didn't know how to love myself".

Reading the words of girls over the span of 40 years felt like an answered prayer, hearing the impact Golden Girl made in their lives. Looking again at our jar, full of hearts, I saw the name Tara, who came to Golden Girl in 1997. Reaching in to hold the wooden heart that symbolized her place in the Golden Girl family, instant memories popped into my head. I pictured this vivacious blonde with a big smile and tell it like it is attitude that came two years after I started working there. My first memories that I thought of though were from after her time with us. I remember her leaving to navigate the world of adulthood, then shortly after, she came to visit, having hit some bumps in the road. She asked me if she could have a favor, I expected it to be a loan of money, knowing how hard it is to get a financial start in those early adulthood years. Instead, she asked if she could help me lead Life Skill groups for our current girls. She said she wanted to share her tough life lessons with other girls, to help make their journeys easier. This, 25 years later, remains the absolute best group session I've ever seen at Golden Girl. My heart beamed with pride, as I realized that when planting seeds of hope and healing, the growth is not always immediate, it can take time for something beautiful to bloom. Holding her heart in my hand, I recalled the words she wrote in response to her reunion invite "I wouldn't be where I am today had it not been for Golden Girl. With the abuse that I suffered it turned me into an angry teenager that never wanted to trust adults again. Through the therapy, support, education, and most importantly LOVE that I received from not only the GGGH girls but the staff as well, I overcame so many of the obstacles I faced. I will FOREVER hold GGGH close to my heart and always remember my experience there as one with fun, sisterhood, and growth!" Today, I still see her supporting her Golden sisters, encouraging staff and making my heart smile each time I talk to her.

While the 798 girls Golden Girl has served over the last 40 years can be counted, the impact of our staff, volunteers, donors and community cannot be measured. It is our privilege, honor and legacy to continue investing in the lives of girls, knowing they will touch our hearts and will forever show us the beautiful results of providing a safe, nurturing home for our girls.



Did you know that Golden Girl has a state wide impact? We receive girls to come live with us from EVERY county in the state of West Virginia!

COMMUNITY SERVICE



One of the core values we believe in at **Golden Girl Group Home** is the power of "giving back" to the community. We are always looking for opportunities to lend a helping hand. If you have a service project and need help please contact Nikki Thomas at 304-939-5726 or nthomas@gggh.org.



WORKING GIRLS SUCCEED!

Working girls do succeed!

Research shows that abuse and neglect have a negative effect on the future success in the workforce. We provide a wonderful program in our Golden Minds Center for Learning and Development/Golden Treasure's Boutique that enables girls who have barriers to workforce development opportunities the chance to learn crucial interpersonal skills that will be translated into the marketplace.

To find out how you can inspire our girls to succeed, contact Nikki Thomas at 304-939-5726 or nthomas@gggh.org.

Looking for a way to reduce your WV tax? Donate a minimum of \$500 and receive up to 50% in Neighborhood Investment Program (NIP) tax Credits. NIP credits are limited, so hurry before they run out! Contact Nikki Thomas for more information at 304-939-5726.





Hats Off

A TRADITIONAL DERBY BRUNCH

SavetheDate!

Saturday, April 27

GUYAN GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB



Golden Girl
GROUP HOME
Share Your Heart

Grab your most stylish,
Derby inspired hat and join us for
brunch!



CHRISTMAS ANGELS

"Have yourself a merry little Christmas"

We all know this classic Christmas carol, singing of letting your heart be light and all your troubles being miles away, as we gather together with family and friends to have a merry Christmas. This song is true for so many, but not for all. Being without family or just having no family at all, causes depression and loneliness. When you are a Golden Girl, the holidays are hard.

At Golden Girl Group Home we have special people we like to call our *Christmas Angels*. To be a *Christmas Angel*, you can donate

\$200 and sponsor a girl's Christmas, to provide gifts for her. Although gifts do not make up the loss of a family or erase the traumatic situations that each of our girls have been through, we want to make Christmas as special as we can for each and every one of them.

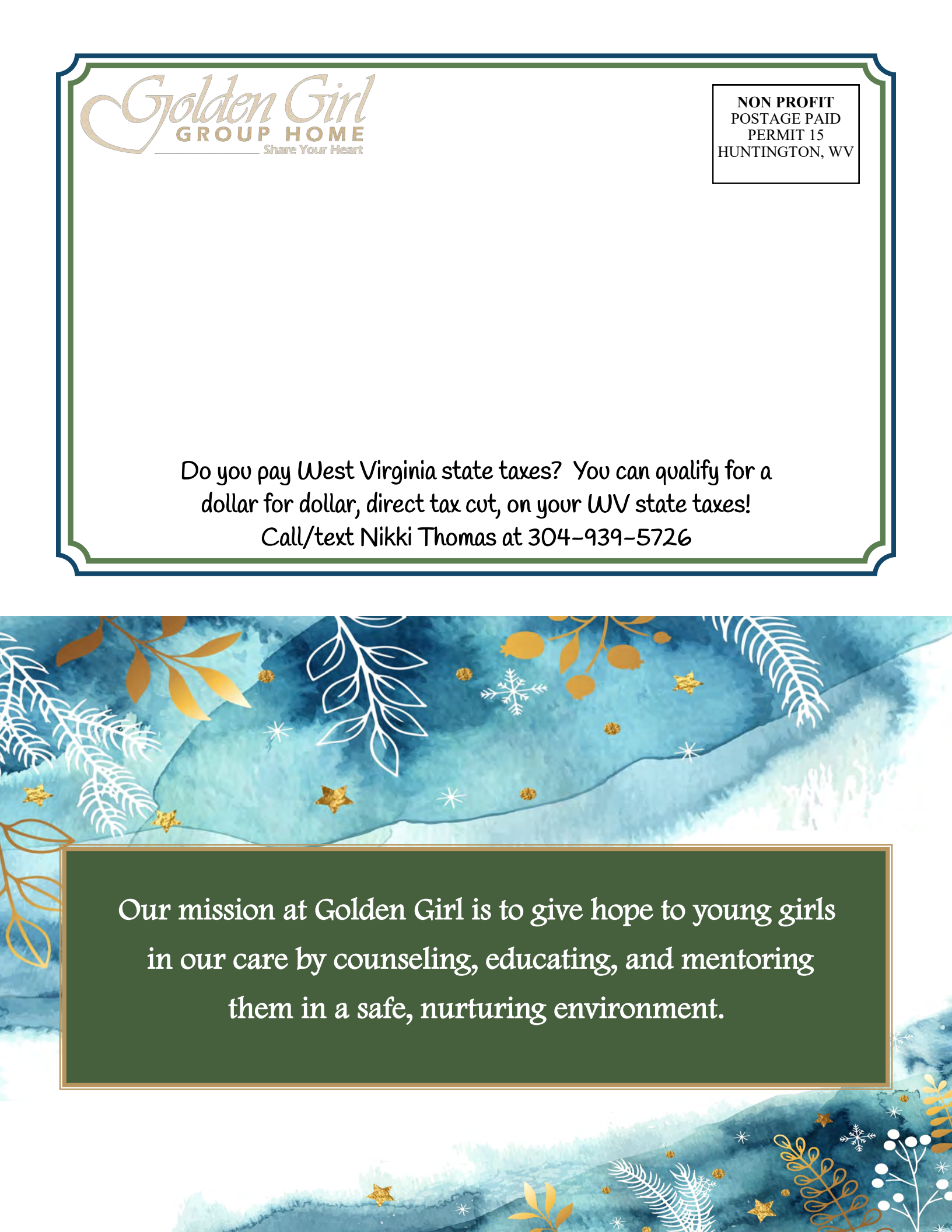
Please consider being one of our *Christmas Angels*, and helping one of our girls during the most difficult time of the year for most of them. Our Christmas wish is that this year will be one that each girl at Golden Girl Group Home will remember forever, and that their hearts will be light and their troubles out of sight.





NON PROFIT
POSTAGE PAID
PERMIT 15
HUNTINGTON, WV

Do you pay West Virginia state taxes? You can qualify for a dollar for dollar, direct tax cut, on your WV state taxes!
Call/text Nikki Thomas at 304-939-5726



Our mission at Golden Girl is to give hope to young girls in our care by counseling, educating, and mentoring them in a safe, nurturing environment.