

Summer 2021

Golden Girl Gazette-Herald

Golden Girl Group Home



A Message From Our Director.....

"My dad has COVID," the message read. These words seemed to jump out at me as I read the message from one of our former girls. Jessica had spent most of her teenage years with us. After she left us, she earned a Bachelor of Social Work degree from Marshall University.

I remembered the day she came to us. I thought of the bravery she showed as she testified against a father who had horrifically sexually and physically abused her and her brother. That testimony and subsequent trial had sent this evil man to prison for a number of years. This was the "dad," still in prison, who had COVID. I must have some residual anger towards this man, as the only sorrow I felt was for Jessica.

A year before this, she had asked me if she could list me as her medical power of attorney, ensuring that anyone who had failed to protect her childhood had no control over her life.

Mere days after informing me of her father's health, I received another message, telling me her father had died in Mount Olive Correctional Center. Although she already knew how much I loved and cared for her, I told her again and expressed my sorrow for the emotional pain she continued to suffer from this man. Her response will forever remain in my heart. It read:

"I'm okay. My battle that started when I was nine, ended with his death. I've been set free and I don't live in the shadow of my past now. I've not only survived but also overcome my past. I made peace with my dad before he died. I just have to say goodbye when I find out where his ashes are

buried. This is my closure. The great people in my life far outweigh the people who hurt me. Without Golden Girl, I wouldn't be as resilient as I am. You gave me a home and a sense of belonging. It was the first place I have ever felt safe."

Jessica has decided to write a book about her childhood. She sent me what she planned to write in her acknowledgements. In part, she wrote, "...*Blood is not always thicker than water. That is a fallacy. Family is who truly loves and cares about you and shows it in their actions...*"

When I think of the terrible sexual, physical, mental and emotional abuse she suffered, I still feel angry. The ones who should have been the first to protect and love her neglected and abused her. They stole her childhood.

I take comfort in the knowledge that Jessica has overcome her past and continues to thrive. When she walked in our doors those many years ago, she became "ours". We promised to protect and love her. We promised to keep her safe. She found her sense of belonging. She found her home.

Last week, at our Derby Brunch, someone asked one of our former girls to describe Golden Girl in one word. Without hesitation, she said, "Family". As each girl comes to us, she becomes, forever, part of our Golden Girl Family. Perhaps Jessica says it best. "Family is who you make it...no matter how hard I fought to push you away, you never gave up on me. Sometimes, that's what counts the most."

~ Renee Harrison

Stay tuned for words from our founder Judy Gilkerson in our next edition!

Ribbon Cutting in September



The Golden Minds Center for Learning & Development and Golden Treasures Resale Shop is set for completion on July 10, 2021. This state of the art building will be a place for our girls to catch up in school and participate in valuable workforce development training. It will also be a great place for our generous donors to bring gently used items that, when sold, will provide a constant stream of revenue for our girls. Many thanks to corporations, foundations, and private donors for making this project possible.

To find out how you can invest in this life-changing project, contact Nikki Thomas @
nthomas@gggh.org or 304-939-5726.

Challenges...

COVID-19 brought many unexpected challenges in 2020 that continue into 2021. The trauma caused by school closings and the lack of socialization have made it even more difficult for our girls to heal from abuse and neglect. Thank you to all who have purchased cleaning supplies, masks, board games, craft supplies video consoles, books and other items to help them through this difficult time.



Donations, Please!

Many of you have asked about donating your gently-used items to our girls. The answer is "yes!" We are once again accepting physical donations. To schedule a time to drop off your items, please text Nikki Thomas at 304-939-5726. Thanks!



Spotlight on Seniors



Hailey has been part of our GG family for 2 years. Her favorite memory with us is King's Island. She plans to work and go to school this summer, and continue her education in the fall. She's learned that at GG, "There's always someone there for me when I need them." She's also learned how to be responsible.

Taylor has been at GG 2 1/2 months. Her favorite memory with us is the Nerf Gun war at Battlearium. She plans to visit FL and live it up this summer! When she's finished relaxing, she will continue her education at Mountwest for 2 years then on to FL to complete her degree. While at GG, Taylor learned that "she isn't alone, and life isn't all that bad."



Devon came to GG three years ago. She loves the time she's gotten to spend camping with staff and other girls. She's looking forward to spending time with friends and family this summer, before starting college to pursue her RN in the fall. She's learned about coping skills while she's been with us, and how to use them correctly.

Kim's been at Golden Girl for a year and two months. She's really enjoyed all the camping trips and big events we have. She's looking forward to getting a job and enjoying the warm weather this summer. Her future plans are to get her CDL and become a truck driver. While she's been with us, she's learned "to be patient and never give up!"



Emily came to GG 19 months ago. Her favorite memory is the Nerf war at Battlearium with staff. She plans to relax this summer and start college in the fall. While at GG, she's realized there are lots of "family friendly" movies with positive messages.

Sponsor a girl for just \$35/month and help them enjoy the summer camping, swimming and going to the movies! Go to gggh.org and click "Monthly Sponsor!"



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Summer Fun Sponsor Opportunities

"Campfire Girl" \$55

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Roasting Sticks
Smores Supplies
Bug Spray

"Water Girl" \$65

Swimsuit
Towel
Sunglasses
Flip Flops
Sunscreen

"Fishin' Girl" \$75

Camping Chair
Fishing Pole
Tackle Box
Bait
First Aid Kit
Sunscreen

"Sleepy Girl" \$85

Sleeping Bag
Twin Air Mattress
Lantern/ Flashlight
Bug Spray

"Paddlin' Girl" \$425

Kayak
Paddles
Life Vest
Sunscreen

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