

# Challenges

## *New greenhouse offers wealth of opportunity*

When the ground wouldn't pass "perc" testing, the TresslerCare Wilderness Center faced a big problem. The waste management system needed upgrading, but the ground would not cooperate. A new direction was needed. After careful study, an evapotranspiration system greenhouse became the answer, and its more than 15,000-square-foot growing area has created a tremendous opportunity to expand significantly the center's horticultural program.

"At present," says George Eckenrode, TresslerCare director of marketing

and census development, "we are exploring ideas to use the space to benefit our youth therapeutically, and at the same time financially."

The Wilderness Challenge: A Chance to Succeed, the capital campaign launched to expand and improve the Wilderness Center facilities, stands at \$1.9 million and will continue through the first quarter of 2004.

One of its projects has been the addition of the greenhouse, which will be the basis of a new horticultural therapy program at the school.

"We plan to use the greenhouse to enhance intergenerational programming with agency nursing homes, establish internships with local colleges and universities, and develop a volunteer network to expand community involvement," says Eckenrode of the facility, which is about one third the size of a football field.

"The kids will be able not only to learn valuable lessons and skills, but also earn community service hours and work to repay restitution they may owe the courts."



### **INSIDE:**

- Females move in to residential program; continuum of care enhanced
- Foster parents lead teenage mother to independence
- Quilted bags bring comfort to children
- Clinical supervisor recognized with academic honor

## ***Wilderness School residential program now serving young women; continuum of care enhanced***

***It didn't take long for word to get out that TresslerCare's girls' residential program was up and running.***

A steady stream of referrals had the Wilderness Center at half its capacity for females in the longer-term residential program within the first month of operation, and staff expect to be at capacity by early 2004.

The change also has strengthened TresslerCare's continuum by offering a step-up service for other programs within the continuum.

In early November, as the Wilderness School completed the renovation of its residential facility and opened the program to females, one young woman entering the program received the level of intervention that TresslerCare now has available for every youth.

The female, who had participated in the Weekend Alternative Program (WAP), was reaping the benefits of

the Wilderness Center's continuum of care, says Corey Carothers, director of WAP.

"She was starting at a better level in the program than other youths who come in cold," says Carothers, explaining how WAP and the Wilderness School were able to share her experience. "We can shorten that 'honeymoon period' by taking advantage of the fact that youth are already with us."

Deanna Davis, clinical director at the Wilderness School, agrees that cases like the young woman's go a long way toward maximizing the benefits of the residential placement. "We were able to immediately provide the services that she needed because we already had experience with her," Davis says. "The benefit for her was that she was familiar with TresslerCare."

Because most referral sources like the idea of starting first-time offenders in programs like WAP, Carothers and Davis are spreading

the word that now that the Wilderness School accepts females into the residential program, there should be no exception to TresslerCare's ability to serve youths, as necessary, at many different levels of care.

The 16-bed wing for females in the new facility began with three females, but referrals are increasing. "Staff, of course, are intensely supervising the youth and laying down guidelines as to their interaction with each other," Davis explains, adding that they are ready to provide a continuum of care—including the residential program—which includes the Wilderness Course component—and WAP, AfterCare and Prevention, Specialized In-Home, foster care, and adoption, dependent upon the treatment needs and permanency goal for the youth.

"It is good for kids," believes Carothers. "It's going to make our ability to help them that much stronger."



# *Foster parents lead teenage mother to independence*

*Nestled in rural Perry County where a visit to the nearest grocery store requires a 22-mile round trip, Helen and Butch Britcher are creating a new style of life for foster children—a life of renewed hope and independence.*

For five years the Britchers have been working with TresslerCare's Foster Care program, making a difference for children of all ages, especially for teenage mothers.

Approximately three years ago, the Britchers welcomed 16-year-old Donna Kleyling and her 18-month-old child into their home after Northampton Children and Youth Services referred her to TresslerCare. Kleyling was the second teenaged mother to find hope for a new life with the Britchers and a reason to do well.

"I had been in and out of foster care since 1999, until I got to the Britchers," says Kleyling. "Most of the foster homes [that I had been in] didn't push me to do well. I probably would be right back where I started from [if it weren't for the Britchers]. Living with them gave me independence."

About two weeks after Kleyling moved in with the Britchers "we got blessed news and surprised everyone that she was about four months pregnant with her second

child," remembers Mrs. Britcher, who says they immediately got to work teaching Kleyling responsibility for herself and her children. "We started in the home with her as the primary caregiver and using a lot of verbal redirection and family talk sessions."

The Britchers also made it clear that Kleyling had to agree to certain rules if she wanted to stay with them. "Any child that comes into our house when they are a teenager has to make a commitment. They have to complete school. They cannot run away physically or from their treatment issues, and there are no drugs and alcohol," Mrs. Britcher says. "Those are our expectations."

Kleyling didn't back down. In fact, she responded very well, according to Britcher. "We taught her about herself and her kids and stressed the importance of education," she says. "The demand on what she had to learn and study [for independent living] was much greater than you would ask for from another teenager."

The Britchers also provided an efficiency apartment in the lower level of their home that Kleyling was able to set up as her own. "Every once in a while, she would invite some of the other foster siblings to have meals with her and they were invited up to eat with us," explains Mrs. Britcher. "When someone went down to see her, they had to knock on the door before they entered. That was her little house."

The arrangement worked well for Kleyling, who took only one and a half weeks off from high school to have her baby. It also had an impact on the other foster children. "They saw the way she learned to interact with her children and be a mother," says Britcher. "That gave them the outlook on life that their families could be different. They can make it, because they saw her make it."

---

*"I had been in and out of foster care since 1999, until I got to the Britchers, most of the foster homes [that I had been in] didn't push me to do well. I probably would be right back where I started from [if it weren't for the Britchers]. Living with them gave me independence."*

---

Although Kleyling was her children's primary caregiver, the Britchers acted as the surrogate grandparents, allowing Kleyling to complete high school. "She earned an academic scholarship and she is going to [Harrisburg Area Community College] to become an RN," Mrs. Britcher says.

It was while working as a certified nursing assistant at Perry Village, a Diakon Lutheran Social Ministries nursing facility at New Bloomfield, that Kleyling decided she wanted to become a registered nurse. The Britchers fully supported her decision and worked with Diakon's TresslerCare so that Kleyling could

continue to live with them after graduation until she found subsidized housing and day care.

With that extra help and time on her side, Kleyling was able to find a place for her and her children to live while she continued to work and attend school. "When she was living here, she worked and basically put all her money in the bank. She has her driver's license and she has a car," Mrs. Britcher proudly states. "Because we had an efficiency apartment downstairs, which she had to furnish, she had all of her necessities to leave—such as a simple living room suite, beds for

the kids, pots, pans and spices."

But when Kleyling left the Britchers, she took with her more than material goods—she also took a new outlook on life for her and her children.

"[What I have been able to achieve] is going to show my kids that no matter what obstacles they have to get through, they are still going to get through them. They can't have an excuse," says Kleyling, who volunteers in her community in addition to working and attending school. "All it takes is a mindset, routine, and a schedule book."



## *Paper or plastic? Kids come into care with belongings in black plastic garbage bags!*

**I**t broke Bettie Heycock's heart every time she saw a child who entered TresslerCare's Foster Care program arrive at the office with all his or her belongings in a paper bag. "They didn't have anything personal with them," she remembers. "When I saw them, I was almost in tears."

Shortly after she noticed this happening, TresslerCare's administrative assistant turned to management and asked if her congregation, Trinity Lutheran Church in Lemoyne, Pa., could help.

"We have a quilters group. I asked if they could make me a drawstring bag," says Heycock. "Then I went to the women of the church and asked if they thought the congregation would donate some new personal items and stuffed animals."

It wasn't long before Heycock returned to work with nearly 50 small and large duffel bags, each uniquely designed, which have brought smiles to the faces of children in the Foster Care program. "They were very willing to help," Heycock says of the Hummingbird Quilters and members of the Women of the Evangelical Lutheran Church Association (WELCA). "It was a combined effort."

Each bag contains toiletry articles, such as soap, towel, washcloth, comb, and toothbrush, but it is the stuffed animal that has been winning the hearts of the children, both big and small. "I had a foster mother tell me that one little boy

held his Koala bear all night long. When she went in to check him in the morning, he was still holding it," says Heycock. "When you see these children and understand their heartaches, you realize how thankful you should be."



---

## *Clinical supervisor recognized with academic honor*

**A**fter two years of committing her Saturdays and Sundays every three weeks to the completion of the Juvenile Court Judges Commission's Weekend Masters Program at Shippensburg University, Shauntae Stancil knew the value in her achievement and was proud to accept her diploma. But the TresslerCare clinical supervisor was surprised when she learned that she had been selected as the program's Graduate-Student-of-the-Year.

"I didn't expect it," Stancil says, explaining that it was a rigorous program that challenged all of the

students. "Everyone worked hard in the class. It could have been any one of us [who won the award]."

Stancil accepted the award, which recognizes academics, leadership, and professionalism, at the Pennsylvania Conference on Juvenile Justice in early November. The recognition came after she left Dauphin County Juvenile Probation, where she served as a school-based officer, and joined TresslerCare.

"I'm working here with a lot of the same types of youth—those who have gone through the same types of life experiences, but haven't got-

ten as far into the delinquency aspect," says Stancil. "I worked with TresslerCare when I was a [probation officer] and always had positive experiences. It's nice to be in this program and know it has been effective when you are considering different interventions."

Although it was only spring when Stancil completed the master's program, she admits she has thought about hitting the books again. "The award has motivated me to keep learning and building on my skills," she says. "But I want to give myself some time to get adjusted here."

## REGIONAL NEWS

### **TresslerCare** *Capital Region*

- Several staff from the Specialized In-home Treatment Program attended the conference for the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers in St. Louis. Staff attended a variety of workshops and training sessions on assessing juveniles who sexually act out and offend, working with special populations, sex offending in sports, the effects of media violence, and understanding the impact of development issues, attachment, and trauma on sexual behavior. Staff returned with energy and commitment to improving assessment and treatment efforts.

***Be sure to plan for  
2004 challenge courses.***

