Succeeding at HEARTH

Checking in with Jenny

You might remember us telling Jenny’s* story over the past few years. When Jenny arrived at HEARTH she had just left her abuser and father of her two young children. Jenny lived a life many women dream about; a beautiful home, a stay at home mom, nice cars, clothes, the best of everything. However, there was one major problem; Jenny’s perceived dream life was, in reality, a nightmare. She didn’t work because she wasn’t allowed. Before she met her abuser she had a great job working as an LPN. If she took one of those nice cars to meet a friend for lunch, she paid for it later. She was given a weekly allowance to keep up appearances so people on the outside couldn’t figure out what was really going on.

It didn’t start out that way, at first he was amazing; charming, loving, giving her compliments left and right. A few years into the relationship things started to change, she noticed odd behavior; angry outbursts and fights any time she did anything without his permission. The control was a lot to handle, but still she stood by him. The fights started escalating. “Why are you dressed like that? Are you cheating on me?!” “You shouldn’t wear that, it makes you look fat.” “Nobody even cares about you, quit crying!”

After she had their son, the abuse turned physical. He isolated her from family and friends. People in the community started to figure out what was happening. He threw her down some stairs while she was holding her new baby; he broke her bones and then beat her. That was it, the last straw, one day, while he was at work; she packed some things and fled to a friend’s house.

Once at HEARTH, Jenny was able to get the help she and her children needed. She worked weekly with our Direct Services Coordinator to enroll in school, develop a safety plan for her and her children, and enrolled her and her children in therapy so that they could start to re-build from the trauma.

Here we are, two years later. Jenny has graduated from post-secondary school, with training as a medical assistant. She and her children have moved to permanent housing and are thriving. Jenny has also become certified through the JARS (justice, autonomy, restoration, and safety) program to speak to other women in domestic violence situations. Most importantly however, Jenny finally feels safe.

“Getting on a bus, paying a bill on my own, that was huge for me, I realized I had forgotten basic skills you need to live. When I came to HEARTH I didn’t have a voice anymore, now I have one, and here I am!

*Name changed for safety
HEARTH’s Signature Events

‘The Art of Wine & Food’ to benefit HEARTH

To purchase tickets visit - http://www.bidpal.net/hearthwineandfood2019

Celebrate families creating a better future for themselves by joining us at the Children's Museum of Pittsburgh for our 18th annual Art of Wine and Food tasting event! Guests have the opportunity to taste over 30 wines and sample food from the area's best restaurants and caterers... all while talking with friends, playing in the museum's exhibits, and bidding on great silent auction items!

Designated Driver - $55: Includes all restaurant tastings, free parking, and admission at 6 PM.

Regular Guests - $75: Includes a souvenir wine glass, free parking, & admission at 6 PM.

VIP Guests - $120: Includes exclusive welcome cocktail, wine tastings, passed hors d'oeuvres, free preferred parking, a souvenir wine glass, & admission at 5:30 PM. (Only 12 tickets left)

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Save the Date!

Friday, March 20, 2020

To volunteer, sponsor, or participate in this upcoming event, please contact HEARTH Special Events and Development Coordinator, Morgan Ceschini at 412-366-9801 ext. 12 or mlceschini@hearth-bp.org
A letter from our Executive Director,
Judy Eakin

Can you believe Summer is almost over!? Before you know it, the days will be getting shorter (and busier!). School will be starting soon for the kids AND moms at HEARTH. With that being said, I think this is a good time to bring up a topic that we at HEARTH just can’t seem to quit talking about… access to affordable and safe transportation and child care.

Are you tired of hearing me go on and on about this yet? Trust me, I wish I didn’t need to keep bringing it up, but the reality is that this problem is still a huge issue for the families at HEARTH. HEARTH is not on a major bus line. In fact, unless you live within the city limits of Pittsburgh, access to reliable public transportation is just not an option. In addition to a lack of public transportation, most of the women living at HEARTH don’t have access to a reliable car. Even if they have the ability to get a car, they can’t afford car insurance, registration, repairs, annual inspection, or the gas needed to use the vehicle.

**Imagine this scenario.** You have two children a three-year-old and a seven-year-old. Your seven-year-old needs to be on the school bus at 7:30 am. Your three-year-old has to be at child care earlier than that so that you can get to class by 9 am. This means that:

- you need to take both children on a bus to child care by 6 am so that you can drop off your youngest (Bus trip #1)
- then you take a bus back to HEARTH and get your 7-year-old on the school bus (Bus trip #2)
- You then need to be on a bus no later than 8 am to go back into the city to get to your own classes. (Bus trip #3)

By this point, being on time to everything seems almost impossible. And the coordination is exhausting. Oh, and did I mention you have to do this entire routine at the end of the day too?!

Without easy access to reliable transportation low income families struggle to maintain jobs, finish school, and make sure their children have adequate child care. Reminder- if you do not live within the Pittsburgh city limits, access to reliable transportation is just not an option. Allegheny County has limited access for individuals living in the suburbs to get downtown while many suburbs have no weekend bus access (ours included). With the Port Authority’s spoke and wheel design, access from suburb to suburb is almost-nonexistent. AND according to an audit performed last year, buses in Pittsburgh run late 1/3 of the time! *

**So, how is HEARTH addressing these two big issues?**

At HEARTH we are lucky enough to have an Early Head Start Classroom and a bus stop for school-aged children on-site. However, we still have a gap for children ages three to five. And, unfortunately, there are limitations to dealing with the transportation issue. When we moved into our current facility, we made sure that there was adequate public transport, and within months it was decreased, providing no access on weekends.

We have made strides with the help of dedicated volunteers, staff, and community members. We have an amazing volunteer that organizes a van service on weekends that takes our families to more accessible public transit stops. Neighbors have contacted the Port Authority to create a safe bus stop so that people do not have to walk unsafely across the bridge on Mount Royal Boulevard. Shaler Township has offered to help with this project. HEARTH and our neighbors have generously offered their property. All that’s left is for Penn Dot and the Port Authority to work out the details.

Please consider talking to your local officials expressing your concern for this issue. Let them know that there is an entire population of people in your backyard who are being underserved! Together, we can work toward solving this issue!

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Hello everyone! My name is Joan Eichner and I am writing this as the new board president of HEARTH. I am very excited to be a part of a wonderful organization. I first became involved with HEARTH professionally through my work with nonprofits focused on early childhood and homelessness. Personally, the mission of HEARTH spoke to me as mother. So, for me, serving on HEARTH’s Board is both a professional and personal honor. I hope that as Board President I can add my skills and my voice to the many others that are dedicated to advancing the important work of HEARTH. This is a critical moment in time to rally around families by providing the support and tools they need to thrive.

On that note, I’d like to talk about a topic that I am sure many parents in our network have on their minds as we head back to school: after school activities. Today it seems that children are more involved than ever in activities - sports, band, dance, academic clubs, you name it! I think many parents are looking to give their children these diverse and enriching experience and the opportunity build new relationships with peers. But, these opportunities cost money – sometimes a good deal of money. They also cost time. Time in the car, time at practice, time to attend events and games. It can be very challenging to fit these activities into the already busy family schedule!

At HEARTH, our moms are juggling this all on their own, often with more than one child. While our moms recognize that education is a key factor in breaking the cycles of abuse and poverty, many families at HEARTH do not have access to reliable transportation to even get to parent-teacher conferences, let alone a sport or a club. Many do not have flexible work schedules that allow them to attend.

It is very important for children to feel that they fit in with their peers. It is difficult for children to understand why they may not be able to participate in the same activities that their friends are in. At HEARTH we have been fortunate to have strong working relationships with the local school district and the Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU). As you may know, last year the AIU started a pilot program with the families at HEARTH, which is geared toward parental interaction in after-school opportunities. This program was focused on working with families who have become displaced due to homelessness stay active in their children’s after school education. This includes working on homework, going to practices, and attending things like open houses and parent-teacher conferences. They are working with our parents and the local school district to find out what works and doesn’t work for our families, and enabling them to engage in their children’s education and social development – a critical step in re-building after trauma.

HEARTH is so grateful to the AIU and the local school districts that are working to make sure our families are seen and heard, and do not miss these opportunities.
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A full list of supporters can be found on our website
www.hearth-bp.org/ourdonors

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Meet Harriet, HEARTH’s New Volunteer Coordinator!

Born and raised in the United Kingdom, Harriet has worked in volunteer management and recruitment for fifteen years. She holds a Masters in Women’s History and Gender Studies from the University of London.

She now calls Pittsburgh home and is thrilled to join the team at HEARTH. “I’m looking forward to working alongside the wonderful volunteers here and helping grow volunteer efforts at HEARTH because there is so much wonderful potential.

In her spare time she performs improv and stand-up comedy, loves cooking and baking – “I am a huge fan of The Great British Baking Show and hanging out with my dog Bella.”

Get Involved at HEARTH!

*Please note, our Volunteer Coordinator does work part-time and will respond as quickly as possible.*

Looking to make a difference in a child’s life?

HEARTH is looking for volunteers for our Monday Night Child Care sessions. Timing is usually from 6:45 p.m. – 8:15 p.m. twice a month. Volunteers must be at least 13 years old. Clearances are required for volunteers 18 and older. There is an orientation prior to the start of volunteering. You can choose how many Mondays you are able to attend!

If you or your group are interested please e-mail our volunteer coordinator, Harriet Riley at hriley@hearth-bp.org. Projects will include cleaning the inside and outside of the building, organizing the HEARTH store, apartment storage, etc.

Interested in touring our facility?

Please contact HEARTH’s Communications and Community Outreach manager, Tara Maziarz at least 4 days prior to the tour date to be scheduled.

Contact: trmaziarz@hearth-bp.org or 412-366-9801x.3913

Wednesday, September 4, 2019 - 6 pm
Friday, September 27, 2019 - noon
Tuesday, October 15, 2019 - 6 pm
Tuesday, October 22, 2019 - noon
Tuesday, November 5, 2019 - 6 pm
Thursday, November 14, 2019 - noon

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