

Real Lives, Real Stories

Names have been changed to protect the people served in these stories.



Story 1:

A young defendant appeared before Teen Court for a second time. The jury felt it would benefit the youth to have additional monitoring for another three months, so they ordered that she attend weekly check-in's with Teen Court staff. Initially she struggled with attending the appointments, but the monitor was persistent and reminded her of her responsibility. Eventually, she began to acknowledge the support being offered and reported in without reminders, even staying longer than the average meeting time to just talk with the monitor. This girl went from skipping school to attending school on a regular basis and setting realistic and attainable goals for her future. It was a proud moment for the girl, her parents and the Teen Court monitor when she successfully completed her Teen Court sentence. Capital Area United Way funding support made a significant difference in this youngster's life.

- Capital Area Counseling Services

Story 2:

A couple with small children experienced financial difficulties when a job change reduced the family's income. Despite making sacrifices, including working opposite shifts to reduce daycare costs, medical bills kept piling up. When it became impossible to make ends meet they sought the assistance of Consumer Credit Counseling Services. The family met with the CCCS counselor who reviewed their situation and developed a personalized plan of action to help them resolve their issues. In addition, the couple enrolled in CCCS's Debt Management Program, and CCCS negotiated with their creditors to reduce their monthly payments. Four years later, the couple has successfully completed the Debt Management Program, repaid \$24,000 to the community, and was able to avoid bankruptcy benefitting the family, businesses and our community. Thanks to the Capital Area United Way, counseling provided by CCCA is offered at no charge.

- Consumer Credit Counseling Services

Story 3:

Within the past year, we have seen a growing trend of retired seniors raising their grandchildren. The YMCA has had five such families apply for financial assistance for memberships. All of these families have similar stories. The seniors are retired with fixed incomes and for various reasons they have become the primary caregivers of their grandchildren. In one case, a widowed senior is taking care of three children under the age of 8. In each situation, the Oahe YMCA has been able to provide a family membership at no extra cost to the family. This allows the children to participate in member activities and programs at no or little cost. It also allows the "new parent" to participate in activities that promote good health in spirit, mind and body. This new family unit can also come and enjoy activities together and make the best of a sometimes challenging situation. Without United Way assistance, it would be very hard to provide such services to these deserving families.

- Oahe YMCA

Story 4:

Missy was a 16 year-old Native American teenager, who had just given birth to a baby boy. Her first priority became her son and she considered dropping out of high school to take care of him. It had always been Missy's dream to be the first member of her family to graduated from high school. She decided to stay in school, despite her family's feeling that she should quit and go to work. Eventually, the pressure of trying to raise her son on her own and keep up with her school work became too much and she dropped out of school. But her desire to learn remained, and when she was able to Missy came to The Right Turn and enrolled in our GED program. Her son was now over a year old and was able to attend The Right Turn's Early Learning Center while Missy worked on her schoolwork. She felt very comfortable knowing that he was right next door. While studying to take her GED exams, Missy also had been working with our Youth Employability program, learning about what careers and options would be available at she got her GED. Her youth employability counselor asked her if she had ever thought about college. Missy went on with her life, continuing to work and be a mom. Several months later, she came back and told us that she had been accepted at CUC and was enrolled in pre-med. With United Way funding, Missy was able to start working towards her goals.

- The Right Turn

Story 5:

In November of 2007, club staff recognized that a regular club member, a teen-age girl named Amy, appeared to be troubled. It was known that Amy has had some difficulties at school and in the community with other teens. A discreet offer was made to her to speak to club staff about her situation. Reluctant at first, Amy denied that anything was wrong. The staff continued to speak to her in hopes that she would open up as to why she was so distraught. Eventually, she broke down in tears and began to sob uncontrollably, no longer able to keep her vow of silence. At that time, she talked about a plan that she and a friend were to carry out that very day.

Tired of the name-calling, fighting and drama that filled their daily lives and which they felt no hope of escaping, Amy and her friend had planned to leave town and possibly commit suicide. The plan seemed like the answer to the relentless sense of hopelessness and despair they faced each day.

Once hearing the plan, the Pierre Police were called in, Amy's parents were called and Amy was comforted.

Within hours, the friend was located in the Mitchell area and her family were enroute to be with her.

As it turned out, coming to the Club and trusting Club staff probably saved not one but two lives.

United Way funding comprises a significant portion of the Boys & Girls Club budget. Without their support, this story could have had a very different and tragic ending.

- Pierre Boys & Girls Club

Story 6:

A middle aged woman named Sara from north South Dakota came to Missouri Shores for shelter and support services. Three weeks before coming to MSDVC, the woman had been severely beaten by her fiancé and had been hospitalized for head trauma and other injuries. Before coming to Pierre, she pressed charges against him.

Sara lived in a small community and her fiancé knew she was staying at the shelter. The shelter staff from her community, her health-care provider and the prosecuting attorney encouraged her to leave the area for her safety.

Once Sara arrived at Missouri Shores' "House of Hope", she and her two dogs, who were also victimized, were ensured safety. She was provided food, clothing, support and advocacy.

Staff advocated with housing to have her Section 8 housing voucher transferred to Pierre and intervened on her behalf when a landlord was discriminatory to her because she was a victim of domestic violence. Missouri Shores assisted her in obtaining a permanent order of protection, provided transportation to medical appointments, coordinated transportation and support for criminal court hearings.

Sara and her two dogs were able to find permanent housing in Pierre.

United Way funds assisted Missouri Shores in providing all the needed resources and services for Sara, so she could feel safe and live violence free.

- Missouri Shores Domestic Violence Center

Story 7:

Jim came to our office after losing his job due to some physical limitations after a lengthy illness. He had applied for Social Security Disability but had yet to hear anything back. Since he had been working in the service industry he had no benefits, so between his illness and subsequent layoff he was without any funds and in jeopardy of losing his housing. He also needed help paying for medication and food.

Our office provided him with a coupon book to the Food Pantry which helped meet his immediate nutritional needs. We were also able to help him with his rent and medications through our Emergency Assistance funds.

After visiting with Jim, we were able to determine what other assistance he needed and referred him to other state and local programs for further help.

Jim stopped into the office recently to let us know how much he appreciated our help. He said that he had always taken pride in being able to budget his money and making it to stretch to cover his needs. When he got sick and wasn't able to work any more, his whole life changed. Jim said asking for help was the hardest thing he had ever done. He commented on how nice it was to have someone that would not only help him but also take the time to listen and understand what he was going through.

Today, Jim is in subsidized housing, received notice that he has been approved for SSD, and doesn't have to worry about being on the street without a roof over his head or where his next meal will be coming from. He told us that this wouldn't have happened without help. That's United Way funds at work in our community.

- Pierre Area Referral Service