

THE NEXT STEPS ..

PATH will take the next step in its evolution as an organization on July 1, 2008. On that date, all three states and NSC will begin operating as independent organizations. North Dakota, Minnesota, and the National Support Center are joining together in a voluntary affiliation, which we are calling the PATH Affiliation. Wisconsin is separating from the Affiliation to manage all their own business and relationships separate from the other PATH entities. Initially the agency will be known as PATH Wisconsin, but over time they will be choosing a new name.

The change in the PATH structure follows a long period of discussion and research by PATH board members and staff. The goal was to find the right balance between shared and independent operations. Ultimately, it was recognized that one of the important principles in the PATH model was the voluntary nature of the association. It was agreed that the voluntary aspect should be applied to the organizational structure and each state board should decide how they might best relate to the other PATH entities.

PATH Minnesota has restructured its board and intends to focus on its core services of foster care and adoption with the goal of being the premier treatment foster care provider in Minnesota. The affiliation allows it to concentrate on service quality while sharing administrative services and maintaining a close relationship with North Dakota and other affiliates.

PATH North Dakota has long been concerned that its resources were being used to support programs in other states. The affiliation allows it to maintain the integrity of its programs, while still sharing in best practices, advocacy, and quality assurance with other programs, including PATH Minnesota.

PATH Wisconsin has made the decision to strategically redirect its resources

back to Wisconsin in an effort to increase its ability to be more responsive to local needs and markets. PATH Wisconsin has a wide array of diverse programs and services and will continue to focus on these programs while maintaining its emphasis on quality treatment foster care.

All three PATH states feel the changes allow them to best respond to the unique needs and opportunities in their states.

PATH Inc. will perhaps experience the greatest change. As the "parent" organization it is changing from a directing and supervising role to being a strategic partner with the affiliates. The change frees up the organization to focus on quality administrative services and issues of best practices. It is also hoped that the change answers a long standing question about how PATH can best expand its successful model to new areas. The affiliation's first goal is to strengthen the existing affiliates, but it will eventually also look to develop new affiliates in other parts of the country.

PATH has identified several examples of successful affiliations. Yet we think we are one of the first to try this approach in foster care, our primary area of endeavor. We are aware there are risks in this approach. Yet, it is in keeping with the nature of PATH to break new ground in trying to find the best ways to serve children and families.



At PATH, we believe we can change lives, one child at a time. In this issue of PATH Prints we are sharing the story of one of our foster youth. Dom has been willing to share his story with others because he feels strongly that his time with PATH has helped him to change his life around. This newsletter shares Dom's story with you through his own experiences and the work of his foster parents and social worker. We succeed by building a strong team, with each youth at the center creating their path for a new future. This is one of the many stories that are taking place in our homes each and every day.

DOM'S NEW LIFE

"I wanted someone to notice me, to love me, and accept me for who I was. I wanted more than anything to be someone's friend and to have a home to go to that would accept me with open warm hands."

Most people go through life but don't figure out how to live until it is almost too late. The greatest thing about life is that we have the ability to do anything we want. When I was a young crib midget, I wasn't brought up how most people would want to bring up their children. I got into trouble several times in school, got bad grades, and got into fights all the time. So I got sent away a lot. The first time I got sent away I was six years old. I tried to stand out when I was at school in all the wrong ways, yelling and swearing at my teachers and picking fights with people. It did work though; I got expelled from two different schools and kicked out of most of my classes.

Every time I went to bed at night, I always felt that I was missing something, like I wasn't all completely there. One night during the year that I was locked up at the boys home, I got a phone call from my mom. Now around this time my mom had a meth addiction and had lost her father, all of her kids, and most of her life. I could tell she was under the influence of something by the tone of her voice. I asked her, "How are you doing?" She replied, "Horribly, thanks to you! You are the reason that my life is messed up. You caused my problems. You've driven me to alcohol and drugs. You need to stay out of my life and grow up!"

That night I sat in my room wondering why I felt so alone.

My mother hated me. I had no friends. I was completely alone. At that moment I got up out of my bed and sat down next to my window and started praying to God. I told him that I was alone and that I had two days until my release date and that I was in need of some guidance.

I wished more than anything that I had a family like all the other kids in school. I wanted someone to notice me, to love me, and accept me for who I was. I wanted more than anything to be someone's friend and to have a home to go to that would accept me with open warm hands.

The next morning I woke up and got a phone call from my probation officer. I told her about my talk with my mother. It was at that moment that she said the words that would change my life. She said, "You don't have to live that life anymore. You can go home or move into a foster home." The next day I was put into a foster home. My new family took me in, not as just another kid.

I have accomplished more than I ever thought I could possibly do in my life. I am telling you this. If you put your mind to it you can change your life. Maybe it might not be easy but it isn't too late. You have the power and choice to do it. I did and so can you.

"From the moment I met Dom, I could see he had enormous potential." Carol Sheridan, PATH Social Worker, Fergus Falls, MN.

Dom was referred to therapeutic foster care after completing his course of treatment at Valley Lake Boys Home. He was on probation as a result of previous law violations, and had one year of high school left. Dom could have gone back to his home town and tried to live with his mother, but he knew that he would fall back into the same crowd that he had gotten in trouble with before. He wasn't wild about the prospect of living in a foster home either, but he agreed to give it a try, so when he first went to meet the foster family, he had reservations. But, as Dom says, upon entering the foster home that first day, everyone, including the family dog, was smiling at him!

From the moment I met Dom, I could see he had enormous potential. Dom has been amenable to the suggestions and guidance of his foster family and has matured tremendously while in care. He has graduated high school, will

soon graduate from a culinary arts program at N.D.S.C.S. in Wahpeton and go to Billings, Montana for his internship. He plans to return to Wahpeton in the fall to complete a year of restaurant management training.

The thing I appreciate most about Dom is his joy and dedication in helping other youth, his desire to "be there" for others who are struggling. He has served as mentor and positive role model for other youth in the foster home. He is truly a "big brother" to his younger brother who struggles with many of the same conflicts that Dom did when he was in his home community. He regularly goes back to Valley Lake to mentor the younger boys there.

Dom's sense of humor is contagious, his resilience is remarkable, his future is filled with tremendous potential. No matter where he ends up working, or living, I am confident that he will continue to answer the call to serve others, and share the benefit of what he has learned and overcome in his life.



**Dom, PATH
Foster Youth**



“Dom is a role model and shows others they can accomplish their goals.” Jeff and Jeri Krueger, PATH Foster Parents, Fergus Falls, MN

Jeff and Jeri Krueger have been Dom’s foster parents for the last three years. The Krueger’s already had a big family with two children of their own and five foster youth in care, but they knew that they could create a loving home for Dom. By their own admission, Jeff and Jeri weren’t angels themselves growing up and they knew there would be struggles. What they wanted Dom to know is that they were willing to work through those struggles and come together as Dom began to heal.

Dom, Jeff and Jeri identified goals they wanted to work on together as a family. The Krueger’s have been working hard to support Dom with his sobriety and he has now been sober for four years. Jeff and Jeri have also been supporting Dom as he works to develop healthy relationships with peers and adults.

Their ability to serve as a family for the children in their care has been extremely important. The recently celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary and know the strong marriage they have grown allows them to do this work. The Kruegers foster parent because they know there are many more youth out there with Dom’s potential to turn their lives around.

Jeff comments, “The main thing we do is encourage the youth to reach their goals. They may stumble and struggle along the way but they can succeed in what they believe in. We can’t change the past, so let’s work on learning to deal with it, accept what’s happened and take the steps to break the cycle of abuse and neglect. We accept them for who they are ... We try to do the best we can for the time they’re in our home and even after as they’re always family to us.”

OFFICE UPDATES

PATH MINNESOTA, INC.



- A new treatment plan has been implemented for treatment foster care and CTSS programs. The new plan better meets the county and court needs.
- We are meeting with county supervisors to receive their feedback on our work. The interviews have been very successful in maintaining strong relationships, renewing dissolved relationships and establishing new working partnerships.
- A foster parent survey was completed recently and the majority of foster parents are very satisfied with how the organization is functioning.
- We will soon be opening an Outpatient Clinic in the Metro area to offer mental health services.
- Duluth will begin offering Family Mentoring, which is a program similar to the Visitation Program, except that the family is placed into care for the weekend. This program can be used either as a reunification service or as a preventative service.

- Karen Trosdahl, a foster parent, has completed the first draft curriculum for Specialized Foster Care for her home. Her manual will be used as a guide for other Specialized Foster Care homes as the program is implemented statewide.
- The extended visitation program is currently serving five families, averaging twenty-two hours per week, with the primary focus of improving parenting skills and returning children back to their parents in a safe environment.

PATH NORTH DAKOTA, INC.



- A Native American Foster Youth Education Group was facilitated by Sam Robertson and Mark LittleOwl for PATH children and foster parents. The goal of the group was to help children build their self-esteem by talking and learning about who they are and what they can do in a world that may require them to live in two separate cultures. The ten session program was generously supported financially by Casey Family Services.
- PATH North Dakota is currently engaged in creating a Strategic Plan to guide the work of the organization for fiscal years 2008-2012. Staff and foster parents are

highly engaged in this exciting process in light of all the changes and future of PATH North Dakota.

- Three of our foster parents were recently recognized for their incredible commitment to kids and families. Bruce and Naomi Harner were recognized as North Dakota Foster Parents of the Year; Jason and Dana Mitzel were awarded as being the Adoptive Family of the Year; and Bob and Vicki Thu were the North Dakota Special Needs Adoptive Family of the Year. The awards were granted by the North Dakota Department of Human Services.
- PATHways to Parenting Visitation, is a new program and it is for all families in treatment foster care. Staff and foster parents support visits that include the parents and others involved in the child's life. It is our belief these efforts and others will be helpful in creating success for the child's family and the child.

PATH WISCONSIN, INC.

- Cindy O'Keefe was invited to present at the State of Wisconsin Long Term Care Conference about our restraint-free policies and Therapeutic Crisis Intervention for Foster Families (TCIF).

- PATH Wisconsin was contacted by an agency in Alaska to understand our restraint-free policies and TCIF. Cindy O'Keefe is coordinating our consultation with them and may be asked to visit programs in Alaska.
- Amelia Franck Meyer, Becky Connell and Dawn Luebster are performing a training on "Senior staff and Board development and succession planning" during the Senior Management Track at the FFTA Conference in July.
- Rob Edwards and Annette Semancin Jones are presenting the results of the PATH Wisconsin BHAG (Big Hairy Audacious Goal) child placement disruption prevention and permanency literature review at the FFTA Conference in July 2008. The PATH Wisconsin BHAG is to be "the last placement prior to permanence for 90% of the children we serve".



**PATH Prints
NATIONAL SUPPORT CENTER**

Phone: 612-259-1600 • Fax: 612-259-1689
Toll-free: 1-877-264-PATH
www.pathinc.org

Vickie Meyer
Corporate Board President
Mike Peterson
Chief Executive Officer
Sara Larson
Senior Editor
JoAnn Crane
Layout/Design

PATH MINNESOTA

| | |
|------------------------------|--------------|
| Bemidji Area | 218-333-8000 |
| Brainerd Area | 218-828-3900 |
| Duluth Area | 218-722-6106 |
| Fergus Falls Area | 218-739-3074 |
| Marshall Area | 507-532-4635 |
| Monticello Area | 763-271-1670 |
| Moorhead Area | 218-291-5858 |
| Rochester Area | 507-280-0304 |
| St. Cloud Area | 320-529-0862 |
| St. Paul/Minneapolis Area .. | 612-259-1600 |

PATH NORTH DAKOTA

| | |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| Administration | 800-376-6608 |
| Bismarck Area | 800-766-9279 |
| Devils Lake Area | 800-766-9389 |
| Dickinson Area | 800-766-9351 |
| Fargo Area | 800-766-9321 |
| Grand Forks Area | 800-766-9356 |
| Jamestown Area | 800-766-9363 |
| Minot Area | 800-766-9885 |
| Turtle Mountain Area | 800-303-4961 |
| Williston Area | 800-766-9387 |

PATH WISCONSIN

| | |
|-----------------------|--------------|
| Eau Claire Area | 877-780-7284 |
| Hudson Area | 800-870-2069 |
| LaCrosse Area | 608-779-4448 |
| Madison Area | 877-842-7284 |
| Milwaukee Area | 414-431-2843 |

PATH is an equal opportunity employer and provider and is accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Services for Families and Children.

@2008 Professional Association of Treatment Homes. Reproduction approved if proper credit is given.



National Support Center
2021 East Hennepin Avenue, Suite 100
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55413-1769

NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
ST. PAUL, MN
PERMIT #7191