

## LOVE AND LAUGHTER SUSTAIN FOSTER COMMITMENT

*PATH foster parents Evett and Hank Westphal realize families come in all shapes and sizes.*

Hank comes from a family of 11 siblings and when his parents died at a young age the Westphal household took care of each other. Evett also experienced the dynamics of a unique family life. Raised by her grandmother since age 14, she had a tough beginning. As a young bride she had custody of her younger sister and later she would provide a home to her 16-year-old twin brothers.

Because of the extended family care they experienced, Evett was surprised as a foster mom that there could be no family to take care of the kids who found themselves in her home. "A lot of these kids have no stable family members available (to care for them)," said Westphal. Knowing the importance of having a family, the Westphals decided to become foster parents.

Hank and Evett began as county foster parents, and three years ago became licensed by PATH. A family makes up a recipe of love, humor and individual attention, crucial components to the development of a child. "A family means someone there to love them: someone to talk with them," Evett says.

The parents of four biological kids, Westphals have opened their home to foster children for 15 years. Currently, six children with special needs live with the Westphal family; two former foster children, now adopted, three foster children, and the legal guardian of the sixth child.

"Evett is fantastic," said PATH social

worker Jessica Barrickman who works with the family. "She is so resourceful." Showing resourcefulness through building a community of support doesn't depend on parents alone. Evett and Hank are proactive, networking from the onset with healthcare providers and school staff, addressing the unique needs of each child. "You want their transitions to be as smooth as possible," said Evett. Older siblings, other community organizations and healthy neighborhood relations all add nurturance and support. "There are angels all over the place," said Evett. "You need a network of angels and have that kind of support."

Children will always try to challenge, especially if they are hurt. Sometimes words can be used as a vessel for anger. That's when humor becomes a foster parenting asset. "You have to find some humor," Westphal said. "Some kids have so much anger, they are like a tornado. When kids are hurtful, you cannot take it to heart."

Another challenge that many foster parents go through is saying goodbye. "There is a lot of bonding that goes on," she says. Although it is tough to let a child go, the child will take the love and hope they experienced with them. The skills and care received during foster care create a path for successful and healthy adulthood. Recently, a former foster child met Evett at her front door. "Mom," he said. "I went to college."

### WHAT'S INSIDE

#### Family Connections



#### Saying Goodbye to Nancy Anderson

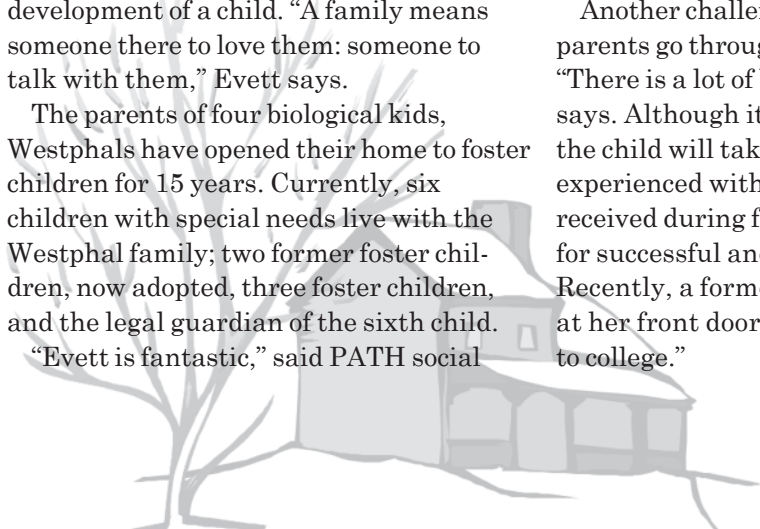
#### Evolv Update

#### State Highlights



#### Individual, Foundation and Corporate Donors

#### New Employees



## FAMILY CONNECTIONS OFFERS PARENT-DRIVEN OPTIONS

*The road less traveled is not always visible to families who have been in and out of the foster care system for years. But it's there.*

PATH In-Home therapists, Margaret Shoemaker and James Davis are leading a team of Parent Support Workers, with options of possible new roads for each family they meet through the Family Connections program in La Crosse, Wisconsin.

The Family Connections program began last spring to assist families in which children living in out-of-home situations is common. As therapists intercede in the process of permanency planning, PATH workers build trusting relationships focused on empowering parents to develop realistic plans for their children's futures. Working in a nurturing role ultimately reduces the necessity for Termination of Parental Rights litigation and lessens the time children spend in foster care awaiting permanent homes.

"It's really about building a relationship with these families and then giving them the permission to do what they need to do to care for their kids," said Shoemaker. "We try to nurture these parents."

Through the process of assessing personal abilities and parenting limits, partnered with coaching and training, parents can reach decisions and closure to overdue and unresolved instability regarding the placement of their children.

Helping them parent to the best of their ability is key. Finding permanency is primary. If parents find that reunification of their family is not possible, Kinship Care, relative placement, guardianship, and open adoptions may be part of an equation leading to healthy family structures.

Often families served by other systems walk a road of shame and alienation. PATH comes to a family with options built on a family's strengths. This public validation of strength and ability encourages and motivates parents to reach a goal that serves the well-being of their children.

"We are on a strength-based hunt," said James Davis. "We really try to identify strengths so we can bolster them and maximize the energy from them. Once a family sees what is possible, they can best assess what their options are for a healthy home. They can make more accurate and informed choices."

Davis has provided counseling in a variety of settings, but likes the opportunity that the Family Connections program offers in client homes. The process of working in the home provides immediate first-hand and accurate information enabling interventions in a new way. The short-term intensive work is typically completed in 4



James Davis joined PATH in 2006. Davis is the primary therapist working in the La Crosse community with Family Connections. Margaret Shoemaker works along side Davis, bringing her years of experience to the program.

months, whereas other In-Home therapy services may last much longer.

PATH's positive impact in the La Crosse community assists families and also extends to the court system, school districts, and other agencies that team with PATH. As therapists collaborate in multi-disciplinary teams, perspectives change, family trauma and strain are reduced so a road to healing can begin.

"Every time we do an initial assessment we are not just impacting a family system, but the whole eco-system around the family. People start looking at families differently," said 17-year PATH therapist, Shoemaker. "We positively impact how the family is viewed by the community."

Each family is unique. Each road is different. With 30 years in child welfare, Shoemaker identifies her professional goal with each family she serves through Family Connections.

"I want people to walk away from our services in a better place in their heart."

## SAYING GOODBYE

*Nancy Anderson, PATH MN Program  
Development and Adoption Director*

There is just one difficult thing about retirement and that is saying goodbye to all of you. I will be retiring from PATH, March 2, 2007, after 22 years of employment. When the PATH Board members hired me in February of 1984, my two sons, Spencer and Grant, were eight and four years old.

Now Spencer is married and has a new baby girl, Piper, born Dec. 3, 2006. She is the main reason for my retirement. My husband, Doug, the maternal grandmother, Pam, and I will be sharing day care when my daughter in law, Melissa, returns to work. I feel so lucky to have this opportunity with my granddaughter. Yet, I must leave PATH to enter this new phase of my life.

I am grateful to have worked for this fine organization and to have had a career that I hope has made a difference. As a social worker, I have lived my dream to work with children and families. PATH has given me many career opportunities. I have had 8 different job titles and 13 different office sites. Conference travel took me many places such as Sweden.

But most importantly I have had relationships with all the terrific people involved with PATH. People like, George Hendrickson, Mike Peterson, Teri Zywicki Nelson, Don Crompton, and Dave Charbonneau were leadership mentors who taught me invaluable qualities. Foster and adoptive parents taught me attributes of parenting I never thought possible. The rest of you have made coming to work each day a delight. Most importantly, I want to say thank you for everything and continuing on with PATH's important mission.



## EVOLV UPDATE

*Provided by Brian Brommel*

### Clinical Data

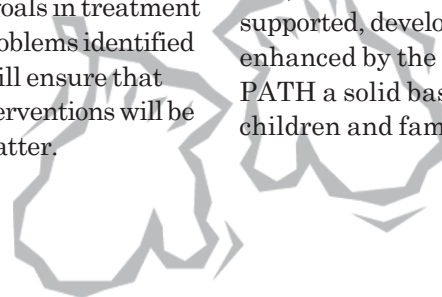
PATH has made significant progress with our clinical setup in Evolv. Now that this is implemented, social workers are able to conduct numerous advanced case management activities not previously available. For instance, PATH social workers use Evolv to enroll and discharge clients from programs, enter placement disruptions, place children in foster homes, log incidents, and many other activities. All foster homes and family members who reside in them are also entered in the system.

### Clinical Care

The clinical care for each client is focused around the formation of an electronic treatment plan that tracks diagnoses, goals, interventions, medications, court orders and other legal matters, and prognosis. All treatment plans require electronic approval by supervisors prior to finalization. Workflows have been created to issue automated alerts to case managers as crucial deadlines approach for various clinical management tasks, such as re-administration of assessments, re-filing of consent forms, etc. Clinical assessments have been tied to specific goals in treatment plans so that problems identified in the former will ensure that appropriate interventions will be entered in the latter.

### Financial Streamline

The financial implementation has been a tremendous success. For years, PATH was operating with an antiquated billing and receivables system. This system ran on an outdated and unsupported operating system and lacked any documentation. The risk to PATH as the system aged grew annually and was a key audit concern each year. Evolv has given us a solution to all of those concerns. Starting October 2005, and continuing through the next several months, we were able to migrate all of our billing and receivables function to a new state of the art platform. In addition to replacing the old system, Evolv now provides us with a fully integrated operating system. Evolv combines the financial functionality with the clinical operating needs providing a complete beginning-to-end tracking and financial system. Evolv eliminated the old system's requirements for repeated, multiple data entry steps. All data is put in once in one place and is then available for all future downstream processes. The conversion to Evolv eliminates the need to support a home-grown alternative, as it continues to be supported, developed and enhanced by the vendor giving PATH a solid base for serving children and families long term.



## COLORADO

- PATH Colorado is undergoing a Process Improvement Plan that, at all operational levels, will create and/or refine the effectiveness of existing processes such as family recruitment, increasing referrals, quality assurance, marketing/fundraising, matching, and foster parent relations. These changes are both immediate and incremental in nature, designed to enhance the quality of services for the children and families we serve.
- In 2006, PATH Colorado Inc. entered into a very unique partnership with the Adams County Department of Human Services. This collaboration involved approaching churches in the Adams County area for the purposes of foster family recruitment.
- PATH Colorado established three more contracts for placement with local counties and mental health agencies, bringing the total number of contracts to 30.

## MINNESOTA

- In western Minnesota, Fergus Falls recently completed their first Bridge Builders 14-week skills group.
- Fergus Falls now has three county paid contracts to provide Bridge Builders services.
- The Fergus Falls office has contracted with a worker to complete foster care and adoption home studies in Clay and Becker counties for service expansion in these areas.
- The Bemidji and Crookston offices have implemented supervised visitation programs.
- The Crookston office has expanded its CTSS services by hiring a full-time worker.
- Pam Skon in the Bemidji office was admitted to an MSW program.
- Bemidji has a total of 25 open adoption cases.

## NORTH DAKOTA

- Independent Living Program in Southeast Region completes state review. Reviewer comments include:
  - Reviewer was very impressed with how organized the Region V IL Program is and the

level of professionalism demonstrated by the IL Coordinator and program Supervisor. Policy and Procedure requirements all met or exceeded expectations, specifically in the area of documentation and record keeping. The IL Coordinator has developed and implemented a prioritization system that is fair to the youth and is currently keeping the referral base content. Region V was the last region to receive training and start services under the new program guidelines, but in many respects they are far ahead in program implementation and service provision. Great Job!

*Jeffrey L. Bashus LSW*

*North Dakota Chafee Foster Care Independence Program*

- Congratulations to Stephanie and to the rest of you. This report confirms my thoughts prior to the review - "We have a winner". I thank you all for your willingness to implement the program, as well as your dedication to sticking it out through the growing pains. A special thanks to Stephanie for building and coordinating an A+ IL Program.

*Dawn Pearson*

*North Dakota Department of Human Services, Children and Family Division*

## WISCONSIN

- The management teams of St. Aemilian-Lakeside, Inc. and PATH Wisconsin met in November. It was decided that these agencies have a commitment to move forward and continue discussions to learn more about each other and identify potential ways the two can collaborate. Agency representatives met again in December to brainstorm potential relationships between the agencies. Both have tremendous resources that would benefit each other.
- Wisconsin's Season of Giving campaign went extremely well, raising over \$20,000 toward our goal of \$12,000. We gathered contact information for many new individual donors and had strong participation from our staff and foster parents.
- The Western Region has begun the process of doing placement disruption teleconferences. These efforts have successfully kept youth



placed in their current foster homes.

- The Eastern Region has completed the application packet and submitted it to the Wisconsin mental health clinic certification specialist to license our Madison office as a clinic. We anticipate approval before the end of February.
- A new foster parent training was held in January with seven families in attendance. The Eastern Region is planning an intensive foster parent training weekend in March in response to the many requests from our families to provide concentrated hours.
- An additional “mini” education opportunity arose when a school staff member recently asked a PATH foster parent for training in how he works with his foster child as he is able to calm him down so quickly. This foster dad is one of our TCIF trainers and is willing to do an informal training.

## TEN TIPS FOR FOSTER PARENTS

- Be honest with children. They can read you like a book.
- Listen to the children.
- Sit down and eat as a family.
- Be real. Children know when you are genuine.
- Use personal care for more. Touch feeds a lot into the wellbeing of a child.
- Lighten up and maintain a sense of humor.
- Bite your tongue when working with challenging biological parents.
- Strive to remain neutral. You can sympathize, but do not take sides.
- Don't take the frustrations of a child personally.
- Be proactive regarding education and healthcare.

*This list is offered by former Pierce County Sheriff, Everett Muhlhausen, and PATH foster parent, Evett Westphal, each have served as foster parents for many years.*

## Foundation and Corporate Donors July 2006 through January 2007

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Bon-Ton Elder-Beerman Stores	North American Council on Adoptable Children
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Marshall Lutheran Sunday School, Marshall, ND	Whitney Foundation
McKnight Foundation	Jean Meyer Memorial Fund/Winona Community Foundation
	Xcel Energy Foundation, Minneapolis, MN
	Xcel Energy Foundation, Eau Claire, WI



In PATH's 2006 Annual Report the grant from the Northwest Minnesota Foundation was mistakenly not recognized. The foundation has made a considerable investment, in excess of \$14,000, for PATH Minnesota's Whole Family Placement program. The agency is very appreciative of the foundation's generous support.

# PATH Prints

## Individual Donors July 2006 through January 2007

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	Martha Noffsinger		Michael Smith	Mary Jane Uhlman	
	Kathleen Nygaard				
	Jami Nylander				

# NEW EMPLOYEES

July 2006 through January 2007

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Allan Coleman  
 Controller  
 Kimberlyn Gaulden  
 Accounts Payable Specialist  
 Ross Horn  
 Sr. Staff Accountant  
 Katie Johnson  
 Sr. Staff Accountant  
 Cindy Luther  
 Sr. Staff Accountant

## MINNESOTA

### Bemidji

Britt Aschnewitz  
 Social Worker

### Duluth

Julie Flint  
 Social Worker

### Fergus Falls

Jodi Anderson  
 Social Worker Supervisor  
 Allyson Ellingson  
 Mental Health Practitioner

## MINNESOTA

### Metro

Debra Patras  
 Mental Health Practitioner  
 Mary Petersen  
 Social Worker

### Rochester

Jay Kimball  
 Social Worker  
 Lisa Krueger  
 Office Administrator  
 Joseph Waller  
 Mental Health Practitioner

### St. Cloud

Tara Boeckmann  
 Visitation Supervisor  
 Kim Hanson  
 Visitation Supervisor

Kimberly Plautz  
 Office Assistant

## NORTH DAKOTA

### Bismarck

Ileen Enzlinger  
 Office Assistant  
 Mary Uhlman  
 Office Assistant

### Fargo

Carissa Cox  
 Social Worker  
 Macey Furstenau  
 Secondary Case Manager  
 Chelsae Johnson  
 Administrative Associate  
 Kathryn Kempf  
 Secondary Case Manager

## NORTH DAKOTA

### Fargo

Harold Lindsay  
 Secondary Case Manager  
 Jami Nylander  
 Office Assistant  
 Rebecca Soland  
 Secondary Case Manager  
 Tanya Stuhaug  
 Social Worker  
 Marie Boura  
 Secondary Case Manager

### Grand Forks

Lori Burianek  
 Secondary Case Manager

### Minot

Donna Adam  
 Adoption Social Worker  
 Ellen Gillis-St. Croix  
 Secondary Case Manager  
 Tara Schaefer  
 Adoption Social Worker

## WISCONSIN

### Eau Claire

Mechele Judd  
 Support Work Supervisor  
 Erik Kleven  
 Intervenor

### Hudson

Stephanie Brown  
 TFC Intervenor

### LaCrosse

Jamie Bettesworth  
 Family/Child Skills Worker

## PATH Prints

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Phone: 612-259-1600 • Fax: 612-259-1689  
 www.pathinc.org

Vickie Meyer, Corporate Board President  
 Tim Plant, Chief Executive Officer  
 Sara Larson, Senior Editor  
 JoAnn Crane, Layout/Design

## COLORADO PATH

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## MINNESOTA PATH

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 Crookston Area ..... 218-281-0721  
 Duluth Area ..... 218-722-6106  
 Fergus Falls Area ..... 218-739-3074  
 Marshall Area ..... 507-532-4635  
 Rochester Area ..... 507-280-0304  
 St. Cloud Area ..... 320-529-0862  
 St. Paul/Minneapolis Area .. 612-259-1600

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National Support Center  
 2021 East Hennepin Avenue, Suite 100  
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