

# SOLUTIONS

Summer Newsletter | 2019

## IN THIS ISSUE:

Transforming Wellbeing  
for Veterans

Building Resilience for  
Older Youth in Care

Be a “Home for the  
Holidays” Host Family



#### Our Mission:

The Center for Youth and Family Solutions engages and serves children and families in need with dignity, compassion, and respect by building upon individual and community strengths to resolve life challenges together.

#### Our Values:

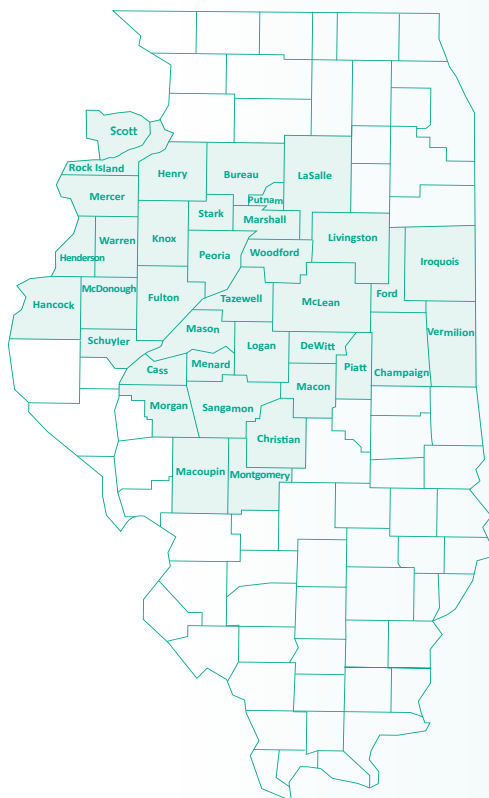
- Collaboration and partnership
- Excellence
- Dedication to achieving solutions
- Treating everybody with dignity and respect

## Agency Happenings

### Organizations Help Sustain Tazewell Community Area Project (TCAP) Supporting East Peoria's Richland Neighborhood

When they say it takes a village to raise a child, we know this to be true as we have witnessed such collaboration first hand! For over two decades, our Tazewell Community Area Project (TCAP) has been providing positive community activities and preventative services in the Richland Neighborhood. We couldn't have continued making a meaningful difference in this neighborhood without funding from several organizations and the parents and residents of Richland over the last year. We want to thank the following organizations:

Archer Daniels Midland  
Fondulac Park District  
Friends of Richland Youth  
Tazewell Community Services



### Celebrating Simon's First Year

Last year we introduced you to Simon, our first pet therapy dog in training. A lot has happened over the past year. Simon passed the intermediate level training class to ensure he has good manners when interacting with clients, staff, and visitors. He and behavioral counseling supervisor, Christian Myers, will attend the more advanced training class next, and will also be working one on one with a trainer to enhance all of what Simon has learned. The goal is for Simon to pass the evaluation for the AKC Good Citizen certificate. Along with Simon, Christian also has been working towards her Animal Assisted Psychotherapy certificate. Research consistently shows animal-assisted therapy, as directed by a health professional can help people improve their physical, social and emotional or cognitive functioning and we can't wait to offer this benefit to our clients. We wish both Simon and Christian best of luck as they approach the end of their training!





## Jim Kleine Youth Enrichment Fund Unveiled To Honor Retired Program Coordinator of Guardian Angel Hall

After 33 years of service, our Guardian Angel Hall Program Coordinator, Jim Kleine, retired this past winter. In Jim's honor, a valued donor founded the **Jim Kleine Youth Enrichment Fund**. The purpose of this fund is to provide the youth at Guardian Angel with enrichment activities and opportunities that will help stimulate their minds as they learn to heal, cope and thrive despite severe abuse and neglect. Because of this enrichment fund the boys have already experienced Lego Land and attended a Big Ten basketball tournament. We wish Jim the best of luck in this next chapter of his life and we thank our donors for paying tribute to Jim in such a remarkable way!

Interested in making a contribution to The Jim Kleine Enrichment fund? You can do so easily by going here: <https://www.cyfsolutions.org/services/donation/>

## Cheers to Morton Community Foundation!

CYFS would like to offer many thanks to the **Morton Community Foundation** for a grant that funded commercial grade swing sets for the boys at our residential program at Guardian Angel Home. The boys will be thrilled by this addition!

RETIRED AND LOOKING TO STAY ACTIVE?  
DO SO THROUGH THE RETIRED SENIOR VOLUNTEER PROGRAM (RSVP)



“The worst thing we could do in retirement is stop being active. Continuing to have responsibility, like we can get from volunteering, not only gives us the chance to pay it forward, but provides the stimulation we need for our mind and body as we age.”

—DR. BILL GARDNER

AARP Illinois State Coordinator for Driver Safety,  
a volunteer role



To get more information on this program, contact **Jeff Turnbull** at **309-323-6620** or by email at : [jturnbull@cyfsolutions.org](mailto:jturnbull@cyfsolutions.org)

# We Are Building Resilience for Older Youth in Care

Imagine not having anyone there to help you learn how to drive or balance a checkbook, no one to show you how to write your first resume or apply to college and for financial aid, no one to help you navigate relationships as an emerging adult. While many of us benefitted from the guidance of a parent or mentor when we experienced these milestones, in the United States, more than 20,000 young adults in foster care “age out” of the child welfare system – and the majority have little to no support when they reach these hurdles.

The realities for many of these young men and women are dire. According to the National Foster Youth Institute:

- While **70%** of foster kids express interest in wanting to go to college, only **3%** of kids who “age out” will earn a college degree
- **1 in 4** don’t graduate from high school or get a GED
- **60%** of young men who “age out” are convicted of a crime
- **7 in 10** girls who “age out” become pregnant before the age of 21

*CYFS is trying to change these outcomes for older youth in care.*

“We wanted to strengthen our ability to support older youth by having a professional social worker focus solely on this age group,” stated Heather Goff, director of our foster care program. Jessica Bennett, CYFS’s Educational and Life Skills Coordinator, has taken on that challenge. Jessica spends most of her time working with older youth in care, foster parents, and child welfare staff, helping them navigate education and vocational



opportunities, as well as ensuring youth in care who face aging out have adequate housing and knowledge of community resources.

The other big piece of Jessica’s work is providing forums where young adults in care have a voice and can enlighten public officials on the realities they face. This past spring, Jessica – along with three older youth in care/alumni she works with – attended the 4th Annual Foster Youth and Alumni Legislator Shadow Day. This event provided an opportunity for 60 current and former youth in care ages 18 and older to be paired with a member of the 101st General Assembly, and learn first hand about the legislative process.

“Having this opportunity for our older youth in care and alumni to share their story directly with those who have the power to make changes is so crucially important. So many of the people with whom we work feel like they do not have a voice. Legislative Shadow Day is a great way for that voice to be amplified and heard,” says Bennett.

In fact, Bennett found many of the legislators never realized the challenges older youth in foster care face.

“Too many of our legislators had no idea many youth transition out of care without any long term connections or support systems; that many do not have educational advancement being modeled for them; that many are so angry and ‘done’ with being in the child welfare system they do not access resources available while in care,





and when they are ready (years down the line) the resources are no longer available to them,” continued Bennett.

Above is a group photo of the 60 current or former youth in care who attended the 4th Annual Foster Youth and Alumni Legislator Shadow Day.

Alexandra who is four months from aging out of foster care, was one of the older youth who attended the Legislator Shadow Day. While Alexandra is now on a good path to success, she is very passionate about advocating for changes in the child welfare system, especially for older youth in care. What lies heavily on her mind is making sure that other kids have access to someone like Jessica, who can provide the tools they need to be successful, especially when preparing for college. Since the age of 15, Alexandra desperately wanted to take a financial literacy class specifically to help her understand how she could afford college. “When you are in foster care and living in a rural area, you don’t have easy access to many of the tools you need to be successful. For me to take a financial literacy class, I would have to miss work and drive two hours both ways,” continued Alexandra.

Experiences like Alexandra faced are exactly why Bennet is also a certified Financial Literacy trainer. Continues Jessica, “My goal is to provide older youth in care the same opportunities as those not in foster care. That is why we work not only on financial literacy, but I also spend a lot of time meeting with schools to ensure our youth in care are getting the support they need to be successful academically. In essence, I try to ensure older youth in care are getting their educational and life skill needs met so they can transition into adulthood successfully and live their best life.”

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP SUPPORT OLDER YOUTH IN CARE AS THEY BEGIN TO TRANSITION OUT OF CARE?

## Be a ‘Home for the Holidays’ Host Family

*For some of our youth in care who are in college, they simply have no place to go during school breaks and holidays. You could provide that temporary place to call home during these times when college is closed, providing them a sense of belonging and a safe place to call home.*

## Donate Gift Packages

### Student Care Packages

*Opening a box stuffed with goodies a few times a year and realizing someone is thinking of them really means the world to older youth in care who are in college.*

### Housewarming Packages

*Moving into your first apartment can be overwhelming, but having a package of household items like cleaning supplies, towels and linens, and kitchen accessories could make the transition so much smoother for young adults.*

*If you are interested in becoming a host family for college aged youth in care or donating a care package, contact Jessica Bennett at [jbennett@cyfsolutions.org](mailto:jbennett@cyfsolutions.org) or by calling her at (217) 352-5179 ext.3217*

# We Are Transforming Wellbeing for Veterans

In many ways veterans are the bedrock of society. Their courage, resilience, and honor place them among our communities' most valuable assets. However, the journey home for many veterans is not always a smooth one as they silently suffer from the trauma of war.

The statistics illustrating distress are quite sobering. According to Justice for Vets, a division of the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, 181,000 veterans are currently in U.S. jails or prisons. One in five veterans have symptoms of mental illness or cognitive impairment, and 81% of veterans have a substance abuse disorder prior to incarceration.

That is why starting January 1 of 2018, veterans treatment courts were mandated in every judicial circuit in Illinois, as a way to offer a second chance to those that often suffer the consequences of military service, including PTSD, traumatic brain injuries and substance abuse. The voluntary program allows honorably discharged veterans to plead guilty to a crime in exchange for an intensive probation sentence that includes frequent court visits, mental health counseling, or substance abuse treatment. Upon completion, they can have their records expunged.

In our own backyard of McLean County, veterans residing in McLean, Livingston, Logan, Ford and Woodford counties can be identified as potential clients for the program during their intake process at county jails.

What makes this program so unique is the team supporting the veterans, including The Center for Youth and Family Solutions Veterans Court Case Manager, Nick Pate. "What strengthens this program is the common experiences we all have had in the military," stated Pate. Nick,

Nate enlisted in the U.S. Marines in 2003 and served until 2011 when he was honorably discharged and awarded a Purple Heart.

a former Marine who was awarded a Purple Heart while serving in Iraq. The team includes Judge Charles Feeney III, (who served as a U.S. Marine), public defenders, prosecutors, probation officers, police officers and Veterans Administration staff - almost all of whom are veterans. The team meets weekly to review progress of those enrolled, brainstorm ideas as to how to best support participants, and strategize how to keep them from further criminal behavior.

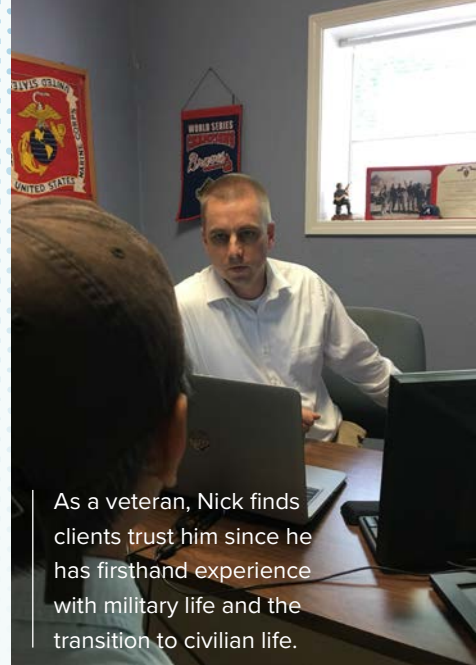
And while the setting is the same as most courtrooms, the feeling one experiences in veterans court is one of positive affirmation, clear and transparent communication, and a feeling of hope. "In this program, we have two primary rules: be where you are supposed to be and on time, and be honest," said Judge Feeney.

"A lot of what we are doing is digging deeper to find root causes for the behaviors that got them in trouble," stated Pate. As Case Manager, Nick's role is primarily to insure participants are following their action plan, which for many includes drug and/or alcohol treatment, helping secure transportation to get to court, connecting them to mental health experts, and being their advocate throughout the entire process.

The McLean County program is new, but expected to deliver great success. According to the Chicago Tribune, two established programs in Illinois have seen great results. Out of the 200 Cook County veterans admitted between 2012 and 2015, 63% graduated from the program. In Will County, all but two of its 26 veterans that have entered the program since it started in 2012 have graduated.

While McLean County understands there will be highs and lows, one thing is for certain: the support team collectively agrees no one will be giving up on the veterans in the program.

Know a veteran who has become involved in the criminal justice system and could benefit from veterans court? For questions about eligibility or to learn more about the casework services we provide, contact Nick Pate at [npate@cyfsolutions.org](mailto:npate@cyfsolutions.org).



As a veteran, Nick finds clients trust him since he has firsthand experience with military life and the transition to civilian life.





This past April, we had a great evening at our sixth annual Blues for a Cause benefit concert. For those that joined us, we want to express our heartfelt thanks for supporting our agency!

We also want to express again our gratitude to our event sponsors! Thank you for joining us in believing in the human and community spirit!

## Lenny The Lawyer

John Graham & Associates • Nathan White  
F&M Bank • Kuhl Insurance • CEFCU  
RSM • Lanz Heating and Cooling Inc.  
Entec Services • AAA Confidential Security  
Group • Thermal Services, Inc.



We also want to thank everyone who donated to our Just Like Me project the night of the concert! This project helps kids who have experienced trauma be able to enjoy their childhood and just be kids! With your support, we have been able to provide the following special enrichment activities to youth in care:

Bicycles | Swim Passes | Dance Class  
Guitar Lessons | Karate | Cubs Baseball Games

Didn't get a chance to donate to this cause?  
There still is time!

TO MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO OUR JUST LIKE ME PROJECT VISIT:  
<https://www.cyfsolutions.org/services/donation/>

**Executive Director**  
Tricia C. Fox

**Chief Operating Officer**  
Anthony T. Riordan

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**Be the person  
she comes  
home to.**

CYFS has immediate needs for foster parents of teens who often have emotional challenges due to past experiences of abuse or neglect. More than anything, these teens simply want a place to call home and they desperately need the love, safety and support that you could provide.

**JOIN US IN BEING PART OF THE SOLUTION.**

**cyfsolutions.org | 309.323.6600**



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