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Chelsea Earns Success With Your Support

When Chelsea got expelled from school in the seventh grade, she didn't know what would happen. She couldn't get into another school; she had been expelled or suspended for fighting from too many schools already. In fact, from the fifth grade until the seventh grade, she had spent about two weeks a year attending school.

said. "It made me realize, 'I don't have anything going for me. I can't lose my daughter. I have to turn this around.'" So, that's what she did.

"They're getting kids off the streets and saving kids' lives."

Her home life wasn't easy. Her parents struggled with heroin addiction and they lost their house. In her first two years at Ingham Academy, she lived in out-of-home residential placements.

Lindsey Robinson, a juvenile court officer at Ingham Academy, said that in the two years she worked with Chelsea, she really matured.

"I liked Ingham Academy," she said. "I felt like it could get me out of residential placements and I became close to the staff." She said going to Ingham Academy helped her turn her life around. But not right away. "When I first started going here, they weren't sure I would graduate before I was 20," she said.

"She has grown to be a helpful, caring and nurturing mother to her daughter as well as to others in need," Lindsey said. "She once had no drive for success. She is now only accepting success, even with the obstacles she has run into along the way."

Chelsea knew in order to support herself and her daughter, she needed an education. She made the commitment to study hard and was able to make big strides in a short period of time. Last June, she had 10.25 credits.

"It made me realize, I can't lose my daughter. I have to turn this around."

Just 10 months later, she more than doubled her credits, allowing her to graduate at age 18. She will walk in the graduation ceremony in July, is enrolled in Lansing Community College and works at Arby's.

Two years after starting at Ingham Academy, at age 16, she became pregnant. A month after her daughter was born, she had emergency surgery to remove her gall bladder. Then her mother relapsed. Things weren't going well and she said she wasn't motivated to change.

"I want to be a home healthcare nurse," she said. "I plan to find a nice house in a nice neighborhood. I want to do as much as I can and strive for success for my kids."

As a result, her daughter was put in foster care and Chelsea began hanging out with a rough crowd. She ended up arrested and put into foster care herself. At the following permanency hearing for her daughter, the judge warned that her parental rights could be terminated if she ended up in court again. "That's when it clicked for me," Chelsea

Chelsea has worked diligently to build a path for a successful future. She says she is grateful for Lindsey and the other workers who have helped her — they are now like second moms to her. She is also grateful for Ingham Academy and its supporters.

"They really are changing kids' lives," she said. "They're making kids who have nothing, have something. They're getting kids off the streets and saving kids' lives." **BF**

BRIGHT FUTURES

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Steve Helps Kids Become Successful Adults

When a friend suggested that Steve Swart disc jockey a talent show at Highfields, he wasn't sure it was something he wanted to do. He had never worked with kids before. But, just for fun, he did it anyway — and he loved it.

Steve said with help from the courts, the community, and voters, programs that are proven to help kids also decrease crime and continue to improve the community.

Swart said seeing all the positive work done at Highfields to support kids changed him. Within a year, he applied for a job with the organization and now has been with Highfields for 10 years

"If there's not a program to help these kids get jobs and a future, we're giving them up to crime," he said. "Science would say this is a good investment and being here with these kids lets me know it's a good investment, too."

and with Ingham Academy for the past five.

"We're creating a generation of adults that can be successful."

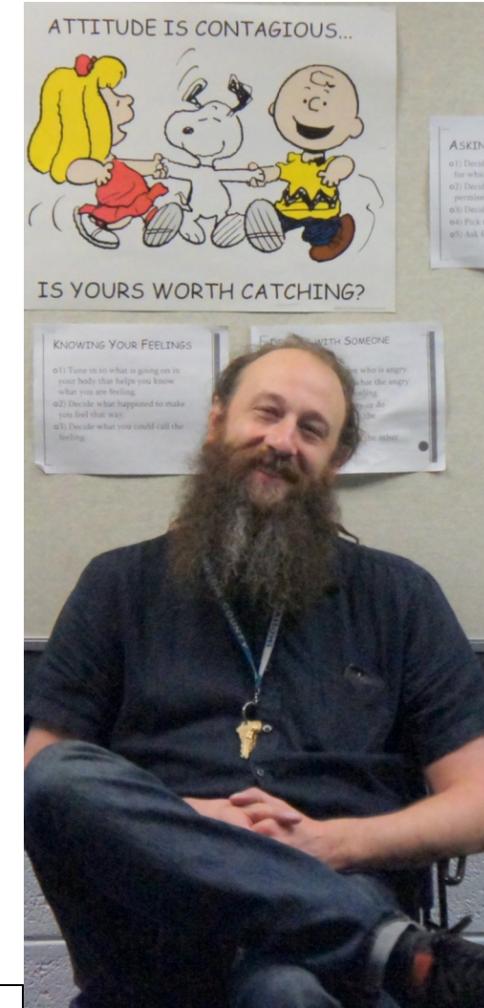
"It's a great place to work," he said. "It's a stressful job but I can't imagine a more fulfilling job."

To him, Ingham Academy is a place for growth. It's a place where kids who may have been forgotten are now nurtured.

Steve is a behavior treatment specialist at Ingham Academy. He works with kids on improving their social skills and works to train other Highfields staff in Aggression Replacement Training (ART). ART focuses on improving anger management and social skills.

"Before these programs, schools in general would ignore them until they could expel them," he said. "[That is] creating a class of kids who don't have a lot of options. [At Ingham Academy,] we're creating a class of kids who haven't been given up on. We're creating a generation of adults that can function and be successful." **BF**

"The more we can give them skills they can take with them — that they'll always have with them — that's the treatment that matters," he said. "That's the thing that changes their life."



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Shilynn Builds a Brighter Future

Shilynn is a good student. She gets all As and Bs, holds two jobs and her smile doubles in size when she thinks about her future. But a year ago, things were much different.

When Shilynn began high school, she stopped going to class. She skipped school so much that by the end of 10th grade, she found herself expelled and on probation.

When she transferred to Ingham Academy, she really didn't want to go because she didn't want to leave her friends. But soon, she began to see how Ingham Academy could help her improve her future.

"At my old school, I couldn't learn the way they taught," she said. "I would ask them to slow down and they didn't and they just gave up on you. Here, they slow down for you and help you out."

Her teachers at Ingham Academy have noticed a change in Shilynn since she started, too.

"Over the course of the year, she has

improved her coping skills and has been able to hold down two jobs on top of being successful in school," said Stephen Swart, one of Highfields' behavior treatment specialists at Ingham Academy. "She participated in Anger Control and Social Skills groups and has developed the tools to be successful."

Now Shilynn gets the attention she needs in order to succeed in school. She says Ingham Academy turned out to be the best thing for her.

"I know I would be in a lot worse of a situation if it weren't for Ingham Academy," she said. "Before coming here, I didn't really care. I didn't look at my future and I wasn't focused. Here, I had to focus. Without Ingham Academy, I wouldn't [have a job] and I would not have as good of grades as I have now." **BF**

"At my old school, I couldn't learn the way they taught. Here, they slow down for you and help you out."

Celebrate with Ingham Academy this July! First, Ingham Academy's graduating class will accept their high school diplomas at their graduation on July 22. The following day, Ingham Academy will host their annual Garden Gala to honor those graduates. We hope you can join us for one or both of these events; see more information below and on the next page.



Ingham Academy Graduation

When: Wednesday, July 22 at 2:00 p.m. at Ingham Academy
Where: 1601 W. Holmes Road, Lansing, Mich. 48910



Ingham County Judge Finds Inspiration in Helping Families

Judge Janelle Lawless likes assisting people. Her favorite part of her job as Chief Judge of the Ingham County Circuit Court is her ability to help families change for the better. She likes seeing the evolution in children and families as they work hard and utilize the programs available to them. She said this is why she attends the Ingham Academy graduation every year.

"It has a tremendous success rate... 3% [recidivism] after one year. That's way below the state average."

"It's inspiring," she said. "A lot of these youth had difficult home lives and to get to the point where they are getting their high school diploma shows dedication on their part."

Ingham Academy is a collaboration of four key institutions. The Ingham County Intermediate School District provides the teachers. Highfields provides behavioral treatment specialists. Peckham, Inc. provides vocational training. And the Ingham County Circuit Court provides Juvenile Court Officers on-site. It's a unique combination, but one that has been extremely successful in Ingham County.

"It has a tremendous success rate in terms of recidivism," she said. "Three percent after one year. That's way below the state average."

The low recidivism rate shows that once students leave Ingham Academy, they have the life and social skills they need to lead a successful life, away from crime. Lawless said

having a high school diploma, work experience and real-life skills are a huge factor in this.

"Everyone is rooting for the youth," she said. "We're there sometimes to hold their hand but we're also there to make sure they're doing the right thing and make sure the right resources are in place."

She said Highfields has always been on the forefront of change. Ingham Academy and the Pride Evening Reporting program are two examples of how working together has allowed meaningful change to happen in Ingham County.

In the 13 years she has been a judge, she has seen many young adults turn their lives around through Ingham Academy.

She recalled one young woman who had made poor relationship choices and had been self-harming. At Ingham Academy, she discovered her creative side. She began to express herself through art rather than self-harm. Two years ago, Judge Lawless received a Christmas card in the mail from this young woman. She is now happily married and in a much better place.

"It's exciting when they're no longer under court jurisdiction and you find they're doing well," she said. **BF**

2015 Annual Garden Gala

The Garden Gala follows the Ingham Academy graduation every year and features fresh produce grown by our 4-H Youth Garden. A delicious dinner will be prepared by Capital Prime's Executive Chef.

**Thursday, July 23, 2015
6:30 p.m.
1601 W. Holmes Road
Lansing, Mich. 48910**

Reservations are required. If you would like to be Highfields' guest to the Garden Gala, please contact Bev McGill at (517) 628-2287, ext. 337 or bmcgill@highfields.org.

