



Highfields, Inc.
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Onondaga, MI 49264

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An Unbreakable Bond

A single mother raising two children with autism spectrum disorder receives help, thanks to you!



Sherri (left) and her Case Manager Christina work together to take care of her family.

Sherri has a heart for children who are suffering. For fourteen years she has dedicated her life to providing foster care, and has cared for over 60 children in her home.

Sherri adopted two of her foster children: Kara, age 10, and Nolan, age 5. Both of them are diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). Sherri knew it would be tough to raise children with special needs, but she opened her heart anyway.

"I knew Kara and Nolan were going to have problems before I adopted them," said Sherri, "but that doesn't mean you don't take them in...how could you not want to love them?"

Kara and Nolan are not siblings by blood, and both have different ASD symptoms. Kara has trouble focusing on things, but she is also very smart and attends a mainstream

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school. Nolan was a very low functioning child. When he was two years old, he was unable to communicate using more than two words. He began Applied Behavior Analysis (ABA) two years ago, which focuses on positive reinforcement and is widely recognized as a safe and effective treatment for autism. Now Nolan can have a conversation.

Nolan receives services through Highfields, and Kara receives services through another

Continued on next page.

A new government survey of parents suggests that 1 in 45 children, ages 3 through 17, have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder (ASD).

Thanks to your support, we can assist families in navigating the range of services available to their children and help them develop a plan for success.

Highfields Presents Awards at Annual Meeting

Highfields' Board of Directors Annual Meeting took place on April 27 at Walnut Hills Country Club in East Lansing. The President/CEO of Highfields, Brian Philson, presented several awards throughout the evening.

The Carl J. Latona Distinguished Service Award was presented to Brenda Weck, Highfields' Breakthrough and Reaching Higher After School Program Manager.

Highfields' Partnership Award was presented to the R.E. Olds Foundation.

The Robert L. Drake Citizenship Award was presented to Ken and Maggie Frankland.

"Ken and Maggie are wonderful examples of what it means to give back to your community and I am a better person for their influence," said Philson.

The Aldinger Scholarship recipients were also acknowledged at the Annual Meeting. This year, 12 people received a scholarship from Highfields: Ciaira Clore, Ethan Eddy, Jarrett Gregory, Alexandra Hagerty, Kayla Hancock, Brittany Honeycutt, Michelle Hopkins, Sydney Kester, Miranda Pahl, Hunter Stephenson, Sarah Stewart, and Merissa Talbot. ^{BF}



Ken and Maggie Frankland received the Robert L. Drake Citizenship Award.

Our mission is to provide opportunities to children, youth and families to become more responsible with their own lives, and to strengthen their relationships with others.

BRIGHT
FUTURES

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An Unbreakable Bond (cont.)

organization. Between appointments, school, therapy and more, Sherri leans on her Autism Case Manager, Christina, for support.

Highfields' Autism Case Management program focuses on person-centered planning. The Case Manager helps families navigate the services available to their children.

When Highfields started the Autism Case Management program in 2014, Christina was the first full-time staff member. She loves working with children, and has a special place in her heart for children with autism.

Christina describes herself as the "captain of the team." She advocates for the family, and makes sure that Nolan's assessments are done and that his needs are met. She coordinates schedules between the different systems in Nolan's life, such as school, speech therapy, occupational therapy and ABA.

"My experience with Highfields has been wonderful! I don't know if Nolan would have made progress like he did without Highfields and therapy."

Christina has seen first-hand the hard work and dedication that parents provide to help their children.

"I've seen this program work and I believe in it, but it's only through the parents that it works," said Christina. "Sherri is constantly assessing Nolan's and Kara's needs and wanting the best for them. Her whole life is these children."

Sherri often thinks about Nolan's future. She hopes that he will attend a mainstream school, make friends and become more independent. She believes these goals will be achieved as long as Highfields is helping her.

"We probably wouldn't be anywhere near where we are now without Christina," said Sherri. "She is incredible. She loves the kids that she works with; it's more than just a job for her."

Sherri is grateful for the help that Highfields has provided for her family.

"My experience with Highfields has been wonderful!" said Sherri. "I don't know if Nolan would have made progress like he did without Highfields and therapy."

Thanks to your support, parents like Sherri can depend on Highfields for help, and look forward to a bright future for their children.

BF

You can zip line at Highfields this summer!

Have you or your family ever experienced the thrill of zip lining over Lake Telford in beautiful Onondaga, Michigan?



From May through October, our zip line will be open to the public on the second Saturday of each month from 1–5 p.m. All ages are welcome!

The price to ride is \$15.00 per person. The zip line is located at our Onondaga campus: 5123 Old Plank Road, Onondaga, MI 49264. No reservations needed! Riders under 18 must have an adult present and a liability form signed which can be found on our website. For more information, please visit www.highfields.org/events. BF

Upcoming Events

June 13: Highfields' 36th Annual Golf Outing at Forest Akers West in Lansing
There's still time for you to register an individual golfer or foursome or secure a sponsorship! Please contact Bev McGill at: bmcgill@highfields.org or (517) 628-2287 x332.

July 21: Garden Gala at Ingham County Family Center

October 27: Strengthening Families Fundraising Breakfast at the Kellogg Center in East Lansing

From Faking It to Making It

You helped Michael learn how to express his emotions in a positive way!



Highfields' residential treatment program creates individualized treatment plans to address the students' needs. Read about how Michael works through his treatment plan at Highfields in order to return home and achieve his dreams.

Michael has been transferred between multiple juvenile detention centers, and it has given him perspective on what works for him and what doesn't.

"At juvenile homes, they don't focus as much on treatment as they do at Highfields, and I think that's one of the strengths of Highfields' program," said Michael.

Michael grew up in an unstable environment. His parents split up when he was five years old, and he was sent to live with his father in Kentucky. Growing up, his father treated him like a friend first and a father second.

"I went out whenever I wanted and stayed out late," said Michael. "My dad would get mad, but I never got into any trouble."

"At juvenile homes, they don't focus as much on treatment as they do at Highfields, and I think that's one of the strengths of Highfields' program."

This lifestyle gave Michael the freedom to do whatever he wanted. He started getting into serious trouble by fighting, doing drugs, and bringing illegal objects to school. He was caught stealing from a local store and was sent to a juvenile

detention center. That's when the cycle began. After Michael was released from the juvenile detention center, he violated his probation, and was sent to another detention center. This cycle continued until he was finally sent to Highfields. That is when his life changed.

"I would recommend Highfields to anyone because it's more focused on treatment, and you have to make the changes in order to succeed," said Michael.

"When I first got here, I was just faking it in order to leave, but you really have to make the changes. 'Faking it' turned into me actually trying."

When Michael first came to Highfields he was uncooperative. He thought he would just be sent to another detention center. He quickly realized that Highfields would not let him off the hook so easily.

"When I first got here, I just was faking it in order to leave," said Michael, "but you really have to make the changes. 'Faking it' turned into me actually trying."

One of Michael's biggest struggles is his anger. He used to fight a lot at Highfields in the beginning, but has learned how to manage his anger in a healthier way. He writes in his journal and practices the skills he has learned in order to avoid conflict with others. He stays motivated to avoid his past mistakes by focusing his attention on his job in the kitchen on campus.



Michael learns how to make pottery at Schuler Arts Studio during a residential field trip.

"Working in the kitchen has been a great experience for me," said Michael. "It gives me motivation to not get into trouble because I know I won't be able to work if I mess up."

Working in the kitchen has helped Michael learn important job and social skills that he can use for the rest of life. In the future, Michael wants to go to college and become a nurse. He hopes to fulfill his dreams by getting help through grants and scholarships.

"I'm trying to take advantage of everything I can while I'm here so when I go back into the community I can use the skills I learned in my daily life," said Michael.

Thanks to you, Michael is learning how to control his anger and create a new vision for his future. BF

Live Your Values, Leave a Legacy

You can help Highfields change lives and strengthen communities for future generations! Check out our brochure "Live Your Values, Leave a Legacy" for more information about making a charitable bequest to Highfields. If you'd like to learn more about making a gift to Highfields, please contact Bev McGill at: bmcgill@highfields.org or (517) 628-2287 x332.