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5123 Old Plank Rd.  
Onondaga, MI 49264

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# Family Finds Peace

Vernia and James were tired of arguing with their kids. It was time to try something different. Thanks to your support of Highfields, they found a solution that works for their family.



(From L-R) Children Kierra, Areyana, Kaydin and Leeland participated in Highfields' Multisystemic Therapy Program.

Vernia and James were fighting a losing battle at home. Their children were getting rebellious – lying, sneaking out of the house, and hanging out with bad influences. They couldn't handle it anymore so they started taking their family to counseling in Hillsdale. The counselor recommended Highfields' Multisystemic Therapy (MST) Program as a way to find a solution that works for the whole family.

They met with MST Therapist Eric Moor to talk about their problems. Vernia and James were especially concerned about their 14-year-old daughter, Areyana, who had more severe issues concerning her attitude, negative peer influences, and school.

"Areyana's behavior was out of control," said Vernia. "Once puberty hit, she did a complete 180. We knew we had to do something."

Eric helped Vernia and James look at outside influences that were affecting Areyana, such as her peer group. There was one friend in particular that was affecting her attitude. Every time

***"Areyana's behavior was out of control...we knew we had to do something."***

Areyana hung out with this friend, she was slamming doors, disrespectful to her parents, and fighting with her

**Continued on next page.**

## Students Spread Positivity in Springport




Students from Springport Middle School spend time giving back.

Students involved in Highfields' after school program, Reaching Higher, wanted to give back to their community.

The staff and students at Springport Middle School came up with activities focused on community service called "Reaching Out."

Students painted rocks with encouraging words and sayings on them and placed them all around downtown. At the same time, they also picked up trash in an effort to keep the community clean. They also made patriotic cards and signs and sent them to local Veterans.

"Students were excited to discuss ideas on how to make a positive impact in the community," said Amy Hicks, Springport Middle School Teacher. "At the end of the session, they wanted to know when we were going to do it again!" 

BRIGHT  
FUTURES

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**Family Finds Peace** (cont.)

siblings. The solution was for Areyana to switch schools, and not be allowed to spend time with the friend.

“As soon as we cut that line off, it was night and day,” said James. “Her attitude completely changed and we realized that was a big reason she was acting the way she did.”

At school, Areyana was still having behavior issues. Eric suggested that Vernia and James contact her teachers to let them know that their family is participating in MST and to promote open communication if anything happens involving their kids at school.

**“Her attitude completely changed.”**

“That was a good step because it helped us work out a few kinks we were having

with Areyana at school,” said Vernia. “It was simple yet effective.”

Eric also showed Vernia and James how to take over responsibility in their house. They had no boundaries prior to MST. Their kids acted as if they could do whatever they wanted with no consequences. Once Vernia and James learned how to set healthy boundaries, set limits, and follow through with consequences, things began to change.

“Now my kids come home and they know what they have to do without having to be told over and over again,” said Vernia. “To me, that’s a breakthrough.”

The family has successfully completed MST. Vernia and James continue to use the tools Eric taught them to bring peace to their home. [BF]

**You Made The Holidays Brighter!**

The holiday season is a tough time for many of the families in our counseling programs. Thankfully, supporters like you stepped up in so many ways to help spread holiday cheer!

Thanks to the generosity of the mid-Michigan community, we received over 270 donations of toys, books, and clothing items for children and families.

On Giving Tuesday, November 28th, we raised \$1,200 for specially needed items for our clients.

We were even able to provide \$20 gift cards for the teens in our counseling programs thanks to a collective effort from our board, Maner Costerisan, and a special donor.

The Maner Costerisan team also “adopted” residential students’ families and bought holiday gifts for the boys to take to their families.

Thank you to everyone who helped make a difference this holiday season! [BF]



Highfields’ counselors pick out toys for clients

**From Rock Bottom to Recovery**

**The opioid epidemic is gripping our nation. Over two million Americans have become dependent or abused prescription pain pills and street drugs. Amanda didn’t want to become another statistic. Thanks to you, she received support she desperately needed.**



Amanda and her daughter

Amanda was introduced to heroin when she was 26 years old. At the time, she had no idea the emotional toll it would take on her life.

Heroin is a highly addictive opioid drug. Opioids drive up levels of the feel-good hormone dopamine in the brain. As the brain becomes used to the feelings, it often takes more drugs to produce the same levels of pain relief, leading to dependence, and later, addiction.

Amanda struggled with addiction for years.

“Drugs caused so many problems,” she said. “I was fighting with my partner, unstable, and unhealthy.”

Worst of all, she lost the rights to her three children. It was this wake-up call and the help of a supportive partner, that finally motivated Amanda to get clean, and stay clean.

When Amanda became pregnant again, she tried to quit drugs for good. Unfortunately, the addiction was too strong, and she relapsed.

“I just couldn’t do it on my own,” she said. “I was scared for my baby, so I called Child Protective Services for help. They worked with me and referred me to Highfields.”

Amanda began working with Kelly Fox in Highfields’ Family Maintenance Program. For 12 weeks Kelly worked with Amanda to prevent the need for out-of-home placement for her newborn daughter. During counseling sessions, they talked about Amanda’s stressors and discussed ways to cope and stay clean.

“It was great to have extra added support from Kelly and Highfields,” said Amanda. “They helped me stay on the right path.”

Amanda has stayed clean since her relapse. She reconnected with her oldest child and is using the tools she learned from Kelly to be more present. She is committed to recovery and living a happier, healthier life. [BF]

**You can help Highfields continue to change lives and strengthen communities for future generations! We offer options so you can choose the gift that works best for you. If you’d like to learn more about including Highfields in your will, please contact Bev McGill at 517-628-2287 x332 or [bmccgill@highfields.org](mailto:bmccgill@highfields.org).**

**Highfields services**

Highfields is a nonprofit human services organization providing opportunities to children, youth and families through home-based counseling programs, a residential treatment facility, and educational services.

Highfields provides 17 different programs in 13 counties and serves over 8,300 individuals every year.

**Our Mission**

*To provide opportunities to children, youth and families to become more responsible for their own lives and to strengthen their relationships with others.*

**Our Vision**

*To create bright futures for children, their families and communities.*

**Our Locations**

Onondaga Campus  
5123 Old Plank Rd.  
Onondaga, MI 49264  
(517) 628-2287

Jackson Office  
1206 Clinton Rd.  
Jackson, MI 49202  
(517) 783-4250

Lansing Office  
4305 S. Cedar St.  
Lansing, MI 48910  
(517) 887-2762

Howell Office  
204 S. Highlander Way, Suite 3  
Howell, MI 48843  
(517) 262-0874

Hillsdale Office  
51 S. Howell St.  
Hillsdale, MI 29242  
(517) 212-8168

**Website**

[www.highfields.org](http://www.highfields.org)

