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## A Heart for Giving Back

*Jeannie Delong-Jackson continues to give back to Highfields*

### A Legacy Lives On...

In 2015, Jeannie's son, Nate, was placed in Highfields' Residential Treatment Program for acting out. After nine months, he finally came home with a newfound attitude. He was caring, compassionate, and determined to help others in the way Highfields helped him. Sadly, Nate was caught in a fight three weeks after coming home, in which he lost his life. After Nate passed, Jeannie wanted to continue his legacy by helping students at Highfields.

The idea for "Nate's Giving Heart," an ongoing annual fundraiser, began while Nate was still in the residential program. He came back to campus after visiting home, and he heard some of the boys making fun of another student because of his lack of hygiene. Instead of giving in to peer pressure, Nate gave the student his hygienic items from home, knowing Jeannie would be bringing more when she visited campus for his basketball games.

**"I draw on Nate's strength and keep pushing forward because I know it's what he would want me to do."**

*Continued on next page*

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Summer 2021

Volume 21, Number 2

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## A Heart for Giving Back (continued)

"Some students don't have the family support at home like others do, and don't have help gathering things as simple as hygiene products," said Jeannie. "So, Nate and I thought about the ways we could help."

### Paying it Forward

Jeannie started bringing extra toiletries to campus when she visited, such as toothbrushes, toothpaste, deodorant and body wash.

Now, every month Jeannie brings hygiene products, paper towels, dish soap, and laundry detergent for both residential houses, as gifts from "Nate's Giving Heart." She also started working at Highfields in the kitchen serving food to the boys on campus.

"I love being able to interact with the boys because I understand what caused them to be there, the program, and the parent's point of

view," said Jeannie. "I know it's what Nate would have wanted me to do."

She believes that her experience as a parent and working with Highfields has helped in her efforts to give back.

"I understand that no one's life is perfect, so all I can do is treat someone the way I would want to be treated."

### Remembering Nate

This year, on the five year anniversary of Nate's death, friends and family donated

plenty of hygiene and toiletry items to "Nate's Giving Heart," and even raised \$1,000 which was gifted to Highfields Residential Program and Ingham County Youth Center.

"Nate had a heart of gold, and all I can do is live by his example," said Jeannie. "Thanks to Highfields, I'm continuing to heal every day I'm on campus giving back to their mission."



"Nate's Giving Heart" donations

### Leave Your Legacy

Including Highfields as a beneficiary on your will, trust, insurance policy or retirement plan helps provide lasting gifts for children and families in our communities. For more information, or to make a gift, please contact Laura Jurasek at: (517) 628-2287 x373 or [ljurasek@highfields.org](mailto:ljurasek@highfields.org).

**"There's so much that needs to be done *right now*, but it's so important to think about the future. Planned gifts make sure Highfields has the funds to take care of basics, to weather tough times, or to respond to the needs of children and families for decades to come."**

*Claudia Remenar*  
Drake Society Member



## Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Initiative

Last year, Highfields began updating its 5-Year Strategic Plan, which includes a transformational Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiative for the agency. Since February, Highfields' Leadership Team has been digging deep into a world of DEI resources and knowledge through a capacity building experience, providing them with the tools needed to create a more inclusive organization.

Though many clients share how Highfields changed their life, the question is: "How can Highfields be more inclusive and equitable to children and families?"

Highfields' workplace environment may be positive, but there's always room for improvement. The 14-week leadership transformation focuses on unconscious bias, safe zone training, gender bias and equity, and diversity fundamentals. Each team member experiences a deep personal introspection that will ultimately help increase engagement and responsibility to learn and share the needs of diversity within the organization.

Highfields' Director of Quality and Education, and Mindfulness and Meditation Coordinator, Becky Womboldt shares her thoughts:

*"I'm grateful that Highfields is devoting time, money, and resources to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. Doing this important work on both individual and organizational levels will assist us in growing a culture of equity within our agency along with helping us to more authentically meet the needs of the children and families that we work with. It has been a transformational experience so far and I can't wait to see the impact it has moving forward."*

By challenging the way of thinking and recognizing the value of collective differences, Highfields continues to strive for creating a positive, diverse environment to provide equitable services to families.

### 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 about 7,000 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

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### Website

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

