

Teaming for Technology, Connecting Youth with Donated Computers

The Teaming for Technology (T4T) program distributed a total of 40 computers to children and their families by year's end for 2009 and have continued with 20 more this spring. T4T is funded by United Way with the purpose of increasing computer access and academic achievement for children of lower-income families. Computers are donated, refurbished, and passed on to local non-profit agencies at the rate of \$40 per computer.

"If they're too poor to afford a computer... we ... really try... to level the playing field."
—Megan Powlas

Meagan Powlas, who heads the T4T program at Carolina Outreach, ensures that computers are available to any client who can demonstrate both need and inability to pay. Clients

write brief essays stating how they plan to use and care for their new computers and contribute as much as they can towards the \$40 cost. The remaining cost is subsidized by Carolina Outreach Foundation.

Powlas states that it is important to prepare clients for the responsibility of owning a computer: "Clients come into the office, meet with our tech staff, and we set them up from the beginning with basic information on how to use the computer and take care of it." The program has allowed clients to complete typewritten assignments at home and develop computer skills that are crucial to their academic and professional development. Our therapists have been able to utilize computers during sessions with clients for computer-based therapeutic exercises. For those

families with internet service, therapists instruct clients in appropriate online communication and assist parents with ways to monitor internet use. Even parents have benefited from the opportunity to email teachers about school progress and to complete job searches of their own.

Computer access is essential in our world today, as we grow increasingly technology-dependent. According to Powlas, for instance, many employers require online job applications, and a preponderance of specialty educational materials is distributed as software. Powlas contends, "If a client has a learning disability and is struggling in school, or a parent is unemployed and searching for a job, that's already two strikes against them. If they're too poor to afford a computer, that's a third strike, so we are really trying to level the playing field."



How to Help

If you would like to volunteer for any of the current Foundation programs, would like more information about the Foundation, or have any other questions, please call or email Karla Rosenberg, Executive Director of the Foundation.

Phone: (919) 251-9001 x212
Fax: (919) 251-9008
Email: karlarosenberg@carolinaoutreach.com

You can send a tax-deductible donation to

The Carolina Outreach Foundation
2670 Durham-Chapel Hill Blvd.
Durham, NC 27707

Or you can access the Carolina Outreach Foundation at its website to make a secure donation online: www.carolinaoutreachfoundation.org

We acknowledge and appreciate the support of all the generous and forward thinking donors, volunteers, staff, and local businesses that enable the Carolina Outreach Foundation to serve the community.



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distract me from worrying about my problems. It also motivated me to do other things that I needed to do, such as make phone calls and keep appointments, because I was already out of bed."

The Foundation hopes to develop this program further and to complete additional renovation projects. It also hopes to incorporate one- to two-month internship placement services at the end of training, so that participants who successfully complete the group program will then go on to acquire individual, specialized instruction on a variety of job sites from professionals within their chosen field.



Youth Renovate Historic House, Gain Skills Needed for Future Employment

Vocational training participants have completed their first home rehabilitation project to date, using a 1920s bungalow near downtown Durham as their field school. The training program lasted a total of ten weeks and allowed our youth to acquire basic skills in a wide variety of building trades, such as plastering, dry walling, painting, carpentry, floor refinishing, and wooden window repair. Professionals in each trade led a hands-on training session for their respective trade or craft, accompanied by mental health clinicians of Carolina Outreach. Participants not only gained technical knowledge in a variety of trades, but also experienced, many for the first time, the demands of holding down a job. "They learned what it's like to be in a workforce—being punctual, responsible, and accountable, taking direction from authority figures, and staying focused on an assignment," says Antonio Autry, therapist. In addition, participants found the professionals who trained them to be valuable mentors, hearing accounts of their own beginnings in the field, and receiving advice on how to make a productive future in the building and renovation trades.



Ryan Morgan, a therapist for Carolina Outreach and trainer for the youths' deck-building project, affirms the benefit of participants simply finding productive ways to occupy their time. "We focus often on coping skills and processing skills, and how to deal with mental health symptoms during training, but a lot of times clients can really benefit from just doing something productive." Inactivity, he says, leads to feelings of isolation and lethargy, and makes clients more susceptible to destructive influences. "Teresa," a training participant, agreed and noted, "It made me feel good—I had something to get up to do every morning, and I didn't have to feel lazy or get into any trouble. It helped

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Word from the Executive Director

We are immensely proud of our accomplishments this year! Six young men and women renovated their first house, completing four large rooms, from start to finish. The results are impressive, not only for the beauty of the rooms themselves, but for the unmistakable sense of triumph felt by the youth responsible for their transformation. These young clients showed tremendous motivation and focus during the working process, despite personal struggles and adverse life circumstances.

This renovation project would not have been possible without the energetic and ambitious efforts of our clients, as well as the generous sponsorship of our donors, Scott and Carol Ann Smallwood, the Mary Duke Biddle Foundation, and numerous other private donors. We also extend warm thanks to the hard-working tradesmen who served as trainers: Andy Parks (dry-walling), Ben Robinson (plaster repair), Ron McCoy (painting), Cesar Ayala (finish carpentry), Ryan Morgan (rough carpentry), James Thomas (floor refinishing), and Peter Yeganian (historic window repair).

We aim to strengthen this program even further, hiring additional staff positions and providing program graduates with additional opportunities for internships and employment with builders in the community.



Independent Living Program: New Beginnings for Budding Durham Adults

For most of us in our teenage years, we face some trepidation as we begin to take responsibility for our own lives, making independent choices about school, work, friends, and our future directions. For teens who have not managed to acquire the proper tools to make these decisions

independently, due to lack of role models and limited family and community supports, this time can prove exceptionally precarious, leaving young people to fend for themselves amidst an abundance of risk factors, including family conflict, homelessness, poverty, and destructive peer groups. After years of working with children and adolescents from disadvantaged families and emerging from foster care, Carolina Outreach has developed a special commitment to these maturing adults with services tailored to their specific needs. The Independent Living Program (ILP) began in 2007, to serve youth, ages 18-21, with mental health disabilities. The program offers weekly Independent Living Skills (ILS) classes to educate clients about topics such as hygiene, budgeting, job searching, home tenancy, and even meal preparation.

The need for housing is one that is particularly apparent for this population, as over half of ILP clients are either homeless or at risk of homelessness. Heidi Dohnert, a therapist with Carolina Outreach, says, "Clients can't work on their mental health issues if they don't have stable housing and regular meals. The house gives them a place to work toward independence with a mental health team that can help them learn to distinguish their mental health symptoms from regular growing pains." Housing is often scarce for clients without a rental history, and difficult to maintain without steady employment. The first ILP house opened in 2008 and has housed three young women at a time. A second ILP house near downtown opened in 2009 to house two young men.

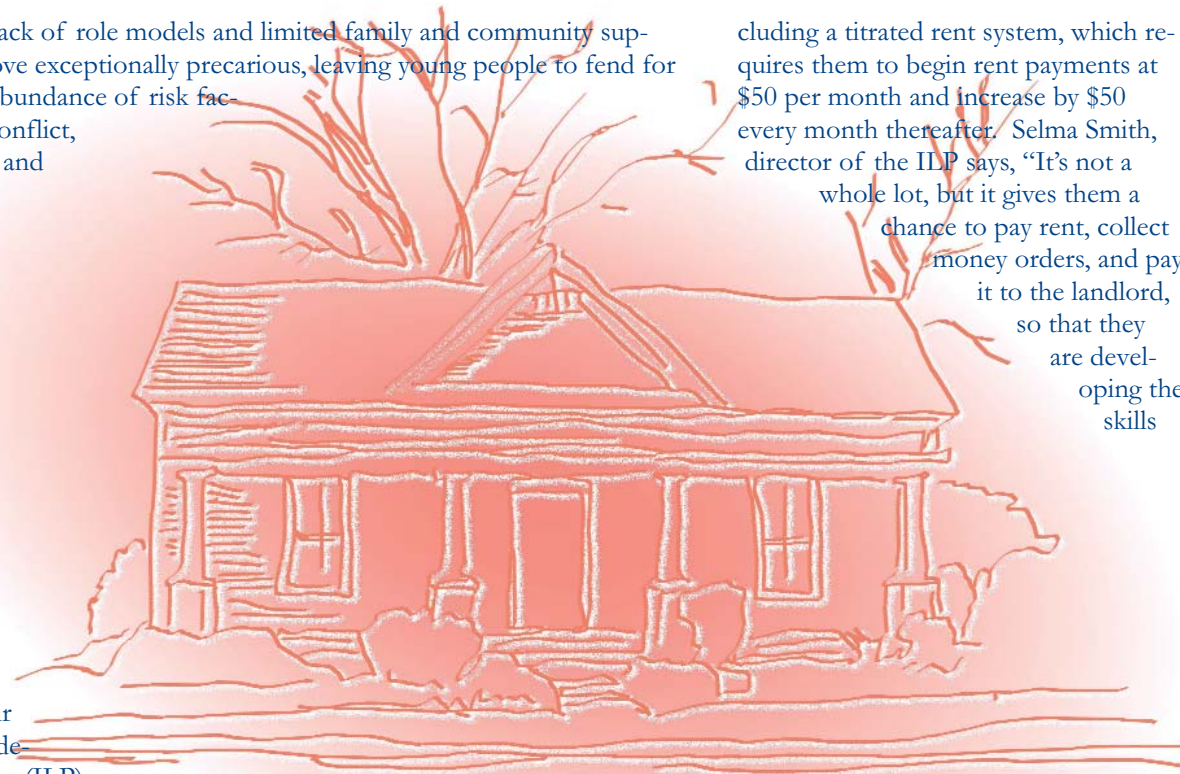
ILP clients use these homes as a stable ground while they transition to independence and self-sufficiency. Their mental health team continues to provide them clinical services and assists them with obtaining education and stable employment. Each resident signs a lease contract that outlines fundamental rules and procedures, in-

cluding a titrated rent system, which requires them to begin rent payments at \$50 per month and increase by \$50 every month thereafter. Selma Smith, director of the ILP says, "It's not a whole lot, but it gives them a chance to pay rent, collect money orders, and pay it to the landlord, so that they are developing the skills

needed to manage their housing." The maximum length of stay is six months, although this can be extended to nine under exceptional circumstances. Staff members do not live on site, but maintain frequent contact with residents through clinical services, as well as regular check-ins.

After reaching a point of stability in the ILP houses, most clients have been able to strengthen family ties and/or achieve stable housing on their own. Smith is exceptionally proud of one client, an 18-year-old mother who, several months ago, was classified as

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ILP

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homeless. As a result, her infant son was placed in foster care and she was referred to Carolina Outreach for mental health services. Since joining the ILP and establishing residence in the girls' house, this young mother has been able to find a job and

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-Robin Sartain

move into her own apartment very soon.

Carolina Outreach Foundation hopes to obtain several more homes for the ILP as the program grows from its current number of 50 clients. The program is expanding rapidly, and the number of participants will likely double in 2011. Robin Sartain, Intake Coordinator for Carolina Outreach, states, "The future of the Independent Living Program is based on the success of its participants. We hope to see our clients secure stable jobs and stable housing, and also hope that many of them

has completed many of the requirements necessary to regain custody of her son, including ILS and parenting classes. Smith expects her to be able to



attend college or obtain their GED. We hope our program teaches youth that power is not gained through anger and violence, but rather through making positive choices and building healthy relationships."



Financial Assistance Programs Inspire Record Donations

Our financial assistance programs for needy families, Hurdle Help and Youth Development, closed 2009 with a record \$4,695 in assistance. Funds for spring 2010 have reached \$1,527. All of these funds were contributed by employees of Carolina Outreach, who donate on a monthly basis from their paychecks. Hurdle Help emergency funds are directed towards basic necessities, such as rent, utilities, and clothing, during times of crisis, while Youth Development funds cover recreational activities for mental enrichment. Rachel Suddarth, a therapist at Carolina Outreach, described how Hurdle Help funds assisted a single mother to avoid eviction after several weeks of hospitalization. "She is so incredibly grateful and was in tears when I told her what the foundation was contributing. She was basically speechless, and I heard excited noises in the background. They won't be evicted as a result of this contribution! I am more committed than ever to becoming a contributor to this fund."

Noting the increasing hardship faced by families due to rising unemployment, Laura Bobis and Ann Murphy, therapists for Carolina Outreach, undertook a campaign this past winter to raise a substantial addition to financial and in-kind assistance. Bobis says, "My neighborhood came together to donate money, clothes, books, toys, and furniture to several of our families in need. The outpouring of gen-

"I plan to contribute to the funds monthly because of how inspired I am by the impact they've had on the families I've worked with!"

-Rachel Suddarth

erosity from my neighbors prevented one Carrboro family from being evicted after both parents were laid off, and another family from losing their heat and water during the holidays. Some neighbors gave \$10, and others were able to contribute \$300. All told, we raised \$1,200, which helped our clients tremendously. Thank you, Heritage Hills!"

