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Covenant to Care for Children
Helping Connecticut's
Children in Need.



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Covenant to Care for Children

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Children in Need.



SHARE WHAT YOU KNOW. BECOME A MENTOR.

It doesn't take special skills to mentor a child just a willingness to listen, offer encouragement, and share what you've learned about life. Mentoring programs in your community need more volunteers.

Visit www.covenanttocare.org

JANUARY



Mentoring Month



Our Programs

Our **Adopt A Social Worker** program works with over 200 faith communities to benefit thousands of Connecticut children by providing the critical material needs that help stabilize their living situations. Without the efforts of over 1,000 volunteers and donors, this initiative would not be a success.

Our **Critical Goods Distribution** program assists social workers who are attempting to reunify and preserve families by providing them with goods such as furniture and clothing. During any given fiscal year, we deliver an average of \$115,000 worth of usable goods to families in need. On a yearly basis, around 500 children are provided with beds, dressers, a table to eat at and do homework on and other goods that they too often go without.



Our mentoring program, **My, Mentor, and Me (M3)** mentors children in Connecticut who have a parent incarcerated. M3 creates and supports relationships between youth, mentors and faith communities to provide the support needed for these at-risk youth.

Our **Reach One Youth** mentoring program matches the power of infinite love to youth with infinite potential by assisting highly at-risk teens, teen parents and their children. This program creates partnerships between youth, mentors, congregations and the broader community by providing opportunities to nurture and cultivate the resilient spirit found in all youth.

From the Executive Director

by Caryl Hallberg, Executive Director

Outreach – The Weight of Nothing
“Tell me the weight of a snowflake,” a sparrow asked a wild dove. “Nothing more than nothing,” was the answer. “In that case I must tell you a marvelous story,” the sparrow said. “I sat on the branch of a fir, close to its trunk, when it began to snow, not heavily, not in a raging blizzard, no just like in a dream, without any violence. Since I didn’t have anything better to do, I counted the snowflakes settling on the twigs and needles of my branch. That number was exactly 3,741,952. When the next snowflake dropped onto the branch – nothing more than nothing, as you say – the branch broke off.” Having said that, the sparrow flew away. The dove, since Noah’s time, an authority on the matter, thought about the story for a while and finally said to herself: “Perhaps there is only one person’s action lacking for permanent real change to come in the world.” (Adapted from *A Race to Nowhere*, Pax Christi U.S.A.)

This story has inspired me for decades. A tattered clipping from an old Pax Christi bulletin has been on the door of my refrigerator since the early 1980’s.

I was thinking about National Mentoring month and our outreach during January when it began to snow outside my window. Softly, just as in a dream, but soon the Northeastern States were covered in drifts of snow. Nothing more than nothing had created such change.

We know, without a doubt, that mentoring changes lives. We have our history here at Covenant to Care for Children; recently our mentoring alumni group held a holiday party for all of the adults who were mentored as children and all the mentors who were there to help them grow into the adults they have become. These are men and women with children of their own now. How many lives have been positively changed by one person’s action in becoming a mentor? We cannot count this impact; it reaches so far.

Studies show us, but we know from direct personal experience (see Rick’s article) that one person can make all the difference in a child’s life. How do we measure the impact of this? How many lives will Rick impact, both the children and the adults, as our new mentoring coordinator?

I am willing to take inspiration from the sparrow, I am willing to suggest that mentoring can change

communities, can change society, and can change the future. The Federal government has a goal for 2008 that 100,000 children with a parent in prison will have a mentor. Covenant to Care for Children is a partner in achieving that goal. We will be matching at least 125 children with mentors, at least 90 of which will have an incarcerated parent. We will need 125 adult “snowflakes” willing to commit a few hours a month for 12 months, in order to break *this* branch. I am confident that we can meet and exceed this goal to mentor 125 children.

One of our long time faith-based liaisons speaking of her work with us over the years said to me recently, “I see miracles, so many miracles.” I see miracles too! I see them in our strong partnerships. We have them with our faith communities and with the new friendships we are forging in this sector. We are very pleased to announce we are again in partnership with Families in Crisis. We are building on our long time partnership with the Department of Children and Families and the hundreds of their social workers who volunteer to work with us. We are reaching out and creating friendship and partnership with ministries that serve our imprisoned populations.

Cont’d on pg. 2

My Life & My Mentor

by: Rick Davis, My Mentor and Me Program Coordinator

I was born in the early 1970’s to wonderful hard working parents from the south. My Mom, a nurse with strong religious convictions, came from Alabama to start a new life; my Dad, a Vietnam veteran from South Carolina, came to do the same. I was extremely fortunate to have parents who worked hard to provide a good life for my brother and myself.

Moving into a beautiful home in the suburbs at 8 seemed to be wonderful; we were destined to become successful members of society since my parents would settle for nothing less. When I was 12 things began to change in our household. Dad’s drinking increased which did not coincide with Mom’s religious beliefs. The once promising household began to self-destruct before my eyes, and before I knew it, the ugly “D” word (Divorce) became prevalent in our conversations with our parents.

Being the oldest and most emotional child, I had a difficult time and rebelled in all the areas in which I once excelled. My grades began to drop, I became very angry and confused during this time. By 13, my parents had divorced and my brother and I went to live with Mom in a one bedroom apartment in a town known for its juvenile delinquency, rather than its social and educational benefits. Since Mom was now a single parent raising two boys while she worked two jobs, we were able to experiment and experience some of the less than desirable things in life. Mom did the best she could in keeping us active in church and taking us places to provide new and different experiences.

From the Executive Director (Cont’d)

We have you, the individual, our most valued friend and miracle. Please look into your heart and know the positive good you could do with only a few hours a month spending time with a young person. Please call Rick, Jeff or Patience, our mentoring program coordinators, and find out the details of what it means to be a mentor.

Together, like the gentle snow, we can make a positive lasting change for the children of Connecticut and all their children to follow. It just takes one more, it just takes you.

I was having none of it. I wanted my family back the way things used to be. I began to hangout with the “cool kids” in school, my grades continued to fall, and the successful member of society that my parents raised me to be had become a troubled child, as the school would determine. After a year of finding trouble, my mom had the foresight to see I needed a male figure that could be supportive during this time and offer me guidance so that I could be the person my parents could be proud of.

As a youngster, I would beg my Mom to let me sign up for pee wee football. The answer was always “no.” Church was on Sunday and, of course, church was more important. Because of our situation, she finally realized that perhaps being involved in extracurricular activities might help and correct my behavior problems. I have always loved sports and was extremely excited to play football. I desired to be part of a collective group of people that I could care about and who would care about me. The next year, my first year in high school, I met a great man who would become one of the most influential people in my life.

Mr. Corto was the high school football coach and he was as excited as me when I became part of the freshman team. He showed a tremendous liking to me as a person along with my football talents. Although Mr. Corto had two boys of his own, he “adopted” me as one of his own. He would make sure I was in school everyday, provided a stern voice when needed, and helped me realize what a good life could look like if I worked hard. After

four years of playing for Mr. Corto, I was offered a football scholarship, and began to make the life we had envisioned four years earlier. It was this relationship, along with the foundation my parents had set, that would allow me to be that successful member of society that my parents always wanted.

I owe a great deal of credit to Mr. Corto for taking the time to be that mentor at such a crucial time in my life. Although the word “mentor” was never expressed, in his dedication, that is exactly what he was; a supportive individual who sacrificed his time, money and knowledge to assure that I would have a good chance at being the person my parents envisioned.

I thank you Mr. Corto and all the others who have provided similar support to a child in need.

Covenant to Care for Children wishes to extend heartfelt gratitude for grants received from Avon Junior Women’s Club, SI Financial Group, The First Congregational Church of Waterbury: Lucy Edwina Schlegal Fund, and The Main Street Community Foundation for our Critical Goods Program.



Reach One Youth Holiday Party.