



GoodNews from The Good Works Show

Helping Young Adults Find Their True North

For young adults exiting the foster care system, the world can be a scary place. Without the proper support system, it can be difficult for them to navigate without a net. Hoping to ease the conversion between supported and independent living, Northern Star Independent Transitional Living offers services for young adults ages 18-21 who have aged out of the system. Soon to be up and running with four houses to accommodate a total of 12 young adults at a time, Northern Star is a life-skills program for young adults that will aid in the transition from group home living to independent adult living, helping them fully integrate into their community.

Founder and Executive Director Mandy Williams started the organization to provide essential services to this vulnerable population. "When they age out of foster care, the paths they chose would lead to different destructive behaviors, and they were not integrated successfully into the community," she said. "We want to be the support system that these young people are lacking." Mandy went on to describe the negative statistics surrounding young adults who age out of the foster care system: 25-50% without a support system will end up homeless; 50% don't complete high school; 25-50% will be unemployed; and 30% will be arrested. She also added that within 18 months, 50% of young women in this category will become pregnant.

Individuals living at Northern Star can stay in the program for up to two years, and then are helped to transition to their own apartment in the community. Northern Star has already set up partnerships with local organizations that will help these individuals

with necessary life skills to help aid in this transition. Various banks have offered to provide money management training, including how to open up a checking and savings account, and how to use a credit card. Driver's training programs will also be in place for the participants to learn how to drive and be able to manage their transportation needs.

Northern Star offers participants the chance to get steadily on their feet, giving them a safe and supportive place to stay while looking for a job, finishing their education, and securing the resources and connections they need to be successful community members. During this time, Northern Star also works to link participants with local families and caring adults who provide additional support during the in-between time after foster care.

With hopes to be fully active by the summer, the organization has launched a fundraising campaign, "Give up so you can give back." The campaign encourages donors to give up just one thing, one day a week, and donate the money that would have been spent to Northern Star. "Pay it forward to these girls and get this program up and running for them," Williams said.

Once open Northern Star will have multiple opportunities for individuals and organizations to volunteer with the nonprofit, from tutoring, providing transportation, and offering time as a mentor to the program participants. Those interested can find more information at www.northernstarga.org.



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