From Poverty to Possibility

Elizabeth Fry Society

Joyce Detweiler, Community Residential Outreach Program
Sandra came to Joyce Detweiler House via the criminal justice system. She had no family or community supports and found herself in a new community. Sandra carried with her the stigma of living in a halfway house, a criminal record and mental health/addiction challenges that had destroyed her self-esteem and a belief in hope and possibilities. She was 43 years old. Her mental health issues paralyzed her, her addiction urges were constant; however, the stability of the house and 24 hour staff support helped Sandra regain her confidence, find hope and attempt things she had not previously done. Sandra was able to develop a circle of supports and moved into the Elizabeth Fry Transition House. She is living independently and both her mental health and addictions are manageable. Sandra visits often and utilizes the Elizabeth Fry Outreach supports available to her.

Kingston Home Base Housing

Housing Help Centre Program
“John” has been a client of the Housing Help Centre since August 2010. He currently receives income from OW however does have an application pending with ODSP. He receives some income from a survivor benefit as his wife passed away leaving him to raise 3 young daughters. John owned his own landscaping business however after his wife passed away the stress of his life and being self employed took its toll on his health. John became homeless and approached the Community Support Worker (CSW) for assistance with finding new housing. John was staying in a motel with his children when he began meeting with the CSW. The CSW assisted John with a detailed housing search and an application for ODSP. Due to John’s financial situation he was refused by multiple property managers and landlords in Kingston. CSW continued to support John through his housing search and eventually he was successful in securing a unit on Patrick Street with a landlord who maintains a very positive relationship with the Housing Help Centre. John continues to live in the unit on Patrick Street and receives outreach support on a regular basis to assist with maintaining his housing and additional barriers in life.

Supportive Housing Joseph Street
Michel has spent more of his life in jail than he has been on the streets. As a young boy Michel faced abuse and abandonment. A life of crime and drugs seemed inevitable. In the late 1990’s Michel discovered he was HIV positive. His path of self destruction intensified. At the age of 40 Michel was again incarcerated. He had not been out of prison for more than 11 weeks consecutively in decades. His health was failing fast. During a period of confinement for misusing his medication Michel decided he needed to
change something. He started the Methadone program while in prison. In late 2010 Michel was released from prison. He was homeless; however, with supports from HARS and Home Base Housing, Michel was able to get temporary lodging at a motel. While he waited for housing. Michel struggled but was determined to stay clean. In April 2011 Michel was offered a recently vacated one-bedroom apartment at our Joseph Street complex. He cried on hearing this good news. Michel moved in on Friday and Monday morning was hospitalized with pneumonia. He had refused to seek medical help prior to moving for fear of losing his apartment despite reassurances otherwise.

Michel recovered and came “home”. Recently Michel celebrated his 14 month anniversary of being out of jail! He feels that living on Joseph Street has improved his outlook on life. He has minimal stress and finds staying clean is so much easier because he is not worried about “living” anymore. “I have a home, I love it!”. Perhaps most importantly to Michel, beyond a sense of belonging, beyond acceptance or pride, Michel’s health has improved dramatically. Prior to moving in Michel had never had a CD4 above 313. CD refers to a number that indicates his body’s ability to fight infection and his HIV status. After living in his place for 3 months the Doctor’s found his CD4 had jumped to 526. Such a drastic improvement they repeated the test to ensure it was not a mistake! Michel often tells the staff he will live in his place until the day he dies, But by the looks of things that will not be for a very long time.

Youth Services Program
I am a 16 year old girl who was brought up mostly by my mother who struggled with addiction issues throughout my life. I was brought up in an environment where drugs were normal. I have very few rules or routines throughout my childhood. I met my father only 2 years ago and when things got unbearable living with my mother, I moved in with him. He used drugs as well and things did not go well living with him so I moved back with my mom until she kicked me out. I just turned 16 and found myself homeless and couch surfing from friend to friend. I tried to still go to school as I didn’t want to go down the same path as my parents. My younger sister was taken into care of CAS and now lives in a foster home. I was accepted into the youth services program and for the first time in my life have structure and nice people to assist me with my future goals of college and teach me to live on my own and be able to take care of myself.

Kingston Youth Shelter

Mary (not her real name) is a 19 yr old female. She had been staying at the Kingston Youth Shelter off and on throughout the previous year. She left an unsafe home situation with an alcoholic father, who was up on charges for providing alcohol to her minor friends, then sleeping with one of them. This had a huge impact on Mary’s self worth, and she wasn’t motivated to find any type of stability – she just bounced around from friends couches to KYS. Over the course of her stays with us she began to build relationships with a coupe of our counselors. Over time, we were able to work with Mary and show her that she could have a more stable life and that there were people who still cared about her. Mary was able to reach out to a family member in another city who was willing to have her come and live with her there – providing much needed family support in a more stable environment. This is an excerpt from an email we received from Mary 2 months after she had settled in:
‘heyy! so my new apartment is huge, love it. *city name* seems to be easy to learn so we'll see. I got a kitten we named him moe. hes adorable! im just typing up resumes today. miss you's . xoxo’

**Loving Spoonful**

*Loving Spoonful*

This summer Loving Spoonful hosted gardening and food preparation workshops at the Oak St. Community Garden for youth involved in Pathways to Education. Of the six youth participants, two young men were particularly enthusiastic about gardening. They identified many of the plants growing in the garden, and energetically engaged in weeding, raking, and watering the garden as they saw it as a good physical workout. While working in the garden, the boys discussed the types of vegetables they would like to grow in their own gardens. To further make the connection between garden plots and dinner plates, the students were invited to harvest ingredients for their own fresh salsa. The boys selected tomatoes, cucumbers, garlic, cilantro, basil and sage to make up the salsa. They applied kitchen skills learned through a previous kitchen workshop to finely chop the ingredients and combine interesting flavours. They took great pride in their skills and planned to plant salsa gardens at their own homes next summer. They also inquired about having a plot in a community garden, as they found the idea of gardening with others to be both fun and a good way to learn more gardening skills.

**Ryandale**

*Core Program Shelter Services*

Karen, a mother with 3 children, 2 of them with learning disabilities, came to stay here from a rural community. Her children needed more educational supports and medical attention than was available there, so needed to be closer to those resources. Through United Way funded programs, she now had a place to stay and keep her family unit intact while she began the process of starting over. While she was here, she was not only able to access the medical and educational resources her children needed, but was also able to get the help and support she needed, through United Way funded programs to find personal support, housing, and starting over. Through the help she received, provided by United Way funded programs, she is able to finally finish her education and move forward.

**Transition Housing**

Randy and Graham met at possibly the worst times in both their lives. Randy had a long history of homelessness and drug addiction, and he was tired. Graham, after caring for elderly parents, developed a drinking problem and several serious health problems. When his parents passed, he was alone and sick. Randy and Graham met in a shelter. It was during their shelter stay they took advantage of the opportunity to become residents of the Ryandale Transition House.

Although neither knew quite what to expect they did know the Transition House was funded through the United Way. Being familiar with United Way programs they felt sure the the Transition House was the first step in the right direction. During their stay they had a safe home to live in, support from staff, and programs to help them learn and relearn skills.

At the end of their stay they were ready to move on and decided to share accommodation. Graham stayed sober and learned to manage his illness. Randy found
employment and began to create a drug free life. Both men are enjoying their new lifestyles and thankful for the help provided by the support of the United Way.

**St. Vincent de Paul**

*Hospitality Centre and Warehouse Program*

To all my friends at St. Vinnie’s! It means an enormous amount to me to know that while I felt so alone during this horrifying experience that there were people trying to find me and send their love and best wishes. In a couple of weeks I shall be recovered enough to resume my pantry shifts and am very much looking forward to being a part of things there again. Sorry if I screwed up the schedule – I’ll try to keep the brain hemorages to a minimum in 2012. I love St. Vinnie’s! You are all on the front lines of helping others. Everything you do is what keeps the worst-off of us moving ahead. You are all ESSENTIAL. I love you, John Dickson