



MULTI-SERVICE CENTER

HELP. HOPE. CHANGE.



True Stories
2013 WINTER NEWSLETTER



True Stories

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MSC accepts bequests or can offer you the opportunity to help MSC while receiving income from your investments.

For more information on these planned gifts, contact Barbara Whitehurst at (253) 835-7678, ext. 149, or barbaraw@multi-servicecenter.com.

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FINDING A SENSE OF SECURITY

Carmela and Chris remember being homeless like it was yesterday.

One morning in 2007, Chris went to the restaurant where he worked to find it all boarded up. Shortly after, Carmela found out she was pregnant with their first child. After her maternity leave, she was unable to find employment.

"We were good citizens—working hard and paying our taxes—just like everyone else. We were able to buy whatever we wanted. Then one day the bad economy hit and we were jobless and on our way to becoming homeless," says Carmela.

Chris's unemployment benefits, temporary employment here and there, and help from Chris's mom kept them in a motel for a short while; however, they soon ended up "couch-surfers," relying on the kindness of friends, and sometimes acquaintances, to provide them with shelter for a night or two. Eventually, they had depleted their savings, Chris's unemployment had run out, and they found themselves in a group shelter.

The shelter was a scary place to be with young girls. "I always slept with one eye open," says

Carmela. "We had a bunk, and strangers surrounding us. You didn't know who you could trust."

Carmela spent all her time trying to find some permanency for her family. She called 211 diligently every morning by 7:59 to make sure their name stayed on the waiting list for transitional housing. She jumped through all the hoops, and did anything requested of her to make sure her family would be able to find the safe and secure housing they needed to thrive.

Carmela's persistence paid off. A year ago, Diana from MSC called them and they entered MSC's temporary housing program. "That call from Diana was what we needed to keep going," says Carmela. "This is now my home. I have a yard, my own doors, and my own carport, even though I don't have a car. We can feel safe, and our kids can be happy."

Both Chris and Carmela want a different life for their children than they experienced. Chris and Carmela met when they were young and attended a therapeutic daycare for children of addicted parents. Carmela laughs as she remembers her first encounter with Chris when they had a disagreement over who got to play with the train. At 16, they reconnected and have

been best friends ever since. Now both 28 years old, Carmela and Chris have three daughters: Kya, age 5, Keilie, age 4, and little Masumi who is 18 months old.

Carmela and Chris are thankful for the contributions the community makes to support families in MSC's housing programs. "I didn't have pots and pans to cook for my girls, and I was able to get some because someone had made a donation of pots and pans," says Carmela. "The value of those donations is not just related to money or things—the real value is that those people cared enough to take the time to donate."

"We don't want to be in this position, but we are. Even if you fall down, you always have to get back up. When you get to a place like this at MSC, you feel so secure. Your stress is reduced and it makes you a better person."

With their basic needs met, Carmela was able to pursue career options. She has applied for the National Guard and is going through a re-employment program with WorkSource. Chris has a disability which makes finding work difficult. When asked where they see themselves in three to five years, they both smile and talk about being safe, secure, and happy in their own home.



"We don't want to be in this position, but we are. Even if you fall down, you always have to get back up."

CHRIS AND CARMELA FOUND THE HOPE AND THE HELP THEY NEEDED TO KEEP GOING AND BUILD A BETTER LIFE FOR THEIR THREE DAUGHTERS.

A LONG HISTORY OF MEANINGFUL GIFTS

For the Long family, making meaningful gifts to the community is a tradition that passes from generation to generation.

Makayla's grandmother, Betty Long, was one of the founders of Christmas House—a community program that benefits MSC clients. The unique approach of allowing families to choose their own gifts during the holidays was what set Christmas House apart from any other program for holiday gifts at the time of its founding 28 years ago.

"Taking the families through and listening to their true stories, that is the most fun. They are so thankful, even for the small gifts that we take for granted," says Betty. For Betty, Christmas House is a meaningful gift that she can give the community that embodies the spirit of Christmas.

Betty's daughter-in-law, Lynne, was already volunteering for MSC and Christmas House before she joined the Long family, so she fit right in! For Lynne, the best part of Christmas House is watching a parent carefully select the right gift for his or her child.

Lynne remembers one mother in particular. This mother only wanted a Razor scooter for her child. Unfortunately, there were no more scooters to be found. Later, when Lynne found that shiny new Razor hiding in the back of the store room, she knew exactly where it needed to go. "Making that connection and being able to truly touch someone's life in a positive way is what Christmas is all about," says Lynne.

Makayla's earliest memories of Christmas House are of helping her grandmother sort stuffed animals into piles for girls and boys. Now, Makayla is responsible for creating stocking stuffers for parents to take home from Christmas House.

"Stockings are the best part of Christmas, so every kid should get one," says Makayla. Last year, with the help of some fellow high school volunteers from Key Club, Makayla provided 1,600 children with stocking stuffers.

"It's not always how it appears on the outside, and you don't know when it will be you or your neighbor," says Betty as she remembers delivering gifts to a family that couldn't make it to Christmas House. When she pulled up to a beautiful house in a great neighborhood, her first thought was these people don't need our help. However, when the mom opened the door, Betty looked into a cold and empty house. The family had nothing left—everything had been sold and the power turned



off—all in an effort to keep the home they could no longer afford.

The Long family's rich history of philanthropic giving began well before the days of Christmas House. Betty's grandfather, a railroad worker, had a "giving fence" where he left extra fruits and vegetables from his crop production for the homeless to help themselves.

Betty fondly remembers one story of a Native American homeless man that her grandfather invited to join him for dinner one evening. Several months after the dinner, the man gave Betty's grandfather several Native American artifacts in appreciation for the kindness he had shown. These gifts remain treasured possessions in the Long family that will pass from generation to generation.

Betty also remembers when her father, a former policeman, would volunteer at the food bank accepting donations that were dropped off, while her mother was busy washing donated stuffed animals. Betty's father also started the Bike for Kids program at Marine View Presbyterian Church, and during his last year, fixed and refurbished 100 bikes and gave them to children who would otherwise go without.

The Long family tradition of making meaningful gifts to the community will continue with future generations as well, just as Christmas House continues today with the support of many organizations, businesses, and volunteers.

“ I don't remember a time when I wasn't doing Christmas House, I was born into it. ”

Donations for Christmas House can be dropped off at MSC's Food Bank Warehouse, located off the alley behind our main building in Federal Way (1200 S 336th Street). Drop-off hours are 8:30 am to 4:30 pm, Monday-Friday.



EVENTS

Multi-Service Center's Learning Institute presents:

"What to Look for When Shopping for Long-Term Care"

Saturday, Nov. 23, 10:30am-12pm
Kent Senior Activity Center
 600 E. Smith St., Room 9
 Kent, WA 98030

Choosing a long-term care setting* for yourself or a loved one can be daunting. How do you determine if the facility is a good one? What signs do you look for? What questions do you ask? What resources are available to help you narrow your search?

Learn all this and more from staff in our State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program, skilled advocates for the best quality of life and care of people living in long-term care facilities.

Event is free, seating is limited. Light refreshments will be served. Reservations are not required, but are recommended. To reserve a seat, please call Sarah Villian at (253) 835-7678, ext. 104, or email sarahv@multi-servicecenter.com.

*Long-Term Care settings include Assisted Living, Nursing Homes, and Adult Family Homes. This program provides general consumer information. We cannot and do not recommend particular facilities.



Giving Tree Benefitting Christmas House
November 29-December 15
The Commons in Federal Way

Make a holiday wish come true for a child of an MSC client! Visit the giving tree at The Commons in Federal Way to select a wish to be fulfilled for a child from birth to age 18. Please return your new, unwrapped gifts to the giving tree by December 15.

Gifts will be transported to Christmas House. MSC clients will shop at Christmas House from December 17-19. Volunteers are also needed. Please contact Le Ann Taylor at (253) 835-7678, ext. 105, or email leannt@multi-servicecenter.com for more information on donating or volunteering.

Barnes & Noble Book Fair
December 8-14

Shop online or at any Barnes & Noble with ID Code 11154754 during the week of December 8-14 and a percentage of the proceeds will support MSC programs.

Also, join MSC at the Southcenter Barnes & Noble on Saturday, December 14, between 11am-4pm with your donations of books or gifts and enjoy carolers, children's programs, and a visit from Santa!



MAKAYLA SAID THE HARDEST STOCKING STUFFERS TO FILL ARE FOR TEEN BOYS. ITEMS SUCH AS BASEBALL HATS, BASEBALLS, WALLETS, CARD GAMES, AND BODY SPRAYS MAKE GREAT TEEN BOY STOCKING STUFFERS.



P.O. Box 23699
Federal Way, WA 98093-0699

MSC is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit agency that offers people pathways out of poverty through support and resources in education, employment, housing, energy assistance, food, and clothing. We also provide statewide advocacy for elderly and disabled residents of long-term care facilities. **Learn More: Call (253) 838-6810 or on the Web at www.mschelps.org**

Help. Hope. Change.

Helping people achieve greater independence and discover the power of their choices.

TRUE STORIES ABOUT AMAZING PEOPLE.

In this column, I want to tell you stories. Stories of adults and children living in South King County who need our help. Stories of generous businesses, community leaders and volunteers who have given hope to those who had none. Stories of people whose resiliency, courage and determination changed their lives. True stories about the amazing people I meet as the CEO of the Multi-Service Center.

We are so fortunate that many of you choose this time of year to make an annual contribution to Multi-Service Center so we can help families meet their basic needs: helping them to achieve greater independence and discover the power of their choices. I am inspired by the gifts the community bestows upon MSC and our customers throughout the year. I want to share some of these gifts with you. They are stories of the greatest gift of all. Help, hope, and change for those that need it most.

Gifts come in all shapes so giving doesn't always mean just writing a check. The ways to support MSC are limited only by your imagination. What is meaningful to you? Is it ending homelessness? Is it ensuring children never go hungry? Is it making sure that a student earns his or her GED so he or she can go on to find a living wage job?

Some gifts are small, some gifts are large, yet all gifts are meaningful. Some families choose to honor loved ones by a donation to help those served at MSC. How would you feel if you opened that sweater box and instead of another sweater you received a note saying that a gift was made in your honor to help provide housing for a homeless family?

One of our donors recently shared her unique way to support a cause that is important to her. Lois Watt, a King County employee, is able to donate her vacation time to a local non-profit. She chose to support MSC's food bank. We received a check for the value of her vacation time and were able to purchase protein and produce for the food bank. Giving a gift of time so others could have nutritious meals meant a lot to Lois.

Knowing that many MSC parents struggle to provide their children with daily needs like a place to sleep or a warm meal, countless volunteers and donors from our community have created Christmas House where these parents can still "shop" for their children during this very difficult time in their lives. Can you imagine being able to give your child the gift they had hoped for thanks to the generosity of someone who understood your need to give?

This holiday season I hope you give yourself the joy of knowing what an impact you have made in the lives of others by giving a meaningful gift, to someone in need. I want to thank you in advance for considering a gift to Multi-Service Center. Please know that we will use every dollar wisely and to the greatest benefit of those we serve.

Some gifts are small, some gifts are large, yet all gifts are meaningful.



Holiday wishes to you and your loved ones.

Robin R. Corak

Robin Corak
Chief Executive Officer

