Somerset HOME *for* Temporarily Displaced Children

NEWSLETTER ■ SUMMER 2004

Member: Somerset County United Way and United Way of Greater Union County.

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49 Brahma Avenue ■ Bridgewater, NJ 08807 ■ 908-526-6605 ■ www.somersethome.org

Caring Schering Employees Making Birthdays Bright

One of the great things about working at Somerset Home is the opportunity to see an outpouring of care and concern from community members. One of the exceptional groups we work with is from Schering Laboratories in nearby Branchburg. Suzanne Longson, a Schering customer service representative, contacted us over a year ago and said their employees would like to provide a birthday celebration for every Somerset Home resident — in both the shelter and Passages.



Debbie Hunter and Sheila Stulec with one of the many birthday gift packages they donate for a Somerset Home teen.

We took her up on the offer and Suzanne and her co-workers have done a wonderful job. We let them know when a birthday is *(Continued on page 4.)*

Congratulations Graduates!

Passages Graduates Moving On to Greater Things

Imagine sending off three of your children to college all at the same time! That's what we're doing this September. Our young women will begin an exciting and challenging college adventure after graduating from the Passages program this summer.

"Evelyn" is headed for the International Academy of Design and Technology in sunny Tampa, Florida. She will be studying fashion design. "It's always been my dream to be involved in the fashion industry," she says. "I'm very excited and am looking forward to meeting new people."

Keisha applied to many different schools and was accepted to her first choice, Morgan State University in Baltimore, Maryland, as a biology major. But, unfortunately, she was unable to accept the invitation because of her financial situation. She says, "I don't want to be in debt with student loans when I graduate." So, she made a decision to attend Raritan Valley Community College. After two years, "I plan to transfer to Fairleigh Dickinson University and obtain a Bachelors degree in Biology. From there I hope to go on to Saint Johns Medical School, to become a pediatrician. It's scary to be moving out on my own but the Passages staff has prepared me well. I'm ready for the challenge."

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A Message From The Executive Director



Jeffrey Fetzko

I feel I need to warn you about what you will see in this newsletter. You'll see the stories of survivors. "Normal" kids doing "normal" things, which is remarkable, considering the profound maltreatment they have endured, shockingly, at the hands of their primary caretaker(s).

These kids want to go to the prom in the spring, the beach in the summer, get part-time jobs and finish school. And, more than anything, they want their parents' love. I believe these parents love their children; however, they are facing many difficulties (i.e., drug and alcohol abuse, unemployment and domestic violence), and the stress they are experiencing leads to abuse, neglect and an escalation, to crisis level, of conflict in the home.

When I first read the poem, "Bio-Poem" (see page 5), I thought, "Who has a fear of duct tape? What a thing to fear!" The maltreatment suffered by the youth in our care is unimaginable to most of us. You've read the stories and have seen the countless reports of child abuse and neglect in the news lately.

But, I am happy to report, the majority of these youth survive that childhood abuse and even to go on to attend college.

This year alone, we have celebrated seven "Sweet 16" birthdays, seen five kids go to the prom, watched another youth perform in a choral concert, and received college acceptances for three residents. We are very proud of the success our kids enjoy and know it didn't come easily for them. Success against adverse conditions is a big thing and something all of us are very proud of.

The hope and optimism expressed by these young people is energizing and contagious. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported our efforts in the past year. Your financial backing enables our agency to provide the supportive services that, in turn, help make our kids' individual achievements possible.

Thank you for your continued support.
Jeffrey Fetzko, ACSW, LSW, CFRE
Executive Director

Board Members

Thank you to all our Board Members for their dedication and service.

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My Place – A Capital Idea!

Somerset Home is wrapping up phase one of the capital campaign which will create a five- bed transitional living program called "My Place I". The new program will address the needs of older male youth, ages 17-21, who are aging out of the foster care (child welfare) system. Youth who grow up in substitute care face many challenges, and are rarely ready or equipped to live successfully on their own at age 18. While at My Place, residents will learn the skills necessary to become productive adults when they leave the program in 6 to 18 months.



Trustees of the Lillian P. Schenck Trust present a "large" check for the new My Place program to Jeffrey Fetzko, Somerset Home executive director and Anne Bradley-Sosis, associate executive director.

Phase two of the capital campaign is now underway, which will fund "My Place II" and provide a five-bed transitional living program for females.

All capital contributions are used to help ensure these youth make a successful transition to self-sufficient adult lives. For more information, please contact Tierney O'Donnell at 908-526-6605 or todonnell@somersethome.org.

We would like to thank the following organizations for supporting our 2002-2004 capital campaign:

$10,000 or more

James E. and Diane W. Burke Foundation, Inc.
Danellie Foundation
Hyde and Watson Foundation
Johnson and Johnson Somerset Family of Companies
Ruth & Peter Metz Family Foundation
National Starch & Chemical
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$250 to $499

Hidden Pond Foundation
K. Hovnanian Companies

$100 to $249

Harwood Properties
Krieger Foundation
Robert Okin Foundation
Pathmark

One Of The Many

A Somerset Home Street S.M.A.R.T. Outreach Story

Jackie was raised in a home run by a controlling, manipulative, and at times physically abusive father. Jackie made it through high school, but she suffered from severe depression in college and nearly committed suicide. Jackie dropped out of college after her first semester and returned home, back to the emotional and physical abuse.

She didn't know what to do. At age 19, Jackie felt she could no longer stay in a home that made her feel like a prisoner. After another incident where Jackie's father beat her, a friend gave Jackie the phone number of the Somerset Home Street S.M.A.R.T. street outreach team. She wasn't sure what they could do, but she knew she needed help.

Since both of Jackie's parents were at work, the street outreach counselors went right over to her house. They listened to Jackie's story and offered her options. Jackie had to deal with making one of the most difficult choices of her life: to leave the home she grew up in and face the world, completely unaware of what it had to offer or stay and suffer more abuse.

With the help of the street outreach team, Jackie decided to move out. She was frightened, upset and depressed, but determined to begin a new life, free of abuse. The street outreach team helped her find a safe place to stay until she could accomplish her ultimate goal – to live independently.

Jackie began working with the street outreach team on developing

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Making Birthdays Bright *(Continued from cover.)*

and give them information about the youth: male or female, age, interests and gift suggestions. The Schering employees take turns shopping for gifts and Sheila Stulec creates a gift basket that seems to get bigger and more elaborate with each birthday. The birthday boy or girl gets everything on their wish list and more.

One of the Schering employees, Bea Makara, is a very talented cake decorator who puts her heart into creating a special confection for each child. Staff members, as well as the residents, all love to see what she creates, but the masterpiece doesn't last long because the cakes taste good too!

We recently had a resident who was obsessed with going back home. Her case manager worked hard with the family to make it a reality for the unhappy girl. Finally, she found out she would be going home, but it was one week before her birthday. The girl actually asked if she could stay until her birthday. We were very surprised. The case manager found out her family was poor and she probably wouldn't have much of a birthday celebration at home. After discussing the situation with our friends at Schering Laboratories, we decided we would move up her birthday party and combine it with a going away party so she could have her cake and eat it too!



Suzanne Longson (L) and Bea Makara (R) display one of the cakes Bea made for a Somerset Youth Shelter resident.

The employees of Schering Laboratories have truly been generous with their hearts and their pocketbooks to make each child feel special. It is a thrill to work with them and see the smiles on the boy or girl's face when they receive their gifts.

TIPS FOR TEENS: *My teen won't talk to me. I can't get him or her to open up.*

Teenagers like to talk. But they must have a willing listener. If simply asked, "How was your day?" by a parent who listens only halfway and responds "uh huh," teens will begin to seek more willing listeners. If all that is said is "clean your room," or "look at me when I am talking to you!" then teens will begin to tune out. There must be a balance between routine chatter and deeper talk. When psychologist Torey Hayden asked several hundred teens what they wished they could talk with their parents about, they named:

- **Family matters** — Vacations, decisions, rules, curfews, serious illness, money problems.
- **Controversial issues** — Sex, lifestyles, drugs.
- **Emotional issues** — Parents' feelings about them and other things.
- **Big whys** —Why do people go hungry? Why is there war? Other philosophical issues.
- **The future** —Work, college, making plans for their life beyond the current home.
- **Current affairs** — World and community happenings.
- **Personal interest** — Sports, hobbies, friends.
- **Parents themselves** — What were parents like at their age, stories that show parents are real.

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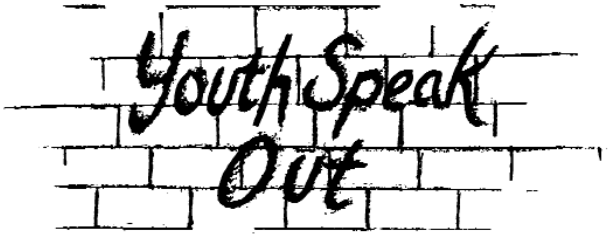

Bio-Poem *by E.T. age 16*

Line 1: Your name…
Edward

Line 2: Traits that describe you…
Young, handsome, intelligent, hurt

Line 3: Related to…
Older brother to Anthony and Tanea

Line 4: Who loves…
Family, friends, life

Line 5: Who feels…
Hurt, confused, depressed

Line 6: Who needs…
Mom, dad, girl

Line 7: Who gives…
Himself, wisdom, fun

Line 8: Who fears…
Death, duct tape, evil

Line 9: Who would like to see…
Alicia Keys, family, money

Line 10: Who lives in…
Somerset Home for Temporarily Displaced Children

[Untitled]

We've been friends since the 2nd grade
Been through good times & bad together
And even though some memories have begun to fade
You've been there more than my own brother
Even when it seemed impossible to be
You never gave up on me
One of the few people in my life I can trust
Took all the missing pieces in my life
Put my heart back together each time
Always helped me make my wrongs right
Stayed by my side, even when they said
I was out of my mind
Helped me understand family isn't who you're born to
But who fits the description of one
And my true family lies within you

A.C. age 17

Walk a Mile (or two) in Their Shoes



Why not make a difference in the life of a homeless, abused or neglected youth by participating in the Somerset Home Run for Runaways? Don't panic, if you're not up to the 5K run, you can try the 2-mile fitness walk through beautiful Duke Island Park on Saturday, November 6th. To make it even more fun, you can form a team with a group of friends or co-workers. Your participation will not only show that you care, it will raise awareness and funds to care for disadvantaged youth.

Just go to runforrunaways.com, click on "register now". It's easy, simple and fun!

Thanks to Our 2004 Run for Runaways Sponsors

Johnson & Johnson
Kids' Sprint Sponsor

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Fitness Walk Sponsor

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Food/Entertainment Sponsor

Stop-N-Shop
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McElroy, Deutsch, Mulvaney & Carpenter, LLP
Award Sponsor

Apple Food Corporation
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Many great sponsorship opportunities are still available. For more information about the advantages of becoming a sponsor or advertiser, visit **www.runforrunaways.com** or call Tierney O'Donnell at 908-526-6605.

Recap of 2003 Run for Runaways
Duke Island Park, November 1, 2003

Top Three Male Finishers

Name	Town	Age	Finishing Time
1. Mark Zamek	Hillsborough,NJ	40	16:25
2. Max Hanes-Stiles	Morristown,NJ	17	16:34
3. Doug Clark	Far Hills, NJ	35	16:51

Top Three Female Finishers

Name	Town	Age	Finishing Time
1. Caryn Heffernan	Flemington,NJ	30	17:26
2. Dawne Hausman	Summit,NJ	38	19:30
3. Diane Ross	Flanders, NJ	35	20:12

6TH ANNUAL
Somerset HOME
Run For Runaways
Saturday, November 6, 2004
Duke Island Park, Bridgewater, NJ

Scenic 5K Run ■ Drinker, Biddle & Reath, LLP Two Mile Fitness Walk *(new course suitable for strollers)* ■ Johnson & Johnson Kids' Sprints ■ Post-race Picnic & Barbeque ■ Entertainment

For more information, visit
www.runforrunaways.org
or contact Tierney O'Donnell
(908) 526-6605 (days)

Passages Graduates Move On

(Continued from cover.)

After being accepted by every college she applied to, "Kayla" selected Seton Hall. She says, "It was a difficult decision, but attending Seton Hall will allow me to stay close to my mom and my sister, not to mention the great staff at Passages I've come to rely on." Kayla eventually wants to enroll in Seton Hall's pre-law program. She is also participating in the Cooperative Business Education program and works for a local real estate investment firm from 12:30 to 5 p.m., five days a week, providing administrative support.

Both Kayla and Keisha will be leaving Passages for the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) in June on the campuses of their prospective colleges. The EOP offers students a freshman summer program to get a "head start" on the college experience.

In addition to the Passages residents headed to college this year, we were very pleased to hear a former shelter resident has also been accepted to many of the state's top schools. "Jessica" resided at the shelter for several months and made many friends here. She's kept in touch since she moved on to a group home and she called to tell us her good news. She recently accepted an offer of admission to Drew University. Jessica also received a $1,000 scholarship from the New Jersey Association of Children's Residential Facilities. This award was presented to Jessica at the association's annual conference by Edward Cotton, the director of the N.J. Division of Youth and Family Services.



One Of The Many

(Continued from page 4)

the independent living skills she needed to live on her own. They taught her how to fill out job applications and write a resume, which led to her getting her first job. The outreach team also helped Jackie find a therapist she felt comfortable talking to. There were a lot of issues in Jackie's life she needed to address.

Jackie relied on the street outreach counselors for transportation to doctors appointments, counseling sessions and job interviews. Jackie also worked hard to pass her driving test and eventually received her driver's license.

When Jackie saved enough money to get her own apartment, the street outreach team helped her furnish her new place. Jackie is now living in a one-bedroom apartment, working two jobs at the local mall and attending therapy on a regular basis. She recently bought a car, and is determined to go back to college soon. With the encouragement of the street outreach team, Jackie calls her parents once a week to keep the lines of communication open. She also keeps in touch with the street outreach counselors and, at the end of conversation, says, "Thank you for all your help."

Can you e-Help?

When one of our residents asks...

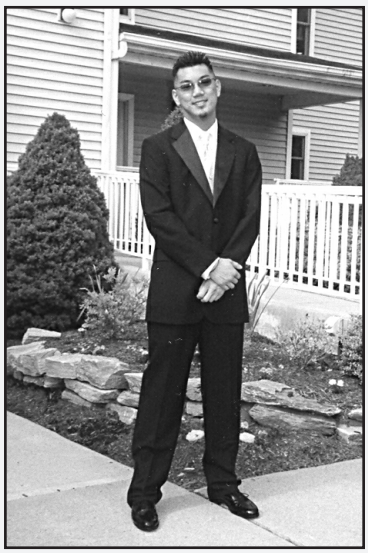
- Can I go to the prom?
- Can I get track shoes so I can join the team?
- Can I go to camp?

Unfortunately, our budget does not cover the cost of these kinds of expenses. So, we scramble, make some phone calls and pass a hat to our loyal friends to make sure the resident isn't disappointed. We would like to invite you to join our circle of friends who help pay for the extraordinary expenses that help to make our kids' lives a little brighter.

We know you share in our belief the youth living at Somerset Home deserve the same opportunities as their peers who live at home. These activities and mementos are an essential part of what makes a child feel good about him/herself and builds a sense of community and belonging.

Won't you consider being a special friend and help make a huge difference in the quality of life of a deserving Somerset Home resident? All you need to do is e-mail: tcostanzo@somersethome.org and you'll be notified when one of the residents has a special need. There will be no pressure on you to answer or to help with every situation. If you don't have e-mail, just call 908-526-6605 and speak with Tracey.

Please contact us today!



A Passages resident decked out for his prom, thanks to contributions from loyal friends.

Somerset HOME *for* Temporarily Displaced Children

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