

NEW AFTERCARE PROGRAM PROVIDES CONTINUED SUPPORT



Matt

Somerset Home has helped more than 8,000 youth obtain shelter, food, clothing and support services. But what happens after they leave? The organization's new Aftercare program can help answer this question.

The Aftercare program helps former Somerset Home clients who wish to continue receiving support. Help finding a job, access to training programs, help with obtaining financial support for college and referrals to community-based services are available. Aftercare's goal is to ensure Somerset Home clients break the cycle of dependency and become self-sufficient.

"The Aftercare program helps our youth establish lifelong positive relationships and a network of support," said Kathleen Saunders, Aftercare Coordinator. *"Currently we have eight clients, but we expect to grow rapidly because we are aggressively reaching out."*

Matt was one of the program's first clients. His experience is a good example of how it works.

Orphaned as a young child, Matt was a resident in Somerset Home's group homes for more than two years. When he turned 21, he was no longer eligible to live in one of the group homes yet he needed support to achieve his goals and had no one else he could trust. The Aftercare program helped him apply for college, get financial aid, housing and a full-time job. Matt, who is a gifted artist, is currently a first-year student at Rutgers where he is studying journalism.

"Matt is very fortunate. He has housing during school as well as when there are school breaks during the winter and summer. Unfortunately, other college kids are homeless and sleep in their cars. One of the Aftercare program's goals is to establish a network of support to help homeless college students. This is an important issue many people don't even think about. Now through Aftercare, there is help."

THE LIVES YOU'VE TOUCHED

"Somerset Home has helped me by offering me opportunities that I previously did not have. Most people have to deal with stress when it comes to being on their own and working a full time job and obtaining a college degree. However joining this program has freed me from the stress that a lot of people have to deal with. Under the care of Somerset Home, I was offered stable housing, security, and guidance. With the services they offered me, I was able to grow as a person, learn more about life, and become more financially literate. I honestly doubt I could have achieved as much in terms of saving money and having a stable worldview if it wasn't for this program. Being able to focus on college and obtain my associate's degree was one of the most important elements of my life. I am now currently a student at Rutgers University and hope to succeed in my future goals. I thank Somerset Home for offering me so much opportunity and fostering my personal growth."

~ Matt, age 22

VILLAGE HOUSE: BRIDGING THE GAP TO INDEPENDENCE

Through the Village House rental assistance or “scatter site” housing program, youth gain the knowledge and experience to live on their own. Through Village House, Somerset Home rents apartments in the open market. Clients then pay Somerset Home an affordable rent based on their income.

“Village House’s goal is to get young adults used to independent living,” said Jennifer Amaya, Director of Outreach and Prevention. “While in the apartments, youth become accustomed to paying rent, purchasing food, and maintaining a household. They also receive case management support. The apartment locations are close to public transportation so they don’t have to worry about having a car to get to and from work.”



Village House apartments are available for clients who were previously in a Somerset Home program or homeless young adults less than 24 years old. There is an interview process to determine if they are a good candidate based on need, current employment and ability to live independently. The goal is for residents to move on to fully independent housing within two years.

“Two of the current Village House clients were living in a shelter before becoming a part of the program,” said Amaya. “They are both working full time and managing themselves well,” she continued. “We hope that Village House can become an option for homeless college students who need temporary housing during school breaks. It would be great to rent more Village House apartments to help more homeless young women and men lay a foundation for becoming successful adults.”

DONOR DOLLARS MAKE A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

THANK YOU to the companies, foundations, and service organizations that have made generous monetary contributions from October 2015 to date* to support Somerset Home and the homeless and runaway youth the agency serves

Affinity Federal Credit Union Foundation	Jolyn Foundation, Inc.	St. John’s Episcopal Church
Aldersgate United Methodist Church	Kiwanis Club International	TD Bank
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Investors Foundation	St. John’s Episcopal Church	Middlesex-Somerset County Funeral Directors Association

*As of March 10, 2016. Donors from January 2015 through October 2015 were listed in the previous newsletter.

BOARD UPDATES:

Marsha Montgomery, the current longest-serving Board Member of Somerset Home, was recently appointed the Board President. Montgomery, who is the President of OnCourse Consulting, LLC and joined the Board in 2000, previously served as Board Secretary, Strategic Planning Committee Chair, and the Gala Silent Auction Committee Chair. Marsha says, *“The work of Somerset Home is life-changing.”* Congratulations Marsha!



Lisa Warren Retires from the Board

After serving 30 years on the Board of Somerset Home, **Lisa Warren** retired from the Board at the end of 2015. Warren, who is Assistant General Counsel at Johnson & Johnson, held many positions including secretary, vice president, and president. *“Through the years, Somerset Home has expanded much needed quality services to provide support to more kids in need,”* said Warren. *“Being on the board has been a great experience. I can truly say I got back more than I gave.”*

VALUED VOLUNTEERS – Volunteer Profile (Bonnie Hodge)



Helping the vulnerable youth at Somerset Home would not be possible without the support of volunteers: individuals, companies, and organizations that give of their time, talents and service to better the lives of youth. One of those individuals, Bonnie Hodge, is a volunteer with the Street Smart street outreach program.

Hodge first learned about Street Smart two years ago through her Kiwanis Club. *“Jessica [Revolorio] reached out to the Kiwanis Club of Randolph to give a presentation about Street Smart,”* said Hodge. *“I was inspired to support the work of Street Smart because of their dedication to working with youth and improving/making a difference in the life of a child.”*

Hodge, who works in nonprofit organization management, currently serves on the Street Smart Morris County Advisory Committee. *“My personal goal is to assist Street Smart in finding opportunities to speak at public events in an effort to educate the public, ultimately securing additional resources (goods/services, manpower and financial) to support Street*

Smart and Somerset Home. Street Smart’s work is important because the program is helping vulnerable youth who are in danger and in need of basic human necessities. Getting youth off the street and/or assisting them in finding resources they can utilize.”

Hodge knows firsthand about youth homelessness... *“Thirty plus years ago, my brother was homeless at age 17. Despite working with guidance counselors/private counseling, my parents ultimately had to make the hard decision to ask my brother to leave the home environment in order to protect me and my younger siblings. I’m not certain how he fed himself and he only had the clothing on his back. It was a very emotional time for us all. My family didn’t have an agency like Street Smart to turn to back then. If we had, we might have been able to turn things around sooner. My brother ultimately was successful in turning his life around and we remain very close.”*

“I am very passionate about my involvement and am proud to be affiliated with Street Smart and Somerset Home. I encourage others to get involved... we need you! Say YES to helping youth and our children! Every time we have the opportunity to make the difference in the life of a child, we are working together to make the world a better place.”

A GREAT TREAT FOR A GREAT CAUSE: Somerset Home Partners with Shake Shack!



Members of the Shake Shack Bridgewater team providing hot chocolate at Run for Runaways 2015

In 2014, a new Shake Shack location was preparing to come to Bridgewater. Each Shake Shack selects a charitable partner – an organization in the community to work with and to donate a percentage of their profits. Shake Shack selected Somerset Home as the charitable partner of the new Bridgewater restaurant!

“I was looking for local vendors for some of our products and came across a short blurb online about Somerset Home,” said Cassandra Spears, manager of the Bridgewater Shake Shack. *“We had not picked our charitable partner yet so I gathered up all of the information I could on Somerset Home. I knew it would be a solid choice for what we were looking for and here we are. I’m really glad that we partnered with you!”*

As their charitable partner, Somerset Home receives 5% of all proceeds from Shake Shack’s Bridgewater Berry Patch concrete dessert. It’s vanilla custard with local New Jersey blueberry jam, and pieces of cheesecake blondie. It is delicious, worth every calorie, and will help support Somerset Home youth. It’s a great dessert for a great cause!

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of your
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*Thank you
for your support!*

WAYS YOU CAN HELP: SUPPORT OUR UPCOMING 2016 EVENTS

2nd Annual Spark! Gala:

Thursday, June 9, 2016 – Park Avenue Club; Florham Park, NJ - 6:00pm

The evening will include a cocktail hour, silent auction, awards ceremony, awarding of the Lisa Warren Scholarship, dinner and entertainment. Honorees include: Robert (Bob) Caruso, Drinker, Biddle, & Reath, LLP, Investors Bank, and Samieh Franklin. Alycia Guichard will serve as keynote speaker. Tickets are \$150/person and proceeds will benefit Somerset Home's programs and services. Visit <https://somersethomesparkgala2016.eventbrite.com> for more information and to purchase tickets online.



Tricky Tray & Bingo Event:

Friday, September 23, 2016 – VFW Morris Plains; Morris Plains, NJ – 6:00pm - Proceeds will benefit Somerset Home's Street Smart street outreach program to help keep youth off the street, prevent exploitation of high-risk youth, and combat human trafficking.



18th Annual Run for Runaways:

Saturday, October 29, 2016 – Duke Island Park; Bridgewater, NJ - 8:00am
Proceeds will benefit Somerset Home's Arts & Recreation Program.

For more information and details on these events including tickets and sponsorship opportunities, contact Adriana Gonzalez at agonzalez@somersethome.org or (908) 526-6605 ext. 312.

Somerset Home for Temporarily Displaced Children provides abused, neglected, homeless, and runaway youth with housing, a stable environment, and supportive services that guide them in becoming self-sufficient. Since 1970, over 8,000 youth throughout New Jersey have come to seek shelter, food, clothing, and support services. The agency provides seven programs for adolescents and their families: Brahma House crisis intervention center; Passages, My Place and Whitney House transitional-living programs; Pathways independent-living skills program; Street Smart street outreach; and Bridge House supportive-housing for homeless young adults. For more information, visit somersethome.org or contact Executive Director David Walker, Esq. MSW at dwalker@somersethome.org.