



## ECHO

This success story is about a pediatric patient named “JB.” JB is a seven year old African American boy that has been through so much in his young life. He has a smile that would melt your heart yet a life that’s full of confusion, neglect, and turmoil that brings sadness to those involved in his care. JB was diagnosed with severe asthma at a very young age. His disease requires very close monitoring in which the nurses, physician, and social worker have worked diligently over the years to provide. Thru no fault of his, he has failed a countless number of appointments with ECHO and the much needed pulmonary specialist. Tragically, he has been neglected by his primary caretakers creating some near death experiences. His mother moved out of the state and left JB and his three siblings in the care of their grandmother. The mother continued to receive state assistance in another state including food stamps and Medicaid even though the children did not reside with her. This prohibited the children from receiving Indiana state benefits. Being uninsured as with all of our uninsured patients, limits options for medical care. The mother created unnecessary challenges by having JB’s medications called to a pharmacy in Tennessee and would only occasionally bring his medications to Evansville. The grandmother was very overwhelmed trying to care for and keep her grandchildren together and with limited resources, she failed. She forgot to bring JB to his appointments; she had no rescue medication to give to the school in the event he needed treatment and without Medicaid coverage it was unaffordable for her to take him to specialty appointments. I can’t begin to tell you the countless hours spent by our staff on the phone with Child Protective Services, school nurses, and pharmacies trying to ensure that JB would receive appropriate care. The poor and sporadic care resulted in him being hospitalized due to respiratory arrest. Thankfully, he did improve and made it through this preventable and frightening experience. Through collaboration with the school system, ECHO, and the hospital, CPS was again notified and the investigation proved JB would be better cared for by an aunt. I’m happy to report that JB is now insured in Indiana, he is getting the medications that he needs on a daily basis and is attending his appointments with ECHO and the specialist. It may take an army to get the job done but with the persistence of the excellent staff at ECHO and collaboration with our community partners, we have made and will continue to make a difference.

## The Arc of Evansville

With the help from a team of professionals at The Arc of Evansville and other support systems in her personal life, Keesha, a talented woman with developmental delays including Down syndrome, receives services in the agency's Day Services Program For Adults with the ultimate goal to achieve a greater level of independence.

While Keesha, 29, participates in numerous activities that are designed to help her daily living, self-help, self-advocacy, and social skills, she also works with instructors in the program to increase her communication skills. Although Keesha has fantastic receptive communication skills, she can be difficult to understand when communicating with an individual who does not interact with her on a daily basis. To help increase her vocabulary and communication level, Keesha began learning sign language a few years ago with the goal to use some simple signs to address her wants and needs.

At first, Keesha was learning basic sign language, including the motions for "yes" and "no," "bathroom," "home," "mom," and "dad." She quickly mastered those words and began learning how to sign color, foods, and days of the week. Keesha found this life-enhancing educational component of the program not only helpful, but also fun and exciting. The more she invested her time in learning new words to sign, the more her communication skills increased.

Today, Keesha is signing full phrases and sentences to express her emotions, wants, and needs. She also understands sign language used by others and can respond appropriately using her signs. She has significantly increased her expressive skills, as well as, her receptive language. Recently, Keesha teamed up with a group of friends to sign the popular 90's hit I Want It That Way from the Backstreet Boys at a talent show for program participants.

In a meeting at our agency to review Keesha's recent advances in this program, her mother shared how pleased she is with Keesha's increased communication skills. Her mother said that she feels more secure in knowing that if there was an emergency; Keesha has the sign language ability to clearly express herself to someone who could prevent a problem or help in a situation. She's thrilled to continuously see Keesha achieve her communication goals.

## Ark Crisis Child Care Center

A little girl(one year old) first came to Ark as an emergency case through the Department of Children's Services. She was removed from a home due to abuse allegations and was placed at Ark until a foster family could be identified. She came in, dirty and with a dirty bandage wrapped around her arm. The DCS case manager called a few hours later said a foster mom was found for the girl, but the woman refused to take the child unless she could get childcare assistance. She had a full-time job and could not take time off to care for the child. Ark assured the case manager that we could help until a traditional child care could be found. The girl came back to Ark the next day with a hot pink cast on her arm. It had been broken at some point before she was removed from her home, but was never properly treated.

We all know, 1-year olds are unsteady on their feet. The little girl would fall often, and would put out her casted arm to catch herself. She cried often when this would happen, but cried even more when our teacher would pick her up. We talked with the foster mom about this, and she

noticed the same problem at home. She took the little girl back to the doctor and found she had several broken ribs from her time before DCS got involved. They considered putting the child in a full-body cast to allow her to heal, unless the foster mom could pick up the child in a different way to not put pressure on her ribs. She and our teacher decided to pick up the child from the bottom, rather than under the arms, to support her safely, while not hurting her ribs. That would also allow for regular mobility, rather than the inactivity that would be caused by a full-body cast.

Within a few weeks of coming to Ark and being with her foster mom, the little girl was laughing, playing, interacting, and smiling like any 1-year old should. We were honored to provide immediate care for the child when she was initially removed from her unsafe home, and to be able to provide her foster mom with the childcare support she needed to be able to continue working and providing a safe and loving home for a very special little girl. We could not do this without support from United Way!

## CASA

One of Vanderburgh County CASA young adults recently won a poetry contest that was part of our State Conference which is held each year for all the CASA volunteers and staff in the State of Indiana. The theme this year of our conference was “Hometown Heroes” and we were asked to submit on behalf of children that we currently advocate for a poem with the theme of “Hero” written by a CASA child. Out of all the entries, Crystal won. She read her poem, which was written about her hero-her CASA volunteer Debby, at the luncheon which was attended by over 650 CASA volunteers and staff. We were so proud of how far she had come; she is in school, she is working, and living in her own apartment. Her words made every person in the audience realize that they too can be someone’s hero.

## Girl Scouts of Southwest Indiana

“There was a girl in the group who was hesitant to share with the group and difficult to engage in the conversations. After we had been meeting a few times, we did an activity where I asked the girls to write what made them a star and share it with the rest of the girls. Afterwards, I asked what their definition of beauty was. One of the girls gave her response, and I asked her, “Who was beautiful?” and she said “us,” and after asking her who us was she said, “Everyone. Everyone is beautiful.” This girl was the one who had been so hesitant to share with the group initially and after that day we saw her gain confidence and come out of her shell.”

## Mental Health of Vanderburgh County

When I first began attending the Survivors of Suicide (SOS) meetings, I instantly felt a connection with the other survivors who understood the range of emotions I was dealing with after the loss of my brother. It’s impossible to put into words the relief I felt knowing there were other people out there who understood how I was feeling. The amount of support and encouragement was a blessing to me in a time when I really needed it.

Over the course of time, I've come to realize how easy it is to develop relationships with the other members, as week after week, we pour our hearts out in these meetings. We follow each other's road to recovery, and know each other well enough to ask for updates on pieces of each other's lives. We become kind of like an extended family, bonded together by our experiences with suicide loss.

When I leave at the end of each meeting, I feel like a huge weight has been lifted off my shoulders. Being able to share with others gives me a sense of relief from the emotional burden I feel.

Last year, I was approached to become a peer facilitator at the SOS group meetings, and I gladly accepted, knowing how much the group has helped me. It gives me an incredible sense of accomplishment to know I am helping further the mission of the Survivors of Suicide meetings and giving support to those who desperately need it.

## Deaconess VNA

Early in 2013, we began providing care for a female patient in her 60's who had a primary diagnosis of heart failure. This patient had lost her insurance coverage, and her husband who had recently died leaving her alone. Her heart disease had led to a decrease in her ability to "do the things she loved to do," and that, paired with the thought that she may not be able to stay in her home and take care of herself any longer, had led to depression. The couple had no children who could assist with her care.

The team of caregivers from the agency performed an initial assessment of the patient, and put together a care plan with her help. The plan included nursing care, home care aides, mental health care dietary services, and medical social services. In addition to the normal scope of services, the case manager recommended this patient for Telehealth monitoring, so that each day, the patient would connect to monitors that would electronically transmit her health information to a nurse to "keep an eye" on her between regular in-person visits. The data being monitored included blood pressure, oxygen level, temperature, and weight. The nurse who brought in the Telehealth equipment provided training to this patient on not only how to use it, but what her health indicators mean and when they indicate the need for medical intervention. With heart failure, even a slight gain in weight can indicate dangerous fluid retention around the heart. Sometimes, this is brought on by a change in diet, such as a very salty meal. This incident happened once with this patient, and a costly visit to the hospital was avoided by a consultation with her doctor and a change in her medication.

The patient was also treated for her depression. The mental health nurse provided a depression screening, and after a consultation with a psychiatrist, an anti-depressant was added to her medications. With the management of her heart condition and improved mental health, this patient was able to remain at her home and not have to go to a nursing facility. In addition, with the coaching and intensive education from the agency nursing team, the patient learned about positive changes in her diet that resulted in weight loss. The agency medical social worker collaborated with Meals on Wheels to assist the patient with healthy and regular meal options while she healed.

Without the home care provided, this patient most likely would have ended up in a nursing facility. And without non-profit providers that accept charity cases, this certainly would have happened. This story is but one example of the type of patient that we care for. Our patients range in age from children to those over 100, and from the newly diagnosed, to the chronically ill. Above all, we strive to allow individuals and families to stay in their own homes for recovery and to live independently. We are truly grateful to the United Way's support that enables the continuation of our mission.

## Albion Fellows Bacon Center

Allie's is a true success story. She was ready, motivated and did it all herself. Allie came to us from Pike County. A partner DV agency, Crisis Connection, referred her to our Shelter Program. They also provided transportation for her from Pike County.

Once in shelter, she shared that she had endured physical, sexual, and emotional abuse from her boyfriend of five years. She couldn't remember the last time she held a job or even went to the doctor. Her first week in shelter she met with a case manager for one-on-one counseling, set goals, started DV education and support groups. She began her healing process. Allie was provided referrals, such as ECHO Health Care, Southwestern Behavioral Healthcare, Work One, Division of Family Resources, etc. She was relearning how to take care for herself. She became an established patient at ECHO Health Care and started the process of long-term therapy by meeting with the homeless Outreach Team from Southwestern Behavioral Healthcare. Allie was also becoming educated about domestic violence. We discussed the Cycle of Violence, Power and Control, Why Victims Stay and Boundaries (how to set them and keep them), and Red Flags of Abusers.

While all of this was going on Allie found employment. She had been in shelter 13 days when she found employment. She quickly excelled at her job and was given extra responsibilities, more hours and a raise. It was impressive how she was able to balance work, health care and counseling.

During her stay, a partnering agency, Aurora, had an incredible financial opportunity toward housing for qualified applicants. Allie was fortunate not to have barriers to housing such as previous utility bills, evictions or a criminal history. She qualified for their program. The program paid her deposit and first month's rent, which enabled her to save her money and have a cushion before paying her bills on her own. We assisted her with furniture from a generous donor and household items to get started. Albion Fellows Bacon Center provided the resources, compassion and the support Allie needed to empower herself into independence and self-sufficiency.

## Boy Scouts of America Buffalo Trace Council

One of our Scouts, that will remain anonymous, has made a complete turn-around in his life. He comes from a large family of 6 siblings and moved to the Evansville area from Utah with his broken family. Some of his siblings and family members are still in Utah.

After moving to Evansville, his family was ready to send him to military school because he was always getting into trouble and causing problems. Since joining Boy Scouts, this young man, who is now 15 years old, has turned his life around. He is Senior Patrol Leader with his troop, he is now making all A's and B's in school with a 3.5 GPA, and he has been a great representative for Scouts at events. He is a product of our program and a success to be proud of. With this young man, we accomplished our mission.

## VOICES

Mary (name changed) had belonged to the country club and is very particular about her appearance-hair, how she dresses, etc. In addition, she loves gardening and had a garden for most of her life. In her younger years, she even canned vegetables to her family.

Before coming to the nursing home, Mary used to eat breakfast around 9:00 AM. She would spend her morning drinking coffee while reading the newspaper in her comfortable recliner. Afterwards, she would prop her feet up, nod off and take a short nap before lunch. In the afternoon, Mary would keep herself entertained and particularly liked gardening and sitting outside. After supper, Mary would get on her comfy PJ's and lay in bed reading or watching TV. She was especially fond of "Everybody Loves Raymond".

When Mary moved from assisted living to a nursing home, her daughter, Sue (name changed) was upset about the care her mother was receiving. Sue's friend suggested she call VOICES. Sue explained since Mary moved to the nursing home, she was woken at 6:00 AM to get dressed and go to the dining room for breakfast. When she came back she was made to sit in a wheelchair by the nurses' station except for when attending therapy or formal activities. She was not "allowed" to go in the courtyard and admire the plants unless a family member went with her. Mary didn't like being treated as a child and missed her morning routine, quiet time and comfortable chair. She was made to sit in her wheelchair all day, which was not nearly as comfortable as her recliner her family brought from the assisted living. Not being able to elevate her feet caused swelling and discomfort in her legs. Although the staff were to put special socks on Mary to mitigate the swelling in her legs, it was rarely done. The staff would also frequently neglect to help Mary put a bra on. Staff would give Mary incontinent briefs that were too big or too small and sometimes Mary got none because they had run out. Her back hurt from sitting in a wheelchair all day so she was given pain medicine that caused her to become lethargic.

One thing Mary enjoyed besides her visits from her family, was to get her hair done. The only problem was inevitably the day after her beauty shop appointment, staff would wash her hair and comb through the set. Now this prim and proper woman was made to stay out and about with her hair messed up, no bra, in discomfort and unable to continue with any of her comforting routine.

Mary, Sue and VOICES had a meeting with the department heads at the nursing home and were able to get some of the issues resolved fairly quickly. The issues that didn't get fixed or didn't stay fixed were being monitored. But, Mary and Sue had lost faith in the facility staff and began

looking for another place to move. With VOCIES help and guidance, they chose a place that rated well, received very few complaints, and was close to Sue. The best part was it had a courtyard Mary could access at any time. There were tomato, green bean, green pepper and pumpkin plants as well as blackberry bushes, grape vines and an assortment of gorgeous flowers. Most of the plants were growing in raised planters so Mary could tend to them from her wheelchair.

Sue reported that they were both very pleased with the new home. It was so clean and they couldn't ask for better workers. Now Mary sleeps in and has a light snack and coffee when she gets up. She spends time in her recliner with her paper and coffee. She snuggles in bed at night and giggles to "Raymond" on the TV. She never has her hair set ruined by staff or goes without a bra in public.

Sue got her mom gardening gloves for Mother's Day and Mary enjoyed the summer playing in the dirt, watching things grow and enjoying her life again.