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Epworth's Monthly CARE Story –January 2013

“Prayers for our Children”

Each Tuesday at Epworth Children's Home, management staff members gather for their weekly meeting. Throughout the year, the Case Managers are assigned weeks to attend the meeting to give updates from their cottage. Case Managers work directly with the children to help meet their comprehensive care plans for behavior, academics, emotional health and medical wellbeing. The meeting begins with a devotion and is followed by weekly reports from several of the management staff. It all sounds like a typical staff meeting, but it isn't. After the reports are given, the group devotes time to discussing individual children who are in need of additional support or who are celebrating a milestone. The needs for support can vary. Perhaps a child is struggling with anger management after a home visit, or DSS wants to terminate the parental rights of the child's parent and the child doesn't understand why. Maybe we celebrate that a child who has failed every spelling test that semester finally makes a C, or they just had their first outing with their mentor and it was a great match.

During one of these regular meetings in January, the Case Manager for Cile Gray gave the group her update. Cile Gray is home to the oldest group of boys on campus. Often times, they come to Epworth during their teenage years after experiencing a lifetime of abandonment and disappointment. They aren't quick to trust and often have limited skills for communicating the hurt and frustration they feel. More often than not, no one in their previous life has made school a priority and they are performing behind their peers in school. Older boys in the foster care system often have a bad reputation, but Ms. Guy, the Case Manager for Cile Gray, knows that each and every one of her boys is still a child deep down. She knows from experience that they need to feel love and support, and with that they will come around.

As she gave her report during January, she noted that several of the boys in her cottage were struggling. One of the boys had lost two brothers from campus – one was adopted and the other moved off to Job Corps after high school. Another of her boys was learning to control his anger, and his grades were improving significantly; however, he had a setback at school just before Christmas. One of the boys was celebrating being offered an athletic scholarship for college, but dealing with the realities of uncertainty and leaving campus. So much is happening in their lives each and every day. While they have not had the best experiences prior to their time at Epworth, they are overcoming them one day at a time.

This is the point in the meeting when it no longer feels like a meeting. After Ms. Guy finished her update, Rev. Susan Culler, Campus Pastor at Epworth, led the group in prayer. She prayed for each of the children by name, knowing that God surrounds them with loving staff and a community who works each day to see them grow and succeed. The children who call Epworth home are lifted up in the prayers of our churches and members as well. The children may not hear the prayers, but they feel them.