

Spring Salutations

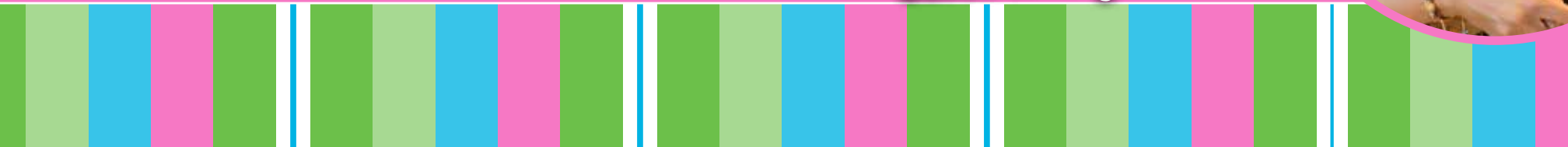


STARFISH
FAMILY SERVICES



A Special Starfish Family Services Newsletter

Celebrating Mothers





A Note from the CEO

Dear Friends of Starfish,

At Starfish Family Services, we celebrate and embrace mothers all year long. Speaking from personal experience, most mothers need a little help and guidance along the way, and Starfish is here to make sure moms get the resources they need to nurture and support their young child's development.

When I have the chance to speak with Starfish mothers in our hallways or during parent groups, they inspire me with their hard work and commitment to do well for their children. Their resilient and determined spirit to raise healthy and well-adjusted children is evidenced when they take advantage of not only our preschool programs but parent education, family counseling, and financial literacy programs. These wonderful mothers fuel me and my colleagues each and every day!

As we celebrate Mother's Day this spring, we hope you too are inspired by the success stories of some special Starfish mothers. And, as always, we thank you for your shared commitment to our mission of strengthening families to create brighter futures for children.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ann".

Ann Kalass
CEO

Our Mission:

Strengthening families to create brighter futures for children.

Our Philosophy:

We believe in the potential of all children and the power of healthy caregiver-child relationships to break the cycle of poverty and create long term positive outcomes for children.

**Questions,
Comments,
Newsletter ideas?**

We'd love to hear from you. Contact us at devdept@sfish.org

Spring Salutations

& Starfish Success Stories



Courtney



Deidre

From Troubled Teen to Role Model

My name is Deidre and I came to Starfish as a troubled teen. In the past I dealt with my problems by being violent towards others. The counseling I received helped me deal with my problems in better ways. I've been in many great Starfish programs and all have been life changing for me. Right now my counselor Lori, (I love Lori!) helps me with anything and everything I need.

My daughter, Germany, has a therapist who helps me teach her new things, look for developmental cues, and videotapes me so that I can see how my interactions are with my daughter. Every program I have been in at Starfish has changed my life in many ways. Therapy helped me learn new, positive ways to express my feelings.

Starfish programs helped me develop goals and advocate for myself, become independent, and helped me to identify my strengths. I also learned how to be a safe haven for Germany. Having Germany has taught me to be patient, determined and more motivated. Germany gives me focus and motivation to accomplish my goals so I can be a role model for her. I feel special as a Mom knowing there is a person that is a part of me. I love to watch her grow.

Learning to Thrive

River and Heath, 4-year old twins, burst into the room full of energy, excitement and eagerness to explore. They are happy, healthy, and according to mom Courtney, thriving. You'd never know the twins were born severely underweight and premature, or that they spent over a month in a pediatric intensive care unit, unable to suck or swallow and dependent on a feeding tube.

Once the twins were finally home, Courtney and husband Tristan delighted in their twin's development. Lingering health issues due to their premature birth, were still a concern; but to the untrained eye the boys seemed to be developing normally.

Courtney began attending Starfish play groups held at the Early Learning Resource Center (ELRC). Ms. Sue, a teacher at the ELRC, immediately developed a strong rapport with Courtney and her sons. When she noticed River and Heath showed signs of developmental delays, she didn't hesitate to discuss her concerns with Courtney. No mother wants to hear that her child might be experiencing delays, but Courtney was very grateful to Ms. Sue and the Starfish experts who encouraged her to seek testing.

The initial assessment was simple. Courtney answered a few questions: Are your children walking up and down stairs? Can they kick, bounce, and push a ball? Are they putting two words together? "Simple questions that no one would think would make a difference, that you don't think to look for" explains Courtney. Courtney made sure to take advantage of every available program. Courtney continues, "Because of Starfish's intervention, Heath and River continue to thrive today" They were enrolled in Early Head Start and were given a therapist who visited weekly engaging the boys and family in games and activities that addressed their development issues including the often misdiagnosed sensory processing disorder. "Had it not been for Starfish helping me take those first steps to get the twins the help they need; I don't know where the boys would be today. I'm so grateful to Starfish. I owe them everything."

An Often Misdiagnosed Disorder

Learn more about Sensory Processing Disorder at: www.starfishonline.org/SPD



Patricia

Inspired to Help Others In Crisis

At 21, after learning that she was pregnant, Patricia immediately set three important goals for herself. She would seek help for her depression, be the best mother possible, and provide her child a completely different childhood from the one she lived. A fourth goal, entering college and maintaining a 4.0 GPA would come later.

She speaks excitedly of the various programs that made a difference for her and Jay, her one year-old son. One program, Partnering with Parents (PWP) provided her with a therapist who visited her home every week, and taught her about parent-child bonding.

Therapist Nat Barna explains, "It's very brave for families to invite people in, especially if they have past experience with the "system" or [Department of] Human Services.... it shows how much she wanted to be different from her family, the willingness to open up her world to scrutiny." It's also important that those who suffered abuse have a safe space to process their past and learn that the abuse was not their fault. Patricia's past included leaving her parents' home 'for good' at age 16 when the abuse reached a crisis point. Six months later her father was convicted of abusing her younger sister and sent to prison. Patricia readily tells others how Baby Power, another Starfish program, taught her many coping and parenting skills.

"I learned that babies can pick up our emotions so it's important to regulate myself." She continues, "I didn't know how to take care of myself, I was always the mother to my mother, learning that I'm the most important person in my child's life and have to take care of myself taught me to be a better mother for sure."

Now 23 and a college student with a 4.0 GPA, she looks forward to helping others the way she has been helped. She's even volunteered at the Starfish Shelter and Crisis Center. Patricia was a natural, helping out wherever she could but her most impactful role was sharing her story with youth who are currently facing similar challenges. And encouraging them that they too, can be successful and have a happy family life.



Sara

Bedtime Chaos Transformed by I Love You Rituals

Relying on "mother's intuition," Sarah sought help for her middle child, Max. Her doctor told her repeatedly that he was just going through the "terrible-twos" and everything would be fine. Thankfully, Sara knew Max's extreme tantrums and sensitivity to his environment were not normal behavior.



Sara calls *I Love You Rituals*, which she learned from Starfish Early Head Start teacher Shonalee Hughes, lifesaving.

'Good Night Foot', the boys' favorite *I Love You Ritual*, is perfect for bedtime and especially calming to Max. Sara massages her son's foot while singing 'Good Night Foot', then she moves on to the leg, and so forth. Once his whole body has been massaged Sara squeezes Max tight and says goodnight Max. "He will go from screaming to stopping once I start massaging his foot."

Most tantrums have been eliminated. The hitting has almost completely stopped. "It is a huge relief. I was really worried for a while for what the future would hold for (Max). He is a lot happier now that he is learning to control himself and it makes him happier and the whole house happier. The (Starfish) programs are amazing."



Mom, Ahm, Maman, Madre, Mum, Ma, Mother, Mai

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& Starfish Success Stories

Please Donate Today!



Help us ensure that our children are provided with the childhood development programs they need for a successful start to school. And that our parents are engaged with programs that empower and educate them to become their child's best and most important teacher.

Visit us at www.starfishonline.org to make your donation. On behalf of the children and families you strengthen, thank you for your generous support of Starfish.

Starfish Family Services is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization. Donations are tax deductible as outlined by IRS tax regulations.

