

Woman's story illustrates measure of group's help

Andrea McKinney · April 18, 2010

In the spirit of collaboration, over 70 people representing 30 agencies met for the Junior League's Children's Summit. The agencies in attendance strive to build stronger families and lower the incidence of child abuse and neglect in Greene County. The group came together to learn about the missions and efforts of some recently opened agencies in our community.

Leaders from Isabel's House, Project Safe Place, Lighthouse Child & Family Development Center, the Homeless Task Force and United Way shared information about their services as well as concrete results about number of children and parents helped as well as ways families were able to increase their income and/or reduce debt to provide for a better home life.

It was promising to hear of improvements made in such a short time since agency inception. Some of these agencies have only been in our community since 2007. However, nothing was as inspirational as the story shared by a mother who utilized the services of Isabel's House in order to provide a safe place for her daughter while she looked for new housing, completed a program to learn job search skills and successfully land a new job after losing hers unexpectedly.

I think many of those in attendance were moved when hearing how a job loss resulted in this mother and young child living in their van. What would you do if you had nothing and nowhere to go? Now we know that having a place to take one's child can make all the difference in the world.

Over the past few years, Isabel's House has seen an increase in children served due to homelessness and

unsafe housing. To date, this nonprofit has helped over 800 children in 362 families and the momentum continues to build. According to the recent Community Focus Report Card, Greene County recognizes that child abuse and neglect is a red flag issue for our community. By supporting the efforts of our partners in the non-profit realm, we can continue to lower these alarming rates of abuse.

Andrea McKinney is president of the Junior League of Springfield and a member of the Isabel's House board.



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