



**SPECTRUM**  
YOUTH & FAMILY SERVICES

# Spectrum Sun

Your gifts at work for teenagers & young adults

**SPRING 2017**

## Finding Home

**With your help, Kayla—once lost and without a home of her own—builds her future.**

When she was 8, Kayla went to the police and asked them to put her in foster care.

Her mom had made a habit of leaving her alone for days at a time, with no food and no one to look after her. And when she was home, she regularly beat little Kayla.

“It was almost like a hobby for her,” says Kayla. “I was so scared in that house alone, and when she came home, she was super abusive. It was just awful.”

And, her father was in and out of prison. “My dad is the most kindhearted man in the world. He’s got such a good soul. But he has been an alcoholic since he was a kid.”

She thought that putting herself in state custody would give her parents a wake-up call. “They wouldn’t want me to be in a foster home, so what else would they do besides get it together? You know, stop drinking, stop using drugs, stop leaving me. **I just thought it would get better.**”

Instead, Kayla bounced from home to home to home—at one, the parents treated her so badly that Kayla’s case manager intervened and they lost their license. Once a star student, she fell behind after switching schools again and again.

Finally, when Kayla was in 8th grade, a room opened up in her aunt’s house, and she became a certified foster parent to take Kayla in—the mother that Kayla had never had. “If I didn’t move in with her, I don’t know what I’d be doing right now. It’s a really scary thought.”

**Support to build on, thanks to you.**

In high school, Kayla’s case manager referred her to Amanda at our Youth Development Program, which helps youth aging out of state custody transition to adulthood. “I remember the initial meeting, when she told me all the things she could help me with.

**“That was the first time anybody had talked to me about college.”**

“I thought, ‘This is my opportunity to branch out and even lead myself.’ My whole time in care had proven that I couldn’t rely on my parents to bounce back and give me a solid life or at least a fair chance at being successful.”

*continued on back*



## Mark's Mission Moment

# The Best Christmas Card

### How you helped a young woman turn her life around.

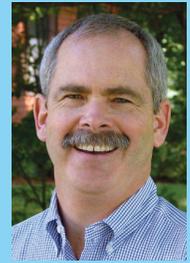
A few days before Christmas, we asked a panel of local experts to answer questions our youth were asking about their legal rights. Beforehand, we offered dinner for everyone.

I sat there, eating a burrito, when a 19-year-old young woman who frequents our Drop-In Center

sat next to me and handed me a Christmas card she had made. "Please read it aloud," she said, as others sat gathered around us.

I started to read it but began choking up. "I don't know if I can do this," I said to her, but she responded, "Please, you have to." I continued on, doing the best I could.

Mark Redmond  
Executive Director



This is the best Christmas card I have ever received. This young person so beautifully expresses the pain and suffering experienced by many of our youth at Spectrum, and the perseverance and hope they have to not only survive, but thrive.

This card is a testament to this young person, a testament to the incredible staff here who are so dedicated to the youth in our care, and a testament to you, our donors, who believe not only in this young woman, but in the hundreds of others who need your support.

Thank you for caring about them all, and for believing in them. As she says, "You Rock!"

Dear Mark,

*Drop-In means a lot to me. First and foremost it means support. Through Drop-In I receive case management. A point person, all the staff who laugh and joke with me, they do their best to cheer me up when I am sad, strive to keep me on a good path and help calm me down when I want to punch walls. It provides a full belly, community, clean and warm clothes, a place to stay sober, fun activities to keep me out of trouble and stability. Essentially it's the home I NEVER HAD!*

*In the past I've struggled with Drop-In rules such as staying sober in the space, being respectful to staff and other clients and controlling my emotions. So I want to apologize to you and all of Spectrum for my actions. I'm so sorry and realize now that I was a huge jerk. I took all of the love, support and services for granted.*

*At the time I was in a ton of pain. I also felt untouchable, I thought experimenting with drugs and abusing alcohol was the only way to make things better. I didn't know how to accept the things I've been through and continue to go through. Sometimes I feel the weight of the world on my shoulders, as a result I didn't know what to do with the support Spectrum offered me.*

*Over the past six months I've made some changes to help better my life. I started going to counseling and consistently meeting with staff at Spectrum like Stephanie, Tucker, Allie and Liz. I'm now 28 days sober, a big thanks to the Valley Vista drug rehab for helping me to detox. I spend less time downtown and at the park, and lastly I am respectful to Spectrum and follow the guidelines.*

*My game plan moving forward is to continue working with all my supports, to continue meeting with my therapist to gain coping skills and emotional control. I'll also be moving in with my Gram (temporarily) while I continue my journey to sobriety.*

*I know I wouldn't be able to go through this alone, and with Spectrum I don't have to. I'm so thankful to have you all in my life. You Rock!*

**HAVE A MERRY CHRISTMAS!**

## Spectrum's Legacy Society

If you have written Spectrum into your will or have chosen us as a beneficiary on your retirement account, you are already a member of our Legacy Society. Thanks to you, teenagers and young adults can get the help they need for years to come.

### If you'd like to join the Legacy Society, contact:

Sarah Woodard  
Director of Development  
802.864.7423 x350  
swoodard@spectrumvt.org

# We raised the signal. You answered the call.

Last June, after a death in a local homeless camp, our youth told us that navigating the weekends was scary and they were often going without food. So we reached out to ask donors like you to help us keep our Drop-In Center open every day of the week.

And you came through! We are so grateful to YOU for making weekends at Drop-In possible, and so are our youth. They sent a few messages about what this change means to them.

What do the weekends at Drop-In mean to you?

It means a lot to me knowing that I have people I can go to for help Monday-Sunday.

How has having the Drop-in space open on the weekends helped you?

allowed me to take a break from my daily stresses and focus on my main priorities.

THANK YOU.  
THANK YOU  
for your generous humanity.

What do the weekends at Drop-In mean to you?

Safety, Showers, Clean laundry, my ymca pass  
Someone to touch in with on a bad day.

How has having the Drop-in space open on the weekends helped you?

They feed my empty belly, warm my cold self, and give me hope for the upcoming week.

Thank you so much for donating, If drop in wasn't here I would starve and be helpless. It's my favorite place.



## Drop-In by the numbers—2016

575 youth came to our Drop-In Center a total of 5174 times.

You helped us serve: 5127 free lunches and dinners.

You provided:  
1,320 pairs of socks;  
720 pairs of underwear;  
150 winter items like coats, gloves, and hats; and 1,000 health and hygiene items.

You helped:  
97% of youth receive support for basic needs, 63% for education and employment, and 37% for coaching on life skills.

## Home for the Holidays

We are so inspired by the dozens of community members who collected gifts, donated to our holiday gift fund, and dropped off holiday food. This is often a tough season for our youth, but your generosity made it a little brighter.

Thank you for making sure our youth could celebrate the holidays.



**Finding Home...***continued from front*

Thanks to your support, Kayla began to plan for college. But in her senior year, her boyfriend of three years suddenly died. In her grief, her grades slipped, she struggled to stay in school, and college seemed like a far-off dream.

She wasn't sure what to do until Amanda suggested our independent living program, which helps foster kids learn to live on their own. We do many of the things a parent might—like coaching, and helping to pay for books, a computer, or rent.

**With your support, a home of her own.**

Kayla moved out of her aunt's house and slowly began to build a life—a home—for herself. She got a job, and eventually started taking classes at Community College of Vermont. Thanks to you, Amanda was always by her side, helping her when her laptop failed in the middle of exams, or covering part of her rent when her hours at work fell through.

"I wasn't used to that, but it really showed how she saw my priorities as her own. I've never really had anywhere else to go. She would do anything she could help me to live independently."

Next, Kayla transferred to the University of Vermont and got an undergraduate degree in social work. Today, she works for one of the family courts, often

witnessing cases that are so similar to her own. Her dream, if she can find a way to pay for it? To go back to school for public policy, focusing on child welfare. "I can't see myself doing anything else."

She also tries to give back to the organizations that helped her. **"It's hard to explain how that extra help pushed me through whatever I was going through. It's helped me be successful with my goals."**

"You guys were with me for a very long time."

## Be a part of the Movement!

On the weekend of March 23–26, hundreds of community leaders and students will unroll their sleeping bags and sleep outside overnight in solidarity with young people who are facing homelessness.

If you'd like to sponsor someone who is sleeping out, go to [www.spectrumssleepout.org](http://www.spectrumssleepout.org).

Don't know anyone sleeping out? Look for the **Spectrum Staff Team**, who are sleeping out to support the youth they work with every day.

**spectrum's sleep out**



**DONATE** Online at [donate.spectrumvt.org/news](http://donate.spectrumvt.org/news) or in the envelope provided.

**MENTOR** Contact Lee Ann at [ldonner@spectrumvt.org](mailto:ldonner@spectrumvt.org) or (617) 480-8215 for more info.

**VOLUNTEER** Sign up to get volunteer opportunity alerts at [www.spectrumvt.org/volunteer](http://www.spectrumvt.org/volunteer).

**CONNECT** Find us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or YouTube.

## Yes! I want to make sure help is there when youth need it most!

I'd like to make a donation of \$\_\_\_\_\_ (Surprise us!)

Please make my gift monthly!

*Your credit card will be charged on the 15th of each month—or call Beal at 802-864-7423 x351 to set up an automatic draft of your checking or savings account.*

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_ CITY \_\_\_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

EMAIL \_\_\_\_\_ PHONE (IN CASE WE HAVE QUESTIONS) \_\_\_\_\_

Please charge my  Visa  Master Card  American Express  Discover

CREDIT CARD NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_ EXPIRATION DATE \_\_\_\_\_ SECURITY CODE \_\_\_\_\_

PRINT NAME AS IT APPEARS ON CARD \_\_\_\_\_ SIGNATURE \_\_\_\_\_



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