



# Your Gifts at Work in the Community

*Building Strong Kids, Strong Families, Strong Communities*

Welcome to our report on how your gifts are making an impact in our community. Each newsletter will feature a new story of lives that have been touched by your generosity.

## Youth Finds "New Beginning" at YMCA Camp

### A Place to be Just a Kid



When a friend suggested that 15-year-old Alex could find "a new beginning" by going to YMCA camp, it couldn't have come at a better time.

In the previous year, Alex's home life had been torn apart. Her parents divorced, and when she went to live with her father he continued to struggle...first losing his job, then losing the house, then losing his kids as Alex and her brothers were sent to stay with different family members.

While at her aunt's she opened up and revealed that she was being abused by a family acquaintance. In the court process that followed, the person was found guilty of all charges, but the damage to Alex remained. Both her grades and her self-esteem suffered. Alex was diagnosed with depression, anxiety attacks and attempted to commit suicide twice. Her aunt struggled as well, both emotionally and financially. She stretched to keep up with Alex's needs, taking her to counseling and psychiatrists, as well as meetings with teachers, detectives, attorneys and court appearances.

Even though camp would be a place where Alex could begin to rebuild her confidence, the price was too high for her aunt to pay. When the YMCA offered a camp scholarship Alex was given her chance to begin healing. On her 15th birthday, Alex had tears come to her eyes as she looked at the YMCA camp brochure her aunt gave her. For the next couple of weeks, YMCA camp was all she would talk about.

*"During that week of camp I went to visit," said her aunt. "When I saw her she did not look like the little girl who I had walked up to the bus earlier that week. On the day that she left she was a timid, quiet kid who was suspicious of everyone. On that summer day at camp, she was laughing, dancing, acting like a typical teenager."*

*"She made some great friends and developed relationships with staff which allowed her to speak of her life experience. She was able to open up, share her story, share her tears, look past the negative and participate in the many great things that Y camp had to offer. She took part in activities that she would never have experienced anywhere else."*

*"I feel that YMCA camp helped put her awful experience in the past and was a first step in letting her develop as a healthy young woman. She still has a long road of healing ahead of her, but she is stronger now."*

Alex's aunt remembers the first thing that she said when she stepped off the bus after her camping trip: "Just so you know, I'm definitely coming back next year."

*"I am grateful to the YMCA for providing this wonderful life-changing experience for Alex and for giving her something to look forward to year after year."*