

LIVE UNITED Success Stories:

Stories from one of our 30 Brown County non-profit organizations your donation support!



United Way of the Brown County Area

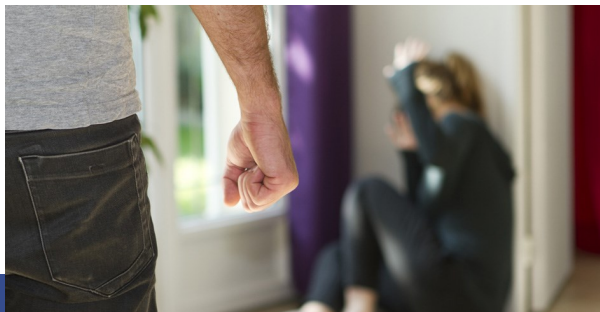
Name of Organization: ServeMinnesota-Third grade is a critical turning point for kids: those who read at grade level are on track to continue learning in other subjects but those who don't are at risk for the lifelong consequences of illiteracy. Reading Corps supports struggling readers from preschool through third grade to reach that important milestone and puts them on a trajectory for success.

Reading Corps tutor Jan at X Elementary told us about the "magical moment" when one of her students discovered she could read. Every day, Jan and kindergartener Amelia* practiced blending sounds into words. "After every word," Jan said, "she would gasp and look at me with surprise [at the sounds meaning words]. Shortly after that, we moved on to blending words into short sentences that made up stories."

One day, after much hard work with Jan, Amelia made it through a whole short story page. Amelia blinked with amazement that she had just read so much all by herself and immediately reached for a new page. "It was such a joy to see the delight she had with herself over her new skill of reading!" Jan said.

Before Reading Corps, children like Amelia may disengage from class or hide their difficulties reading until it leads to failure or special education. By working in partnership with schools, Reading Corps identifies these children and gives them the tailored support they need to become confident, fluent readers quickly. Tutors like Jan make this transformation possible by serving right inside schools every day.

(*names changed)



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Name of Organization: Comittee Against Domestic Abuse- CADA- CADA provides a safe, empowering and non-judgmental space for victims and survivors of domestic violence, sexual violence, and sex trafficking. Our purpose is to validate an individual's experience and help them identify options and available resources that are relevant to their own specific circumstance. All of our services are completely free and confidential in order to ensure that every individual is able to access the services we provide.

Last year we had an individual reach out to us who had left their abusive partner with nothing but the shirt on their back. We immediately got this person a safe place to stay and assisted with an Order For Protection and completing a safety plan. Over our time working with this individual we were able to help them find a new place to live, open their own bank account, change their insurance plan, and purchase new clothing for work. We were also able to connect them with several other programs that were able to provide them assistance with getting a cell phone, purchasing a new vehicle, and furnishing their apartment. Before working with CADA this individual was in an unsafe environment, often experiencing financial abuse, verbal abuse and physical abuse. Since receiving CADA's services this individual is safe, confident, and empowered to make their own choices.

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Name of Organization: Life-Work Planning Center -Women in Transition- Life-Work Planning Center's Women in Transition program provides family stabilization and pre-employment services to individuals who need to enter, or re-enter the workforce due to some disruptive transition in their life such as recent homelessness, recovery from chemical dependency, a job lay-off for self or spouse, inability to perform previous duties due to disability or injury, etc.

*Debbie was born and raised in New Ulm Minnesota. She comes from a family of 7 siblings and her father died at 60 from Alcoholism. She says her dad was very abusive physically and mentally. Her mother worked as a nurse. She says, "Mom didn't drink, and had wonderful parents herself." She recalls that she was severely beaten with a belt by her father at the age of 5. She says, "I remembered blood everywhere and my grandfather rescuing me." She says, "I was raised by my grandparents." She considered her grandparents exceptional people and her mother as well. Debbie says, "They were actively involved in the community and taught me so much about kindness and love. Their door was always open." "Even though I had a less than perfect childhood my grandparents taught us hard work, openness, caring, optimism and resilience." She worked as a licensed practical nurse for many, many years and she really loved this kind of job. However, due to physical limitations she had to apply for Social Security Disability due to her health issues.

In 2006, Debbie developed Clarkson's disease, a 25-year relationship ended, she lost her home, and her financial support. By 2008, she says, "I was wiped out." She was having health issues that made it nearly impossible to work. Since 1/3 of her income was cut due to not being able to work, she had to make adjustments - environmentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually. It was very painful. Debbie says she is still trying to adjust to not working full time. She is learning to slow down. She heard about Life-Work Planning Center through social services and thought she would give it a try.

Debbie began attending the LWPC "Strength. Balance. Self-Respect." workshop series. She says, "What an uplifting experience and supportive environment!" "I learned better problem-solving skills as well as communication skills which is very helpful in my dealings with different personalities." "I also began to feel more empowered and realized that I was never alone." She believes that LWPC helped her acquire the skills she needed to move forward. She found another home health job. Debbie says, "LWPC helped me cope in such a positive way. The workshops were educational and inspiring for me as I struggled to learn skills to help me thrive in my new community."

She states that what she found most helpful was the network of support from the workshops she attended. She believes it is important to network with others. "I'm not only learning in a positive atmosphere but I'm also sharing experiences which can be helpful for others." LWPC was able to help her with some financial barriers she was experiencing during this period. She says, "I began to feel better about myself." "My personal outlook in life changed as well." LWPC was also able to help Debbie find other resources available to her in the community. She says, "LWPC is that kind of place – a safe and caring environment. LWPC is an answered prayer to me". Due to her on-going work on personal growth, and financial management, Debbie is able to live independently and to be self-sufficient in spite of her on-going health issues.

(*names changed)



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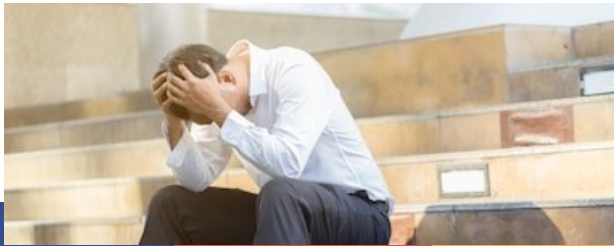
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Name of Organization: Community And Seniors Together-Senior Programming -CAST has formed a lifelong learning program – a place where adults with free time can learn for the joy of learning while focusing on fun, friendship and college-level instruction. C.A.S.T.L.E. – Community And Seniors Together Learning Environment, serves people regardless of previous education with classes in the humanities; art, history, literature, music, theater and more. By it's very nature, lifelong learning involves large amounts of student input and discussion in addition to formal instruction. Members are encouraged to add their life experiences to class discussion. In this way, social interaction is achieved and new friendships are formed.

"CASTLE saved my life" is a favorite phrase of *Ellen's. After retiring from an office job in another county, she moved to New Ulm, hoping to connect with family. Soon, each of her days had a whole lot of free time. After a while, she was finding that she just stayed home, rather than venturing out to see what was going on in town. Then she was told about CASTLE Lifelong Learning and visited a class. Now she has joined with a one-year membership and tries to make it to as many courses as she can. Her input in class is invaluable and she has made several new friends and enjoys the time she spends with them.

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Name of Organization: LSS Financial Counseling -Gaining money skills, knowledge and confidence helps families and individuals make the most of finances. Knowing what can be done can create momentum in moving out of feeling stuck towards empowerment and success. Families, neighborhoods, and community can all be adversely affected when there is chronic financial instability. We serve people from all walks of life who seek reliable information from a trusted, nonjudgmental source.

*Mike was referred for financial counseling by his probation officer. He is a young adult trying to turn his life around and he felt overwhelmed. He was recently laid off his job and didn't know what to do about the fines, student loans and collection debts. Poor choices lead Mike to being involved with drugs. Money was spent on wants rather than needs resulting in legal troubles, burdensome debt, and no savings. Now having lost his job, unemployment compensation was not going to cover basic living needs much less student loans and accumulated debt payments. Together, he and his financial counselor discussed income, expenses, and debts. Taking this holistic approach lead to coaching on setting expense priorities of housing, food, utilities, medical and basic transportation needs, fines, student loans, and then unsecured collection debt. Putting a number on these amounts helps to identify needed income from new employment. Referrals were made to local resources and employment opportunities. He learned about student loan deferments and forbearances to avoid default, as well as consumer protections and payment strategies for the collection debts.

Mike is committed to change and it takes one step at a time, so he has another financial counseling appointment to continue working on his finances -- our program is here to support his progress.

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Name of Organization: Girl Scouts of Minnesota and Wisconsin River Valleys- Girl Scout Leadership Experience (GSLE)- While we all hope for a bright future for the youth in our community, there are many barriers to their success. This is especially true for girls. Girls and women are outnumbered in leadership roles, especially in male-dominated fields such as business, politics, and STEM; their economic security is threatened by a persistent wage gap; and they struggle disproportionately from harassment, relationship violence, and mental health conditions such as anxiety and depression. These barriers place girls from diverse and low-income backgrounds especially at risk, as they face additional access barriers compared to other girls.

In order to face these barriers, girls need opportunities to develop the leadership skills, confidence, support networks, and persistence that are key to planning for future success. Girl Scouts' programming provides girls with these opportunities, as well as a safe, all-girl environment where girls can feel supported as they lead and succeed with Girl Scouts.

One Girl Scout served in New Ulm during the program year was *Katie. Katie, a recent high school graduate, was a Girl Scout since she was in Kindergarten. During that time, she took advantage of many of the opportunities that Girl Scouts has to offer. She earned skill-building badges with her Girl Scout troop; developed entrepreneurship skills as she sold hundreds of boxes of Girl Scout cookies; explored the outdoors with her friends at Girl Scout Camp; and used the money she raised from cookie sales to travel to Savannah, Chicago, and even Paris with her Girl Scout troop. Katie also used the skills she learned from Girl Scouts to improve her community. Together with her troop, she led community service projects such as collecting food for a food shelf, singing carols at a local nursing home, and helping mentor younger Girl Scouts in the area. Though she has now graduated, Katie still feels strongly attached to Girl Scouts and is now lifetime member of the organization.

Though Katie has been with Girl Scouts since she was very young—since Kindergarten—she describes Girl Scouts as having positively impacted her life. Before Girl Scouts, she reported being less confident and sure of herself—as many young girls are. However, with Girl Scouts, Katie has grown into a confident young woman with the courage and character to make the world a better place.

Katie describes the impact that Girl Scouts has had on her life thusly: "Girl Scout has changed my life for the better. I have been a scout since I was in Kindergarten and am currently registered as a Girl Scout forever. Because of Girl Scouts, I have grown in to an adventurous, courageous, and knowledgeable young woman. Girl Scouts has not only taught me how to start a fire, leave places cleaner than I found them, become an expert sales woman by selling hundreds of cookies, or save money for bigger investments. Girls Scouts has truly taught me how to be the best citizen I can be in this world. The most impactful trip that I was able to experience because of Girl Scouts was my last big trip to London and Paris. This was a trip that one may call a "once-in-a-lifetime-opportunity". I was able to see and experience things that I may never have the chance to again thanks to my involvement in Girl Scouts. Living there for a couple weeks broadened my view of how different people live in different parts of the world. Being a Girl Scout gave me this wonderful opportunity to experience that way of life, and I am extremely grateful for that."

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Name of Organization: Brown County Probation-General Crime Program General Crime Program, serves the needs of crime victims by providing direct services during an emotional and traumatizing time in the victim's life. The Crime Victim specialist (CVS) assists with victims' safety and financial needs, emotional health support and guidance through a complex criminal justice system. The CVS is the liaison for the crime victim to make sure every victim's voice is heard and their rights are upheld. The CVS also provides community education through public speaking, professional trainings, and National Night Out.

The CVS works closely with law enforcement, prosecution and probation agents to reach all known victims of crime. The specialist attempts to make contact with every victim of crime, and appear in Court when the victims can not or when victims wish to have a support person available. The specialist assists with restitution studies, victim impact statements, serves as a voice to prosecution, probation and the Courts to insure victims are treated fairly and are being heard. The specialist works with Crime Victim Reparations, emergency housing, and other emergency expenses such as locksmiths as needed.

Crime affects all ages, race, and geographical area. In 2017 the Crime Victim Program served 1051 primary and secondary victims, of this number 619 were seeking services for the first time. The CVS provides support and information to people/businesses who have been victimized by crime.

The program provides services to all crime victims when the crime occurs in Brown County. You may just work in Brown County. You do not have to live in Brown County to receive services. One of the services I would like to highlight is the Emergency Fund. Emergency funds are used to meet the emergency needs of crime victims. The financial need must have a connection to a recent crime victimization. Emergency assistance may include, but not limited to, the following expenses:

- Replacement of necessary property that was lost, damaged, or stolen as a result of a crime;
- Purchase and installation of necessary home security devices;
- Transportation to locations related to the victim's needs as a victim, such as medical facilities and facilities of the criminal justice system;
- Cleanup of a crime scene;
- Reimbursement for reasonable travel and living expenses that the victim incurred to attend court proceedings that were held at a location other than the place where the crime occurred due to the change in venue;
- Reimbursement of towing and storage fees incurred due to impoundment of a recovered stolen vehicle.
- Food;
- Personal expenses (clothing, diapers, personal hygiene items, identification documents, etc.)
- Hotel/motel expenses for safe housing;
- Moving expenses;
- Home expenses (door/window repair, lock change, etc.);
- Telephone service;
- Automobile expenses (minor mechanical repairs, windshield and tire repairs, etc.)

If you are a victim of crime help is available at (507)233-6665.

What was their life like before they began working with you? Crime victims have several questions, concerns, and emotional feelings about what is happening with their case.

Now that they've gone through this program, what's their life like? Or what is their outlook for the future? The CVS is their to provided guidance though

a complex criminal justice system, make sure the victim is being heard and their rights upheld. The CVS is assisting in providing some closure during an emotional and traumatizing time in the victims life.