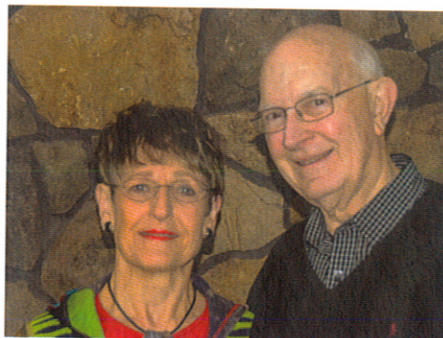


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Is There An "X" Box In Your Future?



*Jo and John Winchester
Long time WMFC Donors*

Jo Winchester is familiar with the letter "X". Before she became an eX-traveling public health nurse for the **Midland County Health Department** she saw first-hand the sad consequences of poverty on children and their families. Before she became an eX-board member for WMFC, Jo provided wise guidance and encouragement to WMFC staff members in their support of impoverished families and the great

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WMFC Unveils New Look and New Logo

For nearly 40 years the WMFC mission has been grounded in the betterment of the family. As such, from the very beginning, the WMFC logo was designed to represent the strength of the family. Using the depiction of a resilient tree within the heart of the logo signifies the roots that bond a family together. In looking forward to the future, and inspired by the original logo developed many years ago, WMFC has jumped ahead with a new updated image. "We are truly grateful to **B & B Marketing Communications** for the innovative logo design. It is modern and original. We're excited to unveil this new representation of WMFC as we move toward the future. B & B Marketing Communications has helped us move forward in style," stated **Greg Dorrien, WMFC Executive Director**. With the new look...WMFC steps into the future grounded with an allegiance to our founders and the thousands of individuals and families we previously served, staunchly dedicated to those yet to come.



*Nick Merritt
U of M Student*

Dow COP Class of 2013 Earns \$72,000 in Scholarships

What a difference a year makes! A year ago four high school seniors were in pursuit of their college dreams with help from the **Dow College Opportunity Program (Dow COP)**. Today, each one of those high school graduates is enrolled in college and thriving in a new environment! Recently, we caught up with those young men to ask them to comment on how Dow COP helped them get to where they are today.

Nick Merritt (Coleman High) is now attending the **University of Michigan**, majoring in nuclear engineering. "The Dow COP gave me the confidence I needed to know I could go far, and where I wanted to go," explained Nick. "It helped me

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The Need is Great...Giveaway Provides Food For Over 700 People

The **Emergency Food Pantry Network** (EFPN) came to the aid of hundreds of families in late September. All afternoon people lined up waiting for the fall food giveaway. Some were in line as early as 2:00 a.m.

Approximately 60 volunteers from the Emergency Food Pantry Network, the **First United Methodist Church** and the West Midland Family Center were on hand to help serve the 741 individuals that came for help. Hundreds of pounds of food purchased by an anonymous donor and distributed by the Food Bank of Eastern Michigan was handed out to those waiting in line. The September food giveaway was just one of several that occur throughout the summer

months. "Food giveaways occur every month throughout the summer at different sites," explained WMFC Food Giveaway Coordinator Diane DeMott. "WMFC is the site for the September giveaway. WMFC has been a long time sponsor of the event. Each year hundreds of people are helped."

WMFC has an ulterior motive for hosting this giveaway. "We do this so that we can feed those in need but it also helps us identify families that need our help," explained DeMott. "Because of the food giveaway, we have found several people who were homeless. As a result, we were able to get those people other kinds of help that they needed."



First United Methodist Church volunteer Mary Yeomans hands out bread at the food giveaway.

Mom Finds Help and "Second Family" at WMF

This is the true story of a family...a family of two working parents who have four children under the age of 13...a family that has taken on the fight to overcome generational poverty.

She had a dream.... "Ever since I was little I always wanted to be a nurse," explained **Tory Wilkins**. She never thought that life would get so complicated...and so hard.

"I was raised by a single mother. My grandmother helped raise me because my mother was only 17 when she had me. Mom never graduated high school so she was proud when I did," smiles Tory. "I grew up poor...we were on welfare. I remember one Christmas my mom telling us that she couldn't afford to get us anything. She asked what we would want if she could afford one thing for us. I really wanted a bowling ball because I was on a bowling league, but I told my mom that I didn't want anything...that she shouldn't worry about us...that she should go out and buy something for herself."

"My mom has retold that story many times...it has always meant a lot to her. She always says that us girls were never greedy or stingy; that we always put others first and we didn't care if we got a gift or not ...she says that she had never been so proud of me as she was on that day," comments Tory with tears in her eyes, "this is how I've always wanted to raise my kids..."

Today Tory is a married mother of four children aged 13, 11, 9 and 3. She and her husband Josh live in northern Midland County. She has a wonderful sense of humor that has most likely helped her to maneuver through her lifetime of struggles. She describes herself as a "happy-go-lucky person but her life story is anything but.

Tory is typical of someone in need of a helping hand who is often reluctant to

ask for the help that she needs. "I don't ask for a lot of help because I don't want to be a burden on people" explains Tory. "I don't want people to take care of me...I would much rather take care of other people."

"I reached out to Tory after receiving a call from the WMFC preschool teacher at our Bullock Creek site," explained **Janie Hollingshead**, WMFC Family Liaison, "The teacher suggested I call Tory to see if her family needed some help. Had it not been for that, I never would have known that Tory's family was in such need."

When Janie met Tory, Tory and her family had been living in the basement of her in-laws home for many years unable to afford a home of their own. "I am thankful that we had a roof over our heads," explained Tory, "but it was

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Mom Finds Help and “Second Family” at WMFC.....continued from page 2

very stressful living there. I couldn't be me. I couldn't raise my children the way I wanted to. I felt awkward being there. The only personal space that we had was the bedroom, which is where I spent most of my time. Part of me felt like I was interrupting my in-laws lives by being there and another part of me wanted my children to be able to be with their grandparents. I was constantly battling conflicting thoughts and feelings. Not having your own home puts so much stress on a family,” continued Tory. “Once I met Janie, I found that coming to the Center helped me relieve a lot of stress.”

“My husband had been coming to WMFC since he was a child and he loves it,” continued Tory, “he kept trying to get me to come up here (to the Center) on the nights when he was playing basketball. I didn't want to at first because I didn't know anyone, but after a while I started coming around, started meeting and opening up to the people here. Since then the Center staff has become a second family to me and my family.”

“The Center has helped us in so many ways. I don't know what we would have done without the support that we have gotten from the Center,” commented Tory as she started to count off on her fingers all the ways that she has been helped. “They have given us a family vacation by allowing us to go to family camp at Camp Neyati. We wouldn't be able to go camping if it wasn't for that (program)...that is like our family time for the summer...it's our family vacation because we can't afford anything right now...”

“The Parent Education classes have taught us how to discipline our kids and come up with better ways of doing things like having chore charts. We have

also been helped with clothing through the free clothing room. When the kids have things like picture day and I can't afford to buy them a new shirt, I've had someplace to go to get clothes so that my kids look nice for their school pictures.”

“They've invited us to the date nights that they have. My husband and I can't afford to go out alone by ourselves... if we do, we feel guilty for spending money on things like that. Being able to come here and have the kids taken care of on-site is wonderful.”



Tory Wilkins

“They've helped me with my son who has ADHD. When I first found out I was devastated. I thought to myself, how can I do this? Janie helped me find helpful resources and she went to the school with me to talk to the teachers. She's helped me stay calm so that I don't get too upset. She also helped my husband get a job one year.” (He eventually lost that job as a result of downsizing.)

“Holidays are especially hard,” continued Tory, “the Center has helped

us then too. I didn't even know about any of the programs that will help you during the holidays until I came here. My husband and I always say that the end of the year is always the hardest for us because we're always playing catch up,” Tory shares through her tears. “I am so sorry for crying,” apologizes Tory, “sometimes it just gets to me.”

One year WMFC adopted Tory and her family for Christmas. “I actually think that the Center adopted us that year because there were no families left to adopt us...I cried that Christmas...I didn't know how we were going to get the kids presents. I just wanted them to have something to open on Christmas Day...I thought of going to the dollar store to get them something...being a parent you always want to fill your child's wants and needs,” continued Tory, “and when you can't have a Christmas for them because you can't afford to do that, it's so devastating...it's heart breaking. It makes you feel less as a parent...like you aren't doing your job. WMFC helping us with Christmas that year was so much more than providing presents so that our kids would have something to open on Christmas Day, it helped us feel better as parents.”

Although life continues to be a struggle for Tory and her family, they've recently been able to solve one problem because of the folks at **Habitat for Humanity**. “I applied and we were chosen for a Habitat Home. Habitat for Humanity, with the help of a \$80,000 donation from **Midland Evangelical Free Church**, built our house. The year we moved in, we had Christmas with no furniture but I didn't care!” exclaimed Tory. “I was in my OWN home! I'm laying on the floor smelling the new carpet!” smiled Tory.

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Mom Finds Help and “Second Family” at WMFC.....continued from page 3

“Having our own home has made a huge difference in our lives,” continued Tory, “I have my own place to go now but sometimes not being able to clean the new house the way that I want stresses me out. I don’t feel like I ever have enough time. How do these other moms do it? How do they have enough time to go shopping, get their hair done, pick the kids up and then go home and make dinner?”

Today Tory’s husband works in Lansing. He’s thankful to have a job but the distance puts a hardship on the family. “My husband stays in Lansing during the week,” explains Tory, “we can’t afford a hotel so he sleeps on an air mattress in the warehouse at work to save on gas money. Thank goodness we have an air mattress!” exclaims Tory. “It’s hard. He wants to be home with us but we just can’t afford it.”

Tory is very happy to have her own home, but it has come with a high price to her personally. “Our new home is far from WMFC. Last summer my kids

cried because they couldn’t come to summer program,” shared Tory. “We live too far for the buses to come and pick them up and we can’t afford the gas to bring them here.” As a result, Tory isn’t able to get the support that she needs. Time and gas have become barriers to her being able to access her “second family”, and loss of funding in the WMFC Family Services Department has made it impossible for Janie to go off-site and help Tory in the ways that she needs.

“I’ve kind of looked at Janie as my backbone for some stuff...sometimes I just need someone to be there to give me that little push. I don’t get support right now...I miss it,” sobs Tory, making it difficult for her to continue, “I love this place. I know that if I ever have a problem I can always call here, even if it’s just to talk to somebody. I miss coming here. I know that I can try to seek out help from other organizations, but this place is me. If I could just take everyone here and put them in a basket and take them home

with me every day, I would. It’s the people here...if you could just move these people closer to me then I’d be good!” smiles Tory through her tears. “I need West Midland...they are like the family that’s far away that I can’t get to...without them life is harder.”

With the help of her husband, (Tory’s husband drives home from Lansing on Wednesdays to watch the kids so that she can go to school), Tory is back on track to fulfilling her childhood dream of becoming a nurse as she only needs to complete two more classes in order to do her clinicals. “I like school but nursing is very time consuming. It’s hard to find time to get the studying done that I need to do. I see other families doing things with their children and I feel bad...I keep saying if we only had more money,” said Tory, “that life would be easier...that’s why I’m going to school... to try to make a better future for my children...and because I want to give back... for me that is what nursing will enable me to do someday...give back.”

Is There An “X” Box In Your Future?.....continued from page 1

changes families made through their own efforts, facilitated by staff support.

We are very pleased to know that Jo and her husband, **John Winchester**, never intend to become eX- donors to WMFC. They personally believe that each generation deserves a better opportunity for success than the generation before. We are pleased that the Winchesters set an eXtraordinary eXample by marking an “X” on our WMFC Donor Information Card when asked for permission to publish their names in the Family Focus Newsletter. Yes, there is a down side to placing that “X” in the box. Lots of other organizations read

our newsletter adding our donors to their mailing lists, a common practice. And, full disclosure...that’s how we have connected with many interested community-minded people. Because it seems that every time we list a new donor one of their friends takes note and is moved to send a donation our way (many times in honor of the friend that in-spired them). The eXcellent Winchesters along with many other eXemplary contributors are right on target to prompt the **Herbert H. and Grace A Dow Foundation** to send a matching contribution to WMFC. You too have the power to prompt a matching gift; just send a check or an

on-line gift via credit card. We will be sure to have the Foundation match your contribution dollar for dollar providing you the opportunity to mark the “X” that matters, thus making you an eXceptional, eXclusive and eXtra-eXtraordinary eXample, as well!

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Dow COP Says “Goodbye” and “Hello” to Directors

Much credit for the recent success of the Dow COP goes to former program director, **Terri Malek-Madani**.



*Terri Malek-Madani
Former COP Director*

A local native, Terri grew up in Hemlock, Michigan. She came to WMFC in 2007, determined to make a difference in the lives of young people. Over the years, Terri worked diligently on behalf of the Dow COP students. As evidenced by the forward progress demonstrated by just four of her former students (see “*Dow COP Class Earns \$72,000 In Scholarships*”) and the program accolades they have provided, Terri’s desire to make a difference has truly come to fruition.

Terri is missed by staff and students alike. However it is a certainty that she will make a worthy contribution as she takes on her new adventure “out west” where she is establishing a life closer to her own adult children.

Carrying on the success of the Dow COP is new director **Mike Sobolewski**. Mike comes to the program with over 10 years experience working with students in the public schools, and such facilities as the Adventure Learning Center at **Eagle Village**. He also volunteers at the **Broadway Theatre** in Mt. Pleasant, directing children’s theatrical productions. Mike also has a genuine desire to discover more about the world in which we live.

Equipped with a Secondary Education Degree and Humanities Master’s

Degree, Mike personifies WMFC’s commitment for modeling lifelong learning “I have a real passion for learning, not to pass a test or complete an assignment, but just because there is SO much out there to learn and know about the world! How can we not be curious about what we don’t know?!”



Mike was recently spotted loading cars for those who came to the annual food giveaway. “I thought the food giveaway was an awesome event!”, said Sobolewski, “It has been years since I’ve been able to be a part of such a goodwill effort for the community. It made me feel good to help out.”

Dow COP Class of 2013 Earns \$72,000 In Scholarships ...continued from page 1

learn that places like the U of M weren’t out of my reach.”

Nathan Brooks (Shepherd High) shared that “the Dow COP certainly helped me with the essays to get into college. It also helped me to be more outgoing, and created good skills to use in the classroom and for studying.” Nathan is using those skills at **Mid Michigan Community College** before transferring to another school to



Nathan Brooks, Andrew (Pedro) King, Terri Malek-Madani, Rory Richmond, Nick Merritt

study computer science or graphic design. Nathan is also still very active volunteering at WMFC.

Andrew ‘Pedro’ King (Bullock Creek High) is attending **Central Michigan University**, majoring in art and design, while minoring in psychology and broadcasting. Pedro has volunteered to assist the new Dow COP director, Michael Sobolewski with a music studio project for the teens and families in the WMFC community. “(Dow COP) built in me a better character than what I had before,” explained King. “If it wasn’t for the program, I would not be in college. The program helped clear out a foggy path for me to understand.”

Rory Richmond (Coleman High) is attending **Kettering University**, majoring in chemical engineering. “The program opened my mind to the



Former COP Director Terri and “her boys”.

world and I grew less self-centered,” shared Richmond. “In terms of college, I was introduced to colleges that I never would have considered. I also learned the financial aid process, which I would have been lost in.”

As a result of the diligence and commitment that these young men showed, they were awarded scholarship monies totaling over \$72,000 from their universities and other sources. Clearly the Dow COP has helped set the stage for a successful future for these wonderful students.

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Western Photo Booth a Hit With Families at Parkapalooza

Once again, **D Street Entertainment Foundation** and **The Midland County Parks and Recreation Department** hit it out of the park when the two organizations joined forces and hosted the 9th Annual Parkapalooza this past September!

It was a beautiful day along the shores of Sanford Lake Park...clear blue skies and warm temperatures. It was the perfect kind of day to have a picnic



*WMFC sponsored a Western Photo Opp.
Families dressed up in western wear for
family photos. That smile says it all!*

by the lakeshore while making family memories. This is exactly what over 3,000 people did on that sunny day in early September at this year's annual **Parkapalooza**.

Every September, West Midland Family Center (WMFC) attends Parkapalooza to host activities for families attending the day long event. "For years we have been hosting a raffle and a treasure hunt," explained Renee Allen, WMFC Parkapalooza Chair. "We started coming as a community outreach for the families who attend this event...now it's become a tradition of sorts for us."

Treasure hunt teams scour the park looking for answers to clues then return to the WMFC booth and are registered in the Treasure Hunt Raffle. "Each year we change the theme of the treasure hunt so that it will be fun and educational for all who participate. The last two hunts have included State of Michigan trivia," continued Allen. "The treasure hunt is something that families look forward to every year."



*At the WMFC Parkapalooza Booth,
families had a great time dressing up for
family portraits!*

This year WMFC added a Western Photo Booth to their activity offerings. "It was fun to watch people of all ages dress up and take pictures of one another," commented Allen. "Every year we see an increase in the number of people who visit our booth. Over 400 people participated in our raffle and treasure hunt this year and that doesn't include all those who dropped by our Western Photo Booth! We really enjoy being here for the community and we hope to continue to participate in this event for many years to come."