

Publication of
The Treehouse Foundation
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Investing in the lives of children
who experience foster care

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Our primary mission is to provide children in the public foster care system with enduring family relationships and supportive community connections by implementing innovative intergenerational community based programs and practices.

Our promise is to invite people of all ages to participate in Treehouse programs in order to re-envision the way we support children, families, and elders in America.

“There is a subtle difference between a mission and a promise. A mission is something you strive to accomplish—a promise is something you are compelled to keep.”

—Hala Moddelmog



news from the Treehouse

A New Perspective

People always ask where the name Treehouse comes from. I love treehouses. They represent a childhood icon that brings a smile to the young and the young at heart.

A treehouse is a place you climb up into, a place where you can find a new perspective—a more expansive view. It's a place where you gather with friends, feeling safe and cozy. A place where you can imagine something new.

That safe, cozy feeling is what those of us who live and work at Treehouse strive to create. Since June 2006, over 100 people, ranging in age from 4 - 90, have been living, working and playing on Treehouse Circle. Together we are building a new kind of community. One that recognizes that what all children need is safety, stability and a loving home. One that says, “FORGET the stereotypes!” Treehouse is a neighborhood built around responsibility and trust.

The Treehouse Foundation knows that we must provide children in foster care with the joys of a loving family, a safe and caring community, and the support of professionals who understand the issues facing them in order to improve their life trajectories. Our staff and board believe in the power of one generation helping another. We know that foster care in America requires a new way of thinking.

At Treehouse, children with foster care histories are being surrounded by people of all ages who care about them and are actively investing in their lives. Families, friends, and a neighborhood full of people wish them well. Every day. They show up at high school graduations, school science fairs and tea parties. They help with homework,

attend performances, bake cookies and share birthday cakes.

It's not just the kids who benefit from living at Treehouse. Adult lives are being enriched as well. We all spend time together rowing on the Connecticut River, working in our Community Garden, gathering for writing classes, doing yoga, working on our cottage industry, going out to enjoy local performances, and enjoying each other's company at the Treehouse Café.



Over the past three years the Treehouse Community has received attention from all across the country. We have had many visitors. There are Treehouse inspired communities on the drawing board in Oregon and California. Professionals in the fields of elder care, housing and child welfare are interested in learning more about the Treehouse Approach.

We appreciate all of the generous donors who find the Treehouse Foundation mission worthy of their financial support. With your ongoing help we will honor our young people who have had challenging beginnings. We will respectfully collaborate with elders and parents. We will create new resources for the region and the nation.

Please consider giving a donation to the Treehouse Foundation today so that we can continue this very important work. We will invest your dollars wisely so that many more people can benefit from our unique Treehouse perspective.

Thank you!

Judy Cockerton
Founder

“In My View...

A sense of belonging and a sense of place is something we hope for all children and something that children who experience foster care often never find. At Treehouse, creating programs that cultivate connections and belonging are central to our mission and role as a model for change.

Over the past year, the Treehouse Foundation joined together with two arts organizations, Enchanted Circle Theater and Snow Farm, to develop and pilot the Treehouse Arts & Learning Program (TALP) Engaging youth and Treehouse elders, this program explored the themes of I, We and Us, integrating theater, writing, painting, photography, music and craft. Among the many gifts this program offered the youth who participated, was the opportunity to get to know and understand ourselves and our neighbors more deeply, and to affirm and express our connections with each other and the larger community.

We are very grateful for the financial support from private donors, the Art Angels, the Community Foundation of Western Massachusetts and Mass Housing that made the Treehouse Arts & Learning Project possible. This fall we partnered with the Hampshire Educational Collaborative to bring a new version of TALP to the White Brook Middle School After School Program. We look forward to sharing its benefits with more children in the region.

Kerry Homstead
Community Facilitator

“Children do well when families do well, and families do better when they live in supportive communities.”

—Annie E. Casey Foundation

Treehouse: The Promise of Family & Community!
Make a donation today! Visit www.treehousecommunities.org

HEAR OUR VOICES!

The Hear Our Voices Initiative, funded by the Women's Fund of Western Massachusetts, is a Treehouse project designed to empower women and girls as well as children with foster care experiences. Through collaborations with Holyoke Rows and Enchanted Circle Theater, this exciting initiative began on the Connecticut River where we are learning new skills and developing strengths. This project continues to build important Treehouse partnerships in the region. It also recognizes the importance of engaging voices across generations and differences to build community based solutions, and acknowledge the important role of women and girls as leaders and change agents.



Treehouse Picture Book Project!

Our special thanks goes to the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art! We look forward to creating a Treehouse Picture Book Literacy Program for young children living with their families at Treehouse. This wonderful collaboration will be launched this winter. Stay tuned for details!

THE MAGIC OF PARTNERSHIPS!

Treehouse was designed to be a Center of Innovation for Foster/Adoptive Care and a Center of Vital Living.

At Treehouse we know that strong partnerships mean more people benefit from the resources we offer. A good example of this is our partnership with Sibling Connections, a non-profit organization dedicated to providing year-round programming for sisters and brothers who have been separated when placed in foster care.

On the first Sunday of every month, siblings and volunteer counselors from all over the Pioneer Valley gather together at Treehouse. The kids and counselors spend the day swimming, hiking, sledding, and

creating joyous shared memories that will last a lifetime.

Each Treehouse partnership is unique. Together they ensure the creation of arts and learning projects, rowing programs, animal therapies, our intergenerational community garden program, year-round sibling connection initiatives, literacy programs, innovative parent supports, mentoring opportunities, internships, and much more!

We thank all of our partners for their on-going support. We look forward to developing exciting new collaborations that will strengthen lives in the Pioneer Valley and beyond over the coming years. ●



Treehouse is a Meals on Wheels Partner

The Treehouse Community is a Highland Valley Elder Services Title III partner. In 2007 we partnered with the HVES Meals on Wheels Program. Drivers come to the Treehouse Community Center kitchen Monday thru Friday to pick up freshly made meals and make sure seniors throughout the region eat well all year long.

Connecting the Generations: An Elder Perspective

It was nearly 2 years ago, when my dog Chloe and I jumped into our PT Cruiser overflowing with our belongings and drove 1,000 miles to Treehouse. The description of the Treehouse Community in Easthampton on National Public Radio, a conversation with Kerry, the Treehouse website and written materials lured me to take a leap of faith and move. I could not be happier.

Four years after retiring, I wanted to settle down where my contributions would make a difference in other people's lives. Having an opportunity to help children in a meaningful way was paramount.

We are blessed with the presence of 35 children at Treehouse. All of them are benefiting from being together in a community dedicated to creating a safe, loving and fun place where they can count on their families, friends and neighbors to help them become the wonderful, unique, talented children that they are. Kids at Treehouse play, laugh, dance, sing with the coyotes, paint, participate in sports, create music, share their ideas, and contribute their gifts. They are here for one another in a very special way. All of them know what life was like in foster care and they have a very special bond and relationship with one another because of it.

Elders recently wrote in a questionnaire that our children are wonderful, polite, loving, helpful, energetic, and a joy to be around. They call us Grandma, Grandpa, Mama and Dad. They embrace us, explore with us, work on projects with us, and help us every day. In short, they bless our lives.

Elders also shared that Treehouse provides opportunities to get involved in meaningful activities and grow. Treehouse is beautiful, convenient, safe, secure, affordable, and friendly. There are good neighbors, wonderful people of all ages, and friends who are willing to help one another. One Treehouse member wrote, "When I come down that hill and round the corner, I feel at peace. Treehouse is my home."

I am so glad I took that leap of faith and moved to Treehouse. Living here brings me so much joy.

Rosa Young

It takes a village to raise a child...



Treehouse at Easthampton Meadow: Where families who are adopting children from the public foster care system live with caring elders in a supportive, multi-generational community.

Living at Treehouse is an exciting opportunity to experience community life as it should be, while enjoying affordable, maintenance-free and independent living!

The unique vision of Treehouse encourages elders and families to connect in a supportive and active neighborhood, where families who are making permanent commitments to children through adoption live on Treehouse Circle along with caring elders.

Treehouse offers lovely, affordable rental homes for foster-adoptive families and elders (age 55+) in a small town setting. Treehouse includes a Community Center, a library, a community garden, and many activities for children, families and elders.

Qualified families include:

- **Those who have adopted or are in the process of adopting children from foster care**
- **Guardianship families**
- **Kinship families**



Treehouse
at Easthampton Meadow

Dedicated to providing life-long families and community connections for children who have experienced foster care, Treehouse puts the words “it takes a village to raise a child” into action.

For more information, please contact **Kerry Homstead**, Community Facilitator, at **(413) 527-7966**.