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Crossroads for Youth—65 years of giving children a chance

OXFORD, Mich.—For 65 years, the nonprofit Crossroads for Youth, fondly remembered as Camp Oakland, has been offering on-site and in-home counseling, therapy and support to at-risk and neglected children throughout Michigan.

Founded in 1951 by a judge of the Juvenile Court of Oakland County—the late Honorable Arthur Moore—Camp Oakland began with the premise that “Courts must do more for children than the surgery of judgments, decrees and mandates.” After decades of working with delinquent and neglected children and their families, Moore noted that education, positive thinking, respect for others, a strong work-ethic and discipline was a necessity to encourage positive growth.

While searching for the perfect setting for their vision, Judge Moore, along with first president Walter Gehrke, discovered 320 acres of rural farmland in Oxford. The property, including multiple buildings, farming equipment, cattle and the 50-acre Lake Handsome, was purchased for \$118,000. After renovating some existing buildings into living quarters, the doors opened for 20 wards of the Oakland County Juvenile Court system.

The next year, 100 young boys came to stay at Camp Oakland. That same year, the Girls’ Ranch was constructed to address the growing need for services for young women. Shortly after that, a Work-Education Camp with vocational instruction was developed with financial assistance from the Ford Foundation and General Motors.

For nearly forty years, Camp Oakland worked primarily with pre-delinquent and troubled children referred through the juvenile court system. Dr. Janet McPeek became president of Camp Oakland in 1995. In 1999, she was instrumental in renaming Camp Oakland to Crossroads for Youth to better represent the diverse and multiple services the agency offers neglected and abused children and their families.

After McPeek retired in mid-2016, Marc Porter was appointed president by the board of directors. Porter has been a part of Crossroads for Youth for 15 years as a treatment specialist, program supervisor and program director.

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Today, Crossroads for Youth is working with fewer juvenile offenders and more with abused and neglected children, says Porter.

“We are now seeing more and more abused and neglected kids being appointed by Department of Health and Human Services—it’s a population that is really underserved,” he said. Crossroads for Youth plans to address the issue by becoming more instrumental in finding and providing foster care placement on a state level. There are currently more than 13,000 children in Michigan’s foster care system and only 8,500 foster homes. “This is a flat-out need in the system. Where are these children going to go?” he asked.

Crossroads for Youth is a private, nonprofit 501(c)(3) treatment agency that serves at-risk children and youth ages 7-17. Crossroads for Youth believes that every child deserves a chance and as such, works to strengthen families and youth with skills and tools so they become valuable contributors in their communities. For more information on Crossroads for Youth, or to make a donation, go to www.crossroadsforyouth.org or call 248-628-2561.

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