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Crossroads for Youth – helping children of all needs receive the care they deserve

OXFORD, Mich.—Since opening in 1951, Crossroads for Youth has seen thousands of children pass through its doors. Their stories are as unique as they are, but all need the same thing—the stability, structure and self-reliance Crossroads for Youth offers.

Chris Veihl, clinical director for Crossroads for Youth, has been with the organization for 20 years and worked with more than 5,500 children during that time. He has many stories, but two recent ones have really made an impact on him.

One young lady, “Joan” (name has been changed for privacy) on her first day she told Veihl she didn’t think she would be able to stay. As a result of her severely diminished vision—she had only 10 percent of sight remaining—she was having a difficult time adjusting to the noise and commotion associated with sharing living space with other young ladies. Veihl told her to “just give it a chance.”

The next day, the young ladies went to Lake Handsome for supervised swimming and recreation. “My team and I were watching, listening to the laughter emanating from the shore,” recalls Veihl. “Then we saw Joan splashing in the water, playing with other girls and getting help from them to get onto the floating raft. We could see her smile ... a genuine, full-blown kid smile.” Joan decided to remain at Crossroads for Youth.

A current resident of Crossroads for Youth who has made a strong impression on Veihl and the entire team is Tommy. Born with lower-spastic cerebral palsy, Tommy was removed from his birth home at four weeks old and placed in the foster care system. By the time he came to Crossroads for Youth in 2015 at age 17, Tommy had been in more than 200 foster care placements.

“Tommy found us,” said Veihl. “He did the research and told his caseworkers ‘This is a place I’d feel good in.’” When he arrived, Tommy was suffering from severe medical neglect and his legs were at a 60-degree angle. “The first thing we did was assess his medical needs, which led us to Shriners Hospital for Children in Chicago,” said Veihl.

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Crossroads for Youth – helping children of all needs receive the care they deserve, continued

After a consultation with doctors, Tommy and the Crossroads for Youth team prepared for a life-changing surgery and post-surgical care necessary to straighten his legs. Veihl was with him as he went into the seven-and-a-half hour surgery and his “brothers” at Crossroads for Youth were there for him when he returned. Tommy’s ultimate goal, after learning to walk again, is to go to Oakland University, Rochester, and become an engineer.

“Tommy has a unique story for sure,” said Veihl, “But from our perspective, we have 20 Tommies. We believe in each one of our youths. We believe they will heal and change. That’s why we do what we do.”

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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