

Your United Way Dollars At Work

Supporting Youth

Examples of Three Young Lives Changed and Improved

The mission of United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania is to mobilize the caring power of donors, volunteers, and communities. Through United Way, donors may fund one or many of the hundreds of agencies that provide health and human services to the Philadelphia region. The personal stories of those whose lives have improved due to these donors are compelling and truly exemplify the importance of the work United Way agencies do in our region.



- 16-year-old Tonya was beginning to spend her time with an objectionable group of friends rather than at school. Her mother, Sheila, feared that Tonya was not only making poor decisions for herself, but negatively influencing her younger sisters, as well. A youth agency staff member suggested that Sheila enroll her three daughters in a youth and families program offered by the agency. Sheila was very enthusiastic about the program and learned and implemented the parenting techniques immediately. Change became evident in her daughters as well as in Sheila. The methods used by the program encourage focusing on what was right rather than what was wrong, and resulted in more positive communication, and a more positive attitude towards the world. Sheila also said that this new attitude is important to giving the girls a good self-image and psychological preparation for the world.
- 12-year-old Nancy was not disruptive as Tonya was, but it was her shyness and passivity that prevented her from living up to her potential. The in-school mentoring program at her middle school matched Nancy with mentors. These mentors, college women, provided Nancy with friendship and guidance. They helped Nancy to see herself as a strong and intelligent young woman. With this new confidence, Nancy gradually became more assertive and more active in school and extra-curricular activities. When Nancy returned to her old middle school a year later, now a junior mentor herself, she gave an introductory speech at the first mentoring program meeting to welcome the new students and volunteers.
- 16-year-old Shelly struggled with adversity all of her life. Shelly's mother had a substance abuse problem and was unable to provide her children with a stable home life. Shelly was moved to many different schools over the years, and eventually, she refused to attend school at all. Family Court referred Shelly to a United Way-affiliated youth agency, and a social worker there immediately made personal contact with Shelly and her family. The social worker helped Shelly to communicate her feelings to her mother, and soon both mother and child began to understand each other better. Hope and understanding was all that Shelly needed to live up to her potential. She went from being a D and F student to a second honor student, and has set a career goal for herself- she wants to become a veterinarian.

United Way of Southeastern Pennsylvania partners with many youth-serving organizations so that individuals, families and communities have the basic supports they need to be happy, healthy, and reach their full potential.