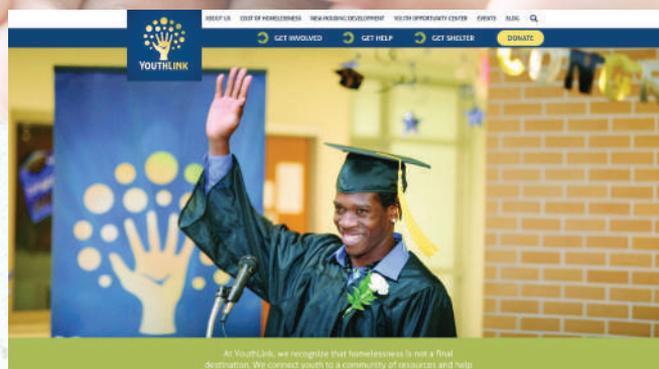


HELPING local women & children

By SARAH OSTERBAUER

Give to the Max Day is quickly approaching (November 16) and in that spirit, we invite you to take a look at some locally based charities that focus their attention on the needs of women and children. The stories of the people these organizations serve are a stark reminder of everything we have to be grateful for this season. Minnesota is often championed as one of the best places to live in the country, and these charities shine a light on how hard times can fall on anyone, but also how fortunate we are to have groups like these who are working tirelessly for the greater good.

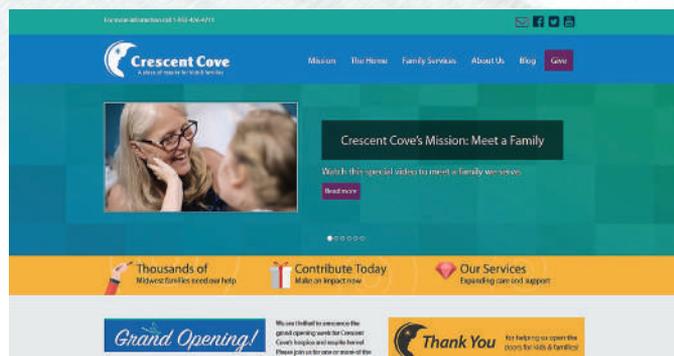


Youthlink

Youthlink estimates that on any given night in Minnesota, 4,000 young people will experience homelessness. They strive to serve the needs of these youth by providing resources to find housing as well as assistance with any overarching root causes of homelessness. They focus on meeting people where they are, creating a stable environment for young people so they're able to thrive in school and the job market. By focusing on youth ages 16 - 23, they're able to empower young people to become more self-reliant and see hope for their future. Youthlink has a variety of volunteer opportunities available for individuals or groups including but not limited to tutors, childcare and meal service. www.youthlinkmn.org

One Heartland

What started as a camp for kids with HIV/AIDS has expanded to include any child facing "social isolation, intolerance or serious health challenges." With an extraordinary ratio of one counselor for every two campers, One Heartland uses education and recreation to empower campers to feel confident in themselves and their skills. They make every camper feel valued and appreciated, dedicated to shutting down bullying culture. Camp is the place where these kids can let go and truly be themselves taking in the wilder-



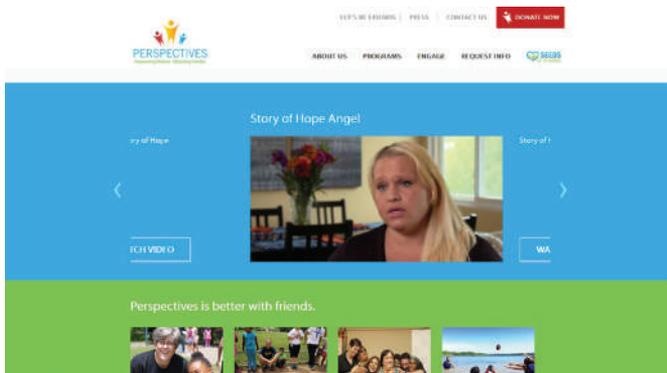
Crescent Cove

Having a child in need of hospice care is a scenario no parent wants to encounter. Unfortunately the reality is that (according to Crescent Cove's website) more than 700 children die each year in Minnesota alone, and nearly half of those could benefit from hospice care and/or respite services. In November, Crescent Cove will open its new facility in Brooklyn Center, only the third one of its kind in the country. They will offer hospice and palliative care as well as family services. They'll provide an escape from the sterile hospital environment for children with life-threatening diseases and their families. It will give families a place to be together, while getting a break from stressful, often 24-hour caregiving. The official Grand Opening Ribbon cutting is scheduled for November 16, which also happens to be Give to the Max Day. They hope it will inspire people to take notice of their cause and reach for their wallets. Indeed, their stories will tug at the iciest of heart strings. To learn more, visit www.crescentcove.org

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ness, swimming, writing poetry, painting and many other activities. The camp is staffed primarily by volunteers from counselors, to medical staff to food service, they have many options available. www.oneheartland.org



Perspectives Inc.

Founded in 1976, the main goal of Perspectives has always been to break the cycle of addiction for women, particularly those with children. Once they started to provide services, they realized that what these women needed most, aside from recovery services, was transitional sober housing, and mental health services. Now, with a campus of five apartment buildings and an office space for educational programming, they offer a full array of support for women and children facing addiction. They are committed to helping families get back on their feet by providing support and resources that aide in physical and mental stability for all involved. They provide education around job readiness, nutrition and parenting. Perspectives has a wide spectrum of volunteer opportunities for many different skills and expertise. www.perspectives-family.org

Casa De Esperanza

With the unique focus on serving the needs of Latina women, Casa De Esperanza provides bilingual support and services for victims of domestic violence. Recognizing the specific needs of the Latin community they offer assistance navigating immigration issues, accessing public health benefits, understanding law enforcement, court advocacy, as well as finding transitional housing. They run a 24-hour bilingual helpline, which is the only one of its kind in the state. Their family advocates ensure participants are well-informed of their options so that individuals are able to make the best decision for themselves and their family. They accept volunteers to help in their administrative office, to organize fundraisers or with a group to plant gardens or do other outside work. www.casadeesperanza.org



Breaking Free

Based in St Paul with a location in Minneapolis, Breaking Free aspires to rid the world of prostitution and sex trafficking. They strive for this via direct services for victims and survivors, by educating communities about the effects of sexual exploitation, and by advocating for victims. They have resources for holistic support, including addiction support, pro bono law services, transitional housing, as well as advocates acting on clients' behalf to access necessary services. They offer classes to educate law professionals, health professionals and law enforcement on how to treat victims. They also offer a program for Johns, in an effort to stop the demand for prostitution all together. They are committed to ensuring survivors have every opportunity to live a fulfilling life free from the barriers of their past. Breaking Free accepts individual and group volunteers for a variety of projects. www.breakingfree.net/about_us.aspx

This is only a short list of organizations that help women and children in our region every day. For more information on local non-profits in our area, check out the websites of Southern Minnesota United Ways. They often list the organizations they fund. You can also call 2-1-1 (not only to find organizations, but to reach out for assistance and information yourself).

- Greater Mankato Area United Way – www.mankatounitedway.org**
- Northfield Area United Way – www.northfieldunitedway.org**
- United Way of Faribault – www.unitedwayoffaribault.org**
- United Way of Steele County – www.unitedwaysteelecounty.org**

For more information about Give to the Max Day, visit www.GiveMN.org.

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