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Indiana University Health



Youth without homes get assistance at Franklin center

By RYAN TRARES

Daily Journal staff writer

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Homeless and living on the streets of Indianapolis, the immediate concerns were finding food, water and a place to sleep.

But Libby Muir wanted more. She wanted someone to care about her.

Muir, who was 17 at the time, was a rebellious teen. She butted heads with her mother and stepfather on

everything. She was partying and drinking alcohol excessively, getting in screaming matches with the authority figures in her life.

Finally, her family kicked her out of the house. She had nowhere to go.

"I felt lost and abandoned. I really felt like dying when I was up there," Muir said. "Living in Franklin, and then having that big difference of being in Indy, I didn't know where to go."

Muir found the help she needed back in her hometown of Franklin through Kids in Crisis Intervention Team, or KIC-IT. Young people who have come to KIC-IT have found stability that was otherwise missing in their lives.

They come in with the weight of family struggles, substance abuse and unemployment pushing them down, looking for any kind of relief.

The coats, hot meals and job-training resources are helpful in building some kind of foundation. But the biggest benefit is having someone stand by them and believe that they can pull themselves out of their difficulties.

"They helped me in so many ways. Once I had a place to stay, that eliminated so many of my fears," said Brianna Murray, an 18-year-old Greenwood resident.

Murray's life was teetering on collapse when she first came to KIC-IT.

Her mother had kicked her out of the house, and the teen stayed with a friend when she could. But sleeping on a couch night after night and living out of a bag was taking a toll on her.

When her couch-surfing options dried up, she faced the reality of having nowhere to go.

"I really thought I was going to sleep outside. It was terrifying," she said. "I've never been homeless. I've been kicked out before but always found a place to stay."

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Murray was recommended to contact KIC-IT through her church, Grace Assembly of God.

When she came to the agency for help, they arranged for her to contact her father, who lives in Michigan. The group lined up a hotel room for her to get a good night's sleep for two nights and paid for a bus ticket to Michigan so she could go live with her father.

"I had a place to stay that night, so I could start thinking about what my next move would be," she said. "I don't know where I'd be without them."

Muir faced similar uncertainty in her life.

After her mother and stepfather kicked her out in 2013, she made her way to Indianapolis with the help of then-KIC-IT executive director Debbie Burton. She found a shelter to take her in, but she clashed with the residents and leadership at the shelter. After a few days, she was kicked out.

"I ended up living on the streets for a couple days," she said.

People offered to help her. Muir met a group that offered to give her a place to stay if she would help with cooking and cleaning. But that situation deteriorated after a few weeks.

Through Burton, she knew about KIC-IT even before she became homeless. When her life seemed at its lowest point, Muir vowed to make it back to Franklin and seek her out.

Once she returned to Franklin in late 2013, Muir started going to the drop-in center every Tuesday and Thursday, mostly just for a place to be.

"I wasn't trying to get my life back together then," she said. "Mostly, I was at that age where I just wanted to party."

Her drinking and pill problems became more severe, and her life felt like it was plunging deeper and deeper into despair. Not until a KIC-IT volunteer suggested going to church with them did she begin to see the destructive nature of her lifestyle.

Being invited to worship with the group evoked an epiphany in Muir.

"I realized that I needed to get my life together," she said. "I was responsible for my own mistakes, where before I was blaming anyone and everyone else."

She started using the drop-in center's resources to look for jobs. She worked on her résumé on the center's computers and filled out online applications for minimum-wage work around Franklin.

KIC-IT volunteers connected her with counselors, who helped her give up drinking and drugs. They worked with her on controlling her anger and how to talk respectfully to her mom and others.

"For them, it's for us to have someplace to go to have a family. Most people who go there don't know what it's like to feel loved, to feel wanted," Muir said.

Muir has held a steady job as a cashier at Walmart since November and has saved enough money to get her own apartment in Franklin. She and her mother have reconciled, and she has been living at home for about a year.

Volunteers from KIC-IT are helping her sign up for testing and job training at Work One. Muir plans to register for college in the near future as well, studying to become either a crime-scene investigator, forensic nurse or nurse.

"They're big on helping yourself in order to get help back," she said. "Most of my life, I thought that I needed other people to support me. Now I'm getting into the mindset that I can support myself."