

Our Friends Place
Helping Girls & Young Women
... Soar to Success

FRIEND to FRIEND

a publication of Our Friends Place

How My Life was Changed by Our Friends Place

My adoptive mother loves to go to Eatzi's. I was there with her one day, and I said – my house is around here. So we went to find “my house” — Our Friends Place. It was there that I learned who I was and who I could become.

The summer I came to Our Friends Place Group Home, I was 12. When I was living with my family, my life was chaos. I was living in abandoned houses; trying to take care of my little sisters when my mom would leave us for weeks at a time. We never knew when our next meal would be. After CPS took us away, I was separated from my family. I was angry. I felt like an outcast. I didn't feel loved.

At first, it was so strange at Our Friends Place. I had never been in a house with food before, let alone have to be the one to help cook it! And laundry... why I had never done laundry before. And another strange thing — I felt like I belonged. Now, I'm not saying that I followed all of the rules. I didn't and I learned what the consequences were for breaking the rules. But, from the beginning, I knew that Miss Janet would love me enough to work through my problems. To this day I remember

Miss Janet saying to me, “If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always gotten.”

“I had never been in a house with food before, let alone have to be the one to help cook it.”

Since I didn't want what I had gotten so far, I paid attention — like with the cooking — I learned how to shop by planning the menu, seeing what things we had and what things we needed to buy, and how to use coupons. Plus, I had to learn to communicate with the other girls in the house in order to find out what they wanted for meals. If it were up to me, all we would have would be chicken, fish, and pork chops, and, apparently, some people like beef, turkey, and vegetables.

I was only at Our Friends Place for a short time. I ended up being in seven different placements before I was adopted at age 18. But it was the skills I learned at Our Friends Place — like goal setting, menu planning, shopping, cooking, laundry, working with others, and communicating — that set the foundation for my life now.

I am proud to say that I am a strong, independent, self-sufficient woman. I graduated from Skyline High School. I've been married to a wonderful man, Marcus, for the past



Princess Murray-Ellis shares how Our Friends Place laid the foundation for her now stable life.

three years who is a wonderful father to my daughter and son. I am working at a nonprofit where the mission is to build strong, healthy families. It's funny to say, but I learned how to be part of a family at a group home. It was at Our Friends Place that I learned the morning routine that now sets up the day for my children. I still use the menu chart we had at Our Friends Place to plan my family's meals and my grocery shopping. And my children hear me say, “If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always gotten.”

Thanks to your support, Princess was able to break the cycle of abuse, neglect, poverty, and homelessness.

Fearing Deportation – Ludmila Now Preparing for Her Citizenship Test

Orphaned in Russia, Ludmila was adopted and brought to the US where she was orphaned again. When her adoptive American mother became so ill that she had to move to a nursing home, Ludmila came to Our Friends Place. At the time, it was thought that Ludmila's mother had all of the adoption documentation and had applied for Ludmila's green card. Now 19, Ludmila discovered that her Russian passport would expire next

year, and that no work had been done towards citizenship even though she had lived in Dallas since she was 9 years-old.

Ludmila has succeeded since she came to Our Friends Place. She graduated from the Group Home. She then moved on to the Transitional Living Center (TLC) where she graduated from high school and continued her education by taking



classes at Dallas County Community College. She works in retail sales. But her hard-earned life was in jeopardy because of her lack of a green card.

Working with Joyce Bruce-Starling, Site Manager of the TLC, Ludmila was able to obtain her green card. While having her green card is a relief, Ludmila wants to become an American citizen. She is studying for the citizenship test and plans to take the test early next year. In talking about helping Ludmila, Joyce Bruce-Starling stated "This only happened because Our Friends Place allowed me the time to work with each girl and help them with their needs."

The financial gifts you give to Our Friends Place allow our staff to meet the girls and the young women where they are and to provide the individualized support that each one needs in order to succeed. Thank you!



Ludmila looks forward to being an American citizen. Ludmila is pictured with Sue Thiers Hesseltine, Executive Director.

wish list

By donating the following new items, you help our girls and young women feel part of a home and help Our Friends Place be even more conscientious stewards of the funds you give to us.

Standard size pillows

Twin size mattress covers

Towel sets – wash cloth,
hand towel, bath towel

Twin blankets

Twin sheets

Blow dryers

Curling irons

Flat irons

Stationery



donor **SPOTLIGHT**

Paying It Forward Volunteer Celebrates the Big Five-Oh! With Donations to Our Friends Place

When asked what she wanted for her 50th birthday, Jorja Krause said, "There wasn't any choice. The only thing that came to my mind was donations to Our Friends Place. I've been given so much, and I wanted to give back." Jorja

Our Friends Place was the perfect match for her because Jorja became a foster child at the age of five.

believes that in giving your life becomes fulfilled.

Jorja came to Our Friends Place, as a volunteer, through a friend. When she looked at the website, she had goose bumps. Our Friends Place was the perfect match for her because Jorja became a foster child at the age of five. At times there were up to nine foster kids in her home. A teacher, June DeWitt, would come and

stay with them on the weekends to help out. June's generosity of spirit inspired Jorja to become a teacher and volunteer with the girls at our Group Home.

Jorja was reluctant to talk about her birthday, not because she was turning the Big Five-Oh, but because she didn't want to make a big deal about the donations. After thinking about it, she thought that if she could inspire others to give financially to help the girls and young women of Our Friends Place,

it would be yet another way to pay it forward. Jorja's friends were more than happy to give in honor of their friend.

Thank you, Jorja, for giving so much to help the girls and young women who call Our Friends Place home.

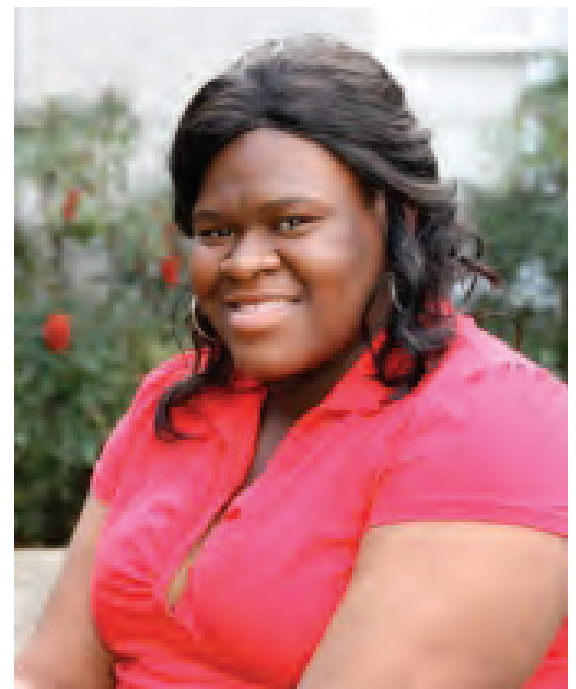


Jorja Krause with her inspiration, June DeWitt.

96 on Trig Exam! Nesha Soars to Success at Prairie View A&M

Nesha, a recent graduate of our Group Home, called 'home' to tell us how her first semester in college was going. One of the first things she reported was the 96 on her trigonometry exam. Even as an honors graduate from high school, Nesha is challenged by her college courses. Through your donations, Nesha is a college student instead of a high school dropout. Thank you for changing her life.

Be A Friend. Change A Life.



Nesha enjoys college life at Prairie View A&M.

WAYS to HELP

Your support allows Our Friends Place to help at-risk girls and young women break the cycle of abuse, neglect, poverty, and homelessness. Here are some of the ways that you can help:

- Recurring Gifts** – You can give a set amount each month or quarter that provides Our Friends Place with a steady income throughout the year. Contact us online or by phone to arrange your recurring gift.
- Matching Gifts** – This is an easy way to double or triple your support. Contact your employer for the matching gift form.
- In Kind Gifts** – We keep our updated Wish List on our website. Our most pressing need is for computers for the TLC so that our young women are able to search for jobs using the internet and use the computers for their schoolwork.

For more information or to make your gift today, please contact Kristianne Hinkamp at 214-520-6268 or kristianne.hinkamp@ourfriendsplace.org. Or you can make your gift safely and securely online at www.ourfriendsplace.org.

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Be A Friend. Change A Life.

Princess Shares Her Story
Donor Spotlight Pay it Forward
Nesha Starts College
...and more!

In this issue:

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