

SUCCESS STORIES FROM UNITED WAY AGENCIES

These are true stories from United Way agencies, but names have been changed to protect anonymity.

Mary had been married for 30 years when she was admitted to the Domestic Abuse Family Shelter in Hattiesburg. She had endured physical, psychological and sexual abuse spanning almost the entire three decades of the marriage. While struggling through her abusive relationship, she worked the same full-time job for 15 years. She also suffered physical problems.

Nevertheless, these challenges did not stop her from taking it upon herself to raise two grandchildren.



DOMESTIC ABUSE FAMILY SHELTER, INC.

Mary most likely waited to leave her abusive relationship until her own children were grown and had moved away from home. At age 57, she finally got up her courage to leave, and she turned to DAFS for help. When the woman and her grandchildren arrived at the shelter, she was emotionally exhausted, but she took full advantage of the services and resources offered by and through DAFS. While residing at the shelter for several months, she

underwent both group and individual counseling. DAFS was her help and inspiration. The woman rose above her past circumstances and refused to let her physical limitations hold her back. She found a new place to live, despite the fact that she did not qualify for low-income housing, and she was able to maintain her job.

Mary found assistance through several other agencies, such as Pinebelt Association for Families, Southeast Mississippi Legal Services Corp.,

Department of Human Services, The Salvation Army and Pearl River Valley Opportunity.

She grew emotionally, working through issues stemming from the long-term abuse she had experienced. Today, having filed for divorce, she continues to live independently with her two grandchildren.

By the age of three and a half, Tim should have been speaking in 3-4 word phrases and sentences with speech that was usually understood by others. However, Tim's speech was determined to be completely unintelligible and seriously delayed in development. In spite of having average to above average intelligence and a nurturing home environment, nothing that Tim said could be understood. His frustration was growing. Outclient therapy was initiated, and Tim's speech began to improve. However, it was still difficult to understand. At four and a half, he was approaching kindergarten age, and his parents knew that the continued challenges of his severe speech problem soon would become a major issue.

As is often the case, language and academic problems followed Tim's speech difficulties. His fine motor skills and organizational skills were compromised. In order to receive more intensive services, Tim enrolled in the full time program at the USM DuBard School for Language Disorders when he was five years old. He remained there for three years. During that time he acquired additional speech and language skills, as well as reading, writing and math through the intensive, multisensory curriculum of the Association Method.

It was much to Tim's advantage that he received intensive intervention early. By the age of eight, he returned to an area school district. Tim had normal articulation skills and grade level academic skills, and he even became an honor student! Because of the services that United Way of Southeast Mississippi helped provide, he avoided a pattern so frequently seen: speech and language problems that lead to academic frustration and failure.

Tim is currently in high school where he is active in the Beta Club and excels in sports!

Letter from a 13-year-old girl staying at the South Mississippi Children's Center

"My Stay at the Shelter"

It is a fun place to stay. They take you places. You go skating and to the movies. You rent movies. We go to the basketball games. You get store privileges. They take you to the mall and Payless. This place feels just like home. We usually don't do this at home. But sometimes I miss my mom and dad.

Sometimes they let me visit my mom. We had fun with her. The shelter is a place that is warm and safe. Mrs. Sonya Duncan was there for my brother, sister, and me. She was like a mother to me. Mrs. April is a fun person to hang out with. She's like my best friend. She is very cool when you get to know her. Mr.

Shane is very nice and funny. But he can't dance. But I still love the staff. So that is why I like the shelter.