HOPEFULL

THE CENTER FOR GREAT EXPECTATIONS NEWSLETTER

Fall 2023

25 Years of Impact

The Center for Great Expectations

"I came to **Roots to Recovery** one year ago following three years of incarceration for drug related charges. I had a long history of substance and legal issues, and I knew it was time to make a change.

My substance use and related behaviors caused me to be apart from my family for a substantial period of time, including my WIFE and my two sons who I love dearly. I've learned that my substance use was a coping mechanism to deal with deficiencies in my life. I risked everything I had and lost everything I had including my pride and self-respect. **I am proud of my progress and very grateful for my life now.** I have a great job, stronger family relationships, and most importantly, I have my wife and two sons back and we are living together in a new place, enjoying every minute of every day. There is not one easy path to recovery, and I am thankful and grateful for my path back." JT

"I have had the pleasure of being in the START program for 18 months. I have learned ways to cope with my addiction while raising my children. START has been there through everything, even when domestic violence became a concern, they continued to show up every day.

If I was short on food or if the kids needed virtually anything, I know I had START there to link me to resources or help me find a way to provide for my family.

The START program has also been very instrumental in helping me find housing and standing beside me through court to restore my license. **With START, I have been able to set goals for myself and complete them.** I appreciate all the help and care this program has offered to me and my family." CH

"I'm a 26-year-old survivor and mother of two daughters. Before coming to CGE, I was struggling with the life of addiction. I reached out to CGE and within a week, I had an intake date and the staff welcomed me with open arms. **Since I've been at CGE, I've been able to love myself again**, cherish my children, and learn coping skills to stay clean. I've been in recovery now for 7 months with the help of my counselors, recovery meetings, sponsor, and step work.

My goals are to continue a new journey to transitional living, find a more permanent home for my family to be raised in, get married, and obtain full custody of my other child. Seven months ago, I was down and out and suffering to the point that none of these goals would have been attainable. Without God, my hard work and survival skills, none of this would have been accomplished." BS

"I have been affiliated with all of the different CGE programs over the last 6 years. **I can honestly say CGE saved my life.** I would not be where I am today if it wasn't for every last CGE program. I am currently part of the Supportive Housing Program and have been for the last three years.

As a single mother to a beautiful girl, just starting a job in her dream field, I wouldn't be able to do it without the support and guidance they have provided me. I now have a job in the recovery field, helping support other women and moms to sustain and achieve their recovery.

Motherhood can be a very lonely thing and can be exhausting. Being able to have events, not only for ourselves, but also for all our kids is something I'll never take for granted. CGE has gone above and beyond changing many lives and they will continue to change many in the future." MC

Peg Wright Reflects on 25 Years... By Looking Forward!

Not inclined to rest on her accomplishments after 25 years, Peg Wright charges forward with ever-renewed energy and commitment for her life's work, explaining, "This is my mission and passion. This work isn't a job, it's a calling."

CGE was a trailblazer in recognizing the need to formalize an approach to working with women with children who had experienced homelessness, abuse, and neglect. Peg explains, "We had a vision for working with women and treating trauma and substance use together. We've continued to enhance that model of the delivery of care with actual interventions becoming more advanced and integrated into our program."

"The ravages of mental health issues and substance use abound, exacerbated by the isolation of COVID and for young people, the pressures of social media. This is not a sentimental year for me, but really another jumping off point for even more intense focus on enhancing a patient-centered approach to care."

CGE's experience of integrating early relational health into its model addresses the chronic stress and dysfunction which begins early in life and within the parent and child relationship. CGE's impact and reach is also extended through The Institute, collaborating with health care providers. With the inauguration of the Institute, CGE now trains in schools, healthcare systems, and child welfare systems throughout the United States.

Peg confirms, "We start with hope, but we move well beyond hope. We have a real responsibility to share what we've learned. The need is just so large. We are just beginning."

CGE client artwork and statement

After the long, hard path I've traveled...

The stairs are symbolic of the tough climb that it's been and what it's taken to get to this place, to this moment.

The door symbolizes all the opportunities that await and all the good things to come to my family and me.

The bricks represent the strength of the structure, the strength in the foundation, the strength in me.

The window lets the light shine down on us. It brightens everything on the other side where I'm about to enter.

The parts of the painting that remain unfinished were left that way intentionally because like the painting, **I feel that my life is a work in progress.**

"Expanding our understanding of Early Relational Health and implementing newly learned strategies have had a profound impact on our work with our children and parents at Katy's Place. Working with parents as partners, we continue to strengthen relationships with positive results."

– Mary Jean DiRoberto
Manager of Katy's Place

Early Relational Health
Leads the Way

Carolyn Flynn, CGE's Director of Early Relational Health, espouses the value of early relational health as the "ultimate prevention of mental and physical health difficulties." As Carolyn explains, "The parent child relationship is a foundational piece for the infant's mental health that carries on throughout their life."

A young child's brain develops most rapidly in the first three to five years of life. This is when the child's ability to regulate their emotions develops, through face-to-face interactions with a regulated caregiver. Absent this, a person may turn to using drugs or other unhealthy ways to regulate. These behaviors are often effective at regulating emotion in the moment but have other harmful effects. CGE leverages the power of this critical time in brain development by offering services that support the parent-child relationship in our Adult and Adolescent residential programs, as well as in START, our community-based home visitation program.

At Katy's Place, CGE's child development center, Mary Jean DiRoberto, Program Manager, uses the GOLD assessment for each child upon their arrival. This helps Mary Jean and her team understand each child's development and apply the Touchpoints approach to position the parent as the expert in their child's development and together, anticipate their needs as they grow. Meanwhile, Carolyn and the clinical team assess for environmental factors that lead to parental stress, understanding that a parent's ability to stay calm, attuned, and responsive to their children depends largely on the amount of stress the parent is experiencing.

A focus on early relational health not only positively impacts the parent child relationship today but is an investment in the mom's and child's health over the course of their lifespan. The connection between unrelenting stress and physical health is undeniable and has deeper implications for future healthcare needs and costs.

Nancy King reading to children in Katy's Place.

"The first time I went to visit Peg was at CGE's little house in Somerville. What really impressed me was Peg was "it" in the State of New Jersey. CGE was all there was for women dealing with these issues. I was impressed with her as she was so enthusiastic, and she was doing so much with such limited space. CGE is really something!"

– Nancy King, Chairman, CGE Board of Trustees

The Center for
Great Expectations

25th ANNIVERSARY

19B Dellwood Lane
Somerset, NJ 08873

www.cge-nj.org
732-247-7003 Ext. 336

A safe place, safe presence, and a safe path.

Hope lives here

25TH ANNIVERSARY GALA

Friday, October 6th at 6:00pm
The Marigold, 315 Churchill Ave, Somerset, NJ, US 08873

Congratulations to our honorees

Peg Wright Humanitarian Award
Dale Florio Outstanding Volunteer Award
John & Linda Deitchman Outstanding Service Award

Presenting Sponsors

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FRONTline INSURANCE

RWJBarnabas HEALTH

We hope to have you join us for this special night!

If you'd like to purchase tickets, contact Laurie Lachs at 732-247-7003 Ext. 336, llachs@cge-nj.org or use the QR code to visit cge-nj.org. RSVP by September 22nd.