

# Voices



children & families of iowa

Stories and voices of hope.

Volume 117, Issue No. 3 2013-2014

## CFI program mentors use past experiences to help others facing similar challenges

For 13 mothers facing a journey full of sacrifices and heartbreak, Kara\* is many things. She is encouraging. She is a motivator. She is a listener. And most importantly, she is someone who can relate to the struggles they face.

Kara is a mentor for Children & Families of Iowa's Parent Partners program, a service that connects trained mentors with parents who have had their children removed from their care by the Department of Human Services (DHS). What makes this relationship unique is that the mentors have all lived this same experience, but were eventually successful in reuniting with their children.

In 2012, 4,230 children were removed from their homes by DHS and placed in the care of others. That same year, 2,455 children currently in the system were successfully reunited with their families. The goal of the mentor relationship is to improve these numbers and increase the chances for a successful reunion.

As a mentor, Kara works with clients to establish goals focused on fulfilling requirements they must meet to regain custody of their children, requirements she once had to meet. These may include drug testings, parenting classes, or substance abuse treatment. Kara helps clients meet these goals by providing support, guidance and accountability.

Meeting these requirements can be challenging for some. Over 75 percent of cases are substance abuse related, meaning many parents must break serious drug addictions to get their children back. "You have to make a major lifestyle adjustment," says Diane\*, the program's Western Service Area Coordinator. "Living a chaotic lifestyle is all that they know, and it is a hard thing to change- I know that from experience," she says. Both Kara and Diane lost custody of their children because of meth addictions.

Diane was introduced to meth by her boyfriend when she was just 14 years old. She used recreationally for seven years,



then began using heavily for eight years after breaking up with her boyfriend. In April 2005, Diane was arrested for having a meth lab in her home, and her daughter was placed in her mother's care. When Diane was close to regaining custody, she failed a drug test at a probation meeting and was given an ultimatum: go to treatment or go to prison. "I just decided then and there that I would not fail again. I would not lose my kid again," she said.

Diane became drug-free and in August 2006, was reunited with her daughter. She joined a support group where she was connected to CFI's Parent Partners program. After completing training and requirements that included a year of maintaining sobriety and proper custody of her daughter, Diane became one of the program's first mentors in December 2007. Today she serves as program coordinator, helping coach client mentors in the same position she once held.

Through all of the trainings and challenges, Kara says the hard work is worth it. "The smile parents have on their faces when the judge determines they have met the requirements to get their children back is just priceless," she says.

Your continued support helps ensure this same future is possible for many families to come.

*\*Names have been changed to protect confidentiality.*

*More hope inside!*

Why We Give ■ Events





# Why We Give: Stories of Hope from People Who Give Back

## Kidsfest event a 'perfect fit' for GuideOne support



As an insurance company serving churches, private schools, higher education institutions, and senior living communities, there is no doubt family and

community lie at the heart of GuideOne Insurance. These same values have led the company to sponsor one of Children & Families of Iowa's (CFI) most popular events for the past several years.

"Here at GuideOne, we are all about families," says Sarah Buckley, GuideOne's Vice President of Corporate Communications & Marketing. "With Kidsfest being a kid-centered festival with games, entertainment and activities for families to enjoy together, it's a perfect fit for us." GuideOne first sponsored Kidsfest in 1993. They became involved again in 2005, and have sponsored for the past seven years. They will be back again at this year's event to sponsor the Game Truck.

The company has also sponsored CFI's Tango gala for the past five years, was a major contributor to CFI's Capital Campaign, and has made several additional monetary and in-kind donations over the years. "It's an easy decision to support CFI, with all of the great work the organization does," said Sarah. "As the CFI mission states, it 'changes lives' for the better."

## Local causes benefit from giving changes at company

While preparing for their fifth annual charity golf tournament last August, insurance broking and risk management company Marsh and Mercer decided it was time for a change. "In the past, we had been donating funds raised at the event to one bigger, more nationally known organization. This year, we wanted to target multiple organizations in our own community," said Mercer's Vice President of Marketing Brian Hulten, who serves as the golf event's organizer.

Changes didn't stop there. The company let its employees choose where the event funds would be distributed, something not done in the past. "We solicited to our colleagues and they sent in nominations along with a paragraph about why they chose a particular organization," said Brian. Children & Families of Iowa was one of four local nonprofits chosen to benefit from the event, and received \$10,000.

"We are proud to support the Foundation for Children & Families of Iowa. We applaud them for their commitment to our community and wish them the very best as they continue to have a positive impact on so many," said Partner, Mercer Health & Benefits Consumer Business Leader, North America Region Michael Ross.



## Companies partner with CFI to brighten birthdays

What do law firm Ahlers & Cooney, P.C. and real estate company CBRE/Hubbell Commercial have in common? Together, they make birthdays a little more special for CFI clients. Ahlers & Cooney, P.C. has been donating birthday gifts to each girl living in CFI's residential home for girls since 2011. "It's good to hear these girls are progressing in life with hard work and determination to overcome the traumas they have experienced," said Debbi Cornell, a legal assistant at the firm who helps coordinate the partnership with CFI. "We are glad to be a part of these girls' lives in a small way."

CBRE/Hubbell Commercial also helps make the day special by donating cakes to clients in CFI's residential home for boys, residential home for girls, and children at the Family Violence Shelter since 2009. The company partners with Hy-Vee who, after baking and decorating the cakes, provides them to Hubbell at a discounted price. Hubbell employees then deliver the cakes to clients on their special day. "It's simple, but it can create a really positive impact on the children," said Hubbell Vice President Colleen Johnson. "It's a really special thing when we go on deliveries, because a number of kids have never even had a birthday cake before. You get to see them light up when you walk in the door." Thank you to Ahlers & Cooney, P.C. and CBRE/Hubbell Commercial for helping our clients celebrate their special day!



children & families of iowa  
Restoring hope. Building futures. Changing lives.

[www.cfiowa.org](http://www.cfiowa.org)



Mark your calendar!

**February 28 - March 2, 2014**

Children & Families of Iowa's

**Kidsfest!**<sup>TM</sup>

presented by **Veridian**<sup>®</sup>  
credit union

Kidsfest is a family-oriented festival that features fun activities, games and entertainment for kids and their families. This exciting event is attended by more than 15,000 people every year. Proceeds benefit the programs of Children & Families of Iowa; it truly is about kids helping kids!

Visit [www.cfiowa.org](http://www.cfiowa.org) or like CFI's Kidsfest page on Facebook for up-to-date information.

**Friday, February 28, 2014: 6-9 p.m. | Saturday, March 1, 2014: 9 a.m.- 6 p.m.**  
**Sunday, March 2, 2014: 10 a.m.- 4 p.m.**

**Iowa State Fairgrounds Varied Industries Building**

 children & families of iowa's

**SUPER  
INCREDIBLE  
PARTY**



presented by **EMC**  
AMERICA'S LIFE

**Saturday, April 12, 2014: 8 - 10:30 a.m.**

**Incredible Buffet & Fun Center: 3799 NW 86th St., Urbandale**

Bring your children to Children & Families of Iowa's (CFI) Super Incredible Party (formerly Boys will be Boys). While children look up to superheroes as role models, some are also dealing with urgent needs, such as finding a safe place to live and a stable family. CFI's Super Incredible Party is a fundraiser in their honor... and to restore hope for a more carefree future!

Join CFI for the fourth annual Super Incredible Party and help restore hope for families in need. Attendees will enjoy a breakfast buffet, play in the arcade, ride go-karts, and meet favorite superheroes. Parents can purchase raffle tickets and participate in a silent auction for chances to win great family items.

Cost: **\$12 per person** (children under age 2 are free). Includes a breakfast buffet, \$10 game card, great goody bag and fun attractions!

**Thank you!** Children & Families of Iowa staff and volunteers were busy the last few months working to ensure that the holidays were a little brighter for families across the state. We would like to thank everyone involved in making this a meaningful holiday season for CFI clients!

**Adopt-A-Family** - A total of 351 families were adopted by 170 sponsors through CFI's Adopt-A-Family program.

**Coaches Toy Drive** - The 2013 Coaches Toy Drive collected 2,113 toys for families across the state. CFI truly appreciates the support of Applebee's and Carlos O'Kelly's in partnership with WHOTV-13 and the Iowa State University and University of Iowa coaches who helped make this fundraiser possible.

**Breakfast With Santa** - Jordan Creek Town Center and BRAVO! Cucina Italiana hosted a breakfast and private meeting with Santa on Saturday, December 7, raising \$1,910 for CFI programs.

**Visit [www.cfiowa.org](http://www.cfiowa.org) for up-to-date event information and registration.**



# Special Offer!

Children & Families of Iowa (CFI) is selling one-of-a-kind, handmade Isabel Bloom butterfly sculptures available for purchase online at [www.cfiowa.org](http://www.cfiowa.org). The beautiful figurines are on sale for \$31, with 50 percent of proceeds benefitting CFI's Domestic Violence Services. Orders are available for pick up at CFI's main office at 1111 University Avenue in Des Moines. Office hours are Monday - Friday (excluding holidays) 8 a.m. - 5 p.m. Limited quantity available!

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