



Marion County Partnerships to Assist At-Risk Youth Aging Out of Foster Care

While foster care may be fraught with its own problems and issues, even more frustrating is what happens to children in the system once they reach the age of adulthood. Being eighteen doesn't mean that a young adult is capable of living on their own. How many parents, if their adult kids do actually leave home at age eighteen, feel secure that their child will successfully set-up housekeeping, become gainfully employed and never need their assistance or the use of their old bedroom again.



SHIP funds were used to acquire and rehabilitate the 14th Street Apartments, for youth aging out of foster care.

assistance and capacity building necessary for these non-profits to successfully access these funds and encourage the partnerships and networking necessary for sustainability.

In Marion County, Arnette House and SRMI were proposing the construction of apartments to provide a transitional living facility for these youth. In addition to providing safe, decent and affordable living accommodations, both organizations believed that intensive support services would help these young adults learn the skills necessary to survive on

Unfortunately, a greater number of these kids end up on the streets and homeless. They become prey to the same or worse evils than they faced before they were removed from their first homes. In Marion County, Arnette House and Silver River Marine Institute work hard to bring this problem to the attention of the community and to find a solution. Arnette House works with homeless and runaway youth, and Silver River Marine Institute (SRMI) provides a second chance for at-risk youth having a difficult time functioning in the mainstream schools. Even though the two organizations help numerous kids figure out how to successfully make it in the real world, they were still frustrated to see the number of youth ending up back in the system after being sent out on their own at age eighteen.

their own, help them find a job that would support them, and locate a safe and affordable living arrangement. Youth would be required to maintain employment, attend school or vocational program and follow the rules. Rents would be affordable to someone with a part-time, minimum wage job and living costs could be shared by "suite mates". An on-site manager, living in one of the apartments, would provide necessary management, oversight and security.

The Marion County Community Services Department feels it's important to maintain contact with the non-profit agencies that provide services to the local community. County staff regularly participated in the Children's Alliance, Homeless Council, Senior Alliance and Mental Health Alliance to keep abreast of the community's needs and know where the service gaps are. It also helps in determining how to best direct the use of grant funds to meet the primary needs of the community. County staff identified and recommended ways in which state and federal grant funds can be used to meet these needs, provide the technical

SHIP rental/transitional funds provided the best match for this project, and as luck would have it, a 14-unit apartment complex that was less than a year old was advertised for sale. Now known as 14th Street Apartments, the complex features 12 two-bedroom, one-bath units and 2 three-bedroom, two-bath units. SHIP funds were used to acquire and rehabilitate the apartments, a federal transitional living grant provided staffing and programming costs, and federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds were used to install an emergency generator. Local businesses donated furniture, appliances and TV's.

Marion County will be featured in the Youth Aging out of Foster Care Case Study at the Florida Housing Coalition's 23rd annual affordable housing conference in September.

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