

One Little Boy's Story



Staff help Evan collect his possessions as he readies for his new home.

“Evan” is a quiet, shy boy with a traumatic history. His early years were not very different than those of other kids at Ryther. At age three, he was removed from his home due to chronic neglect by his mother caused by her addiction to drugs. He was placed in a relative’s home where he was allegedly abused. Next, he moved to a foster home and was adopted. This should have been the beginning of a happy childhood, but instead, Evan was having a hard time adapting to a very busy household with a lot of children, some adopted and some with special needs. He reacted with aggressiveness, banging his head and ripping out his hair. What was

perplexing was that he did fine in other settings, like school.

When Evan was brought to Ryther at age 7 by his adoptive parents, we didn’t see those negative behaviors. Through a comprehensive assessment, including decreasing his medication dosages, we discovered that he has sensory integration issues and possible fetal alcohol effect. He processed information very slowly and disliked loud noises intensely. We worked with him using basic Cognitive Behavioral Therapy for anxiety so he could learn how to manage his environment.

Much of his anxiety decreased from being in a highly structured setting with clear expectations. He loved the sameness of each day and said that the cottage was quieter than his adoptive home. He liked being at Ryther. After a couple of months, the sad message had to be communicated to Evan that his adoptive parents were not going to take him back. He expressed his hurt and anger over not having a family by slamming doors and clamming up.

Staff helped him use feeling words to work through his feelings. They also encouraged him to watch his physical space and participate in the cottage community. He did well with the red-yellow-green light behavioral system and was rewarded with extra time in the sandbox and Hot Wheels cars from the prize box. Ryther also gave him the skills to have more positive social interactions with peers. Evan’s therapist helped him understand that his former family environment was not a very good fit for him and that he was going to leave Ryther and go to a really good home with fewer children and highly skilled caregivers. There was a goodbye group for him and everyone said something nice that they will remember about him and why they will miss him.

We wish Evan the best. He has tools now that he didn’t have before.

Thank you donors!

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Message From Lee

In recent years I know that people must have tired of me talking about how irresponsible the State of Washington has been regarding the rates it pays for caring for kids at Ryther. While Ryther has been quite good at diversifying its revenue to self-sustaining private sources, the growth in those revenues has not been fast enough to outpace the State sponsored deficits in our residential programs. Accordingly we have had to make a business decision to keep Ryther advancing toward self-sufficiency. Effective February 1, Ryther will close its Teen Chemical Dependency Inpatient Cottage, re-structure its medical staff, and make some limited and targeted staff reductions. While further moves may lie ahead, what isn't in Ryther's future is extinction. Indeed we are not giving up the fight for rate justice and in the coming days we will be calling on all of our friends to voice their concerns to the legislature and the Governor. Stay tuned.

Aside from the obvious, there are abundant reasons for Ryther needing to continue to grow. Principal among them is the huge unmet need for mental health services to children. In 2013 Ryther had provided just about 10,000 outpatient visits to kids and families in need. At the end of 2014 that figure had grown by 50% to 15,000 visits. Given our limited visibility, I am convinced that the growth is attributable to the higher quality of care provided by our staff. Word of mouth is the best advertising.

Finally, one of our better kept secrets has been a very positive partnership with YouthCare, an organization well known and respected for its work with homeless youth in Seattle. Over the past two years YouthCare has become one of our major outpatient sites. They also use one of our off campus cottages for one of their programs serving unaccompanied migrant youth. We anticipate that this partnership will continue to grow for the benefit of our entire community.



Lee E. Grogg
Executive Director/CEO

Stacey's Story: At Ryther they will find a way to help you



Crystal Hynek, Ryther Therapist, and Stacey, speaker at the League Noel Holiday Luncheon.

When I was asked to tell my story I thought it would be hard to convey everything Ryther has done to help my 13 year old son, "Teddy," and I move through one of the most difficult periods in our lives. My son's father, with whom I share custody with our son, was involved with CPS due to abuse. There was one day that I will never forget when Teddy wouldn't get out of bed to go to school. I found out he was cutting. He was hopeless. He was running away. That was the bottom.

When I met Crystal Hynek, my therapist at Ryther, we connected right away. She worked with my son individually and also with the two of us since this was all about us learning skills to deal with these difficult circumstances. Crystal worked with Teddy to connect his thoughts, feelings and behaviors. We worked on my not engaging in power struggles when he was clearly feeling out of control. I learned to look deeper than the situation at hand to understand his underlying feelings.

After three months, Teddy wanted a break from therapy and I panicked because we were making so much progress. Crystal assured me that there were creative options and from that point on, it was Crystal and I meeting weekly. I learned the tools and modeled them for Teddy. What I learned was simple – when I changed my reactions and behaviors my son's reactions and behaviors also changed.

Now, Teddy says how he feels when things aren't going great and what he needs and wants in a respectful and effective way. After six months, he was ready to resume therapy and Crystal connected my son with Luke Sworts, another Ryther therapist, which was a great fit. They worked together when Teddy was being reunited with his father. Teddy did some pretty deep work with Luke and it truly helped.

As much as I lean on my family and friends, it's important to know when to seek outside help. I honestly don't know what I would have done without Ryther's expertise and support. Teddy's personal successes have been both baby steps and monumental. Where we were a year ago seems like a distant place. Now, he comes home from school and tells me how he broke up a fight and about the letter to a friend who was very much in despair. We still have the age appropriate struggles of a family with a 13 year old, but they are manageable because of Ryther.

Ryther League NEWS

What's Happening

The Ryther League brought smiles to children and teens in residence when the Marion Baer Holiday Store opened for a big one-day event. Children chose several gifts for family, foster parents, social workers, Best Buddies and canine companions. Afterwards, League members helped with gift wrapping and cookie decorating to make the day extra special.

The League also brought their famous holiday treats and helpful elves to the Kids' Holiday Party, where they served as "cookie monitors" and Santa's helpers.



Ryther League members having fun setting up the Marion Baer Holiday Store for the kids.



After a successful shopping day, it's back to the cottage.



The Ryther League provided festive holiday cookies at the Kids' Holiday Party.

In other League news, the All-League Holiday Luncheon was a success, with funds raised and friends gathered for a great cause at the festive Seattle Yacht Club. Sharon Setzler, League Chair, presented the biannual check of \$84,000. The event raised nearly \$5,000 so children can decorate their bedrooms on campus. Blue Ridge Unit took over the fashion show, which highlighted great finds from the ReStyle for Ryther Thrift Store. Noel Unit's Holiday Luncheon at the Sunset Club was at capacity and raised a record \$37,000. Sou'Wester Unit appreciates all who purchased the lovely poinsettias, because you helped raise \$4,800 for Ryther this year!

The ReStyle for Ryther thrift store in Ballard has had record breaking months lately. If you haven't yet been in the store, you will be delighted to find quality clothing (men's/women's), shoes and décor items, including kitchenware. Visit the store at 5435 Ballard Ave. NW, Tues-Sat noon-6pm and Sunday noon-4pm. To volunteer in the store, email R4Rthrift@gmail.com.

If you want to learn about this outstanding League community call the League Liaison at 206.517.0215.



Noel Unit members and friends gathered at the Sunset Club for their annual Holiday Luncheon.

Sincere thanks to those who made Thanksgiving & the Holidays very special!

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Thank you for Renewing Hope & Renewing Lives!

Thank you to all of our guests and supporters of Ryther's Renewing Hope, Renewing Lives luncheon. Over \$240,000 was raised for the children and teens that receive treatment at Ryther. Save the date for next year's luncheon on Thursday, November 19 at the Seattle Marriott Waterfront.

A special thank you to our Renewing Hope, Renewing Lives sponsors:

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