

GOLDEN GIRL GAZETTE - HERALD

Golden Girl Group Home | Christmas 2024



A letter from our Executive Director, Renee Harrison

I was having a meeting with all of the girls in the recreation room when the door opened and two women walked in. They stood quietly in the back of the room as I reviewed the rules for our girls during our upcoming trip. One woman looked to be around thirty and was wearing a baseball hat and glasses. Her companion looked to be about ten years younger. As the meeting ended the one in the baseball hat, spoke to me in a thick, drawn out true Appalachian accent. She said, "You don't remember me do you?" In my muddled brain I knew I recognized the voice but I didn't remember the face. As walked together out of the Rec room unto the courtyard, several of our girls were also trying to get my attention. That familiar voice spoke again, "I can't believe you don't remember me" and in a louder voice she added, "MOM!" As she said the word 'mom' several of the girls stopped walking to look at her. At Golden Girl we tell the girls that they can't call us Mom or Momma while they live here. We do this for a variety of reasons including: respect for their own mothers, to avoid the appearance of favoritism and to keep relationships between each girl and staff equal. I often joke with the girls that after they leave Golden Girl, they can call me mom all they want. So, when this woman loudly said this word, the girls stopped walking to gawk at the rule breaker. I had a completely different reaction.

Like a movie montage, memories of Angeline as a teenager growing up at Golden Girl, more than a decade earlier skipped through my mind. No matter how many times I told Angeline she couldn't call me Mom or Momma she continued to do it. As I stopped walking, I looked at her and questioned, "Angeline?" She answered, "Actually people call me Angie now and I'd like you to meet my baby sister Lucy." After Angeline and I embraced, I looked at Lucy. I knew that Lucy was about ten years younger than Angeline and had been able to avoid the abuse and neglect that Angeline had suffered.

I remembered a Christmas long ago when Angeline first came to live at Golden Girl. She had come from extreme poverty and had never experienced a Christmas that included gifts, carols, love and affection. We all knew that Angeline would be missing her baby sister Lucy who had just entered kindergarten.

Lucy was in a safe place away from the horrors of Angeline's childhood. Angeline's prize possession was a wallet size picture of her holding Lucy as a toddler. When the Christmas presents were handed out, Angeline looked terrified. This was all new to her. Gradually she opened each gift, expressing her appreciation for clothes, shoes and electronics I'm sure she'd never dream she'd own. And then she opened her last gift. We all knew what it was as one of us had "borrowed" Angeline's picture and returned it without her knowledge. As the wrapping fell away, she saw the enlarged, beautifully framed picture of her and Lucy. Overcome with emotion, she dropped the framed photo on her lap and began to cry.

Now it was fifteen years later and I was meeting Lucy for the first time. Angeline beamed as she said, "Isn't my baby sister beautiful? She drove me all the way from the Mingo County just to come meet you Momma." I gave Angeline a reproachful look that clearly said for her to not call me Momma at Golden Girl. She grinned back impishly.

About a week after that visit Angeline left me a message on my voice mail. I listened to the message as I was driving home. She told me that she and Lucy were now living together and she was making sure that they would spend the holidays together. She ended the message with, "I hope you know how much I love you" then there was a slight pause and I could hear the laughter in her voice as she added, "Mom." I immediately thought, 'well, dang, she got me again'. A moment later, I saw my reflection in the rearview mirror. I was smiling.



Save the Date for Derby Brunch

Hats Off

A TRADITIONAL DERBY BRUNCH

Save the Date!

Saturday, April 26 | 10am

Guyan Golf & Country Club

Grab your most stylish, derby-inspired hat and join us for brunch!



For tables and individual tickets go to gggh.org



Tea Time

On Tuesday, November 6th, the Marshall Sadō (Tea) Club hosted a tea gathering for the girls. This was led by Dr. Zelideth María Rivas, fourth-degree instructor (Hikitsugi) in the Urasenke tradition of tea, and Marshall's Assistant Provost for Global Education with support from Akiko Praylow, Marshall's Japan Outreach Coordinator. This tea gathering followed the four-hundred year practice that emphasizes the principles of chanoyu that Sen Rikyu (1522-1591) enumerated – wa, kei, sei, jaku 和敬清寂 (harmony, respect, purity, and tranquility).

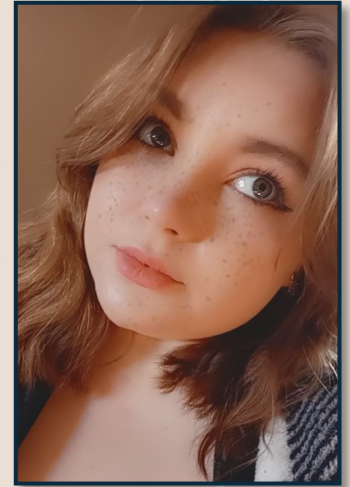
The girls enjoyed watching a ryakubon tea gathering and receiving a bowl of green matcha tea. They then learned how to whisk their own bowl of tea, enjoying this tea with Pocky snacks. Throughout the time, we included conversations about Japan, including Hello Kitty, bento (boxed lunch) boxes, manga and anime and even chatted about some K-pop groups. We left the students with promises of returning to hold a kyaraben workshop where students will learn how to make their own Japanese style character bento boxes. Stay tuned for next time!





Meet Addison

At the young age of 5 years old Addison was sold for drugs. Her mother is a drug addict and she was given to her grandmother to care for her. Her own grandmother neglected her. Over five years ago, she was taken from her home and brought to Golden Girl to live, heal and grow into a confident young lady. Addison graduated from high school and is now attending Marshall University. She has a double major and is studying early childhood development and social work. Her burning desire is to start a non-profit organization that helps children who are effected by the Opioid Epidemic. Addison is thriving in our Independent Living Program and lives in our “Golden Heart” apartment complex. If you would like to help Addison on her quest please contact Nikki Thomas at nthomas@gggh.org or call 304-939-5726.



Christmas Angels

Christmastime can be a tough time of year for our girls. Research shows that incidences of abuse increase during the holiday season. It is hard to believe that what should be the “Most Wonderful Time of the Year” is terrorizing for victims of abuse.

At Golden Girl Group Home we have special people we like to call our *Christmas Angels*. To be a *Christmas Angel*, you can donate \$200 and sponsor a girl's Christmas, to provide gifts for her. Although gifts do not make up the loss of a family or erase the traumatic situations that each of our girls have been through, we want to make Christmas as special as we can for each and every one of them.

We are so thankful for our Christmas Angel Program and the true impact it has. If you would like to make a difference this holiday season please call 304-544-7400.





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Our mission at Golden Girl is to give hope to young girls in our care by counseling, educating, and mentoring them in a safe, nurturing environment.



Do you pay West Virginia state taxes? You can qualify for a tax credit with your donation to Golden Girl Group Home. Find out how to take advantage of the Neighborhood Investment Program today by calling Nikki Thomas 304.939-5726 or email nthomas@gggh.org