Two of the most powerful words in the English language are: “thank you.” As children, we learn to say those words but as adults, we can forget just how important it is to show our appreciation for what other do for us, or do with us. Such a simple gesture – yet so meaningful. Mark Twain once said, “I could work for two months on a good compliment.”

At Family Education and Support Services our goal can be condensed in these words “Build Resilient Families.” That is a big goal given the distress in which so many of our friends and neighbors find themselves. It is not a goal that we could ever reach on our own.
That is why we try to say thank you all year long, but especially in November, which we have chosen as “Giving Thanks Month.”

We would quickly run out of space to thank individually all those who helped us serve 8,500 families and individuals last year. So many of us worked together as a community of caring to help individuals overcome their challenges to become resilient.

If you have donated in any way to help the children and families we serve...
If you are one of the many whom we have become partners in this work....
If you are one of the members of our Board of Directors who guide our work and tell our story through the communities we serve...
To our amazing staff members who work so hard every day to make possible what we do...
To all, who believe in in service to others, in this month of saying thanks...

thank you.

Shelly Willis, Executive Director
Stories of "lived experience," told by people who have been through traumatic and often-horrrendous life experience and found the support and resources to succeed, can be emotional to tell and emotional to hear.

So when the 110 people at the our Strengthening Families Luncheon in September heard PCAP graduate, Lydia Stanley tell her story, they rose to their feet in unison and gave her a prolonged standing ovation.

The last link in a long chain of abuse and addiction. Lydia grew up with no guidance or stability. At the age of 10 her mother abandoned her through suicide, leaving her feeling alone and unloved, Lydia says "it's no wonder I turned to drugs ... they made me feel better... it was like suddenly I became more attractive, popular and had more attention then I had ever had"

Lydia fell into a cycle of addition - drugs, dumpster diving, camping
in the woods, relationships, but never anyone who really cared. After landing in an impatient treatment program, she found Family Education & Support Services and their PCAP (Parent Child Assistance Program).

"It might seem like a small thing to find transportation, but for someone who wasn't equip to overcome obstacles - I couldn't find a way... But Teya, my PCAP Case Manager was relentless and found a way. She was the first person who was committed to me and invested in my success."

Lydia’s PCAP Case Manager, Teya "found a way" and invested in her, helping her to find within herself what she needed to succeed. She has now become one of the first graduates of the three-year program.

"My goal is to make a difference in somebody's life, like these amazing people did for me," she told the audience.

#GIVELOCAL is an annual two-week giving campaign, hosted by the Community Foundation of South Puget Sound, designed to encourage investment in our local communities. You can become a part of this growing movement to change lives by supporting a cause close to your heart.

Join us and the rest of South Puget Sound in supporting local nonprofits. Every gift goes to improving the live of those in Lewis, Mason, and Thurston Counties.

Visit #GIVELOCAL and invest in Family Education & Support
Services today. We also invite you to be a part of the social media conversation, and help us spread the word and help us reach our goal. If 500 people in the South Puget Sound would invest just $20 before November 21st... We can make big changes together!

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Board Highlight: Tanya Murray

For most of the past decade, Tanya Murray has been served on the Board of Family Education and Support Services.

A part-time professor in parent education, at South Puget Sound Community College, Tanya teaches classes on health, safety and nutrition. She has worked in that arena for many with her first professional job being health promotions manager for Dow Chemical.

She was born in Colville, north of Spokane, but her Dow Chemical job allowed her to travel all over the world.

“I loved it a lot,” she said of her job.

But her life path eventually led back to her roots in the northwest. She and her husband Dan settled in Olympia when he got a job here. “We just fell in love with Olympia” she said. They have three children.

Tanya, 51, met Executive Director Shelly Willis through the Junior League, one of many community partners with FESS.
She believes FESS has become a valuable part in service to the community.

“They never say no,” she said of those who work for the agency. “They always figure out how to get to yes. I so admire that.”

The agency has grown, adding programs and people since 2010 when she first joined, she said.

She served on the Board for six years from 2010-2016, before taking a year off and then returning in 2017, as allowed by Board rules. Tanya’s current work on the Board includes organizing focus groups to help inform the Board and the agency about how to achieve its mission.

Programs that help serve children and families have become much more dependent on showing they are effective. The first focus group brought together experts in data collection and management so FESS can show the community and funders how much our programs help those who use them.

Tanya said the Board itself has become less informal and more structured over the years as they help oversee the growth.

“It has definitely matured and become focused,” she said.
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