

# Success Stories

personal stories about how your gift helps to create opportunities for a better quality of life for all...



United Way  
of Portage County

## EDUCATION & STRONG FAMILIES

### **Josh's Story- Shooting for the Stars, Finding a Friend Along the Way**

Josh was a very shy child who often sat alone during lunch and recess. Last year when Josh's teacher noticed that he was struggling in school and didn't seem to have many friends, she referred him to Big Brothers Big Sisters Site-Based mentoring program. Josh met his Big Brother Mike for the first time during his lunch period a few weeks later. Initially, he was so shy that he would not even look Mike in the eyes. Through Mike's consistent friendship, Josh slowly began to open up to Mike and share his interests. Josh talked about wanting to be an astronaut one day, but his mom said that he would never be able to do that. Mike continued to encourage Josh with his dreams and even helped with a science project making a model of the solar system. His teacher reported that after one semester of meeting with his Big Brother, Josh displayed more self-confidence in the classroom as well as improved relationships with other students. With Mike's support, Josh's grades are improving and Josh is now shooting for the stars.

## INCOME & SELF-SUFFICIENCY

### **Bill's Story-Celebrating Success One Step at a Time**

Finding a job has been very difficult for many people lately. For Bill, his limited reading skills made this task even more difficult. He struggled to complete a standard employment application since it required a level of reading proficiency above his own. Despite the daunting odds against him, Bill set a goal to improve his reading skills, find a new place to live and get a job. Using a self-paced, computerized learning program at the Portage County Literacy Council, Bill took the first steps toward this goal. The staff members gave Bill the encouragement he needed to keep going on this path. In addition to supporting his learning, they patiently helped him read and complete job applications and informed him of job openings they learned about. Given the details of his personal challenges, the Literacy Council was one of the few places where he was treated with respect. Over the next few months the Literacy Council staff celebrated little victories with Bill—first that he got a part-time job and then that he had found an apartment. Recently he obtained full-time employment. He has been saving as much of his income as possible so he can reach another of his goals, to travel and move west to be closer to family. Bill continues to work on his reading. He still faces certain obstacles, but he knows that the Literacy Council will be there to encourage him every step of the way.

## HEALTH & BASIC NEEDS

### **Dan's Story-A Path to Recovery**

When Dan called the Hope Center in the fall of 2008, he opened up about his problem with alcohol for the first time and how it had devastated both his life and the lives of those close to him. As the conversation developed, Dan realized he needed help to begin a new life without alcohol. The Hope Center connected him with the Salvation Army Adult Rehabilitation Center (ARC) in Milwaukee, a six-month program offered at no cost to the clients. Although the treatment center was far from home, Dan embraced this opportunity to begin to rebuild his life. When he successfully completed the program in the spring of 2009 and wanted to return to Stevens Point, the Hope Center was there to help with his transition back to a normal life. He met regularly with the case manager who assisted him with programs to maintain his sobriety as well as encouraged his search for employment and housing outside the Hope Center. Today, Dan resides in a transitional housing program and has managed his sobriety for nearly 2 years. He has been offered a promotion at the food service company where he works. Dan's life is now full of hope and opportunity where once he saw only despair and addiction.

**For more stories about how your gift to United Way of Portage County helps to improve lives, please call us at (715) 341-6740 or email [uway@unitedwaypoco.org](mailto:uway@unitedwaypoco.org).**